

11. The God who restrains in order to redeem (2007)

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[0 : 00] Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Genesis chapter 9, which is all about the God who restrains in order to redeem.

Now, last week we looked at the long narrative of the flood story and at its real focus on the God who saves through judgment, who recreates through redemption.

Out of judgment and sin and evil, but into a newly cleansed, a newly created world, if you like.

And so even here, right early on in human history, we see a pattern of the way that this God works. But even before you reach the end of the flood story, it's plain that this can't be God's final answer to the sin of man.

Because we read that although God has saved Noah and his family, all eight of them, of course, are still human beings. And that means, as God puts it plainly in chapter 8, verse 21, that the intentions of even their hearts are evil right from youth.

[1 : 13] So, the world has been purged drastically, and yet only outwardly. And the basic problem of man's heart remains.

So, verse 21 there really sounds a rather ominous note, doesn't it? How long before we simply get to the same place all over again? Is human history going to be one simply of repeated judgment and destruction every few generations?

God's stated purpose for humanity is that they should multiply on the earth. But we read that it's precisely when human beings do multiply on the earth that sin multiplies with them and pollutes the whole world, and God must act to punish and destroy.

Of course, God knows all this. And he's already promised, he's covenanted that this world will not remain forever under the power of evil, under the rule of the serpent.

He's promised the seed who would at last crush the serpent forever. And he knows that judgment on human sin, judgment alone, can never mend the world.

[2 : 26] So, somehow there must at last be a final intervention, a reckoning with sin, and a removal of the dark power of sin, and indeed the serpent himself, and the power of sin over the human heart.

And therefore, to give time for God's ultimate plan to come to fruition, that is, both the destruction of sin and evil, and its banishment forever, and also to save the great multitude of men and women and children made in his own image, to give time and occasion for God's ultimate goal, God must preserve the earth until that can take place.

And so, to enable the earth to go on, and for repeated judgment and destruction not to be the pattern, God must preserve the earth. And to do that, he must restrain the evil in man's heart, so that man may multiply and fill the earth, and yet not destroy it, and not destroy himself, utterly in the multiplying of his own sin and selfishness.

God must restrain man, in order, ultimately, to redeem man. And indeed, restrain and retain the earth, in order, ultimately, to recreate it, in glorious perfection, according to his purpose.

And that's what Genesis chapter 9 is all about. It's about the God who restrains, in order to redeem, who retains the world, in order to recreate the world.

[4 : 00] And he declares his purpose, more formally than he has before, by going public, as it were, to establish, says verse 9, to establish his covenant with the whole creation.

And that's what God had said to Noah previously, isn't it? You remember in chapter 6, verse 17, there he established his covenant. He reaffirmed the promise that went right back to Genesis 3, verse 15.

But here he does it again. Notice, it's not a new thing altogether. He's establishing and reaffirming the same promise. And yet, here God is clearly going public, in a new way. He's including the whole creation, in the covenant that he affirms, with all mankind after the flood. Notice in verse 9, I read it, you all, because it's plural, not just Noah. And clearly, this covenant, and its sign, and its significance, is the very heart, of the message of this chapter. Seven times, in verses 8 to 17, we have the word covenant. [5 : 04] Three times, we have the sign, of the covenant. So obviously, that's got to guide our focus, and our approach this morning. And you'll see, that the passage divides, rather neatly, into three sections.

And I want to look at it like that, although not quite in the order, that they come here. Since the covenant itself, is absolutely at the heart, I want to start there, in verses 8 to 17. Reference back, of course, also to chapter 8, verse 20 to 22, which is all of a part.

And each section, that we see here, has a clear theme, and a clear focus. First, verses 8 to 17, are all about, aren't they? The security, of the universe. God's reassurance, to man. Verses 1 to 7, are all about, the sanctity of life, and God's requirement, of man. And then, verses 18 to 29, at the end, are all about, the shape of the future.

God's revelation, of that to man. So first then, look at verses 8 to 17, the security, of the universe. God's covenant, gives reassurance, to man.

