

A Warning for 2015

The new year brings hope and opportunity. Many of us have made New Year's resolutions we are firmly committed (at least for now . . .) to keep throughout the year.

Every new year, though, also brings renewed temptations and fresh opportunities for failure. Consequently, this post is a caution based on the story of Noah's drunkenness after the receding of the floodwaters (Gen. 9:20-27).

In this story, Noah became drunk with wine and lay naked in his tent. His son Ham saw his father naked and told his two brothers. While we can't be certain of Ham's sin in this situation, he dishonored his father by seeing his nakedness and then reporting his father's state to his brothers. Both father and son had sinned, and the repercussions were serious and long lasting through a curse on Ham's son, Canaan.

My intent here is not to debate the use of alcohol or to discuss the curse on Canaan. Instead, my goal is help us consider the consequences of one act of sin. Think about these conclusions from this story.

1. Nobody—even the most righteous person today—is immune from sin tomorrow. Several times in the story of Noah, the scriptures speak of his obedience to God. He was “a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries” (Gen. 6:9, HCSB). Four times, the text says Noah did whatever the Lord commanded him (Gen. 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16). All of his faithfulness, though, did not keep him from getting drunk. Our temptations may be different, but this truth remains the same. Faithfulness today is no guarantee of our victory tomorrow.

2. A powerful movement of God does not always keep us from sin. Think about it—God showed favor to Noah by personally communicating with him, warning him about the flood, giving him direction about the ark, and then safeguarding him and his

family through the deluge. In fact, Noah's first recorded act when his family left the ark was to build an altar to the God who had provided divine guidance and protection. Still, that history of the undeniable work of God did not keep Noah from making momentary choices that brought shame on himself. Regardless of what miracles God has worked in our past, we too can still fall today.

3. Even a single act of sin can mar the record of years of faithfulness. Again, Noah found favor in the Lord's sight and modeled faithfulness for his generation (Gen. 6:8-9, 7:1). So faithful was he that the book of Hebrews includes him among the models of faith (Heb. 11:7). The same Bible, though, does not shy away from Noah's failure in Genesis 9. The account is brief, but the blemish is glaring – and the inspired Word of God does not allow us to ignore Noah's sin even today. The danger of making a choice today that will mar the rest of our lives is ever before us.

4. Seldom does our sin affect only us. In Noah's case, the sin of a parent opened the door for the sin of a son; even a single failure became a stumbling block to somebody else. I have seen seemingly single acts of sin lead to ungodly anger, bitterness, and retaliation from others. Sometimes, the single act includes another person, who then also falls into the enemy's trap. Too many of us can tell stories of those whose single acts of sin have left ongoing scars in others – and the risk of that story becoming ours in 2015 is a real one.

So, brother or sister in Christ, here is my caution: even a single wrong choice this year can carry heavy consequences. Join with me in praying that none of us would make decisions this year that will mar the rest of our lives. Let's follow God—and lead His people, if that is our calling—from our knees.

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