



The Sermon

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Genesis 9:18-29

"Drunk, Naked, & Divided"

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TRANSCRIPT

Beginning in verse 18, "Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated."

"Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. So he said, 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall 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.'

"Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood. So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died." This is the reading of God's Word. Let us now go to the Author in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, as we look into this passage we know that all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable. And I pray that You would cause this passage to be profitable in our lives. I pray that You give us understanding, give us insight, and I also pray that You would make the practicality of it very clear and relevant to us. So, Lord, we ask for Your assistance today as we look at Your Word, and I pray that You would fill me with Your Spirit. Set a guard over my mouth. Direct my thinking in my mind, that I would stay within the bounds of proper interpretation of this passage. So, Father, we look to You. We expect great things from Your Word, in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

With these verses we bring to conclusion the story of Noah, and it's not a pretty ending. And one thing we can say about the Bible is that the Bible never sugarcoats its message. The Bible always tells it like it is, it never pulls any punches. And the Bible shows the saints at their best, and the Bible also shows the saints at their worst. And throughout the entire storyline of the Bible we are shown the saints, warts and all.

In fact, when we read the Bible, we see that Abraham lied about his wife, and Jacob deceived his father. Sampson was a womanizer, and David committed adultery and tried to cover it up with murder. Solomon was a polygamist. Jonah actually ran away from God because of racial prejudice in his heart. Peter denied the Lord three times, and Thomas doubted the Lord. And John Mark, in the middle of missions, just quit and went home. Ananias and Sapphira, well they lied in church to the Holy Spirit. And so throughout the centuries, those who have been numbered among the saints have committed some of the biggest sins.

And this is precisely what we see in the life of Noah. We've already seen Noah at his best. We have seen him building the ark. We have seen him preaching righteousness. We have seen him getting his family on board. We have seen him using his influence in a godly way. But now we see Noah at his worst. We see Noah drunk, and we see him naked, and we even see one of his sons rising up against him. So as we look at this passage, our eyes will be wide open, as we will see really Noah at his worst.

As we begin in verse 18, I want you to note, first, "The sons of Noah." That's really where this narrative begins, with the sons of Noah, because they will play a major part in this cluster of verses that I've just read. So in verse 18 we read, "Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth." Shem, who's mentioned first, is the middle son; and Japheth, who is the first or oldest son, is mentioned last; and then Ham, the youngest, is in the middle - Shem being the middle son.

And so we asked the question then, "Why would Shem be first in the list if he is the middle son?" It seems like it would go with the birth order. But Japheth, who is the oldest, is mentioned last. It's just a question of curiosity. And I think the answer lies in this, that out of Shem would come the descendants who would be the nation of Israel. It would be Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. And ultimately would come the prophets and David, and ultimately would come the Messiah, the **Yeshua** Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so for that reason I think that Shem is given prominence even in this list.

And so we continue to read at the end of verse 18, "and Ham was the father of Canaan." This is to draw our attention to Ham for him to be mentioned twice in verse 18; and he would become the father of Canaan who would - their descendants would occupy the Promised Land. They would be the Canaanites, and they would become the idolatrous enemies of the people of God; and it will be Ham who will be in the spotlight, and we'll see that here in just a moment.

So verse 19, "These three were the sons of Noah, from these the whole earth was populated." We see here very easily that there's only one human race, that there's not this race and that race, and this race and that race, that the entire population of the entire planet comes from: one man at this point after the flood is Noah, and through his three sons. And so we are all of really one common origin and one race of people.

What we also will note here in just a little bit is that Ham will be a son who will grow up to resist his father. And what is interesting is that all three

sons grew up in the same house, all three sons heard the same instruction, all three sons had the same parenting, all three sons sailed on the same ark, and yet how different they would prove to be. Two would be loyal to their father, and one would become disloyal to his father, despite the fact that they all three had the same influences in their life.

This leads us now, second, to, "The sin of Noah." In verse 20 we are introduced to the sin of Noah. And what we can say is when Noah went into the ark, he had a sin nature. Though he was a true believer, he still retained sinful flesh. And when he came out of the ark, he still had his sinful flesh, though being clothed in the perfect righteousness that only God could provide.