[6 : 10] Above all, the covenants, are God's, divine initiative. And through his covenant, God says here, that he himself, takes responsibility, to preserve, the universe.

Look back to chapter 8, verse 21. I, he says, I will never again, curse the ground, because of man. Chapter 9, verse 11. I establish, my covenant with you, that never again, shall all flesh, be cut off, by the waters of the flood, and never again, shall there be a flood, to destroy the earth.

It's a responsibility, that God takes, upon himself, with a solemn oath, a covenant. Covenant is, just that. It's a solemn, oath, bond, a bond, sealed, to the death, sealed in blood.

And Moses readers, know that only too well. Do you remember? Of course, Moses is writing, for his people. They know, that God is a covenant God. They know, that he's a God, who declares his will, and purpose, and will never change it.

They know, that he's king, of all the earth. So just like, the ancient kings, in their day, he makes a solemn covenant, with his people, a bond, as strong as death.

[7 : 25] And when the sovereign, of all the universe, when the creator, of the heavens, and the earth, promises, to preserve the earth, well then, you have security. Now just contrast that, to the extraordinary, insecurity, of the pagan world, both ancient, and modern, for that matter.

It's so striking, when you read, the other accounts, of the flood stories, from Babylonia, and Samaria, the other ancient cultures, of the day. It's the very, very opposite. There's no security. There were many gods, dozens of gods, not just one, so you can never be sure, who was really in control. If anybody at all, was really in control. And their behavior, was so capricious.

If they caused a flood, because, because human beings, were so noisy at night, that they couldn't get to sleep, well what next? Anything could happen. And think of the cultures, of our world today, that are still like that.

In the east, think of the Hindu, pantheon of gods, think of the animistic, cultures of the far east. If you don't keep the gods happy, if you don't placate them, who knows what might happen. But how do you know, if you've ever kept them happy?

[8 : 36] Culture is marked, by insecurity. Or in fact, it's not so different, than our own secular west, is it? It's really a culture, of fear and superstition, that we live in, so often.

What does the future hold? How can we know? Will there be a future? Think of the near hysteria, that's being whipped up, these days, about global warming, and so on. Whatever might be true, in the science of all of that.

But what a contrast here, in the God who gives, by his solemn covenant oath, reassurance to mankind, about the security, of the universe.

I wonder if we grasp that, nearly seriously enough, as Christians today. Look at verse 22, of chapter 8 again. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.

I can still remember, learning that verse by heart, in the Sunday school, in Holyrood, years and years ago. And it's true, this world is in God's hands.

[9 : 39] And it still is. And the entirety, of God's purpose, is complete. Notice, it does say, as long as the earth shall last, while the earth remains, it's clear that this world, will have an end.

But until that day, of God's new creation, we can be secure. We don't need, and we mustn't, live lives, consumed by anxiety.

Even when we are bombarded, with the latest scare stories, of all sorts of things. Because God has promised. That means that no Christian, for example, can become consumed, in their life, with the idea of saving the planet, as though the earth itself, was some kind of mother God, needing our help, to keep it alive.

No, the earth is the Lord, says the Bible, and everything in it. And he has promised, its security, as long as he has a purpose for it. And nothing, but nothing, can change that.

Now, of course, that's not, let me say, a license for irresponsibility, and the rape of the earth, and the exploitation of the earth. Of course not. Not at all. In fact, we'll come on to that, in a minute.

[10 : 53] Because God does, does very clearly, confer responsibility, on human beings. But it does mean, that Christian believers, mustn't live in fear, as pagans do.

As if we alone, held the future of this world, in our hands, to decide its fate. We don't. God does. He holds the world, and he holds it secure.

He's promised. And notice how condescending, the Lord is, to fearful humanity. He doesn't just give a promise, he gives a sign, a bow, in the clouds.

Because we call it a rainbow, don't we? But notice here, it's only called a bow. In fact, in verse 13, it's clear, it's God's bow. And in the Bible, in the Old Testament, that word always just means, a battle bow.

