

## **The Lord Was Grieved**

Genesis 6:1-8

We are studying the history of mankind. Not a myth. Not a fable or a legend, but a history. Beginning with our first parents, Adam and Eve. We studied their fall into sin, then the sinfulness of the children they bore, including the first murderer, Cain. Along with his descendants, representing and defining the line of the wicked, those who would remain in rebellion against God.

We have also studied the other line of mankind, the line of the righteous, the faithful, those who turned to God in faith and worshipped him. Beginning with the replacement whom God provided for Abel,

Gen. 4:25 “And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.” 26 And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.”

Last time, two weeks ago, we looked at that great line of Seth, the ten generations that extended from Adam to Noah. That line was also the line through which Jesus would be born, according to the flesh. We identified two particular men in that line, men whose faithfulness to God was evident. First, Enoch then Noah. We look in some detail at Enoch, especially,

v.21 “Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. 22 After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. 23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 24 And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”

Then comes Noah, introduced at the end of chapter 5 and presented to us in much greater detail here in chapters 6-9. And

if you understand that the genealogy of chapter 5 is comprehensive, that all the generations are identified, as I believe they are, then you accumulate a total of 1656 years from creation until the flood. Further, having the inspired words of the Apostle Peter, we know that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, in the line of the patriarchs before him, Noah being the eighth such preacher.

2 Pet. 2:4 “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.”

As I mentioned two weeks ago, the more natural rendering of that last verse is that Noah was one of eight preachers of righteousness. So the gospel was being proclaimed from generation to generation, beginning with Seth and continuing to the days of Noah. But before we study Noah any further, we have to recognize something very sober and severe; namely, that that preaching wasn't very effective from a human perspective. In other words, for those 1656 years from creation until the flood, sin grew, sin was magnified, it expanded and was enlarged from generation to generation. Thus judgment would be anticipated and expected, the judgment of God. And these days of Noah are used by Jesus as a warning of that final judgment which would come at the end of the age,

Mat. 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

And what we find in our text this morning is a description of those days before the flood, a time when sin abounded and judgment was imminent. So we begin with,

## **I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE SINFUL WICKEDNESS OF MANKIND.**

A horrible description.

v.5 “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

We’ll look more thoroughly at that verse in a few minutes, but with that context, let’s look at the verses that begin the chapter first. As we do so, let me say that this passage is one of the most confusing passages that I have ever encountered in the Bible, confusing in the sense of trying to figure out exactly what the meaning might be. And the commentators aren’t always very helpful. Look at,

v.1 “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, 2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.”

And with that,

v.4 “There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”

Let’s start with the easy part. Children were being born, for over 1600 years now. The descendants of Adam and Eve were populating the earth. Living to the ripe old age of 900, some of them, you could guess that they had lots of children. “Men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to

them.” So far so good. That’s pretty obvious. But who are “the sons of God” who produced children with “the daughters of men”? And who were the “giants on the earth”? The actual Hebrew word there is Nephilim, which is how the ESV and the NASB actually translate the verse. But who were they?

I have one commentator whom I greatly respect who insists that the sons of God refer to the angels, since the phrase “sons of God” does refer to angels in a couple other places in the Bible. He insists therefore, that the sons of Gods are angels who come down to earth and marry human women, the daughters of men. And, he continues, their offspring, the Nephilim, are giants.

Now, my problem with that is that it goes against so much other sound theological ideas, like the fact that angels are spirits, thus not able to conceive or beget children. If they were, then their offspring would only be half human, not full descendants of Adam. In that case, at least partially, it couldn’t be said that all mankind descended from Adam by ordinary generation. So I reject the idea that Genesis 6 refers to angels who have intimate relations with women to produce giants.

But what, then, does it mean? To state the obvious, chapter 6 comes after chapter 5. Nothing confusing about that, but noting that connection, the key to understanding who the sons of God are is to keep in mind the context provided by chapter 5. That context is the line of Seth, the line of the godly, the true people of God, including men like Enoch, who walked with God. They are the men who publicly worshipped God, as we read in,

Gen. 4:26 “And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.”

