

Beacons of the Bible

Filial Impiety

By [Henry Law](#)

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After the Flood, Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard. One day he became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, walked backward into the tent, and covered their father's naked body. As they did this, they looked the other way so they wouldn't see him naked. When Noah woke up from his drunken stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. Genesis 9:20-24

The earliest days of earth witnessed sin in full-blown magnitude. The monster was quick to raise a giant-head. Every succeeding morn has dawned on its tremendous work. Each swift-flying moment has been stained by its defiling touch. The world has never known a respite. The sluice-gates have not closed. The terrible stream has ever flowed.

When but one household lived, this plague of evil crept in. Sin took its seat amid that little company. The seed of the serpent even then hated the child of faith. Cain rose in wrath. The righteous Abel fell a murdered corpse.

After a course of sinful years, the flood cleansed earth of its polluting inhabitants. Then one domestic band occupied the renovated soil. But sin went forth even among them. The drowning waters have not destroyed it.

In the *young* world brother slays brother. In the *renewed* earth a son, with impious recklessness, treads down a venerable parent. In the one case, fraternal ties afford no shield. In the other, the love, the reverence, which are the father's due, daunt not the assailant. A brother's blood is shed. A father's fame is mangled. There is no adamant like unto sin's hardness.

This last enormity now meets us. It is deeply steeped in misery. It is a cup filled to the topmost rim with bitter waters. It is a picture, in which each shade darkens blackness with blackness.

Noah, after a long life of saintly eminence, gives forth a sad occasion. In

thoughtless moment he deviates into sin's path. He thus provokes the unnatural blow. He foully falls, and by his fall he slopes the way for the son's fouler evil.

Partaking of the produce of his vineyard, he gives free reins to unrestrained indulgence. He drinks, until he lies a drunken man. Reason is thus beclouded. Consciousness becomes bewildered. He is outstretched within his tent--helpless--besotted. His walk had long been heavenward--but this unguarded moment hurls him from his lofty pinnacle. He sinks into shame's lowest depths.

Here crowds of mournful thoughts arise. What savage joy would fill the heart of Satan! What shouts of triumph would pervade his hellish realms! What a victory would now elate him! How surely will he mangle the victim caught within his net!

Results--so sure to follow--suggest most strong entreaties to each child of God. Beloved, realize your countless calls to pure and blameless life. Consider what observation ever watches you! What scrutiny marks your every step! What devouring tongues will magnify your least offence! They, who are prone to fabricate unreal faults, will surely magnify unquestionable shortcomings. What, if you stray? Vice boldly triumphs. Religion is bespattered with all sneers. Taunts openly proclaim, that all men are alike in secret life. Insinuations whisper, that the worst are they, who falsely claim a higher standard, and cloak iniquity in vile hypocrisy.

It may be, also, that *beginners in the heavenly walk* are startled and discouraged. Inexperience falters, and perhaps turns back. The early spark of piety is quenched. The world wins back the victims struggling from its grasp. Satan's chains again are tightened around the prey almost escaped.

Thus grievous faults in God's children are the direst wounds to pure religion. The Savior's name is profanely mocked. His holy truth is blasphemed, as a lie. The narrow way, which only leads to life, is ridiculed, as truthless scrupulosity. Believer, would you not die for Christ? Resist, then, sin unto the death. Yielding, you may wound Him, by whose stripes you are healed.

Noah's shame soon sees the light. But whose step first crosses the threshold of the tent? Who first perceives the misery? What eye first rests on the dishonored patriarch? His youngest son is guided to the door. This seems a gracious providence to screen the fallen. Exposure would be probable, if some unfeeling stranger should behold. An alien might be not careful to conceal--no, rather prone to propagate. But Ham, Noah's son, is the discoverer.

Can he, with unweeping eye, and with unsorrowing heart, discern the fact? Can he fail to use all means to cloak the infamy? Can he seemingly rejoice in this enormous blot? Can it be, that his lips can open to proclaim it? Can he hasten to make known the fall? Can he reveal it even to his brothers?

Stand aghast at the occurrence. It is written, "Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and *told his two brothers* outside." Genesis 9:22. Oh! vile iniquity--most hateful hardness--most unnatural cruelty--most abominable impiety! The greatness of the sin is announced terribly on the instant sentence, "Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him--and he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." Genesis 9:24-25.