Like a bow and arrows. And there's a strong symbolism there, isn't it? So vivid. God, the warrior judge, who brings the flood on mankind, to destroy it, hangs up his bow.

[11 : 59] He hangs up his weapon, and declares peace. And so, at the very time, think of it, the very time, when reminders, of that awful judgment come, when the rains come, and no doubt, people then, were huddled together, and wondering, well, is this the beginning, of another flood?

At exactly that time, the dark skies would open, and the sun would come out, and the rainbow appear, and remind them, no, God has promised, it will never happen again.

A wonderful reassurance, isn't it? And just notice two things. what is the basis, what is the basis, of this new covenant commitment, of God to his world, of which the rainbow is the sign?

Well, look at verse 21, of chapter 8. It's when God smells, the sweet savour, of the burnt offering, on the altar. We might say, that the blood of the sacrifice, given up, as a fragrant offering, and sacrifice to God, is what turns, the hostility of God, and his wrath, and his righteous anger, at man's sin, away, and causes him, to hang up, his weapon of judgment, in peace.

God's covenant grace, is centred, you see, on sacrifice. And secondly, on seeing the rainbow, whose remembering is it, that gives, great reassurance, of the security, of the future?

[13 : 33] Well, it's not that man, sees and remembers, and therefore, feels reassured, is it?

Although, no, that is the case. No, do you see verse 15? When the bow, is in the clouds, I, will see it, and remember, the covenant, says the Lord.

Our assurance, of God's grace, doesn't come from, our remembering, but from his remembering. God sees, and remembers, and acts in grace, towards his world.

And that's always the way, with God's covenant signs. Our assurance, not, doesn't come from, within ourselves, our assurance, comes from God, and his promise, to remember, his covenant of grace.

Think about, the Passover, later on, in Exodus chapter 12. That would certainly, have been in the minds, of the readers, of this text, at the very beginning, Moses people, because they'd lived, through it. Do you remember, in obedient faith, they dobed the blood, on the doorposts, and God said, when I see the blood, I will pass over.

And this day, ever afterwards, he said, therefore, shall be for you, a memorial day, a remembrance day. You will keep it, as a feast, to the Lord. Where was the reassurance?

[14 : 53] In the blood, on the doors, yes, but not, because of a feeling, inside, of security, that that gave them, rather, because of the assurance, that the Lord's word, was true, and that he, would see the blood, and he, would remember, his promise, to protect his people.

Maybe that's a help, to us, in our understanding, of the great sign, of remembrance, that God has given to us, in the bread, and the cup, that we share, around the Lord's table. People have got into,

terrible knots, over the years, into understanding, what it really means, where the efficacy, of it really lies.

But perhaps, it's a lot more simple, than, we're often led to think. Do this, says Jesus, as a remembrance, of me, because this is, the new covenant, in my blood.

That is, this now, is what all these, other covenants, we're pointing to. And just like, way back, with Noah, God has given us, a visible sign, of his wonderful word, of promise, that reassures us, of his grace.

Not, though, because we remember, and conjure up, some feeling of assurance, within ourselves. No, not at all. But because, God sees, and remembers.

[16:09] He remembers, his unbreakable promise, based on the blood, of sacrifice, and the sweet savor, of its message, to his heart. And that causes him, to avert his wrath, to remember mercy, to all of those, that he's called, through the death, of his son.

And that's why, we are, of course, doing something real, in the Lord's supper. That's why, Paul says, as we do it, we are proclaiming, the Lord's death, until he comes.

But who are we, proclaiming it to? Well, of course, yes, to one another, and to ourselves. But above all, we're proclaiming it, to God. God says, when I see, the bow in the clouds, I will remember, my everlasting covenant.

God says to us, when I see, the bread and the wine, I will remember, the everlasting covenant, sealed in the blood, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's why, we gain, such assurance, through coming, to the Lord's table.

