

Genesis 9:18-29

Watch Against Sin!

Introduction

This text is alarming, and alarms are good. They raise a sound that we cannot and must not ignore. The alarm of this text is, "Watch against sin." You're never safe from sin, even our blessings become occasions for sin, sin's consequences are bigger than they seem, and sin's wickedness is worse than it seems. "*Watch against sin*," cries our text!

Watch Against Sin, Because You're Never "Safe" from Sinning

Right away, the text demands of us that each of us individually heed its warnings. This is, after all, your family. From these, the people of the whole earth—that means you; you're kin here—were dispersed. There are grave warnings here about trifling with sin and treating sin as small. And these warnings are for everyone. And these warnings are for you.

And lest you would like to think that "where you are" in your spiritual life means that you cannot fall prey to sin in this way, consider where Noah was in His spiritual life. 2Pet 2:5 calls him a herald of righteousness in his generation. We read in 6:8 that he had found grace in the eyes of Yahweh. Heb 11:7 describes him as having faith, being an heir of righteousness, and obeying God out of reverent fear. In these last weeks we have seen how he patiently waited on God's command to get off the ark, though we would have certainly been impatient at that point, and how the first thing he did when he got off that ark was Noah. Have you faith? Noah had more. Have you grown in your walk with God? Not more than Noah. Have you made it through difficulties in a long hard life by trusting in the Lord? Nothing compared to Noah's 600 years—especially that 600th one on the boat! Verses 19-20 cry out for our attention and say with 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" or with Jesus in the garden—and the children know this verse because we memorized it together in intergenerational Sunday School on the Lord's Prayer this year: "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matt 26:41, Mark 14:38).

In fact, it seems that this text would especially warn God's people, church members, covenant children. "Sons of Noah" (twice!) is a covenant designation, a covenant reminder. It makes a difference whose son you are, and we have seen that ever since 3:15. We expect better from the godly line of Noah! God is grabbing your attention and saying, "can't you see that sin is something you are never 'safe from' committing in this life? This is My church!"

Watch Against Sin, Because Even Blessings Are Occasion for Sin

We sin even with good things. Noah became a man of the soil and planted a vineyard. Verse 20 has trumpets going off behind it; these are very good things! You remember from chapter 2 that it was a garden into which God put Adam to worship and obey. You remember from chapter 4 that being a worker of the ground was the most noble of jobs, that one of the attractive things about godly Abel is how he offered even from his poorer job the best that he had. And the problem since chapter 6 is that the ground has been covered, inaccessible, that God has been "destroying it" according to 6:13 and 9:11. For Noah, the "ground" had been decks of the ark for over a year. When Noah v20 tells us that Noah "began to be a man of the soil," it's announcing the rich redemptive blessing of the triumphant grace of God in Noah's life!

And Noah planted a vineyard. This is even better. Imagine as the Israelites heard about this from Moses. That was one of the wonderful things about this promised land.

Leviticus 26:3-5 If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ⁴then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. ⁵Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely.

Numbers 13:17-24 Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, "Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country, ¹⁸and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, ¹⁹and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, ²⁰and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes. ²¹So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath. ²²They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) ²³And they came to the Valley of Eshcol and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them; they also brought some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴That place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster that the people of Israel cut down from there.

Deuteronomy 32:9-14 But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. ¹⁰"He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. ¹¹Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, ¹²the LORD alone guided him, no foreign god was with him. ¹³He made him ride on the high places of the land, and he ate the produce of the field, and he suckled him with honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. ¹⁴Curds from the herd, and milk from the flock, with fat of lambs, rams of Bashan and goats, with the very finest of the wheat- and you drank foaming wine made from the blood of the grape.

So v20 is announcing to us heights of rich blessings from God. If this were a film, you'd hear fanfare at "man of the soil," and when he plants the vineyard, the cheerful, pretty music would start and the credits roll. It's over, and it was a happy ending!

But it's not over. And the ending is about to get very sad. Are you blessed of God? Good! And watch against sin. Watch against pride, gluttony, laziness, self-reliance, drunkenness. Watch against being callous to the hurts of others and to the kindness of God. Watch against sin; watch against them all. There is no blessing which you are not capable of turning into sin. 2Sam 8-10 is the account of God's richly blessing David with covenant blessings promised in 2Sam 7. And the man who prayed the prayer at the end of 2Sam 7, God's chosen servant and king and a man after

God's own heart, David the sweet psalmist of Israel turned victory into laziness, power into adultery, authority into treachery, and cleverness into murder.

