

Genesis 9.18 -11.32 (read Gen 9.18-29;11:1-10,27-32)

Clint Le Page

CPS – Sin separates us from God, but through Christ we're restored to relationship with God and each other - show it in love.

Sin separates.(**SLIDE**)

Sin separates us from each other.

We see that; experience that, when a friend gossips or says hurtful things behind our back, and the relationship of trust is broken.

We see it with more than a third of marriages ending in divorce.

And I've sat with n' pastored people through the brokenness, pain and grief of that.

And how it's left an ongoing impact on the couple, the children, and maybe you.---

Also, many of us also have family members we're estranged from n' don't talk too, and people who are no longer friends

Sin separates.

We see it in families, in friendships, in society.-----

We see it in our passage today, and I hope it will make us long for the restoration Christ brings and will bring.

I pray you'll leave with hope today.-----

After today, we pause our Genesis series, for our 3 Meet Jesus Sundays.

Then in September we'll come back to Gen 12, before returning to Luke's Gospel.----

Remember **where we're up to** in Genesis:

In ch6 we were told,(**SLIDE**) 'The Lord saw that human wickedness was widespread, and that every inclination of the human mind, was nothing but evil all the time.'

And God proceeded to wipe mankind from the face of earth in a huge flood.

All humanity was killed, except for Noah and the 7 with him on the ark.---

I mentioned last week how Noah's family & the animals the leaving of the ark post-flood, brings a **fresh start** for humanity.

It seemed all the "wicked" perished, but is the problem fixed?-----

We have a hint that it is not, in **8v21.(SLIDE)**

God is pleased with Noah's sacrifice and says to himself: "I will never again curse the ground because of human beings, even though the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth (or childhood) onward."

The problem is a heart problem; which remains.-----

God knows that we are the problem.

Our sin is the problem.

And a fresh start will still lead to the same old problems – more sinful choices.-----

Our first point today is: SIN (SLIDE)

In Genesis **6(v8-9)** Noah was contrasted with the wicked of his generation.

(**SLIDE**)He 'was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.'-----

But, he ain't perfect.-----

Look at ch**9v20**, after Noah leaves the ark he 'began by planting a vineyard'.(**SLIDE**)

He was a farmer and keen to enjoy some wine.

And 'he drank some of the wine, became drunk and uncovered himself inside his tent.' The Hebrew word for 'drunk' can mean satisfied & sleepy, so it's possible he wasn't drunk.

And there's no crime with lying naked in your own tent.

Noah was not out wandering around naked.

And neither here nor anywhere does Scripture condemn Noah's actions.-----

And yet, neither is his behaviour excused.

If he was drunk, which is likely, it just reminds us that Noah was a sinner just like the rest of us. Noah too sinned and lacked self-control.

There's only ever lived one sinless person, and that's the Lord Jesus.-----

But in Genesis the fault is found with Ham, **v24**.

He's twice called Ham 'the father of Canaan' (v18,22), hinting that sin will soon come.

It's Ham's sin, which is highlighted in the text.-----

'Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers'.

Maybe he makes fun of his father to them.

We've probably all been guilty of disrespecting our fathers, which is why we might feel the punishment that comes doesn't fit the crime.

Yet I also acknowledge that I don't come from an honour-shame culture.

So don't grasp the shame Ham brought to his father.-----

[Since Genesis 3.7(cf. 2.25), nakedness has been associated with shame.]

Shem and Japheth then go to every effort to avoid seeing their Dad naked, walking in backwards and covering him.-----

And Noah awakes and ends up cursing not Ham, but Ham's youngest son Canaan, condemning him to be a slave.

And the Canaanites do become slaves of Israel, in Joshua 9 & 1 Kings 9.----

But we might ask why should innocent Canaan be cursed for his father's sin?-----

I'm not sure.

Maybe Ham's sin against the family will mean his own family will falter.

But please be clear, that God doesn't punish Canaan for his father's sin.

The Canaanites inhabiting the Promised Land are punished for their own sins, when they deserve it, **Genesis 15.16(SLIDE)**.-----

Chapter 9 finishes with Noah dying, just like all Noah's ancestors before him.