It's not through any magic, or any mystery, but it's through, the certain knowledge, that when we proclaim, afresh, the Lord's death, like that, God sees, and remembers, his grace and mercy.

[17:24] He remembers, his promise, to preserve us, to the very end. And he must remember, because it's a covenant. It's a bond, sealed in blood, his own blood.

It's unbreakable, forever. Because of the sweet savor, of the offering, and the sacrifice, of our Lord Jesus Christ. So next time, we gather around the table, remember, it doesn't depend upon you, or on your own feelings, of worthiness, or unworthiness.

It depends upon God. You're proclaiming to him, a covenant promise, that he must remember, and he will remember, forever, because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's covenant signs, says Alec Mateer, declare God's covenant promises, to God's covenant people. When the bow is seen, says the Lord, I will remember my covenant.

And God gives, reassurance, to man, in his covenant. It's his responsibility, it's his promise, to preserve, the universe, to its end.

[18:37] Well, there's a lot more, we could say about that, but we must move on, because there is another side, of God's covenant, always, there's a manward side. It's also very important, that we don't miss that, especially here, because sometimes you hear it said, that the covenant, that God makes with Noah, is unilateral, or unconditional.

I think that's very unhelpful, language to use really, because the very nature, of covenant, is that it's about relationship. And our relationship, implies always, communication, and responsibilities, both ways.

There's a sense, of course, in which all of God's promises, are unilateral. He is the sovereign God, he declares these promises, at his pleasure. He's the Lord of the universe. And yet, all God's covenant promises, also lay demands, and obligations, upon human beings.

And that's very, very clear here, in verses 1 to 7. So let's look at these verses, that are all about, the sanctity of life. You see, God's covenant, clearly makes, a requirement, of man.

God's covenant, is a divine initiative, but it demands, a human response. And through this covenant, man, is made responsible, to preserve, human life.

[19:57] Clearly, the theme of, the sanctity, the preciousness, of life, unites all of these verses. Life in general, but above all, and in a very unique way, human life, in the image of God.

Now, there are three emphases, on life, here in these verses. All about life, and its preservation.

First, if you see verses 1, and verse 7, they bracket, the whole section, and they speak about, the responsibility of man, for the propagation, of human life.

Be fruitful, and multiply on the earth, says verse 1, and verse 7. It's a direct repeat, isn't it, of Genesis chapter 1. It's a new beginning. And God has the same goal, to have the earth, filled, with people, in his image.

Now again, it's just worth noting, at this point, the contrast there, to paganism. In the pagan flood stories, the gods hate, human beings. They don't want them, to multiply. They want to reduce, humanity, and therefore, after the flood, they curse, human beings, with sterility, and barrenness, and so on.

It's interesting, actually, isn't it, how pagan culture, has changed so little. Birth, is so often, seen by pagan cultures, not as a blessing, but as a curse, isn't it?

[21 : 10] Especially if it's, the wrong sex. So we hear, these dreadful things, especially in the Indian, subcontinent, in China, about, prenatal diagnosis, of the sex of babies, and aborting them, if they're girls.

We hear about, the one child policy, in China, and so on. That's reflected, in our own, pagan culture too, isn't it? Where abortion, is demanded, to be easier, and easier.

Where we talk about, pregnancy, as a problem, as a burden, as a curse, and not as a blessing, and a gift. Pagan culture, is still pretty unchanged. But the Bible's culture, is so different, because God loves, human beings.

He loves, the bustling crowds, out in Buchanan Street, today, even though, of course, it grieves him, that they're worshipping mammon, instead of worshipping his son, the Lord Jesus. We need to think about that, in our views about all sorts of things, procreation, and so on.

So God tells man, he is to cherish, and to propagate life, be fruitful, and multiply. Second, he gives man, the responsibility, to provide, for human life, verses two and three, tell us that God, gives the resources, of the earth, for food.

[22 : 27] And the implication, is that man, is to be responsible, and make use of these, in order to provide, for the lives, of human beings, and so fulfill, God's command, for the earth. Now, it's often said, that it's only at this point, that man, is able to graduate, from being vegetarian, and that, eating meat, therefore, is just a concession, to human sin, and therefore, vegetarianism, would be morally, superior.