And so we see a sin in verse 20: "Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard." He cultivated the land, he tilled the soil, he planted the sprigs and small vines, and he did so in order to grow grapes. This took some period of time, by the way. But he wanted to grow grapes in order to make wine to drink, in order to make grapes to eat. And so there is really a doubling up in his economy of labors. From the vineyard, there would be both food and drink.

And so in verse 21 we read, "He drank of the wine." That's the first mention of wine in the Bible. And I need to point out to you that this is not the sin of Noah. The Bible never forbids the drinking of wine. And I want to just hit a pause button for a moment and I want to give you eight reasons why drinking wine is not a sin. Maybe you never thought you would hear this in church, especially being from one particular denomination. So let me just walk us through this, because whatever's in the Bible, we can talk about. We can have adult conversation. So let me give this to you.

Number One: "Jesus made wine," so therefore, wine is not in and of itself intrinsically sinful. Some would say, "Well, what Jesus made was just very watered-down. Well no, not so. It was the best wine the head waiter had ever tasted. It was robust, it was potent, and Jesus Himself made it.

Second, "Jesus served wine." Jesus served wine when He instituted the Lord's Supper. When He was in the upper room Jesus took a cup that had wine in it and He passed it to His disciples, and when they first took the Lord's Supper they did not use grape juice, they actually used wine.

Third, "Jesus drank wine." In fact, even when He was upon the cross He drank wine. As He thirsted, they held a pole up to Jesus, and there was sour wine on it, and Jesus drank of it; so therefore, it was not sinful, it was permissible. Fourth, "Jesus will drink wine in heaven, and he will serve wine in heaven." And Jesus said that He will drink of the wine with His disciples in His Father's kingdom, looking ahead to His Father's kingdom.

Fifth, "Wine is presented as a blessing from God in the Bible." In Deuteronomy 14 and verse 26, it is said to be a blessing. Sixth, "Wine was used to worship God in the worship service." In Leviticus 23, verse 13, and in Numbers 28, verse 7, it was actually used in their ceremonial worship of God; and if it was sinful in and of itself, that would have never been permitted.

Seventh, "Wine was served on happy occasions to make the heart merry," and that is why Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana in John chapter 21, when they ran out of wine He didn't say, "Well then, let's just drink water the rest of the wedding." Jesus actually turned the water into wine, so as not to disappoint the family, and not to embarrass the family that they have run out.

And then, eighth, "Wine was used to make the body well." It had medicinal value to help the body repair itself and be made well. So for those eight reasons, and others could be added as well, but I think the point is established, that the sin of Noah was not in drinking the wine. It was permissible, and it is a Christian liberty to this day.

But here is the sin, it's the next three words that follow in verse 21. We read, "and became drunk." The sin was he drank too much wine. The sin

was he started, but did not stop. The sin was that his brain became affected by the wine and he lost self-control; and being drunk and under the influence, being intoxicated, is a sin. Ephesians 5 and verse 18 says, "Do not be drunk with wine, for this is dissipation." And in 1 Corinthians 6 verse 10, the Bible says, "Drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God," meaning the new birth will dramatically change a person from the inside out, and it will bring new desires for God and lessen older desires. And one who would become obsessed with drinking wine would be an evidence that they have not been born again, because drunkards will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

In 1 Timothy 3, verse 3, we are told that one of the qualifications to be an elder is they are not addicted to wine. They may drink wine as elders, they just may not become addicted to wine. And the same is true for a deacon, and in 1 Timothy 3, verse 8, the Bible says that a deacon must not be addicted to much wine. In other words, he may drink wine, he just may not drink much wine and become addicted to it, because he will lose his sensibilities, and he will lose his rationality and his ability to think and to respond properly. And then Titus 1, verse 7, also gives the same qualification for an elder: "An elder in the church" - it says - "must not be addicted to wine." And the word "addicted" clearly implies he may drink wine, he just may not be addicted to wine. So the word that is necessary is "moderation."

