"The Curse of Canaan"

Genesis 9:18-29

2/1/98



Introduction: v.18-19

The shameful error of Noah (v.20-21)

**** How do you respond when someone else falls? (particularly when an authority falls?)***

I. How we respond when someone else falls will reveal our <u>honor or dishonor</u> (v.22-23)

(A contrast of <u>responses</u>)

A. The <u>DISRESPECTFUL behavior</u> of Ham (v.22)

B. The <u>RESPECTFUL behavior</u> of Shem & Japheth (v.23)

II. How we respond when someone else falls will result in our <u>curse or blessing</u> (v.24-27)

(A contrast of <u>results</u>)

A. The <u>CURSE</u> of Canaan (v.24-25)

B. The <u>BLESSING</u> of Shem & Japheth (v.26-27)

Conclusion: v.28-29

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How do you respond when someone else falls?

v. 18
Special attention is given to Canaan so as to set the stage for the events regarding Canaan that follow.

v. 19
"Of them was the whole earth overspread" - All of us stem back to either Shem, Ham, or Japheth, or a combination thereof. Certainly all of us come out of the loins of Noah, back to Adam.

Racism is foolish when you consider the unity of the race from Noah; We all came from the same stock! There is ultimately only one race – the human race!

The Shameful Error of Noah (v. 20-21)

v. 20
Noah's planting a vineyard was not wrong. What was wrong was his ignorance regarding his over-consumption of grape juice gone bad!

v. 21
Noah had an impeccable testimony prior to this verse.

One proof of the inspiration of the Bible is its relentless honesty in showing even the sins of its greatest heroes!

The Bible does not sugar-coat any man, but transparently reveals the true nature of mortal, corrupt flesh.

"Was drunken" – "Fermentation, which leads to drunkenness may have been caused by ecological conditions as a result of the flood" (MacArthur, Study Bible Note).

To give Noah the benefit of the doubt, perhaps he was unaware that grape juice could ferment and become alcoholic. It is possible that in pre-flood conditions, fermentation was not possible. People certainly did drink prior to the flood (Mt. 24:38), but this is the first recorded example of drunkenness.

"He was uncovered" – Perhaps due to the effect of the alcohol, Noah's body temperature rose, leading him to take off his clothes to cool off; or perhaps due to his drunken condition, Noah without realizing it, took off his clothes and involuntarily exposed himself.

In either case, one thing is obvious: alcohol consumption always results in shame and foolish behavior. The effects of drinking are spelled out clearly in Scripture.

"Directly or indirectly, alcohol kills thousands of Americans every year.

Thirty thousand drunkards die of cirrhosis of the liver annually.

Alcohol is also indirectly involved in causing at least –
50 percent of the road accidents in our country,
65 percent of the drowning deaths,
80 percent of the deaths by fire,
22 percent of all home accidents,
36 percent of the pedestrian accidents,
and 44 percent of all airplane accidents.

Alcohol is a major factor in violent crimes as well –
65 percent of murders,
40 percent of all assaults,
35 percent of the rapes,
30 percent (later figures are 50 percent) of the suicides,
55 percent of fights in the home, and
60 percent of the reported child abuse cases in our country . . .

[All these] are perpetrated by people under the influence of alcohol." (WINE; A Biblical Imperative: Total Abstinence, by Robert P. Teachout, p. 6).

"1 ½ ounces of whiskey
3 ½ ounces of fortified wine
5 ½ ounces of ordinary wine
12 ounces of beer

= "One drink" (each of these puts an equal percentage of ethyl alcohol into a person's body)

With the above equation in mind, it is clear that one drink will cause 0.03 percent alcohol in the blood of an average (150 lb.) weight man. Two drinks will double the percentage to 0.06. Three drinks will cause 0.09 percent, four drinks 0.12 percent, and five drinks will raise the blood alcohol level to the very high and dangerous percentage of 0.15, producing 'unmistakable abnormality of gross bodily functions and mental faculties'." (Teachout, p. 55)

"…Ancient Jewish rabbis decreed that if a man drinks one glass of unmixed wine, he is deprived of one-fourth of his reason; two glasses remove half; three glasses take away three-fourths; and four glasses will make him fully drunk. Experience of old is in line ith modern scientific discoveries." (Teachout, p. 56)

"In demonstrating to future physicians the effect of alcohol on the intelligence, many medical schools follow this procedure. They give two written examinations on subsequent days, with similar questions. The first examination is written under the usual circumstances without alcohol. Preceding the second one, each student is given one bottle [12 oz.] of beer to drink. The results of these two examinations are graded by people unfamiliar with the undertaking. At the end of the second examination the students are asked these questions:

1) Is this examination easier, harder, or about the same as the one yesterday?
2) Have you done better, worse, or as well as yesterday?

