

The God who restrains in order to redeem

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[0 : 00] Good. Well, let's turn to our reading this morning, and we are in Genesis. If you have a Bible with you, if you don't have a Bible, we have Bibles available. In the sides, at the back, do please take a church Bible if you need to use one.

And we are in Genesis chapter 8, and we're reading there from verse 20 through to chapter 9. So Genesis 8 and verse 20.

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took some of every clean animal, and some of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.

Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.

[1 : 13] And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea.

Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.

But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. And for your lifeblood 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 man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in his own image.

And you, be fruitful and multiply. Teem on the earth and multiply in it. Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you.

[2 : 30] And with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark, it is for every beast of the earth. 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. And God said, This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you for all future generations.

I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh.

And the water shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.

God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth. The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth.

[3 : 58] Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed. Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.

He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.

Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward, and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.

When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, Cursed be Canaan. A servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.

He also said, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.

[5 : 11] After the flood, Noah lived 350 years. All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

Amen. May God bless his word to us this morning. Well, let's turn to Genesis chapter 9.

And as we're doing that, just let me say that it was 10 years ago, this Sunday morning, that our congregation had its last service in our former building in Bath Street.

And we met again in Buchanan Street, rather. We met again in the evening in Bath Street. And God has been good and faithful to us, hasn't he?

Ever since then, we've never looked back, and we've lacked for nothing. The God who restrains to redeem. Even before the end of the flood story, we can see that this can't be God's final answer to human sin.

[6 : 20] Look at chapter 8, verse 21. The company who were saved through that judgment are still flawed people, with hearts evil from their youth.

So the world has been purged drastically, and yet only outwardly. And the problem of the human heart remains, and so evil remains. So how long before such judgment has to happen again?

God restates his purpose for the world in chapter 9, verse 1, that humanity multiplies and fills the earth.

But of course, as they do that, they multiply their sin and their evil to pollute the world. Which is why God has just had to punish so drastically. But God knows that judgment on human sin alone can never mend the world.

He's already promised. A final great reckoning to remove the dark power of sin that it has over mankind forever, through the promised seed, who will come to crush the serpent forever.

[7 : 28] He will both destroy sin and evil forever, but also save a great multitude of people who are made in his image forever. And so to give time and occasion for this ultimate goal, God must preserve the earth.

And to do that, he must restrain evil in the human heart, so that mankind can multiply and fill the earth, and yet not destroy it and not destroy themselves, by the multiplying of their evil.

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

And Genesis 9 shows us the God who restrains to redeem and who retains in order to recreate.

And he declares his purpose here. He goes public, as it were, for the first time in chapter 9, verse 9. He establishes his covenant with the whole earth.

[8 : 36] Now he's reaffirming the same promise that he gave to Noah personally, back in chapter 6, verse 18, and which goes right back to chapter 3, verse 15. But here it's made public in a new way, affirming that God's covenant includes the whole of creation, including all mankind after the flood.

The U in verse 9 there is plural. And it extends to all of their offspring. Now that was very important for Moses' first hearers to hear. The Israelites, the people of the covenant.

Very important for them to know that God's covenant's concern is not just confined to Israel alone. Never was. And clearly this covenant, and indeed the sign of the covenant and its significance, is at the very heart of the message here.

In verses 8 to 17, the word covenant comes seven times. Three times we hear of the covenant sign. That clearly is the focus. So our passage divides really into three sections.

I want to look at it like that, but not in the order they come, because since the covenant is at the very heart, I want to start there, verses 8 to 17, which pick up on the very end of chapter 8.

[9 : 51] And the great concern here in these verses is the security of the universe. God's covenant gives reassurance to mankind. And above all the covenants, they are God's divine initiative.

Through his covenant, God himself takes responsibility to preserve this universe. Verse 11. I establish my covenant with you, you all, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood.

Never again shall be a flood to destroy the earth. It's a responsibility God takes on himself with a solemn oath. That's what a covenant is, a solemn oath, sealed in blood.

God. And Moses' readers knew that God is the covenant God, the God who declares his will, his purpose, and will never change it. And they know that he's king over the whole wide world.