I'm afraid, that doesn't really wash, because, if we look at the text here, look at verse three, where it says, every moving thing, is given, for food.

That isn't actually, a word, that implies, all creatures. It's not a general word, actually, it's a specific word, for one class of creatures. It's the very same expression, used in verse two.

Notice there, that we have the phrase, everything that creeps, on the ground. Now, that's exactly, the same word, that's translated, everything that moves, in verse three. And clearly, there, it's just one of the classes, of the animals.

It's distinct, from these other ones. Seems likely, that it refers to, wild animals, that travel in herds, things like deer, and antelope, and buffalo, and that kind of thing.

[23 : 40] And that now, God is granting, those also, as food for man. Probably, in addition, to domestic animals, and so on, that were, already used as food. Remember, way back, Abel, offered a sacrifice, of one of his animals, and brought the fat portions, to God.

And, very probably, ate the meat himself, as would be normally, understood, by Moses readers, of what you do, with meat from a sacrifice. But, whatever the case, here, God clearly gives, animal life, to man, for food.

So, God doesn't command, vegetarianism. Nor, by the way, should we assume, that in the new creation, vegetarianism, will be the norm. The only one thing, that we know, the risen Jesus did eat, was fish, not just chips.

But, on the other hand, notice verse 4. There is, to be respect, says God, even, for the life of animals, that are killed, for food.

That's what, this regulation, about not eating, the blood is about. It's to instill, a respect for life. It's to, protect against, wanton abuse. And, as one scholar says, having meat, and human diet, is not a license, for savagery.

[24 : 55] That's the point here. And, that is something, we need to take seriously, isn't it? It's possible, to flight that, requirement of God, and it's been done, pervasively, hasn't it?

With all sorts, of real cruelty, and disrespect, for God's creatures, God's creatures, who give their lives, that we might eat them, and have our lives. Think about, veal crates, and some of the, awful things, of factory farming, and so on.

So, we shouldn't be, unconcerned, for good farming, and good husbandry. And, there are some people, who may feel, so strongly, about things like that, that they feel, their conscience, would be

defiled, by association, and they want to be, vegetarians, and not eat meat. And that's well, and good. And fair enough. Although, of course, a Christian, who feels that way, will always, be guided, by the priorities, of scripture.

They'll never be, able to become, fanatical, to elevate animals, and animal life, above human life, and so on, as some have done. Because clearly, as we see here, it is human life, above all, that is to be revered.

[26 : 04] And that brings us, to verse five, and six. When the responsibility, is given by God, to man, for protection, of human life. It's not just, that God's, covenant, to preserve the earth, requires man, to respect all life, animals included.

But he's to protect, human life, to the extent, that he must, require, a reckoning, for all human blood, that is shed. Now notice, it's not optional, is it?

It's not a recommendation, by God. It's a requirement, of man. It's integral, to his covenant, of preservation. Look at verse five. And for your life blood, I will require, a reckoning.

From every beast, I will require it. And from man, from his fellow man, I will require, a reckoning, for the life of a man. Now you see, God knows, that the flood, has not solved, the problem of, sin and evil, in the human heart.

He knows, it was a temporary measure. And as Henri Blashe, he puts it, these verses, signify the presence, of tensions, and hostility, and of, a new atmosphere, on a global scale.

[27 : 21] An atmosphere, of violence, and hatred, and murder. And that is the world, as we know it, isn't it? And God, will preserve, the world, only through, restraining, that evil.

And he does so, through his common grace, to the world, by, the initiation, of public justice, and rule, and order, and government. And an integral part, of that, is justice, that is truly just.

And it's based, squarely, upon retribution, deserved punishment, for transgression. Not just on deterrence, not on rehabilitation, not on convenience, or anything else, but on justice.

And it's something, that God requires, and demands, of human society. It's a responsibility, that he gives, to man. Look at verse 6.