Most of the students reply that the second test is easier and that their marks are better. However, the grades on the second examination are approximately seventeen percent lower. *This shows that even one drink hampers intelligence and decreases efficiency."* (Teachout, p. 57)

"In summary, several major points have been made from modern experimental scientific testing regarding the effects of alcohol upon man.

1. Alcohol in any amount immediately enters the blood stream; even a few sips can be detected in measurable amounts in the blood within three minutes.

2. The part of the body which shows the first symptoms of impairment is the brain.

3. Even one small drink (5 ½ oz. Of ordinary wine) will normally produce measurable impairment of reasoning skills in mental acuity tests.

4. The same amount (one drink) decreases the subject's ability for self-evaluation of alcohol's effect, which in turn makes it more difficult for the subject to discern his own need to stop at one drink.

5. While many people may have a greater tolerance, it is a demonstrated fact that a 'sizeable minority' is so affected by *one drink* as to cause definite impairment of judgment and attention along with emotional instability."

(Teachout, p. 58)

The Damaging Effects of Alcohol (wine; beer; etc.) according to the Bible:

Alcohol is associated with <u>shameful exposure</u> (nakedness)
Ge 9:21 And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

Alcohol is associated with <u>Sexual impurity</u>
Ge 19:32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.
Ge 19:33 And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

Alcohol was forbidden for the Priests of Israel since it would <u>impair their proper worship and service for God</u>
Le 10:9 Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations:

Alcohol was forbidden for those who would take the Nazarite vow, since it would prevent the one who took the vow to fulfill it
Nu 6:3 He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes…
Jud 13:7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death. **Samson evidently violated this law by participating in a drinking feast with other young men** (Jud.14:10)**. This and his other acts of disobedience paved the way for awful consequences in Samson's life.**

Alcohol is associated with <u>violent behavior</u>
Pr 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

Alcohol <u>mocks and deceives</u> its victim
Pr 20:1 ¶ Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.
(Note: This is an indictment by God on the beverage, not merely the drinking of it. The text specifically indicates that wine itself is a "mocker" without mention of the quantity involved" (Teachout, p.12)

Alcohol <u>destroys and enslaves</u> a person's life
Pr.23:29 ¶ Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?
30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.
31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.
32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.
34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.
35 They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

The alcoholic <u>falls under a curse</u>; God pronounces a woe to him
Isa 5:11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!

Alcohol <u>affects the mind and reasoning ability</u>
Isa 28:7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

Alcohol leads to <u>sin (transgression)</u>
Hab 2:5 ¶ Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death

Alcohol is used by people who want to <u>take advantage of others</u>
Hab 2:15 ¶ Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!

Alcohol leads to <u>riotous behavior</u>
Eph 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess (riotous living); but be filled with the Spirit;

<u>Drinking for What?</u>

We drank for happiness and became unhappy.
We drank for joy and became miserable.
We drank for sociability and became argumentative.
We drank for sophistication and became obnoxious.
We drank for friendship and became enemies.
We drank for sleep and awakened without rest.
We drank for medicinal purposes and acquired health problems.
We drank for relaxation and got the shakes.
We drank for confidence and became doubtful.
We drank to forget and were forever haunted.
We drank to erase problems and saw them multiplied.
We drank to cope with life and invited death.

The first reference to wine in the Bible is a negative one. We should take careful heed to such early warnings!

NOTE: The word “wine” (*tirosh & yayin* – Heb. Or *oinos* – Greek) simply refers to the fruit of the vine in liquid form. It may refer to fermented alcohol or unfermented grape juice. The context will decide in each case which meaning is implied.

Jesus said, “No man puts new wine into old wine skins.” Why? Because new wine, although it is called wine (*oinos*) is not yet fermented. Therefore, not all references to wine are references to alcoholic wine. In fact, most are not. Jesus turned water into new wine (For further study, see: Bible Wines and the Laws of Fermentation).

** How do you respond when someone else falls? (particularly when an authority falls?)*

I. How we respond when someone else falls will reveal our honor or dishonor (v.22-23)

(A contrast of responses)

A. The DISRESPECTFUL behavior of Ham (v.22)

“Saw” – lit. “gazed with satisfaction” (Ryrie note)

“Ham looked with some sinful thought, if only for a while until he left to inform his brothers. Perhaps he was glad to see his father’s dignity and authority reduced to such weakness. He thought his brothers might share his feelings so he eagerly told them. They did not, however, share his attitude (v. 23).” (MacArthur, note).