We are thus brought with mourning hearts to analyze this sin. Ham sees the fall of a tried saint--an aged patriarch--his father. He weeps not. He conceals not. He hastens to expose.

Here is hardness not melted by the dews of heaven. Here is the recklessness of a man touched not by the Spirit's gentle power. Here is a startling proof, that the old heart is the nest of every unclean bird--the home of every ungodly passion--the spring of every loathsome stream--the deadly tree of every poisonous berry--hostility to God's family--intense aversion to the loveliness of grace--the image of the old serpent. Ham in the dawn of post-diluvian days, as Cain in the morning of the world, was only *nature's offspring*--shaped in iniquity--conceived in sin--one of the viper's brood--and therefore wholly a mass of hatred to the heirs of faith.

Here is the spring of this appalling conduct. Ham's breast beat not in sympathy with Noah's habitual piety. No, rather, his inner man was thoroughly a counter stream. He long had marked the current of the saintly life. He had observed the close walk to God. He hated the light. He writhed beneath the brightness. He had received long trains of truthful teaching. But the good seed found no prepared soil. No root was taken. No fruit sprang up. Alienation rejected. Enmity abhorred. His taste was wholly worldly. His deeds were only evil.

And now an unlooked-for opportunity was obtained. He found his father plunged in the mire of sin. His godless heart felt hellish joy. He cannot spare. He will not pity. He rushed, as a wild beast, to devour the prey. He called his brothers to the spectacle. No reverence for the long-witnessed godliness of his father restrained him. No love for such a father checked him. No reluctance to revile so high a name hindered him. Hatred of truth found matter for its sneers. A damaging fact was in his hand. He glories in his triumph. And thus, on the wreck of his own father's fame, he erects the Beacon of Filial Impiety.

Frightful indeed is this Beacon. The writing on it fully DISPLAYS NATURE'S VILENESS. It hoots away the weak fallacy, that man's own heart is naturally filled with seeds of excellence. No, rather, it shows it as a magnet pointing to evil, as its polar star. Social life and salutary laws may stand a *barrier to the outbreaking*. But such restraint reaches not to the *root* of the disease. The chained tiger loses not its wild ferocity. The dam, which checks the tide, gives not an upward course. *A mask may hide the face, but it imparts no beauty to the covered features!* Culture may expand the intellect, but it implants no spiritual affection. Whenever

nature is only nature, however curbed or tutored by external factors, it still remains a sprout from evil's root. Hence the necessity of new birth in order to become heirs of life, "Marvel not, that I say unto you, you must be born again." John 3:7. Hence the all-pervading change, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature--old things are passed away--behold all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5:17.

The Beacon next shows NATURE DELIGHTING TO DISHONOR GRACE. Its hatred burns against the Lord--His blessed truth--His humble followers--His holy cause. When godliness shines forth, and casts sweet rays around, and wins commending notice, and shames depravity, and draws attracted souls to Zion's ways, the sight is wormwood to the serpent's seed. They cannot wholly defame transparent truth. But they will rush in to calumniate, if the least door be opened. What, if a good man be entrapped! What, if sparks long stifled blaze again! What, if unwary steps descend into the crafty snare! What, if the tempter gains unhappy mastery! Then what vile triumph! What open sneer! What base reviling! *What eagerness to expose! What efforts to magnify!* What stout denial of religion, as a real principle! What insinuation, that piety is only fraud! What weak conclusion, that Gospel-walk is an unreal show! What a loud cry, that they are not the worst, who wear no mark of Christianity! What venomous jeers, "Come see this saint! Ah! ah! it is as we suspected!"

Few saints reach heaven but through some storms of pitiless reproach. Distinguished indeed are they, whose constant wariness--and tight adherence to the Lord--and unremitted prayer, guard them from giving cause to blasphemy. While we lament that blame too often soils the little flock, one precious comfort cheers us. We look to Jesus, the Lord our righteousness. He passed through years of life, pure as a sunbeam penetrating hovels of uncleanness. Mark His challenge, "Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin?" John 8:46. Mark the often-repeated acquittal, "I find no fault in Him." Mark the unexpected testimony, "Have nothing to do with that just man." Matt. 27:19. Mark the impartial witness, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Mark 15:39.

