

Building on Biblical Foundations

Genesis 9:20-27

“The Power of Choice”

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I had other plans for this morning’s message but the Lord’s plan prevails. I am going to read the verses from Genesis and then we will look at the power of choice.

Genesis 9:20-29 NIV

²⁰ Then Noah began ^{li}farming and planted a vineyard.

²¹ He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.

²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it on both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were ^{li}turned away, so that they did not see their father’s nakedness.

²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. ²⁵ So he said,

*“Cursed be Canaan;
^{li}A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers.”*

²⁶ He also said,

*“Blessed be the LORD,
The God of Shem;
And may Canaan be ^{li}his servant.*

*²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,
And may he live in the tents of Shem;
And may Canaan be ^{li}his servant.”*

28 Noah lived 350 years after the flood. 29 So all the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

As we make our way through Genesis we have already seen the blessings and curses that result from our choices. In these verses we see it again. Noah drank too much of the wine he made and in his drunkenness exposed his nakedness inside his tent. We could probably spend an entire Sunday on this choice, but we actually have an even more weighty topic than his drunkenness. The choice of Ham.

Back in the old days, you know the days of Adam and Eve in the Garden, we discussed free will and why God even placed the forbidden fruit in the Garden. For the Lord desires a people who will choose to love him, choose to have fellowship with Him, choose to honor him – not one that is forced. He could frighten humanity into cowering before him, but that is NOT worship. He could force us to pay tribute, but that is not praise. Only where there is choice is there love.

Ham had a choice. He saw his father's nakedness and rather than cover him, he fetched his brothers to humiliate him. His brothers had a choice. They could have entered Noah's tent and mocked their father's nakedness. They chose to cover his shame, rather than expose it.

The consequences follow. Ham is cursed and Japheth and Shem are blessed.

God was ready to destroy the entire world, all of creation and then he saw Noah. Noah was a righteous man – a man who was right with God. A man who honored God, whose nature was to submit to the rule of God in his life.

So, God spared Noah – and his wife and the lives of his sons and their wives. 3 sons.

But only 2 sons chose to follow God and his ways.

2 sons chose to honor their father. 1 chose to dishonor his father.

Each had the power to choose. Each made his choice. Each lived with the resulting consequences of his choice, whether blessing or curse. And these blessings and curses were to descend through the generations. It wasn't just Ham who was cursed but also his son, Caanan. For those who remember their Bible history – Caanan is the land that God gives to the Israelites when they come out of Egypt and cross over the Jordan. Those blessings and curses continuing through the ages.

Choice. We all have been given the gift of choice. Even those who live in restrictive countries can still choose. To love or hate, to fight or surrender, to forgive or resent, to fear or to trust.

As we prepare for the next two weeks – this is a good time to think about choices.

Jesus had choices too. Out of love for the Father and love for humanity, he chose to lay down his life as a spotless lamb, the sacrifice for sin.

We have the choice too. We can choose to follow after Jesus – or we can choose to go our own way. Notice I did not say we can merely choose Jesus.

Jesus said to his disciples “follow me” . . . He still invites us today to follow him. . . What does it mean?

What does it mean to follow Jesus? What does it mean to be found righteous as Noah? If the world were plunged into wickedness today would you be found *righteous* in God’s sight? Would he choose you to build the ark?

That’s an intense question isn’t it. But truly if the Lord is YOUR Lord, if the Holy Spirit lives in you, rules over you, directs your steps, your words, your thoughts – shouldn’t the answer be a resounding yes?

I listen to sermons by a Pastor out in Chino Hills California. I know, can anything good come out of California? Just kidding Shawnee and Gavin. Pastor Jack Hibbs is his name. He has been teaching and preaching for 35 years and his messages are powerful and timely. Invite you to visit his website and listen to his messages: www.calvarycch.org/sermons/

I was listening to his recent message on the book of Hebrews and wanted to share it with you all but our technology is not quite there yet. I did manage to download a part of his message where he plays a quote by CS Lewis.

CS Lewis was a world-famous atheist before he became radically saved and spent the remainder of his years writing and lecturing for the cause of Christ.