Are you quick to point out the failures of others?

Or are you quicker to defend someone else’s reputation and character?

Those who do enjoy tearing others down usually do so with an intention of showing their own superior goodness in contrast. In other words, many people put others down so as to lift themselves up.

Love covers a multitude of sins.

I Pet. 4:8 - And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Prov. 17:9 - He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

Prov. 19:11 - The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

Ham is a not a little boy (children could be excused from such impropriety). He is over 10 years old! He should have known better! Where's the respect?!

We are to honor our parents! (Exod. 20:12 - Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.; Eph. 6:2-3 - Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Respect for parents is so serious that God told Moses:

*"He who **strikes** **(physical disrespect)** his father or his mother shall surely be put to death";*
*and "He who **curses** **(verbal disrespect)** his father or his mother shall surely be put to death"* (Ex. 21:15, 17; cp. Lev. 20:9; Deut.21:18-21; 27:16; Proverbs 30:11-17).

Proverbs 20:20 - *"Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness"* (ie. his life will be snuffed out)

Eph.6:2-3
Honour thy father and mother;
(which is the first commandment with promise;)
That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

"Honor" = to view as very valuable, or precious.

Today, far too many children treat their parents like garbage. No respect for those who brought them into this world, fed, clothed, and schooled them.

How do children show honor?

1) By obeying them without complaint
(Having the right attitude will produce right action)
2) By providing for parents (when they cannot)
(Mt. 15:3-6) (NOTE: Money is no substitute for love)

Note: The Bible teaches we ought to respect the aged:
(Lev.19:32; Job.12:12)

Never refer to your parents as "my old man" or "my old lady"
Children ought to address their elders with respect:
"Yes Sir" or "No Mam" "Mr._____" or "Mrs._____"

Even if they are not believers, they are your parents, and you owe them love and respect.

God's Promises to children who honor their parents:

a. **Such an attitude results in a top quality life** - *"well with thee . . ."* (v. 3a)
Paul is quoting one of the 10 commandments (Ex. 20:12). This is the only one of the 10 that deals with the family. Why only one! Because if this command was kept, a child would learn the most important lesson of his life -respect for authority.
From this would flow respect for others, for leaders, and most of all for God!
"Well with thee" - they will stay out of things that shorten life and that take the real fun out of life!

2. **Such an attitude results in a long quantity of life** - *"live long . . ."* (v. 3b)
"This does not mean that everyone who died young dishonored his parents. Paul is stating a principle: When children obey their parents in the Lord, they will escape a good deal of sin and danger and thus avoid the things that could threaten or shorten their lives" (Wiersbe, p. 152).

B. The <u>RESPECTFUL behavior</u> of Shem & Japheth (v.23)

It is refreshing to see young people (teens) who are quick to defend their parents, who find it difficult to view their parents with contempt (though it be evident that their character isn't all that it should be).

"Took a garment" – lit. <u>the</u> garment.
The definiteness of the noun gives the impression that Ham completed Noah's uncovering by bringing the garment out to his brothers" (Ross, p. 216).

This passage teaches us an important lesson in ancient morality. Modesty and sexual privacy are important matters as far as God is concerned.

After the fall of man, an obsession or preoccupation with nudity would be the tendency of sinful, fallen man; so God provided, and required clothing for a covering. Ge 3:21¶ Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

1Ti 2:9 - In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with <u>shamefacedness and sobriety</u>; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

"Shamefacedness" - not revealing, suggestive, sensual or sexual orientated clothing; Wear the modest clothing of a godly woman, who would not blush in shame, because she does not wear that of a harlot.

"sobriety" - sensible; clothing that reflects self-control & self-discipline.

Immodesty is associated with ***<u>shame</u>***:
Re 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Immodesty is associated with ***<u>whoredom</u>***:
Eze 16:36,38 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers…I will judge thee.
Pr 7:10 And, behold, there met him a woman *with* the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart.

Immodesty is associated with ***<u>drunkenness</u>***:
Hab 2:15¶ Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!