Whoever sheds, the blood of man, by man, his blood, shall be shed. For God made man, in his own image. You see, murder, defilement, of the image, of God, in man, must be punished, by judicial, execution.

[28 : 36] And the reason, is because of the, preciousness, the sanctity, of life, in the image of God. Human life, is precious, even sinful human life. And so, God says, that he requires, of all human societies, to protect, the sanctity, of human life, and to preserve life, by being ready, when violation occurs, to punish it, by the proper, retribution.

Which God says, is for the murderer's life, to be forfeit. Now, we don't have time, today, to go into all the details, of what that means, in terms of implications, for capital punishment, in society today.

But it does seem to me, that the biblical principle, is entirely clear. It's consistent, it's irrefutable. God requires, the protection, of human life, and a reckoning, of life, for life.

And it's not just, something that belongs, to the passing age, of Israel. No, it's part here, of his covenant, of preservation, with the whole earth, as long as the earth, shall last.

And of course, in the New Testament, Paul clearly affirms, the role of the state, Romans 13, which he says, bears the sword, of punishment, not in vain.

[29 : 57] So I don't think, that any Christian, who takes the Bible seriously, can really argue, against capital punishment, on moral grounds, or on principle. After all, God himself, ultimately, inflicts capital punishment, in every single, living human being, because of his sin.

Every one of us, will die. The only argument, you can have, against capital punishment, for murder, and remember, it is just murder, that we're talking about here, nothing else.

The only argument, you can have, is that because of, society's fallibility, and corruption, in the judicial process, and so on, that the possibility, of false convictions, so outweighs, the claims of justice, that we're actually, incapable, of carrying out, the death penalty, safely.

Now you can argue that. Of course, you've also got, to recognize, that that same, human fallibility, was in existence, when God first, gave the command, but you can argue that. And you must make up, your own mind about that.

But let me just say this, on the one hand, there are Christians, who think that, restoring the death penalty, is all that we need, to transform our society, and they're obsessed with it, as though it was going to, bring back revival.

[31 : 11] Well that's just simply, naive and foolish. I was rather disappointed, that the Christian party, standing at the last election, made one of the cardinal features, the return of the death penalty. Politics is the art of the possible.

But on the other hand, there are those, that are so anti, the death penalty, that in fact, they're really lining themselves, up against God himself. They're really accusing God, of immorality, and injustice. And that really is, blasphemous. And they need to remember, that our salvation was won, and our reassurance, for eternal life, and our rescue, from real spiritual death, under the curse, came only because, that just penalty of God, was inflicted.

Born by himself, in the person of his son. Not because that penalty, was abolished. Well, there's a lot to think about there.

But finally, on this point, it is just worth reflecting, isn't it? See, if God's, covenant, covenant of preservation, for the world, and therefore, for all societies, requires, that we honor, and respect, and revere, and protect, all life, and above all, human life, and yet, our society, and our nation, increasingly, exhibits, disdain for life, the unborn, the aged, the malformed, and if it refuses, to protect life, by appeasing, and not punishing, those who violate life, well, it shouldn't surprise us, should it, if such societies, find themselves, under judgment, under God's curse.

[32 : 59] See, God's covenant with Noah, was a promise, to preserve the earth, but it doesn't say, that there will never, ever, be any judgments, of God in history. In fact, if you read history, you will see, that where the requirements, of God's gracious covenant, of preservation, have been scorned, in societies, in nations, in empires, then God ultimately, has, lifted his hand, of restraint, and they have, brought self-destruction, upon themselves.

And so I would think, that our western world, with all its arrogance, and scorn, for human life, needs to be, very severely warned, don't you think? God's covenant, reassures man, about the security, of the universe, but it also requires, from man, the protection, of the sanctity, of life, under God.