For the wages of sin is death.(**SLIDE**)-----

Then skip forward to **ch11**, for chronologically it comes before ch10.----- (see 10.5,32)

The reason for all the scattered nations and languages in ch10, is the sin in ch11.

And **vv1-9** are a brief but brilliant example of Hebrew story-telling.(**SLIDE**)

It has lots of plays-on-words which we can't all see in the English.

But let me read the first few verses again:

'The whole earth had the same language and vocabulary. ² As people migrated from the east,^[a] they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ They said to each other, "Come, let's make oven-fired bricks." (They used brick for stone and asphalt for mortar.) ⁴ And they said, "Come, let's build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let's make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth."

So after the flood all the descendants of Noah still spoke one language.

Then they decided to build a tower, made of bricks not stone, and tar not mortar.

At one level this is inventive and ingenious.

But the writer, Moses, is also hinting, these are second-class materials.

And wanting us to ask, Will their inferior tower stand?-----

They want this tower to reach to the 'sky', to heaven – it's the same Hebrew word.

While not literally to heaven, it's figurative and describes a tower of impressive and monumental proportions.-----

This is an ancient skyscraper, and they're attempting to be like God.-----
 The tower may have been like this,(**SLIDE**); not a chimney stack but a ziggurat.----
 The ziggurat supposedly served as a gate to heaven.
 The small blue shrine at the top was meant to blend with the home of the gods.-----
 As OT scholar Gordon Wenham says, they were likely trying to reach God, and even
 displace God. This tower is a declaration of war against God.-----

V4 also says, they did it to make a name for themselves.
 They desired a reputation, that they'd earn themselves.
 This is driven by pride, godlessness, and an attitude of independence against the
 true God.-----
 And isn't this still true of people today?-----
 How often do we hear famous successful people saying, "You can be anything you
 want to be, do anything you set your mind to"?-----
 "You can do anything if you just work hard enough".-----
 You often hear it from competition winners and actors like Will Smith.(**SLIDE**)
 A new Spiderman movie is out, and actor Tom Holland has said, he genuinely
 believes in manifestation.
 Like, If you dream of something you can build it brick by brick.
 People think they're gods.-----
 In **ch11v6**, when God says, 'nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them', it's
 not meant literally. It's irony.
 God is echoing their words, their thoughts.
 They're thinking nothing is impossible for them, and God mocks their self-confidence.----
 And again, isn't such pride & self-confidence the sin of many today?-----
 We ignore God and take the credit for our own achievements.-----
 We reject God, and want to put ourselves in his place, ruling our own little world?----
 As Reformer **John Calvin** said, we are 'altogether infected with sin'...
 Human hearts haven't changed.-----
 Without God's grace, that is us.-----
 Sinful desires built the tower of Babel.-----

And what does God do?----- He **separates** them.(**SLIDE**)
 The people building this tower to heaven, they wanted to do it together, **v4** and 'not
 be scattered over the face of the whole earth'.---
 God had said in Gen 1, and to Noah's family(**SLIDE,9v7**) 'Be fruitful and multiply,
 spread out over the earth'.-----
 And people do the opposite.
 Wanting to work together is not wrong, but they work against God's purposes.-----
 Notice that God cares about the plans and ambitions of people.
 Not just about what individuals do, but what groups do.
 And God still cares about what corporations, groups & societies do.
 He cares about **our plans and ambitions**, as a church.-----
 We don't need to spread out over the earth any more.
 But God wants us to work together to fill it with followers of Jesus.-----
 Spread the good news and go n' make disciples of all nations.
 At Bundy, we believe one way we can achieve that in our city is by planting a church,
 a new campus.
 But our plans must align with God's plans.
 We need to believe & say, "if the Lord wills".(**SLIDE-Jam 4.15**)

You and I, and we together, should make our plans, to please the Lord, and Lord willing.-----

In Gen 11, people didn't want to be scattered n' separated, yet what they feared most, happens.----

While they try to build a tower up to heaven, notice God **comes down** to them, **v5**, **v7.(SLIDE)**

They try to reach God, and God has to come down to see their puny tower. God is far above us, far above our pathetic n' pitiful efforts to dethrone him.-----
The tower stands as a monument to humanity's impotence before our Creator.-----
Have you forgotten how big, how great, how awesome God is?-----

People want to make a name for themselves, so '**confusion**' becomes the city's motto, **v9**.