And so, just like ancient kings in their day, he made covenants with his people in a bond as strong as death. And when the sovereign Lord of all the universe, the creator of heaven and the earth, when he promises to preserve the earth, you really do have security.

[11 : 11] Now, just contrast that with all the insecurity in the pagan world, both ancient and modern. It's very striking in the accounts of the flood stories from Babylon and Sumeria and so on.

You get the very opposite of security. There are all sorts of gods, not just one god, so you could never quite be sure what they would do next. You're never quite sure who's in control. And their behaviors were so capricious.

It will cause a flood because, well, human beings are too noisy at night and interrupt their sleep. Well, goodness, anything could happen. What's next? There are many cultures around the world still very much like that today.

In the East, for example, where people worship the pantheon of Hindu gods. Or in the animistic cultures of East Asia. Where if you don't keep the gods happy, you don't keep the ancestors placated.

Who knows what may happen? Great anxiety. And indeed, in our secular Western world today. We live in a culture, don't we?

[12 : 13] A fear of anxiety. What does the future hold? How can we know? Will there even be a future? Are we all going to be extinct? Think of all the hysteria that's around us today. With all this stuff about the so-called climate emergency.

What a total contrast we have here. In a God who gives by his solemn covenant oath. Reassurance to all mankind about the security of the universe.

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

I still remember learning that by heart in my Sunday school class. And it's true. This world is in God's hands. And it shall be until the entirety of his purpose is complete.

Notice he says, as long as the earth shall last. So clearly this world will have an end. But until that day of final new creation, we can be absolutely secure.

[13 : 25] We don't need to be consumed by anxiety. Even when we're bombarded all the time with the latest scare stories. Whatever they are. Rising sea levels and melting ice caps.

Most of which is false anyway. Because God has promised. And no Christian should become so consumed with saving the planet.

As though the earth was some kind of mother God that needs our help to keep it alive. No, the earth is the Lord's. And every single thing that is in it.

And he has promised its security as long as he has a purpose for it. Nothing can possibly change that.

Now don't misunderstand. Of course, that's not a license for irresponsibility. For the rape of the earth. For exploitation of its life. Not at all. We'll come on to that.

[14 : 22] God gives very clear responsibilities to human beings also. But it does mean that Christian believers cannot live in fear like godless pagans do.

As if we alone somehow held the future of the world in our hands. No. We don't. God does. And he holds it absolutely secure.

Note how condescending God is to fearful humanity. He doesn't just give a promise. He gives a sign also. Verse 13. The bow in the clouds. We call it a rainbow.

But notice the text in verse 13 just calls it a bow. It's God's bow. And that word in the scriptures always means a battle bow. And the symbolism is very vivid. God, the warrior judge.

Who sends floods to destroy mankind. Now has hung up his bow. He hangs up his weapon. And he declares peace. And so at the very time when awful reminders of that judgment come.

[15 : 30] When the rains come. And no doubt certainly at first people huddled together and wondered. Is that the beginning of another flood? No. At that exact time. The dark skies would open and the rainbow appear.

And remind mankind that no. God has promised never again. What a wonderful reassurance. And just notice two things.

First. What's the basis of this new covenant commitment of God to the world? To which the bow is given as a sign.

We'll look at chapter 8 verse 21. It's when the Lord smells the sweet savor of the burnt offerings on the altar. That he gives this.

We might say the blood of the sacrifice. Given up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Is what turns aside the hostility of God. His wrath.