Therefore, I believe that the descendants of Seth can properly

be called the sons of God. Among all the families on earth, the descendants of Seth may most appropriately be called the sons of God. And the daughters of men? Given this contrast between the two lines of mankind, they would be the descendants of Cain, those who rejected and rebelled against God. So the sons of God marrying the daughters of men would be the descendants of Seth, those who believed in God, would marry the descendants of Cain, those who lived in rebellion against God. Believers would marry unbelievers. And so, as a description of the sinful wickedness of mankind, we see that,

**A. Descendants of the godly intermarry with the wicked.**

And the text tells us why. The reason is not surprising. Why did the godly want to marry the wicked? Because they were beautiful!

v.2 "...the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose."

They didn't choose wives who were godly. They chose wives based solely upon their outward physical and sexual attraction. Interesting, isn't it, that this particular form of rebellion against God is raised up to such a level of importance. "They took wives for themselves of all whom they chose." Marriage became an opportunity to satisfy their physical desires. So ravished with the charm of physical beauty, these godly descendants of Seth forsook their first love, which was God, and gave themselves over to the sinful desires of their flesh. With impetuous lust, they ignored their spiritual heritage in the pursuit of sexual pleasure.

So it has always been. And throughout the history of God dealing with his people, the consistent warning to the godly is to avoid just such intimate relationships. The one, thing perhaps above all others, which the people of Israel were told when they

entered the land of Canaan was not to marry Canaanite women! The command was clearly stated,

Deut. 7:1 "When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, 2 and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. 3 Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. 4 For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. 5 But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire. 6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."

Now, it needs to be said that what God is forbidding is the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever. For this principle of not marrying the Canaanites is carried over into the NT not in any prohibition against inter-racial marriage, but against marriage between Christians and non-Christians. And so we read in,

2Cor. 6:14 "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

So back in Genesis 6, the sons of God refer to the godly seed of Seth, and the daughters of men refer to the wicked seed of Cain. And the horribleness of the sinfulness of mankind in those days before the flood is that God's people were marrying those

who aren't God's people. In the days before the flood, the spiritual disasters are explained further by the rather strange words of,

v.4

The children of these mixed marriages are called Nephilim. That's a Hebrew word. And since many good translations couldn't come up with an acceptable translation, they just left it in Hebrew, Nephilim. Not a bad idea either. And I'm tempted just to tell you that the children were called Nephilim, and then move on. That would be the easiest thing to do. And actually, I think that's better than using the English translation "giants." It's unfortunate that the English translation for Nephilim in the King James and New King James translations is giants, because that's not particularly what the word means. The issue with them is not their physical size.

The Hebrew word Nephilim is plural, meaning heroes or fierce warriors. Martin Luther uses a good English word to translate it--the word tyrant. Thus the Nephilim were victorious warriors, tyrants who achieved a reputation the world over for violence. They were "mighty men," according to verse 4, sometimes translated with the positive sense of heroes, but their fame was really infamy. They were men of renown, verse 4, literally men of a powerful name--but not because they were good. Just the opposite. Because of their evil and abusive exercise of power, not necessarily because of their size, they were greatly feared and held great terror over those under their influence.

We find the same word used to describe the people of Canaan whom the 12 spies had seen. We read in,

Num. 13:30 "Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." 31 But the men who had gone up with

him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." 32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

The idea is that the Nephilim were strong, mighty, and ruthless tyrants. Thus, a description of the sinful wickedness of mankind includes the situation that,

### **B. Violent tyrants rule in wickedness.**

Surely, these were wicked days. And thus we come to verse 5, where,

### **C. The wickedness of the human heart is fully revealed.**

v.5 "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

That verse is so incredibly clear, and comprehensive. "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." How great? EVERY intent of the thoughts of his heart was ONLY evil CONTINUALLY. Every intent, only evil, all the time. That's how far man had fallen into the depths of sin in only 1656 years. In the language of our day, we simply call that the doctrine of total depravity.

We often rightly say that no man is as bad and as wicked as he possibly could be. Even with unbelievers, God, by his common grace, restrains evil to one degree or another. It is only in the worst cases of horrible sinfulness that God removes his

restraints. In those worse cases, we read in,

Rom.1:28 “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.”

What we find here in Genesis 6 is that in the days before the flood, God gave over lots of people to a depraved mind. So much so that the true nature of sin was clearly seen. EVERY inclination, every intention or purpose, every decision was evil. And ONLY evil! The evil was mixed with nothing good! The evil was restrained by nothing whatsoever. It was ONLY evil. ALL the time. There was no reprieve, no letup, no relief.