And so we see that Noah here in this passage, he crossed the line. He had a liberty to drink wine, but he abused that liberty; he went too far, and he drank wine to the point that he became drunk. And then the next three words in verse 21, "and uncovered himself." So as he goes to bed inside his tent, he has lost his ability to think properly, and he dis robes, but he does not put clothes back on after taking certain clothes off. Whatever it would have been that he would have worn to go to sleep at night, he did not put those back on. And mere speculation, but he probably just crashed asleep and had no clothes on. So he uncovered himself. And the text reads, "inside his tent." At least it was in a private setting. And his tent here would be like his bedroom.

So before we go any further, we just want to be clear. There's no virtue and being any wider than the truth, but there's also no virtue to be more narrow than the truth; you just want to be whatever the truth is. And the truth is that it is not a sin to drink wine. The truth is, it is a sin to be drunk. And the truth is, you will pay consequences for being drunk; you will find yourself in positions and in places that are extremely unwise and potentially harmful to your life. So we see what the sin of Noah is. He crossed the line and went too far.

Before we move on, you just need to think this through. For some of you here today, what I just said may be shocking, may be a verse too far. But I would just encourage you to think back through what I just said in the case that the Bible makes. We never apologize for the Bible. Whatever the Bible says is what is the truth. And for others here, a word to the wise is to not go too far. So there's two extremes. One extreme is, "The Bible never allows drinking wine," the other extreme is, "I can drink all I want and become drunk." No, the truth is in the middle.

This leads us now to, third, in verse 22, "The sin against Noah," because this situation brought the worst out of one of his sons, and that would be Ham. So in verse 22 we read, "Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father." So obviously, he's walked into the tent. What he is doing in there the text really does not say, though it is strange that Ham is in his father's bedroom, and the other two sons are not; but we're not given any more insight into this. But as he comes in, he sees his father laying there asleep and without any clothes on, he is naked; and Ham should have done something. Ham should have looked away. Ham should have taken a blanket and covered up his father. Ham should have taken a piece of clothing and covered his nakedness. But Ham did not do that. So what did Ham do?

Well, we read in verse 22, "and told his brothers outside." Why did he go to his brothers outside? Because he's trying to influence them against their father, because he wants them to see their father at his worst. And I think it's safe to draw from this that there is tension between Noah and his son Ham, and Ham is either not wanting to follow his father's leadership, or

Ham is just wanting to go his own way and be his own man, or Ham is tired of being told what to do after building this ark and taking care of the animals on board the ark.

We're not told, and so obviously that's not important for us. But there is something wrong in Ham's relationship with his father that is very different from his two brothers' relationship with their father, and so Ham is actually trying to divide the family. Ham is actually trying to pit his two brothers against their father. Ham is trying to drive a wedge between Noah and his other two sons. And to be sure, now understand this: this is a far worse sin than being drunk.

We have a list sometimes in our mind of what are the worst sins and what are the less worse sins; and some sins are worse than others, and we know that simply even from in the Old Testament under the Mosaic Law: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," simply means that the punishment should fit the crime, that the punishment should not be too little, it should not be too heavy, that the punishment should match up with the crime, hence an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. And so there is in the Mosaic Law - I don't have the exact number - but there is a list of sins that require the death penalty, and one of those sins is not being drunk. But one of those sins is dishonoring your father, and being disrespectful to your father, and disobeying your father. And that is a far worse sin than even being drunk. I think we tend to have it inverted and upside-down, but the Bible is very clear on this. And I want you to hear some verses about this.

In Exodus 20, verse 12, the Bible says, "Honor your father and mother." And you may say, "Well, what if my father is not really this or that, or my mother is not this or that?" The Bible says, "Honor your father and mother," - and that begins with a heart attitude - "that your days may be prolonged." Why would he say that your days may be prolonged? Because if you do not, it would demand the death penalty, and your days would be brought to an end, because that is how serious this sin is to dishonor your parents.

In Leviticus 19, verse 3, we read, "Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father." So it's not just the outward acts of help and support to your parents, but the inward heart attitude. There must be honor and reverence given to our parents. And if there is not that present, it is a very serious sin to be cloistered in the heart.

In Exodus 21, verse 15, it is so serious to dishonor or disrespect your parents, that Exodus 21:15 says, "He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." And then in verse 17 of Exodus 21 we read, "He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." And so we clearly see the death penalty was in place for disrespecting parents. What is going on here is that Ham is trying to lure his brothers into a very heinous sin, to gang up against his father, now that the father is in a very vulnerable position.

