

98-08-02a

As we continue our worship this morning, if you'll turn with me to Proverbs chapter 12, we see here the contrast that has been brought out so clearly in our Genesis study between the righteous and the wicked. It's easy to place people in one category or the other based on what they do, but we know that this is actually based on what we think. We know that the only genuine source of righteousness is not good deeds or good behavior or an admirable lifestyle.

It is faith in God. Apart from faith in God, there is no righteousness. Apart from faith in God, there is no credit for what we do.

It is often forgotten, especially in our modern society. We tend to admire something good that is done. We had this gymnast that had an accident and was paralyzed from the chest down, this young lady, and she admires the young guy that was the actor in the Titanic, and I honestly can't think of his name.

But anyway, this past week he decided that he would go visit her and cheer her up. And around the world, and certainly in this country, everyone says, my, what a wonderful thing to do. Well, it is certainly from a human perspective for someone to take time out of a busy schedule and with all their fame and notoriety to go visit someone.

But if you stop and think, the only way that that constitutes righteousness is if it's done in faith. If it is a response based on relationship with God, based on a desire to please God, whatsoever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. If it's done for any other reason, if it's done as unto the press or as unto the public, or even out of a sense of altruism or a sense of I'll do the good thing or I'll do the right thing, if it isn't done as unto the Lord, it's not righteousness.

Noah does what he does as unto the Lord. He builds the ark. Whatever God says, he does.

He hasn't spoken a word. There's no indication that he went about in the pre-flood society and did righteous deeds and bound up the wounds of those that had been afflicted or gave to those in need or visited the sick. There's no indication.

He may have done those things. But the Bible is careful to emphasize that Noah is righteous and blameless and walks with God. That's what counts.

That's what enables God to use him at a key point in human history. All of us are descended from Noah. Every living, breathing, walking human being has Noah as a very great, great, great grandfather.

Nobody on the planet is not descended from Noah. That's a pretty key place to be. He is like Adam in that sense.

So, what is righteousness? What is wickedness? The standard of measure is not what you do because what you do can be based on a facade. It can be a whitewashed tombstone. It can be washing the outside of the cup when there's filth on the inside.

And we, with our limited senses, it's difficult for us to know and to tell except for ourselves because the only soul that we can truly see clearly is our own. So, we have to ask ourselves the question, Am I righteous? When we ask ourselves that question, we don't look at what we do. We look at what we think.

What do we think about God? Why do we do what we do? Does any of it bear on relationship with God? We keep that in mind as we read the first section here of Proverbs chapter 12. Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of wicked intentions he will condemn.

A man is not established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous cannot be moved. An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones. The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.

The words of the wicked are, lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright will deliver them. The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand. A man will be commended according to his wisdom, but he who is of a perverse heart will be despised.

Better is the one who is slighted, but has a servant, than he who honors himself, but lacks bread. There's a cryptic saying for you. A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding. The wicked covet the catch of evil men, but the root of the righteous yields fruit. The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will come through trouble.

A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, and the recompense of a man's hands will be rendered to him. The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise. A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame.

He who speaks truth declares righteousness. You could stop and dwell on that for quite a while. In fact, each one of these sayings, you could build an entire hour of study around.

But he who speaks truth declares righteousness. A false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.

The truthful lips shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy. No grave trouble will overtake the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with evil.

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are his delight. We'll stop there. The entire proverb is worthy of study and meditation.

But you can see that God sets a lot of store by righteousness in us. So it's important for us to understand where that righteousness comes from and to seek it as we pursue our daily lives. Let's return now to our study in Genesis chapter 9, where we find Noah having emerged from the ark at God's command.

God blesses Noah and his sons, which is significant because we're going to find one of Noah's descendants under a curse. God blessed Noah and blessed 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 on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth and on all the fish of the sea.

They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.

We notice here that there is no restriction of diet as far as meat goes. There's no indication that there are certain animals not to be eaten, as there will be later in the Levitical code. God says, I have given you every moving thing that lives as food, even as the green herbs.