God frustrates their sinful scheming and confuses their language.-----

'Babel' in Hebrew is the word for confusion. It's where we get the word "**babble**".

After God's judgement, there's only babble in Babel.-----

Then, **God scatters them** over all the earth; over the face of the whole earth.----

As **Acts 17** says,(**SLIDE**) 'From one man [God] made every nationality, to inhabit the whole earth; and he determined their appointed times and the boundaries (or exact places) where they should live.'-----

Coming back to **ch10**, let's look more closely at this separation.

Ch10 doesn't mention all the nations and languages of the earth.

It accounts for the groups the Israelites were aware of.---

Remember Genesis is written by Moses prior to Israel entering the Promised Land.----

The **sons of Japheth**, **v2**,(**SLIDE**) end up heading north, and inhabiting modern day, Greece, Turkey, Eastern Europe, Russia, and beyond.

Some of the places are on the map.-----

The descendants of Gomer, **v2**, would later head West into Europe.-----

The Madai become the Medes, and the Javan, the Greeks.[Kittim v4 is Cyprus]

From Ham, **v6**, his descendants Cush, Put and Mizraim, inhabited Africa.

And this map(**SLIDE**) shows Mizraim is Egypt, and Cush refers to Ethiopia, modern-day Sudan.-----

Cush means 'black', but not all Ham's line are black Africans.

Not until the middle of the 19th C, in the African slave trade did anyone ever imagine that Ham was the father of all the black races, or there was a curse on them.

Prejudiced minds once used this text to justify enslaving Africa's black peoples.

It's unbiblical, and actually proof of their sin.

Racism is never justifiable.-----

I hope none of us believe that certain races are less human or less valuable.----

Or maybe you don't consider yourself racist but still think "those people" are not worthy of my love, my time, my attention.-----

We are all descendants of Adam and descendants of Noah, and all are in need of the Savior.-----

Canaan in **v15-19**, fathered all the tribes that inhabited the Promised Land.(cf.Gen 15.20).

And they would lose that land, due to their sins.-----

In **vv8-12** we also read of **Nimrod**, a powerful hunter.

Even in God's view he was mighty, but likely a hunter of humans.-----

Nimrod is remembered for his personal prowess and political power.
 He forms an empire, establishing the cities of Babylon, Nineveh and more.-----
 One famous Jewish medieval commentator, Rashi, suggests Nimrod was
 instrumental in building the tower of Babel.-----

Then the eldest **Shem, v21**.

He's mentioned last because from his line Abraham will come.-----

From Shem we get the name 'Semite', and anti-Semitism.

Shem's family would inhabit modern Arabia, Iran, Iraq and beyond.-----

Also from **Eber, v21** we may get the name "Hebrew".-----

Looking at **v25**, it may have been in Peleg's lifetime that the separation, post-Babel
 happened.-----

Then **v32** summarises things. 'These are the clans of Noah's sons [and]... the
 nations on the earth spread out from these.'-----

So the early chapters of Genesis describe not just a history of Israel, but our origins.

We will hear of God's saving purposes that will embrace Israel and the world.---

But at the moment, We feel the separation & confusion with languages, don't
 we?-----

When you travel overseas, and you're far from your loved ones and struggle to
 communicate.

When missionaries or immigrants have to spend years learning a new language and
 culture.

When you can't talk to & understand your next-door neighbour.-----

We feel it at church, when some of our Persian speaking brothers & sisters don't
 speak much English and we don't speak Farsi.----- For example.

Thankfully, our separation by language and place will not endure forever.

Nor does humanity's separation from God.