Immodesty is associated with ***<u>demon possession</u>***:
*Luke 8:27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and <u>**ware no clothes**</u>, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.*
After Salvation the man was clothed:
*35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, <u>**clothed**</u>, and in his right mind:*

No one's nakedness should be exposed to anyone other than one's <u>spouse</u>:
See Lev.18. Note: Le 18:6- *None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD.*
You should not dress so as to provoke the <u>sexual interest and desire</u> of others:
Mt 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Clothing on a woman should <u>not</u> be **<u>tight</u>**
Clothing on a woman should <u>not</u> be **<u>above the knees</u>** <u>(exposing the thighs)</u> (Isa.47:2,3)
Clothing on a woman should <u>not</u> be **<u>low cut</u>** <u>(exposing the back or breasts)</u>

Satan (similar to Ham) accuses God's children of being spiritual naked (Rev. 12:10), but it is Christ who clothes us with his righteousness and covered our shameful spiritual nakedness (Rev. 16:15).

II. How we respond when someone else falls will result in our <u>curse or blessing</u> (v.24-27)

(A contrast of <u>results</u>)

A. The <u>CURSE</u> of Canaan (v.24-25)

v. 24
"Noah. . . knew what his younger son had <u>done</u> unto him" – Some commentators hold that the word "done" may imply that some homosexual act was done by Ham to his father. However, what the context says was "done" was that Ham "<u>saw</u>" and "<u>told</u>" his brothers (v. 22).

To read more into the passage is to perhaps delve into speculation.

Ham's actions may seem trivial ("no big deal"), but the heart attitude underneath was a big deal to God. God knows why we do what we do, no matter how significant or insignificant it may seem. God obviously then reveals to Noah the hideous nature of his son's sin and the consequences that would follow.

v. 25
A curse is on anyone who dishonors his parents (Dt. 27:16 - Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.)

"Cursed be Canaan" – Theologically, the "shift from Ham to his son Canaan established the historic legitimacy of Israel's conquest of the Canaanites. Moses was writing this passage and delivering it to the Israelites just prior to their conquest of Canaan." (MacArthur, notes).

If Ham sinned, why was Canaan cursed?

Some suggest that Canaan took part in Ham's sin (perhaps by "squealing" on his grandfather Noah to Ham).

I think a better view is to see that Ham reaps in his son the disgrace that he shows to his father Noah. In other words, because Ham disgraced Noah, Canaan would be a disgrace to Ham. Beware! Whatever you sow, you will reap (Gal. 6:7). And this reaping often occurs in your children!

Ham is punished in his son, who would most strong reproduced the same sinful tendencies as his dad.

The Canaanites would become extremely sexually immoral people (Lev. 18:5-25)

Lev. 18:24-25 - Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you:
25 And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.

Cp. Dt. 9:4-5 - Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee.
5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The sins of the fathers are very often passed on (with their consequences) to their children.

Exodus 20:5b - visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Exodus 34:7 - Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Cp. Num. 14:18

Your actions and attitudes will have far-reaching effects for generations to follow!

“Out of the virtues and vices of Noah’s sons grew the virtues and vices of the families of the world.” (Ross, p. 210).

What virtues and vices will you pass on?

B. The <u>BLESSING</u> of Shem & Japheth (v.26-27)

"In pronouncing the oracle, Noah discerned the traits of his sons and, in a moment of insight, determined that the attributes of their descendents were embodied in his son's personalities" (Ross, p. 210).

Note: Jacob also predicts the generations of his sons in Gen. 49.

v. 26
"Blessed be the LORD God of Shem" – the praise here is not pronounced on Shem, but on Shem's God. The Semitic people (from which the nation of Israel would come) would be blessed because they would come to know the true and living God. All the glory goes to God for revealing Himself to them and for using that nation.

"Canaan shall be his (Shem's) servant" – The Canaanites would later be subdued (subjected) by Israel (the Shemites; the "Semitic" descendents of Shem).

This would come to pass just as God said. The all-knowing God is able to predict the future with flawless accuracy.

Some prejudiced, racist people (particularly in the deep south of the USA) have wrongly twisted this passage in an attempt to prove that the black race, progenitors of Ham (whose race inhabited Africa) are under a curse. However, it was not Ham who was cursed but Canaan. Ham was in fact blessed (Gen. 9:1). The slavery curse on the Canaanites was fulfilled in the Old Testament Bible Days (Josh. 9:24; 15:63; 17:12). There is <u>no</u> Canaanite nation in existence today.

v. 27
"Japheth" = enlargement.

The Japhethites would become a numerous people and would come to share in the spiritual blessings of God through the Semites; hence, they would dwell in the tents of Shem" (Ryrie note).

Jew and Gentile are one body in Christ.

Conclusion: v.28-29

How will you respond when someone else falls into sin?

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!"