Has God given you victory, power, authority, or cleverness? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

Watch Against Sin, Because Sin's Consequences Are Bigger than They Seem

I wonder what was going through Noah's head as he had the sixth cup and the seventh and the eighth. Was it, "this will probably end up with me waking up in the morning and pronouncing a curse that will be ruinous to the earthly and eternal welfare of hundreds of thousands of people for untold generations to come?" Or was it something like, "I know I'm close, but I can hold my drink, and what's the big deal, because after all the worst that will probably happen is I might puke, and I'll wake up with a headache."

You cannot anticipate how grave the consequences of your sin may be to yourself and others. Don't trifle with sin; don't play at it; don't underestimate it; don't consider it!

Watch Against Sin, Because Sin Itself Is Worse Than You Think

What prudes! Can you believe Shem and Japheth walking backward like that! Don't they know that it's only sin if you *do anything* or *want to do anything*? But that's exactly the point of v24 saying Noah knew what Ham *had done* to Him. There is not only a perversion of your own soul but a degrading of and sin against others that happens when you see what you shouldn't in a way that you shouldn't.

v23 is emphatic that the difference between Ham's visit to the tent and Shem and Japheth's visit to the tent is walking backwards, face backwards, that they did not see. But v24 and the curse that follows are breathtaking in response to this sin. When Leviticus in many places talks about some of the worst perversions as "uncovering nakedness," it is screaming to us that nakedness isn't something to be trifled with. Are not these all saying the same thing that your Lord said in Matthew 5:28, "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Did you catch the "with her" in that statement? Boys, when you look at a girl or a woman who is not your wife with desire in your heart, you don't just pervert yourself filthily before God who sees your soul; you violate and degrade the woman herself. Girls, when you dress in a way that invites such looks, you are both trampling on the boys' souls and causing yourself to be sexually abused in ways that you will not discover until the thoughts of hearts are opened at the judgment.

Just by seeing the wrong thing in the wrong way, Ham had *done something* to his father. Sin is worse than you think, and that doesn't just go for this particular sin!

Conclusion

You may be in shock now about how bad the Bible says your sin is, but we haven't begun to scratch the surface of what it says about sin as despising the eternal value and worth and glory of God. Are you careless about some sin because the consequences seem like no big deal to you? When you sin, you fall short of God's glory, you despise His worth. The smallest of your sins is bad enough that nothing but the blood of the eternally beloved and glorious Son will remedy its consequences.

That's why Adam and Eve's sin was such a tragedy, and the promise of the Seed to crush the serpent's head such astounding grace. Jesus was there! That's why in chapter 4 the getting of a godly seed was so important first in Abel and then Seth to replace him. Jesus was there! That's why chapter 5 was so hopeful, and the opening verses of chapter 6 so sad, and the hinge of 6:8 with grace finding Noah so wonderful. Jesus is the reason there was an ark. Jesus is a reason there are three sons here.

Isn't it marvelous that Shem's blessing isn't Shem's? It's God's. Blessed by *Yahweh* the God of Shem. Jesus is here in Shem. Shem's best verse in the Bible isn't Gen 9:26; it's Luke 3:36. You see, Noah is a man of faith and godliness and the hopes of the world. But his story ends here like all those stories in chapter 5. It's like 6:1-9:27 have all been one giant interruption. Listen to 5:25-9:29 with the interruption removed.

²⁵When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech. ²⁶Methuselah lived after he fathered Lamech 782 years and had other sons and daughters ²⁷Thus all the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he died. ²⁸When Lamech had lived 122 years, he fathered a son ²⁹and called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands." ³⁰Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and daughters. ³¹Thus all the days of Lamech were 777 years, and he died. ³²After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ²⁸After the flood Noah lived 350 years. ²⁹All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

Noah is a man of faith and godliness and the hopes of the world, but he's not the promised one. He died. Jesus is the promised one, and though Ham intended it for evil, God intended it for good. As Noah pronounces the blessing upon Shem, he is speaking as a prophet of Christ to come.

After this sermon, are you more wary of sin, more watchful against it, more grieved over it? Hear what God was bringing in Shem's blessing, what He was accomplishing even in Gen 9:18-29:

1 John 2:1-2a My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²He is the propitiation for our sins.

PRAYER

[This sermon originally preached as part of the worship of Harvest Community on 28-Sep-08. The Harvest Community congregation gathers for worship at 10a and 6p each Lord's Day on the campus of Unity Christian High School. Call 712-395-0983 for more information.]