But throughout His ministry a bitter enemy stood ever by His side. Judas, who was a devil, watched His every step--heard His every word--the companion of His public walk--the comrade at His private fellowship--the attendant in His loneliest retreat--John 6:70. Had there been one moment of unguardedness--one approach to devious path, greedily he would have seized--cruelly, also, he would have denounced. But when remorse fixed its tormenting fangs in the self-loathing traitor's breast, then he pours forth the accurate confession, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Matt. 27:4.

Blessed be God! All praise to wondrous grace! Earth has seen "Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1. His faultless obedience was wrought out for His Church. It is their beauteous robe. It is their glorious clothing. It is imputed to them, as their own deed. It is their title to the heavenly kingdom. It is their rich adornment

through eternal ages. It fades not with revolving years. It cannot change its changeless hue. It ever shines bright as very Deity. Believer, clasp it. Delight in it. Trust in it. It cannot fail. Commend it. It exceeds all praise. Glory in it. It is worthy. But its full beauty you will never see, until heaven's day reveals it. Its perfect worth you cannot know, until you receive the crown, which it has earned--the throne, which is its due. Your best righteousness is but a filthy rag. Your too frequent falls bespatter you with mire. But your Jesus is unsullied purity. And all His purity decks you. The hands, which wrought righteousness, bestow it. In it you triumph. In it you reign forever.

But a still darker feature deforms this Beacon. It is a son, who wounds a father's name. Ham tramples upon Noah. He joys in this delinquency. He revels impiously in the parental shame.

Godly parents cannot secure godly offspring. Only the Spirit achieves spiritual work. The homes of unconverted children nurture no harmless vipers. No bond of trustworthy affection unites the ingrates. Darkness cannot love light. The chained lion may not reach the neighboring lamb, but if occasion favors, the savage beast will show devouring fury. The ties of parentage cannot erase hostility to grace. The race of Ham will last, while earth abides. He was not slow to mock, and to pull down the father's pyramid of worth. What has been, will be again, if opportunity be given. The hoary head--the sacred claims--the recollection of long years of love--the experience of all guardian care, are a weak covert. The unconverted heart cannot spare piety. It breaks down all barriers. No sanctity can keep it back. It godlessly will rush to desecrate even a loving parent.

"Noah awoke from his wine." Forgetfulness is short. Consciousness returns. He opens his eyes on the realities. He is sensible of his own grievous fault. He is cognizant, also, of his own son's impiety. He "knew what his younger son had done unto him." Can he fail to loathe himself, because of his own evil? Can he fail to loathe himself the more, when he perceives that *his sad fall has led his own child into black waters of enormity?*

A good man's sin may be exposed to many eyes. But God alone sees the deep humiliation of the wounded spirit--the many tears--the earnest cries for mercy--the self-aborring anguish--the increased self-distrust--the life long grief. Noah would well learn, that the atoning blood was rich to wash out all his crimson stains. He would not doubt that divine righteousness would completely cloak his terrible defilement. But, pardoned by God, he never would forgive himself. Until the grave covered him, he would walk lowly--contrite--with downcast head--with bleeding heart--with many a self-condemning thought.

But now the Spirit of the Lord moves mightily in the patriarch's heart. His lips are guided to pour out predictive woe. "Cursed be Canaan--a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." The father's sin must have on earth a terrible result. A father's eye must foresee misery hunting his son's progeny to their last

race. A father's mouth must utter the malediction.

While Noah thus spoke--how would his heart quiver--how he would loathe his drunken day--how would he quake, when thus branding line after line of his descendants!

But tenderness is mixed in this agonizing trial. The father is not called to mention Ham. This bitterness is withheld. The curse is fixed on the next generation. Canaan's name is named.

It is outside the purpose of this tract to show how a long race of poor and abject slaves have verified the dreadful doom. Tribes upon tribes in iron bondage--under cruel yoke--oppressed--degraded--scorned--maltreated worse than laboring beasts--have proved that Ham's impiety has cast a blighting shadow over descending clans. The curse has fallen heavily.

Reader! do not forget, that every sin is linked with an eternal curse. The misery begins in time. But it does not stop there. Onward it rolls. Forward it extends.

Reader! flee all sin. You may see its first step. You cannot trace its last. You know how it pollutes earth. Can you tell how it embitters eternity?

Believer, bless Jesus with adoring love. He has redeemed you from each curse. This is not all. He blesses you with every blessing.

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