And we must take, that seriously, in every society, as well as our own. But we must look, briefly, as we close at the last section, at verses 18, to 29, which are all about, another thing, that God's covenants, always deal with, and that's the shape, of the future, in terms of blessing, and curse. You see, God's covenant, gives revelation, to man. It's through his covenant, that God is going, to undo, man's hatred, of his fellow man, and of God, and to restore, to harmony, and peace, earth's scattered peoples.

And that's what, these verses are all about. So don't get bogged down, on the details, and the side issues. What these verses, point up to us, is that the world, is not, going to be rid, of the real problem, of sin, until God's promise, comes at last, the final fulfillment, in dealing, with sin and evil.

[34 : 50] And so, God's people, until then, will always, have a real struggle, with sin, both within, and without. Struggles, with their own sin, as they battle, against the world, and the flesh, and the devil.

And struggling, between the seeds, those who are, of the faith, and those who are, not of the faith, who are really, ultimately, of the seed, of the serpent. And that's just, what we see here.

First of all, there's Noah's own, frail, human, sinfulness. Remember, his name, means, bring comfort. And so, Noah, makes, wine.

Wine that the Bible, rejoices in, to gladden the heart of man. But of course, like all good gifts, we can abuse them, and Noah goes too far, and makes a fool of himself. And of course, we're to see, that even great men, are flawed.

And we're to be warned, ourselves. But the focus, of the story, of course, is not, on Noah's behavior, but on the behavior, of his sons. And his sons, we're told, display, radically different attitudes, to their father, to this man, who is, remember, a mighty man of faith.

[35 : 58] To this man, who is, in a very real way, their savior. And in fact, the savior of the whole world. So, Shem and Japheth, we're told, revere, and respect him.

And they give him dignity, even in his weakness. But Ham, well, he betrays a very different spirit. He gloats, pruriently, at his father.

And then he publicly, shames him, by telling all about it. Very ugly thing, isn't it? To gloat, over other people's, sin and failures, and weakness. Even worse, isn't it?

To gossip about it, to other people. And we should be warned, by a passage like this, God doesn't like that. Takes it very seriously. And you see, the log, in Ham's eye, is far, far greater, than the speck, that's in Noah's eye.

And he shows his true heart. He despises Noah. And in doing that, he devalues, and despises God, and God's great covenant promise. And that's why, he's met with curse.

[37 : 04] It may seem rather unfair, to Canaan, that he should be cursed, for his father's sin. And actually, that's just simple reality, isn't it? What we are, and what we do, of course, affects our children, and theirs.

Newspapers have just been full of that, this week, haven't they? Saying that what really matters in life, is what your parents did. That gives you the start, or the hindrance. Well, of course. But you see, in fact, the blessings and the curses, in verses 25 to 28 here, all concern the future.

And about the descendants, of those that verse 19 tells us, become dispersed, all over the earth. And remember, you see, Moses is writing for his people, and he's telling his people, where the enemies of God, and God's people, came from, and why they're there.

That's why Canaan's name, is so prominent here, five times in these verses. It all goes a way back, says Moses. These, these constant enemies, that you have today, in Canaan, and the Canaanite people, it's not something new.

These Canaanites, that you know, that God has ordered you, to stay apart from, and be, separate from, because of their, abominable practices, their idolatry, their sexual perversions, they've been enemies, right from the start.

[38 : 25] Read Leviticus, chapter 18, later on, to see what they were like. But you see, he's telling them, this is where they came from. And that's what, the New Testament tells us, is still so.

There's always been, two seeds, those of faith, and those of the flesh, ultimately of the serpent. And what Paul says, in Galatians 4, 29, those of the flesh, way back then, in the days of Isaac, and Ishmael, those of the flesh, persecuted, those of the spirit, and so it is now, says Paul.

And as long, as God preserves, this world, there will be, those of the enemy, who sorely try, and persecute, the people of faith. There'll be wheat, amid the tares, right until the end, said Jesus, remember?

But take heart. That's what Moses is saying. God knows who are his, and he'll bless them. Shem, verse 26, is blessed, by his God. And Canaan, his enemy, will ultimately, be crushed, under his feet, a servant of servants.