The Bible also says in Proverbs 6, verse 16, "There are six things which the Lord hates," - very strong word - "yes, seven which are an abomination to Him." Again, a very strong word. And he goes from one to two, to three, to four, to five, to six. It's the seventh sin that is the climactic crescendo, which is the most egregious sin, and it is this: "one who spreads strife among brothers." I mean, that's the devil's work. God is the great home-builder, the devil is the great home-destroyer. God is the great peacemaker, the devil is the great peace-destroyer.

And so when the two brothers of Ham hear what Ham was only too happy to come out and tell them about their father who's still asleep and who still is uncovered, we read in verse 23, that they covered the nakedness of their father, in verse 23. Notice: "But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon their shoulders." Why did they do that? Because by placing it on their shoulders and walking into the tent, they will use this garment to lay over the nakedness of their father. Rather than exposing their father, they want to cover up their father's shame.

"So they took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders," - now watch this - "and walked backward." They wouldn't walk frontward into

the tent, because they would see their father. They walked in backward so that they could not see where they were walking; so they would have to walk very slowly and very deliberately. But they do not want to look upon their father in this state and look upon this shame. "So they walk in backward" - verse 23 - "and covered the nakedness of their father." That's what Ham should have done. But Ham had something in his heart in which he wanted to bring his father down; he wanted to expose his father in front of the rest of the family, no doubt to assert himself in a prideful, strategic move.

But the other two brothers would not take the bait; they were too loyal to their father. They had too much allegiance and love for their father, and they're not going to come down to Ham's level in the gutter, they're going to maintain a high level of respect for their father. That was written upon their conscience. That was what they knew to be right in their heart. And in this moment, they had the power to say no to their brother: "We're not going to be drawn into this." And how easy it might have been for them to have taken the bait and to have been lured in just to have a closer relationship with Ham, and to have this juicy bit of information and have the sensationalism of seeing their father in this vulnerable position. But these other two brothers, they knew it was wrong to side against their father.

And so we read, "They covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness." What a virtuous act they committed. What an example they set for us. And we all have been born in families, and we all understand the intricacies and the influences and the inner networking that takes place among siblings, and brothers and sisters, and relationships with fathers and with mothers. And we know how divisive it can be in a home, where everyone's not pulling in the same direction, where there is not unity and harmony in a home. And there the devil has established a beachhead to set up his operation to work yet further into that family and to drive the wedge in an even more decisive way. And what an example this is that Japheth and his other brother have set for us, Shem.

So verse 24 – or excuse me, before I go to that, let me just give you some verses right here at this point, because this needs to speak to every one of our hearts. And it's not only just within families, it's also within church families, it's also within ministry teams, it's also within relationships with other friends. Let me give you these verses, three from the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 10, verse 12: "Hatred stirs up strife." Pause for a moment: that is Ham. "But love covers all transgressions." That is Shem and Japheth. Proverbs 17, verse 9: "He who conceals a transgression seeks love." Rather than spreading something and going to others to uncover their nakedness to the ears or the eyes of someone else, love actually conceals what you know. Proverbs 12, verse 16: "A prudent man conceals dishonor." A foolish man would do the opposite. A foolish man would uncover and spread and even advertise dishonor, but a prudent man conceals dishonor. And one more verse, 1 Peter 4, verse 8, says the same: "Love covers a multitude of sins."

So I don't know how this needs to speak to you today. I don't know your family dynamics. I don't know the interpersonal relationships that you have at home. But I do know this, that this is in the Bible for our instruction. And we see a negative example, and we see a positive example, and the contrast is black and white. And we are not to be like Ham and want to expose the faults of parents to siblings, to put parents down and to put them in a bad light; and at the same time, we are to do everything that we can in a positive way to cover up that which would be dishonoring in parents. We don't all grow up in Christian homes. We don't all grow up in homes that are a model for other families to follow. Many here today have grown up in dysfunctional families; but nevertheless, it is incumbent upon us as believers in Jesus Christ to do what is right, and that is to honor father and mother, and to conceal and to cover up that which is dishonorable.