I had the pleasure and privilege of visiting his home in Oxford England in 2006 while studying his works at the University of London. He is one of my personal heroes.

In 1941 he began his war-time broadcast talks on Christianity which later became a book you may be familiar with, Mere Christianity. If you have never read it, or any of his other books I highly recommend you do. We will add his titles ton our church lending library too.

Many years ago – he was recorded making the following statements. He died in 1963 at the age of 65 so this was recorded a while ago. Yet the truth of this message is not only still relevant, I believe it may be all the more gripping as we are that much closer to the event he describes.

We can spend our entire lives attending church, paying tithes, saying prayers, reading our bibles, singing our songs, and fool ourselves into thinking we are following Jesus. Our religious acts do not make us followers of Jesus – FOLLOWING JESUS – makes us follower of Jesus. While it is his blood and his blood alone that washes our sin away – and

this is an act of grace and not works so none can boast – he does demand that if we are to be saved, we must be born again – made new – we must put off the old man and his carnal ways and put on the new man that is in Christ Jesus. We must walk like him, talk like him, love like him, forgive like him.

To be saved by Him is to be daily conformed to the image of Christ.

To be transformed by the renewing of our minds. ROMANS 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Our minds are to be steadfast on him.

Philippians 2:5 - Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

1 Corinthians 2:16 - For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

We are to take every thought captive and submit it to the mind of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Please hear me – these are not laws, these are not rules, these are results. This is what loving God looks like. When you love someone you seek to do good, and not harm. If you love your spouse you seek to honor him or her – not dishonor.

Why does this matter? Why does it matter today?

The days are growing darker my dear people. You don't need to be a Christian to see how wicked the world has become. Indeed, we are living in the days that look a lot like the days of Noah. The days Jesus said would precede his return.

I do fear the Gospel has been watered down through the ages. The Truth of God has been sugar coated until it is hardly recognizable. How do you know if you have actually been taught the truth? Where is the evidence?

We each need to examine ourselves. Take inventory. Assess whether or not you look any more like Jesus today than you did when you first heard the good news.

Sobering word. It's not mine. I am just the messenger. But understand this – a day is coming when we will each give an account.

If you have known the Gospel and yet choose to sin any way – the bible says that you are in danger of trampling the grace of God underfoot. Trampling upon Jesus and his sacrifice.

We can shut out the truth and justify ourselves by saying I don't sin – I don't murder, or lie, or steal or commit adultery. Religious people have responded this way since Jesus walked among them.

But Jesus said if you are angry with your brother it is like the sin of murder, if you lust after a woman it is the same as the sin of adultery.

Matthew 5:21

21“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’

Matthew 5:27

**27“You have heard that it was said [i]to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’
28But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

Under those standards who is innocent? Who can keep his way pure?

None. Not one. We all fall short of the glory of God

Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

– but if confess our sins to the Lord he will forgive us.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”

Does that mean we can sin as we please and then keep asking for forgiveness? No. Not at all. We must allow the Lord to truly search us. Invite him as King David did – to search our innermost thoughts.

Psalm 139

23Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me, and know my anxieties;

24And see if there is any wicked way in me,

And lead me in the way everlasting.

If you find that you are living in habitual sin like: lying, gossiping, unforgiveness, complaining, doubting the Lord, slandering others, laziness, gluttonous, ungrateful - you know I could go on and on.

Humanity's sickness is SIN, our cure is JESUS.

But we must seek Him every day – all day. Not just on Sundays for one hour.

I can't do this for you – only you can surrender yourself to the Lord and ask him to search you.

And we each have a choice - to remain complacent and risk being spewed out of the mouth of Jesus or to be radically changed by the Gospel of grace.

Rev. 3:14-19

A warning to those who are asleep from Jesus:

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

When we come to Christ our friends and family should notice. There should be a stark difference in the way we live, the way we speak, the way we do everything. Why? To obey rules?

NO but because when the Holy Spirit moves in, he rearranges the furniture and cleans out the house.

Time is short. How short? No one knows except the Father in heaven, but I know this we are 33 years closer than when I began!

Every day we get to choose. While you have a breath you have a chance to choose to put Jesus first.

Let's listen to what CS Lewis had to say about choices.