God will not leave humanity without **hope - Hope of a Restoration – Point 3.(SLIDE)**

Which will come through Abraham.-----

In **chapter 11 from v10**, we have the genealogy that traces the line of Shem down
 to Abram in **v26**.-----

And this sets the scene for the rest of the Genesis story.-----

We're told about how Abram married Sarai, and they were childless.

In a few weeks we'll come back to their story, and God's promise to bless all peoples
 on earth through him.-----

For from Abraham will come one who deals with our sin and separation.-----

Our separation from God and each other will be restored.-----

And as we know, this **restoration happens through Jesus Christ**.-----

Eph 2 says, 'you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and
 foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the
 world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by
 the blood of Christ.'

Because of our sin, we were separated from God, but when we get 'in Christ' by
 trusting in him, we are saved & brought near.

We are reconciled to God, get relationship with God, through faith in Jesus.-----

The One who let his blood pour out to death for us.-----

Please pray people will come to believe this through Meet Jesus.-----

But not only does Christ reconcile us to God, he **reconciles us to each other**, to fellow Christians.-----

The apostle goes on to say in **Eph 2,(SLIDE)** that Christ 'is our peace'.

He's made Jews and non-Jews one.

Torn down the wall of hostility, united all Jesus' followers to each other, in peace. And I thank God that at Bundy, we see a picture of this.

People from numerous nations and languages, united together in the body of Christ here.

It's something to rejoice in.----

The restoration of relationships across people groups.-----

But language continues to be barrier.

I only speak one language, English, and that can make it hard to connect-with and love others in the body of Christ.-----

The tower at Babel resulted in the peoples of the world speaking babble to one another, even with google translate.

But we get a taste of the restoration of unity, in **Acts 2** at Pentecost.(**SLIDE**)

For when the ascended Christ first pours out the HS on all believers, they speak in other languages, which others from those nations can understand.

By the Spirit, people from 'every nation under heaven' hear the word of God in their own language.-----

And that's like a taste, of the final restoration in heaven, when **Rev 7** says,(**SLIDE**)

'there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could count, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...

¹⁰And they cried out in a loud voice (presumably in one unified language):

"Salvation belongs to our God, who's seated on the throne, and to the Lamb."

I am sure, that with one voice, understanding each other, we will worship our Savior on that day – How awesome!-----

I hope you can look forward to that with Hope.-----

No more misunderstandings, confusion, distance, separations.-----

Yet brothers and sisters, NOW in Christ we join the people of God.

Know that in Christ we are one family.

All saved by Christ and restored to relationship with God our Father.

What a blessing!

We who do come from different cultures, places, nations, languages, we are one in Christ Jesus, restored to each other in Christ.(**SLIDE-Gal 3.28**)-----

Our mission at Bundy is to proclaim Christ, so that people are saved, follow Jesus, and live every area of life for him.(**SLIDE**)

And part of our living for Christ is expressed in one of our commitments:

To Warmly loving, welcoming, and caring for one another in all our gatherings and relationships.

God wants us to treat each other as family, welcome each other, and new believers into the family.-----

I pray that over our Meet Jesus Sundays, we will warmly welcome new people.

And that they would see love in the ways we relate to one another

So could you step out of your comfort zone and speak to someone you don't know after the service, and get to know them?-----

Just we talked about in Session 2 of our Life Together growth groups course.-----

Nigel was an introverted kind of guy, who always found it hard & got anxious about moving toward and talking to new people.

But he saw someone he didn't know standing by themselves.

So he went up and said "Hi, I'm Nige, what's your name?"

He then asked Alex what he did during the week.

They chatted for a few minutes, which wasn't easy, because Alex's struggled with English, but Nige finished by saying, 'Hope to see you again next week'.

And next week, Nigel planned to have enough food at home, and that Sunday he invited Alex home for lunch, with a couple of other church friends – to help Alex build relationships with others.-----

Nige is continuing to work at stepping out of his comfort zone in love and to live for Jesus.---

How are you challenged or encouraged by his example?-----

We're not meant to love only people that are like us.

How are you able to show love and friendship to people who are new or different?----

Sin separates us from God, but through Christ we're restored to relationship with God and each other.

Let's Show it in how we welcome and love each other.-----

Let's pray.