This leads us now to verse 24, "The statement of Noah." "When Noah awoke from his wine," – indicating that was the cause of him going to sleep, he had too much wine – "he knew what his youngest son had done to him." How he knew, were not told, and that's not an important part of the story or it would have been included. We could speculate. Perhaps Noah woke up

and asked Shem or Japheth, "How did I end up like this; because I normally wear this when I go to bed, and now I'm wearing this as I wake up. I've never worn this when I go to bed. How did this happen?" And the two brothers may have told him. And a discerning father would be able to put two and two together, and to know that, "Yes, Ham has had a disrespectful attitude, Ham has had a dishonoring heart toward me." And this is a very believable story; and perhaps he was able to connect this together. But nevertheless, he knew what his youngest son had done, leaving him exposed; and the other two sons, out of love and loyalty, covering him up in a way he's never been covered up, probably with some other garment.

And so in verse 25, "So he" – Noah – "said, 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brothers.'" It's strange he doesn't say, "Cursed be Ham," because Ham is the one who did this; but, "Cursed be Canaan." And Canaan is only one of four sons that Ham will have. And it's somewhat of a difficult knot to untie. What we can say is this, is that this is a prophecy of the future, and that there will be an influence from a father to a son to a grandson to the next generation. I mean, Exodus 20, verse 5, says that, "The sins of the fathers will be passed down to the third and fourth generation." That doesn't mean that the sin is imputed to them, what it means is the influence of a father will have a direct bearing upon his children. And it is very possible for then that child to pass down the same influences, the same prejudices, the same patterns of sin that he had learned from his father, now are passed down to the next. It doesn't have to be that way. But in a general way, once that river starts flowing, it will continue to flow.

And so Noah makes a prophecy here that Canaan and his descendants will be servants of his two brothers, and their descendants. And in fact, that is exactly what happened, that after Moses led the children of God out of Egyptian bondage through the wilderness for forty years and came to the river Jordan and was forbidden to enter in, and Joshua was raised up to lead the children of God across Jordan and into the Promised Land, they did go in and conquer the Canaanites and exterminate the Canaanites, not completely, as they should have, but to a very large extent. And so this prophecy was fulfilled. And I think it comes back to this again, and I don't want us to miss this point. This cursing in verse 25 is to show the seriousness of dishonoring your father. This cursing does not come because

Noah became drunk, this curse is a prophecy because of divided loyalty in a family and a son not honoring his father.

And this may speak to some of you today that there needs to be a change of attitude in you towards your father, in you towards your mother. And that may be a very difficult thing. Martin Luther grew up with an overbearing father, and Luther could never pray, "My Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name," because his father was so ruthlessly dominant over his life that it was hard for him to conceive of God with the title "Father." And you may come from a similar such situation. I think this is in the Bible to signal to you there needs to be repentance in your heart of harbored bitterness towards parents, and you need to humble yourself and confess that as sin against God, because God in His sovereignty birthed you into the family that He did, and gave you the father and the mother that He gave you. It doesn't mean that you have to agree with your father's lifestyle. It doesn't mean that you have to approve of the path that he chose to live in life. It doesn't mean that you have to endorse his attitudes or his actions or his words. But it does mean that you must honor and reverence your parents, for this is right in the Lord; and if you do not do that, you have opened your heart up to the devil and to other foul influences that would come into your heart to defile it, to divide it, and to detour it away from the path it should go.

Then in verse 26 we read this: "He" - Noah - "also said, 'Blessed be the Lord.'" Now what's interesting, he cursed Canaan, but in the blessing he actually blesses the Lord rather than directly Shem and Japheth; and I think it's a recognition that all blessings come from God, and the priority of worshiping God. "And blessed be the Lord," very simply means praise the Lord, glory to God - "the God of Shem." And the God of Shem is the God of Noah, is the God who delivered them through the flood, is the God who has dealt so mercifully and kindly with them, that he actually blesses the Lord, who is the God of Shem, who would become the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and David, and the prophets, and the Messiah. "And let Canaan be his servants." Again reinforcing this prophecy that the Canaanites will be subjected to the descendants of Shem, which would be the children of God, the Israelites. And they would go in and conquer the Canaanites in the Promised Land and take possession of the land which God has promised to them.