- [16 : 30] His righteous anger at man's sin. It's the blood of the sacrifice. That causes God to hang up his weapon of judgment. In peace. God's covenant grace towards humankind.
Is centered. On sacrifice. And secondly. On seeing the rainbow. Whose remembering is it. That gives this reassurance of the security of the future. Well it's not that man sees and remembers. Is it? And feels reassured. Although no doubt that was true.
Look at verse 15. I will remember. Says God. Verse 16. When the bow is in the clouds. I will see it. And remember. The everlasting covenant. That's the Lord himself saying that. The assurance of God's grace. Doesn't come from our remembering. But from his remembering. God sees. And God remembers. And God acts. In mercy.
- [17 : 35] Towards his world. And that's always the way. With God's covenant signs. And seals. That he gives to his people. Our assurance doesn't come from within ourselves.
It comes from God. And from his promise. To remember his covenant of grace. Think of the Passover. In Exodus chapter 12. Very certainly.
In the minds of Moses first readers. Because they've been through it. What do they do? Well in obedient faith. They dobed blood on their doorposts. And on their lintels. And God said. When I see the blood.
I will pass over you. And therefore this day. Will be a memorial for you. A remembrance day. To keep as a feast to the Lord. Where was the reassurance?
Well in the blood. On the doors. Yes. But not because of a feeling inside. That that gave the people. But rather an objective assurance.
- [18 : 31] That God's words were true. And that he would see the blood. And remember his promise. And protect them from death. And that should help us.
Shouldn't it? In our great sign of remembrance. In the bread and the cup. That we share at the Lord's table. People over the years. Have got into terrible notes. About what all that really means. Where the efficacy.
Really lies. In all of that. But it's much more simple. Than we often realize. Do this. As a remembrance. Of me. He said Jesus. Because. This. Is the new covenant.
In my blood. That is. He's saying. This now. Is what all the other covenants. Pointed to. And signified. But just like. Way back with Noah.
God has given us. A visible sign. Of this wonderful word. Of promise. To reassure us. Not. Because. Not because we remember. And we conjure up. Feelings of assurance.
- [19 : 24] Within ourselves. Not at all. But because God says. He sees. And he remembers. He remembers. His unbreakable promise. Based. On the blood of sacrifice.
And the sweet savor. Of that message. To his heart. That caused him. To avert his wrath. To remember. Mercy. Upon those. That he has granted.
Mercy. Through the death. Of his son. That's what we really are. Doing something real. When we gather around. The Lord's table. Paul says. We proclaim. His death.
Until he comes. And of course. Yes. We proclaim it. To one another. But above all. We're proclaiming it. To God. And God says. When I see. The bow in the cloud. I will remember. My everlasting covenant. covenant. And in just the same way. He says to us. When I see. The bread and the wine. I will remember. The everlasting covenant. Sealed in the blood.
- [20 : 21] Of my son. Jesus Christ. And that's why we gain. Such assurance. When we come. To the Lord's table. It's not through magic. It's not through mystery.
But it's through. A certain knowledge. That we proclaim. Afresh. What the Lord. Has done for us. And when we do that. God says. I see. And I remember.

My grace. And my mercy. My promise. To you. Is sure. Right until the very end. God must remember. Because. It is a covenant.

It's a bond. Sealed in blood. It is unbreakable. Forever. Because of the sweet sacrifice. Of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Alec Mateer. Says. God's covenant signs. Declare covenant promises. To covenant people. When the bow is seen.

[21 : 20] I will. Remember. My covenant. The God's covenant. Gives. Reassurance. To mankind. It's his.

Responsibility. It's his. Promise. To preserve. The universe. And all in it. Now we can say more about that. But we must move on. Because there is another side.

To God's. Covenant. Always. There is a manward side. And that's also very important. We mustn't miss that. Especially here. Because. Sometimes. You may hear it said.

That God's covenant with Noah. Is unilateral. That it's unconditional. But that's very unhelpful language to use. I think. Because. The very nature.

Of a covenant. Is. That it's about relationship. And a relationship. Implies. Communication. And responsibility. Both ways. There's a sense in which.

[22 : 15] All God's. Promises. A unilateral. In that he. Sovereignly. Makes. A promise. As the Lord of the universe. And he does so freely. He does as he pleases. And yet. All.

God's promises. Also. Lay demands. And obligations. Upon human beings. And we can see that. Very clearly here. In verses one to seven. The focus here.

In these verses. Is very much. On the sanctity. Of life. God's covenant. Clearly. Makes a requirement. Of mankind. God's covenant.

Is a divine initiative. But yes. Always. It demands. A human response. And through this covenant. Man. Is made responsible. To preserve.

Human life. Life. And clearly. The theme of. Of the sanctity of life. The preciousness of life. Especially. Of human life.

[23 : 11] Is what unites. These verses. And there are three emphases. All of them. About life. And its preservation. First of all. Look at verses one and seven. Which bracket.