God had earlier given fruit, vegetables, cereal grains and so forth to man, all of plant life that's edible as food. And now God says, in the same way that I gave you the plants, I now give you the animals. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

Blood has symbolic value. Blood is a teaching tool that God has used throughout human history. The first mention of blood that we have is the murder of Abel by Cain.

And God tells Cain, your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground, the taking of his life. The blood symbolizes the life. And of course, this carries all the way through the Levitical sacrifice system and ultimately the work of Christ.

There's been a lot said pro and con about the blood of Christ. And there have been debates and so forth about Christ bleeding to death and so forth. It is a matter of symbolism.

It's a matter of what blood represents. And that comes in one of its earliest manifestations here. You shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

Surely for your life blood I will demand a reckoning. From the hand of every beast I will

require it. Any beast that is a man killer, if it is a wild horse, if it is a wild animal, if it is a jackal or a lion or any other beast that is a man killer, its life is required.

And of course, this is generally followed even today. You see where zoo animals or even pets that inflict injury or death on human beings are generally destroyed. God says, from the hand of every beast I will require it.

And from the hand of man, this means that it's man's responsibility to destroy the beast that is a man killer. It is the *lex talionis* that we've studied before, which is a Latin term that means the law of retribution. Talion is equality.

It's eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life. The law of talion or the law of recompense demands payment. This was not in effect before the flood.

And we saw last week that this sheds light on God's treatment of Cain where the judgment for sins, even up to and including capital offenses in the pre-flood economy, was in God's hands. God dispensed judgment. God comes down and deals with Cain.

God sets his punishment as banishment and being cursed from the earth, which is equivalent, apparently, to death. It's sort of a living death. The separation from his family, separation from the land, separation from every remnant of the place of provision, the place of worship, the place of blessing, coexisting with his parents and so forth.

And it's a reminder to us that separation from God is also a living death. And it can be experientially a living death even for us as believers. If we follow the path of Israel where the prophet says, your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear.

This is addressed to God's people. This is addressed to Israel. And by failing to pursue God's forgiveness, by failing to pursue restoration to function and to fellowship and to walk with God, even believers can experience a kind of death while we yet live.

It is the death that causes the branch to be broken out of the tree and some other branch to be grafted in that is alive and will bear fruit. And that great branch grafting passage in Romans is based on this same idea. Surely for your life blood I will demand a reckoning.

From the hand of every beast I will require it and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Now, after the flood, man has been delegated the responsibility for justice.

Man is to see to it that there is eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life. And the life for life idea is what is being communicated here. If Lamech or Cain had committed their crimes after the flood, there would have been this divine mandate for capital punishment.

Someone would have needed to go and execute the murderer. God says, I will require the life of man from every man's brother. So the avenger of blood concept is more fully developed in the Levitical code, the law of Moses is first spelled out specifically here.

So there is a change in economy and it's based on the idea when God says, I will never again destroy the earth with a flood. God says, I'm not going to be the primary dispenser of this kind of justice anymore on the human race. The principle is now you're going to find out what it is like.

You're going to be responsible for executing those who commit crimes worthy of death. Whoever sheds man's blood, in verse 6, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God he made man. We generally always take this to mean when you kill someone you've destroyed the image of God and that's a crime worthy of death.

There are many other crimes that are capital offenses and worthy of death that are spelled out in the law. The idea here, I think, is that by man his blood shall be shed because man is in the image of God. Man is going to function in this capacity that God has functioned in, in dispensing justice.

Man needs to learn to judge. Man needs to learn to discern good from evil. It's what God said back in the garden.

Man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. And with that knowledge comes responsibility. And so after the flood, after God has demonstrated his attitude toward those whose hearts are only evil all the day and who play this out in overt acts of criminal behavior, especially when it comes to taking life, when it comes to murder, whoever sheds man's blood by man his blood shall be shed because in the image of God he made man.

Man will dispense this justice because he's in the image of God. God knows right from wrong, God dispenses justice. Man knows right from wrong, man will dispense justice.