This is, at its most basic level, the doctrine of total depravity. And left to himself, apart from any influence of divine grace, these words would describe every single descendant of Adam--every human being born since the fall, every one except Jesus Christ. Paul teaches the same doctrine of total depravity in the third chapter of Romans,

Rom. 3:10 As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.” 13 “Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit”; “The poison of asps is under their lips”; 14 “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” 15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways; 17 And the way of peace they have not known.” 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.””

His conclusion?

Rom.3:20 “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

And his application? The message of the gospel!

Rom.3:21 “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

So there is hope in Jesus Christ, but only in Jesus Christ. But here in Genesis 6, without reference to the work of Christ, we see in the God’s own mind,

## **II. THE LORD’S RESPONSE TO THE WICKEDNESS OF MANKIND.**

v.6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”

Actually, that same thought begins in,

v.3 “And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

There are two ways to interpret that reference to 120 years, and the first is simply that God, in his judgment upon mankind, now significantly limits the length of the normal human life span. Remember, we have read of Adam’s ancestors living as long as 900 years. Certainly that reduction of the normal lifespan is happening, and 120 is certainly a significant reduction from 900 years, but I think there is even a better explanation of verse 3. We read, ““My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.” Strive

there means to contend with, to plead with. And the sense is that God will not plead with mankind forever. He will not plead with man to repent indefinitely. There will be a limit!

The God of forbearance does have a limit to his forbearance. Man is indeed flesh, merely mortal, and he will eventually die. God's patience would not continue indefinitely. Rather, judgment will come!

#### **A. The Lord declares a limit to his forbearance.**

In other words, the Lord is giving mankind a one hundred twenty year warning before bringing judgment, a judgment he specifies in,

v.7 "So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

This 120 years is God's last call to repentance, his final warning. The judgement will come. But God is so gracious as to give sufficient warning! And the days of Noah are presented in Scripture as that warning for us to this day. That is the same warning that we read in,

2 Peter 3:3 "...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." 5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, 6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. 7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.8 "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The

Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."

Judgment is coming. The Lord's response to the wickedness of mankind is the same today as it was then. Today, he has not given us the exact number of years as he did then. But the message is the same. The Lord is forbearing, gracious and compassionate. In that forbearance, he calls you to repent of your sin and turn to him and be saved. And he does so with this warning--there is a limit to forbearance. Judgment will come. In the days of Noah, it would come in 120 years. Specifically,

#### **B. The Lord promises a universal judgment.**

v.7 "So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

What a terrible judgment. "I will destroy man...from the face of the earth." We will be studying the particulars of that judgment in the coming weeks, but as we end this morning, look at how the Lord expresses his own heart and mind as he announces this judgment.

#### **C. The Lord expresses the grief of his heart.**

v.6 "And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart."

Such an astounding statement. Such an incredible statement. The was grieved. He was grieved that he had even made man.

His heart was filled with pain because he had created mankind, only to receive rebellion and rejection. It was a tragic sorrow. The Lord was sorry. Literally, the word is the word for repentance, not that the Lord repented of doing something wrong, as we must do so often. But rather the Lord repented in that he was deeply grieved by the consequences of human sin that he “was sorry that He had made man on the earth.”

The Lord regretted that he had made man, in the ESV. Mankind became a grief to him. It is the anguish of a parent whose child has turned away and rejected his love, multiplied a thousand times. It is the heartbreak of a loving and compassionate father whose love is despised and ignored, the heartbreak of a faithful wife whose husband who forsakes and abandons her in his own wickedness.

That should give you some sense of the how the Lord reacts when you sin, for all our sins grieve him, for ultimately, all our sin is a sin against his love.

This is not a pretty picture, is it? This isn't a feel-good sermon, because this isn't a feel-good text. But oh, the spiritual riches of realizing these great truths about God. God's justice will come, just as it did then. But until that day, he is still forbearing, as he was in the days of Noah.

Thus the whole purpose of this account is to warn us, even to this day, to the end of the age. It is a warning of judgment to come. And with that warning, with the reminder of his forbearance until that day of judgment comes, the message of the gospel is to repent. Hearing this warning of judgment in the days of Noah, a judgment that foreshadows the final judgment at the end of the age, I will end with the clear words of the invitation of the gospel,

Acts 3:19 “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”