This section. They speak of the responsibility. Of man. For the propagation. Of human life. Be fruitful. Multiply. Fill the earth. Verses one and verse seven.

Directly repeating. Genesis one. Because. This is a new beginning. But God has the same goal. He wants an earth. Filled. With people. In his own image. Again.

It's worth noting. The strong. Contrast. To paganism. In pagan flood stories. The gods. Hate human beings. They don't want them.

To multiply. They want to reduce. The numbers of humanity. And so after the flood. The gods are cursing. The human population. That's left with sterility. It's interesting.

[24 : 07] Isn't it? How pagan cultures. Still have that view. Of human life. A very low view. Very often. It's not seen as a blessing. But it's seen as a curse. Especially if it's the wrong sex.

So in some countries. Mass abortion. Of female. Children. Is very common. Because. They want a boy. Not a girl. I think about our own culture.

Where abortion is becoming easier. And easier. For pregnancy. So often. Is talked about. As a burden. As a curse. Not as a blessing. Not as a gift. See.

Godless culture. Has still remained. More or less unchanged. But biblical culture. Is so different. Because God. Loves people. Human beings. Means to think about that.

In our whole attitude. To life. And to procreation. God tells human beings. They are to cherish propagation. To be fruitful. To multiply. The true God.

[25 : 06] Is for population. Not for depopulation. Secondly. Man has responsibility. To provide. For human life. In verses 2 and 3.

God clearly gives. All the resources. Of the earth. Into man's hands. For food. And the implication. Is that he is making. Human beings. Responsible. For the use of these resources. To provide.

For the lives. Of human beings. And so. To fulfill. God's command. To fill the earth. Look at verse 2. That phrase. Everything that creeps.

Upon the ground. It's exactly the same word. That's translated. In verse 3. As every moving thing. He's referring here. To one class of animals.

Probably. Wild animals. Herds. Like deer. And antelope. And buffalo. And so on. And now God is. Granting all of these. As well. As food for man. In addition. To the domestic livestock.

[26 : 01] And so on. That were likely. Already used. For food. That distinction. It goes all the way back there. To chapter 1. Verse 24. But God clearly. Is giving animal life.

For food. Don't be confused. God is not commanding. Vegetarianism. No. By the way. Should we assume. That. The new creation.

Will be a vegetarian kingdom. Every prophetic vision. Of the future. Talks of feasting. On meats. And the finest wines. We know that the Lord Jesus. The risen Lord Jesus. Didn't just eat chips.

He ate the fish too. But notice verse 4. There's to be respect. Do you see? Even. For the life of animals.

That are killed for food. And this regulation. About eating the blood. Is there to instill respect. For life. It's there to protect. Against wanton abuse.

[26 : 55] Even of animal life. One scholar says. That having meat. In the human diet. Is not a license. For savagery. So we shouldn't be unconcerned.

About. Good farming. And good husbandry. And so on. The Bible makes that very clear. Proverbs chapter 12. Says the righteous. Has regard. For the life of his beast.

But clearly. As we see here. It's not principally. Animal life. But it is human life. Above all. That is to be revered. Look at verses 5 and 6.

They speak about the responsibility. That God gives man. For protection. Of human life. It's not just that. God's. Covenant.

A covenant. To preserve the earth. Requires that we must respect. All life. Animals included. There is that. But he's to respect. Human life. To the extent. That he must require.

[27 : 51] A reckoning. For all human blood. That is shed. And notice. It's not optional. This is not a recommendation. It's God's requirement.

Of man. It's integral. To his covenant. Of preservation. Verse 5. For your life. Flood. 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 man. See. God knows. That. The flood.

Does not solve. The problem. Of human. Sin. And evil. It was a temporary measure. It was a partial measure. And as Henri Bloesch puts it. These verses signify.

The presence of tensions. And hostility. Of a new atmosphere. On a global scale. And it's an atmosphere. Of violence. And of hatred.