We have no indication of any capital punishment prior to the flood. In fact, we don't have man really executing or exerting authority prior to the flood because we have the angelic dispensation of justice. We have the angelic judges of Genesis chapter 6, but they're gone.

Their failure has been wiped out. Then in verse 7 of Genesis 9, God says, And as for you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply in it. And in the same way, man is in the image of God.

God so far in Genesis, the first eight chapters, has created life and given life and caused abundance to appear on the earth. God has also dispensed justice and caused life to disappear. Now man has these same two roles.

Man is to be fruitful and multiply. The miracle of birth, you hear people talking all the time, especially celebrities on television. They go for a while and then they finally have a child.

It's often remarked upon what an incredible thing it is, especially in a human perspective, to think this is something that is a part of me. I have given life to this child. If it wasn't for me, this child wouldn't be here, sort of a thing.

People feel a sort of power of creation when they have children. And yet we also bear the responsibility for judgment, for justice, for recompense, for wrongs. And so we exercise in a limited way these divine prerogatives and these divinely given or delegated authorities for life and for death.

And in these two verses you have life and death. Death and life spelled out as responsibilities because man is in the image of God. Then in verse 8, God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, As for me, behold, I establish my covenant with you, for I affirm my covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, every beast of the earth.

Notice once again, those things are with you, God says to Noah and to his sons. Because they are with you, the covenant with you benefits them. The curse from God on us is a disadvantage to creation.

It is shared with creation. God's blessing on us also overflows to creation. So we have blessing by association.

We have cursing by association illustrated here. All that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. Thus I establish my covenant with you.

Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood. Never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. Then God goes through the sign of the covenant, which is the rainbow set in the cloud.

We saw last week why that is. You did not have the conditions prior to the flood that would make a rainbow appear. But after the flood you do.

You have mist in the sky. You have a point source of light in the form of the sun. Those conditions were different prior to the flood when you had a mist over the ground.

And you had the canopy which turned the sun from an earthly perspective into simply the greater light. And the moon was the lesser light. It was not visible as a point source of light.

Therefore, no rainbows. But this is a reminder of the covenant. And it is a reminder to God.

God says in verse 14, It shall be when I bring a cloud over the earth that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant which is between me and you. The rainbow will appear.

I will remember. One of the fascinating things about a rainbow is that it is a refraction of light. God is the one who spoke light into being.

And you cannot have a rainbow without light. God is light. In Him is no darkness at all.

God is the one who said, Let there be light. And there was light. God has authority over the light and over the darkness.

And it is doubly significant that the sign of this great covenant that has been in effect now for some 6,000 years is created and exists. It is actually a manifestation of light. It is a manifestation of God's own power, God's own creative authority.

Rather than it being a tall rock, God could have pointed to Mount Ararat and said, This mountain is the sign of my covenant. As long as this mountain exists, I will never destroy the earth by a flood. He could have said, The ark is the sign of my covenant.

Anytime you look at the ark, we could have pictures of the ark. It might still be up there in Armenia somewhere. People have thought that they saw it and photographed it.

People have claimed to be inside it and see the stalls and so forth. We've got a video around here that details some of these things. But the ark is not the sign.

You think, My, what a great relic that would be. How many shrines would have been built around the ark by now? You look at the Holy Land and all the gaudy over-building and over-gilding that they've done on every significant site in Jerusalem and other places where Christ was believed to have been. You can imagine what they would have done to the ark by now.

But God says, No, the sign of that covenant is the rainbow. It's a refraction of light. It's the interaction between light, which is invisible, and water, which is visible.

Our bodies are 90-something percent water. And so the covenant between God and man is symbolized in the rainbow where light and matter meet and are combined. So it's a very significant sign.

It's a fascinating thing. Every time you see a rainbow, you can't help but remember this statement by God. The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.

God says, I will look on it. God says, This rainbow is a reminder to me. And once again, we have this idea of God remembering that we studied in chapter 8, verse 1, when at

the height of the flood, God remembered Noah.

God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all the flesh that is on the earth. You notice here that this covenant receives quite a bit of space here. Ten or eleven verses are devoted to this covenant.