And then verse 27: "May God enlarge Japheth," - meaning enlarge his influence and enlarge the blessings in his life - "and let him dwell in the tents of Shem," - and what this is saying is, as the descendants of Japheth would show favor to the people of Israel, there would be blessing that would come to the descendants of Japheth - "and let Canaan be his servant." So that is the statement of Noah, and it's a prophetic oracle, it's a prophetic statement looking into the future that God used Noah to be a mouthpiece for his prophecy.

This leads, last, to the last two verses, and we'll wrap this up: "The steadfastness of Noah." As Noah finishes his race well, we read in verse 28, "Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood." I think we are to assume from this that he walked with God for the rest of his days. And I think we are reminded by this: it's not how we start the race, it's how we finish the race. How easy it is to start something but never complete it. And here Noah, who came out of the ark at five hundred years of age, he still has three hundred and fifty years left in front of him, and he continues to serve the Lord.

And in verse 29, "So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died." Those last three words "and he died" will be said of you, will be said of me, unless the Lord comes back in our lifetime. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It's appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment."

Each one of us has two unbreakable appointments that are etched in stone in God's calendar: the day of your death, and the day of your judgment. And we must prepare now for the day of death, and for the day of judgment that will follow our death. We must make our preparations to die and to stand before the Lord. And there is only one step that you and I must take in order to prepare to meet God.

And everyone in this room will one day meet God; you will stand before God. And in order to prepare for that day that lies on the other side of

death, you must believe in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. You must commit your life to Jesus Christ. You must deny yourself, and you must take up a cross and you must become a follower of Jesus Christ; otherwise, when you die and when you stand before God, the books will be open, and every deed, every careless word that you have ever said in the entirety of your life will come before you and will come before God, and there will be a virtual mountain upon mountain upon mountain of sins that will be exposed, and so much sin and so much judgment.

And hell will be hotter for some than for others, because an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is true even in hell; and the greater the sins, the greater the punishment. And so in order to avoid this final judgment with all of your sins exposed, there is only one way, and that is to settle out of court, and that is to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore the sins of His people upon the cross. And when He went to the cross, the Bible says, "Him who knew no sin," - Jesus - "God made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." And so the exchange of the cross is this: all of our sins were transferred to Christ and His righteousness transferred to us. The worst about us laid upon Him, the best about Him laid upon us.

And this is true only for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so this is to remind you and to reinforce that there is only one way to stand before God and to be able to say, "It is well with my soul," and that is to be clothed in the perfect righteousness of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the blood of Christ to wash away all of your sins. And it must happen in this lifetime. It will be too late to wait till the other side of the grave. However you die is how you will stand before God. And if you die in Christ, you will stand before God in Christ. But if you die in your sins, you will stand before God in your sins. And so therefore, the urgency in this life, even today, to take that decisive step of faith and to commit your life to Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, "Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, today is the day of salvation. Boast not yourself of tomorrow, for you know not what a day may bring forth." And so today is a day of mercy, today is a day of grace,

and that door is swung wide open. And if you have never committed your life to Christ, if you have never repented of your sins, if you have never turned away from your own self-righteousness, then do so today this very moment. Jesus said, "Him who comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." He is the friend of sinners. He will welcome you. He will receive you. He will take you in gladly. As an act of your will, you must decide to commit your life to Christ. You must take that step of faith to turn away from the world, to turn away from a life of sin, and to embrace by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in Him and in Him alone to save you and to forgive you.

When He died upon the cross He said, "It is finished." There is nothing that you and I can add to the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross. We must trust Him and Him alone in the sufficiency of His death, the power of His blood to wash away all sin. And so if you've never done that, today should be the day for you. This should be your moment with God. This should be the greatest day of your life, when you leave the darkness and you enter into the light, when you leave death and receive life. May today be your day of salvation. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, what a story we have just looked at. What an account, looking into this family and seeing faithful sons and seeing an unfaithful son, seeing a father who sinned and a father who had shame. Father, we're so grateful for the blood of Christ to forgive saints of all their sins. And so seal to our hearts now what You would have for us to take from this passage. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.