- [28 : 46] And of murder. That's the world we know. Isn't it? That's the real world. And God will preserve the world. Only through restraining. Its evil. And he does so. In his common grace. To the world. By the initiation. Of public justice. Of rule. And order. And government. And the principal requirement. Of that. Is justice. That is just. That is. It's based squarely. On. On retribution. It's not just about deterrence. Or rehabilitation. Or convenience. Or anything else. This is something God requires. God demands. Of human society. It's a responsibility. He places. On mankind. Verse 6. Whoever sheds the blood of man. By man. His blood. Be shed.
- [29 : 40] For God made man. In his own image. God is saying. That murder. Must be punished. By judicial. Execution. And the reason is. Because of the precious. Sanctity. Of human life. Created in the image. Of God himself. Human life is precious. Even sinful human life. Is precious. And so God requires it. Of all human societies. To protect. The sanctity. Of human life. And to preserve. That life. By being ready. If violation occurs. To punish. By the proper. Retribution. Which. He says here. For murder. Is for the murderer's life. To be forfeit. I don't have time this morning. To go into detail. About. The implications of that. For the issue of capital punishment. For example.
- [30 : 33] In societies today. But it seems to me. That whatever we say. The biblical principle here. Is entirely clear. It's totally consistent. It's irrefutable. God requires. Protection of human life. He requires a reckoning. Of a life. For a life. This isn't something. Just for the passing age. Of Israel. It's part of God's covenant. Of preservation. As long as the earth. Shall last. And the New Testament. Clearly affirms. The role of. The state. Which Paul the apostle says. Bears the sword of judgment. As God's institution. So no Christian. Who takes the Bible seriously. Can really argue against. Capital punishment. On moral grounds. As a principle. As a principle. After all. God himself. Inflicts capital punishment.
- [31 : 28] On every single person. On this earth. Because of our sin. Every one of us. Will die. Under God's wrath. For sin. The only argument. You can have against. Capital punishment. For murder. And it's murder. That's being talked about here. The only argument is. That because of. Society's fallibility. And for. The corruption. In the judicial process. And so on. That the possibility of. False. Conviction. So outweighs. The claim of justice. That. We're no longer capable. Of carrying this. Penalty out safely. You can't argue that. Deuteronomy chapter 19. For example. Tells us that God abhors. Wrongful conviction. Just as he abhors. Abhors a failure. To punish correctly. So you can't argue that.
- [32 : 22] Of course. On the other hand. You've also got to take into account. That the same. Human fallibility. Was in evidence. When God first gave this command. You have to think about. These things carefully. Let me say this. Two things. On the one hand. There are Christians. Who think that. Restoring the death penalty. To society. Is. The thing.

That will transform. Our society. And they're quite obsessed with that. As though that was the only thing. That mattered. Well. I think that is naive. Even foolish. But on the other hand.

There are Christians. Who are so. Anti the death penalty. That in fact. That. They are lining themselves up. Against God himself. Actually.

They're accusing God. Of immorality. And of injustice. And that's a blasphemous thing. We must be very careful. Of that. And they need to remember.

[33 : 19] Don't they. That. That our salvation. Was won. And our rescue. From eternal. Spiritual death. Under the curse. Was won. Only because. The just penalty.

For that sin and evil. Was inflicted. By God. On our Lord Jesus Christ. But of course. In him.

Our God. Bore that punishment. Himself. That penalty. Was not abolished. But it was meted out.

On our Savior. But finally. On this point. It is worth reflecting. I think. That if God's. Covenant. Of preservation.

For the world. And therefore. For all societies. Requires. Mankind. To honor. And to respect. And to protect. Life. And above all. To protect. Human life.

[34 : 13] And especially. Vulnerable human life. And yet. If our society. If our nation. Increasingly. Seems to exhibit. A disdain. For life.

For the unborn. For the aged. For the malformed. If our society. Refuses. To protect. Life. If it. Appeases.

Rather than. Punishing. Those who. Violate life. It shouldn't. Surprise us. Too much. Should it. If we should. Find. Such societies.

Falling under. God's judgment. Under God's curse. God's covenant. With Noah. Was a promise. To preserve. The earth.

Death. It doesn't say. There will be no. Real judgments. In time. And in history. On civilizations. And on cultures. And if you read history.

[35 : 08] You'll see. That where. The requirements. Of God's gracious. Covenant. Of preservation. Have been scorned. And abused. Then God.

At times. Has lifted. His restraining hands. Of judgment. And such cultures. Have brought. Self-destruction. On themselves. Many times. So our western world.