Why? The same reason that we have the first seven verses of this chapter. It is an indication of a great change in economy. God has dealt universally with the human race before the flood.

Now He is going to deal more specifically. He's going to move to the national level. Nations will be blessed.

Nations will be cursed. He's going to get even more specific in the church age where individuals will be blessed and individuals will be cursed. Not to say that individuals weren't blessed and cursed in the Old Testament age, but as an economy, as a system of function, in the sense of covenant, in the sense of worship, in the sense of activity that is organized or put forward by God as a pattern.

It begins racially. It moves nationally. And finally, it's individual in the age in which we live.

And we're going to move backward like the Bible is so fond of using these chiasms. We're going to see that this is the center of the chiasm, the age in which we live. God is going to move back to dealing nationally and moving back to dealing universally as we go through the millennial kingdom and into the eternal kingdom of the Father in the future.

But we'll see more of that at some future point when we address Revelation. Then verse 18, Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Ham was the father of Canaan. From this point forward, almost every time we see Ham mentioned, he's going to be linked to Canaan.

Why is this? We're going to find out this morning. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated. Then verse 20, Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard.

Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father.

Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. So Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his younger son had done to him. Then he said, Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.

And he said, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant. Noah lived after the flood 350 years.

So all the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died. This is a fascinating little vignette. We find almost immediately that it raises questions.

It's been the subject of a great deal of study and speculation and analysis. The first thing that we find about Noah after the flood is that he worships. And we saw that in chapter 9. The first thing Noah does is build an altar to the Lord.

And the sweet smell of the sacrifice is directly linked in the narrative to God's covenant to never again destroy the earth. It is as though God is appeased, and God's judgment will never again come on the whole earth. And it is tied in the narrative to Noah's sacrifice.

If you think about this and meditate on it a little bit, this is an illustration of some larger truths, isn't it? There has been a universal condemnation of the human race that results in the sentence of death for all. But there has been faithfulness, there has been obedience on the part of one, and his sacrifice has appeased God so that that judgment will never again be reckoned. And in a loose sense, we see the comparison between Noah and those who are associated with Noah being delivered through judgment and the sacrifice of Noah, which the pleasant aroma rises to God's nostrils and God says, this sacrifice pleases me.

Faith pleases me. The righteousness that is accounted to those of faith is acceptable in my sight. I will never again render this kind of judgment.

And so, again, if you push that too far, you can start to develop wrinkles in your understanding of salvation. But in the broad sense, we see the condemnation lifted because of association with the one who is righteous, the one who is blameless, and the one who walks with God. Noah here is foreshadowing, in that sense, Jesus Christ.

And those who accompany him are delivered. And there is no mention of their righteousness or their personal attributes. It is their association with Noah that delivers them through the flood in the same way that our association with Christ delivers us from the universal condemnation that falls on our race.

Now, after the flood, this sacrifice has been rendered and now judgment is up to man. Now man has to decide what is right and what is wrong. And after our salvation and our deliverance, we are responsible to discern good and evil.

You think about the end of Hebrews chapter 5. We need to be those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. And that's part of spiritual growth, is to come to recognize the better things. Come to recognize that which is

pleasing in God's sight.

So we have a lot of analogy here to that. In verse 20, Noah began to be a farmer. It literally says Noah was a man of the soil.

He was a farmer, much as his father Lamech had been prior to the flood and prior to his own death. Back in Genesis chapter 5, in verse 29, Lamech, when he had his son, he said, We'll call his name Noah. This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands because of the ground which the Lord has cursed.

So we get the idea that Lamech must have been a farmer and experienced at first hand the curse on the ground. And he says, I've got a son here, perhaps in a literal sense, to help me with the plowing here and help lift some of this curse. So Noah, it says, was a man of the soil, as his father before him.

And he planted a vineyard. Now, the vineyard, the grapes and wine and so forth are going to be also highly symbolic and are going to illustrate many things through the rest of Scripture. But it is worth noting that this was not a potato farm.

It wasn't an oak field. It wasn't a barley crop. He didn't get the hops and brew beer.