God's promise, is to curse, finally, those who, insistently, persecute, as enemies, the people of his promise. And that's a huge comfort, to God's people, isn't it?

[39 : 43] That's a huge comfort, today, to Christian people, who are persecuted, and who are beleaguered, and who are crying out, for justice, all around the world, in many, many places.

And so, is the promise, that the root, of that evil, the devil himself, who so plagues us still, he also, at last, will be destroyed forever.

Do you remember, Paul says in Romans 16, the God of peace, will soon crush Satan, under your feet. That's the promise, that's right back here, in Genesis chapter 9, God's enemies, God's people's enemies, will be subdued.

His promise, is certain. But just as we close, look also, at the blessings, as well as the curse. God will bless, his people. The line of Shem, will continue, the promised seed, through the Shemites, from whom Israel, the nation, will come.

[40 : 43] In contrast, to Canaan, the implacable foes, of Israel. And that's the story, isn't it? That plays out, through the rest, of the whole, of the Old Testament. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and let Canaan, be their servant.

But what of Japheth, in verse 27, and his seed? What of this, enlarging of his tents, in blessing, that he should come, and dwell also, in the tents of Shem, together with them, and be, triumphant victors, over evil, over all God's enemies, so that the Canaanites, God's enemies, will serve them also.

What's that all about? Well, when we get to chapter 10, we'll find, that the Japhethites, became the peoples, of the Mediterranean Sea. Peoples, around the coast, of Turkey, and Greece.

Eventually, around to Italy, and Rome. In other words, when we come, to the New Testament, the people, of the whole Gentile world, the world of Jesus, of the Paul, and the Apostles.

It's the world, that we read of, in the Acts of the Apostles, where Jewish, Christian, and Apostles, descendants of Shem, went everywhere, preaching, that at last, the promised seed, the Messiah of Israel, had come.

[41 : 59] And as they did so, they were amazed, to see, that the promised spirit, was poured out, even, on the Gentiles. And that the Gentiles, also, God had granted, repentance, unto life.

And that's the mystery, isn't it, of the unsearchable wisdom, of God. That even though, Israel, in the main, rejected the message, of the Christ, when he came.

Yet, into, that olive tree, says Paul, in Romans 11, God has grafted, in a wild olive shoot, the Gentile world, to share, in the nourishing root, of richness, of the olive tree, of God's covenant people, the descendants of Shem.

He has at last, enlarged, the tents of Japheth, and let them dwell, in the tents of Shem, as the victorious people, of the covenant God. The God who restrained, the sin and evil, of man in this world, so as ultimately, to step in at last, to redeem, to bring, Shemite, and Japhethite, Jew and Gentile, together, into one household, the household of God.

And as one writer, has said, we are all, all of us here, probably this morning, we are all, Japhethites, living in the tents of Shem. You see, that's what Christmas, is all about.

[43 : 26] Remember old Simeon, in the temple, when he greeted, the infant Jesus? That's what he saw. My eyes, he said, have seen your salvation.

A light, a light for revelation, to the Gentiles, the Japhethites, and a glory, for your people Israel, the tents of Shem. Friends, as we celebrate Christmas, aren't you glad, that we have a God, who right from the beginning, so long ago, restrained the world, by his covenant of preservation, in order to redeem it.

And who will do so, until the fullness, of the Gentiles, the Japhethites, have come in, so that in this way, all his Israel, will be saved.

Aren't you glad, that you serve, a covenant God? Well, I certainly am, and I hope you are too. Let's pray together. We thank you, O God, of the covenant, for the marvels, of the mystery, of your great plan, of redemption.

Help us, we pray, to rejoice in it now, as we know it, so wonderfully, through Jesus Christ, whose birth, we celebrate at Christmas. Thank you.

[44 : 50] Bless you, from the Aesthous minister, we pray, for the creators. Thank you. Thank you. Cheers, and please be by the gracefulasnae.

Thank you, and the love. If he had the power of the love, you could pray for YouTube, of Chi already■■■,