Today. With all its arrogance. With all its scorn. For human life. It needs to be warned. Doesn't it? God's covenant. Reassures humanity. About the security.

Of the universe. But it also. Requires. From mankind. Protection. For the sanctity. Of life. Under God. And we need to take that.

Seriously. Don't we? But I want to look. Before we close. Lastly. At this. Final section. Verses 18 to 29. Which are all about. Another thing. That God's covenants.

[36 : 05] Always deal with. And that's the shape. Of the future. In terms of blessings. And curses. See. God's covenant.

Gives a revelation. To mankind. Kind. It's through God's covenant. That he will. Ultimately. Undo. Man's hatred. Of his fellow man.

A man's hatred. Of God. And will restore. Harmony. And peace. To all. The scattered peoples. Of this earth. And that's what these verses. Are really all about.

So. I don't want to get bogged down. In the. In the details. Of Noah's sin. And so on. What these verses. Point up for us. Is that the world. Is not going to be rid.

Of the real problem. Of sin. Until God's promise. Comes to its final. Fulfillment. In dealing with that. Sin and evil forever. And God's people.

[36 : 58] Will always. Therefore be. In a real struggle. With sin. Both without. And within. Struggles with their own sin. And the face of the world. And the flesh. And the devil.

And struggling. Between the seeds. Between those who are of faith. And those who are of not. Those who are of not. Of the serpent. And that's what we're seeing here. First of all.

There's Noah's own. Frail humanity. Remember Noah's name. Means. To bring comfort. Well. We're told he plants vineyards. And makes wine.

That the Bible rejoices in. To gladden the heart of man. But Noah goes too far. Doesn't he? Makes a fool of himself. And yes. We're to see of course.

That even great men. Are flawed. We're to be warned. But the focus. Of this. Section. Is not. On Noah's behavior. But actually. On that of his sons.

[37 : 55] And they show radically. Different attitudes. To their father. To this man. Who was remember. A mighty man of faith. Who was in a very real sense. Their savior. The savior of the whole world.

Shaman. And Japheth. They revere. They respect their father. They give him dignity. Verse 23. But Ham. You see.

Verse 22. Shows a very different spirit. He. He pruriently gloats. Over his father. In his sinfulness. And then he publicly shames him. Tells everyone about it.

It's an ugly thing. Isn't it? To gloat. Over other people's failings. And their sin. It's an even uglier thing. Isn't it? To gossip all about it. And tell others. You see.

The log. In Ham's eye. Is far greater. Than the speck. In Noah's eye. And he shows his true heart. In despising Noah. He's devaluing.

[38 : 54] And despising God. And God's covenant promise. And his covenant servant. And so the curse. Verse 24. Makes him unfair to us.

That Canaan. Would be cursed. For his father's sin. And. But of course. On the one hand. That's simple reality. Isn't it? What we are. And what we do. Will affect our children. And their children. Probably. But in fact.

The blessings. And the curses. Here in verses 25 to 28. They all concern the future. They concern the descendants. Of those. That verse 19 has said. Become the people.

Who are dispersed. All over the earth. See. Moses. Is telling his people. Where their enemies come from. He's telling his people. Why their enemies are.

As they are. And that's why Canaan's name. Is so prominent here. Five times in these verses. Moses is saying to the Israelites. About to enter Canaan. And have all the conflict.

[39 : 51] With these enemies. He's saying to them. This is not a new thing. The Canaanites that you know. That God has warned you against. And told you to keep apart from. Because of their abominable practices.

Their idolatry. Yes there are sexual perversions. He's saying they've always been enemies. Of God's people. And they always will be. That's what the New Testament.

Affirms to us. Isn't it? Paul says to the Galatians. That those who are of the flesh. Always persecute those. Who are born according to the promise. And so it is today. Says Paul. And so it is today still.

As long as God preserves this world. There will be those of the enemy. Who sorely try and persecute. The family of faith.

There will be weeds among the wheat. Right up until the final harvest. Isn't that what Jesus said? But take heart. He knows who are his. He knows how to bless them.