It's a vineyard. Vineyards can be good. Vineyards can be bad.

We see illustrations throughout Scripture. We don't have time to turn to them. Of the use of vineyards in parables or in prophetic utterances to illustrate Israel as the people of God.

God plants a vineyard. He hedges it about. He puts in a tower.

He hires laborers to tend it and take care of it. He's expecting fruit. But when he comes back, there is no fruit.

Then there is condemnation. But the fruitful vineyard is symbolized perhaps best in John 15. Jesus says, I am the vine.

You are the branches. Abide in me and you will bear much fruit. So the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored and the vintage of God's judgment is an illustration.

And at the same time, you have the vine and the branches and the positive side of this. So a vineyard can go either way. People tend to... My daughter Rebecca, in fact, both of the girls have asked us ever since they were old enough to talk if we're watching something on TV.

You know how it is when you're watching a movie or something and even if it's a cartoon movie, if somebody is starting to walk into danger, they open a creaking door and go in and the lights are off. They have this music in the background. I never thought much

about it, but they're always asking me, Dad, is that warning music? Is that warning music? And you hear this sort of minor key type of stuff.

Rebecca had a dream last night. It woke her up and she came into the room. And Patty asked her, what bad dream did you have? She said, well, I was stooped over picking something up and I heard warning music.

And that was enough to constitute a bad dream for her. She heard the warning music and they were afraid. It woke her up.

Well, we tend to think as soon as we see Noah planted a vineyard, we start to hear warning music. Oh, no. He's already headed down the path of dissipation here or something.

There's nothing inherently wrong with planting a vineyard. We should not be hearing warning music because of the vineyard. A vineyard can be a good thing.

Israel is God's vineyard. It's not inherently a bad thing. It's what happens with the vineyard.

It's what you do with the grapes. It's what happens with the wine. My goodness, the cup of wine is a part of the Lord's table that He says He will drink with us new in the kingdom.

So wine is not an inherently demonic substance. Noah was a man of the soil and he planted a vineyard. Now in verse 21, you can start playing the warning music.

Then he drank of the wine and was drunk and became uncovered in his tent. The first part of this is pretty clear. We know what it means to drink wine.

We know what it means to drink too much and become drunk. What happens when you're drunk? Your self-control wanes. Your judgment, your discernment, your self-awareness diminish without your knowledge.

It goes without saying that if you're less self-aware, you're not going to be aware that you're less self-aware. If your judgment is impaired, you're not going to realize, you're not going to judge that your judgment isn't. Most people at the time that they are inebriated aren't aware of the magnitude of their altered state in the eyes of others, especially others who are sober.

That's why people like to get in a group to drink because everybody is equally impaired and everybody thinks that everything is great at the time. But the last phrase here, he became uncovered in his tent. This is a result of impaired judgment.

Now, where else are you going to be uncovered unless you're in your tent? It doesn't say he was uncovered outside his tent. It doesn't say that he danced about in the open

uncovered. We have the instance, you remember, when David was taking the tabernacle to Jerusalem and was so overjoyed at the prospect of having this dwelling place of the holiness of God coming to his capital city that he dances wildly and apparently exposed himself as he danced along the way before the ark.

And you remember his wife, Saul's daughter, Michael, spitefully rebukes him for having had this happen where he exposes himself in public because of his wild abandon of rejoicing. And she is under a curse as a result of pointing out the nakedness of David and making an issue out of the nakedness of David. David is not rebuked.

David is not chastised. Nothing happens to David for this not so graceful, not so modest behavior. It is Michael who points it out that comes under a curse.

She's childless for the rest of her life. She has to adopt the children of her sister to have any children to take care of. So, it is not even this nakedness.

I mean, he's uncovered in his tent. Where else are you going to be uncovered? He's in his tent. That's where he's supposed to be.

So, even this, although it is not the ideal, it doesn't appear to be a bad thing. What is it that happens with Ham? What is it in the seeing of this nakedness brings forth Noah's first words in the divine record? Cursed be Canaan. We're going to pause and take our break, and when we come back, we'll find out.