- [40 : 51] And he will bless them. And we see that way back here. Shem is blessed by God. Verse 26. And Canaan and his enemies. Will be ultimately put under his feet.
- God's promise to curse finally. Those who are insistent. And persistent enemies of his promise. That is a huge comfort. To his faithful people. Ask those today.
- Who are being persecuted for their faith. All around the world. Crying out for justice. And so is the promise. That the root of that evil.
- The devil himself. Who so plagues us still. That he at the last. Will be destroyed forever. The God of peace. Will soon crush.
- Satan. Under your feet. Says the apostle Paul. To the Roman church. But that promise is right here. Way back in Genesis chapter 9. God's enemies.
- [41 : 49] His people's enemies. Will be subdued. It is his covenant promise. But as we close. Look at the blessings.
- Here. As well as just the curse. God will bless his people. The line of Shem. The continued promised seed. Through the Shemites. The Semites.
- Of whom Israel. The nation. Would come. In contrast to Canaan. The implacable foe. Of Israel. Well. Shem will be blessed.
- And that's the story. Isn't it? That you read. All the way on from here. Throughout the whole of the Old Testament. The blessing. Of God's covenant. Upon his people. But what about Japheth.
- Verse 27. What about his seed? And what about all this enlarging. Of his tents. In blessing. That they will come in also. And dwell in the tents of Shem. Together with them.
- [42 : 46] As victors. Over all of God's enemies. What's that about? Well. If you read on into Genesis 10. You'll find the Japhethites. Became the people. The coastal peoples.
- Of the Mediterranean Sea. Turkey. And Greece. And all the surrounding lands. Eventually to Rome itself. In other words. The Japhethites. Are all the people. Of the whole Gentile world.
- That Jesus. And the apostles knew. It's the world of the Acts of the Apostles. Where we read about. Jewish Christian apostles. Descendants of Shem.
- Going everywhere. And proclaiming. That at last. The promised Messiah of Israel. Had come. And what were they amazed to see? That the promise of the Spirit.
- Was poured out even on. The Gentiles. And that to the Gentiles. Also God had granted. Repentance. That leads to life. And that's the mystery.
- [43 : 42] Of the unsearchable. Wisdom of God. That even though. In the main. Israel. The nation. Rejected the message of Christ. Yet as Paul says.
- To the Romans. In Romans chapter 11. Into their. Olive tree. God has grafted in. A wild. Olive shoot. The Gentile world. To share.
- In the nourishing. Root of richness. Of that olive tree. Of God's covenant people. Of the descendants. Of Shem. And he has at last. Enlarged. The tents.
- Of Japheth. He's let them dwell. In the tents. Of Shem. As the victorious people. Of the covenant God. One people together. Jew and Gentile. The God who restrain.
- The sin and the evil of man. In this world. So as to ultimately. Step in at last. To redeem it. To bring. Shemite. And Japhethite. Jew and Gentile. Together. Into one household.
- [44 : 38] The household of God. We're all. Most of us here this morning. Japhethites. Dwelling in the tents of Shem. That's what Christmas is all about.
- Remember what old Simeon said? When he saw the Lord Jesus Christ. My eyes have seen. Your salvation. A light for revelation to.

The Gentiles. The Japhethites. And also. A glory to your people Israel. To the tents of Shem. Aren't you glad that.

That we know. The God. Who right from the beginning. Restrained. This world. By his covenant of preservation. In order to redeem it.

And he will do so. Until the fullness. Of the Gentiles. The fullness of the Japhethites. Has come in.

[45 : 33] To the tents of Shem. So that in this way. Says the apostle Paul. All God's. People. All his true Israel. Will be saved.

This is the gospel. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Right here. In Genesis chapter 9. Amen.

Let's pray together. How we thank you. God of the covenant. For the marvels. Of the mystery. Of your great plan of redemption.

Help us Lord. To rejoice in it. As we now know it. So wonderfully fulfilled. In Jesus Christ. The one whose birth. We celebrate. So gladly at Christmas time.

So that knowing. Your great reassurance. And your great revelation. We may take. Our great responsibilities. Seriously.

[46 : 32] As you're. Witnessing people. In this world. In this. Nation. In our own city here. Help us we pray. To let your light shine.

Amen. For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. You