



Part 23 – The Sin of Man and the Grace of God

Genesis 6:1-8

As the fallen human race expanded and spread so too did sin and corruption. The rapid growth of the human population provided mankind ever increasing ways to sin against God and do evil toward his fellow man.

1. Man's worsening sin

Vv. 1-4

- The opening verses describe what will become one of the characteristic sins of God's people: their intermarriage with pagans. What should have been unthinkable became at times common among the people of God.
- Verse 2 is one of the most debated verses in the Book of Genesis. For our purposes there are generally three primary ways to understand "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men."
 - A) *Fallen angels and human women*
 - Some have seen it as referring to incarnate fallen angels (demons) intermarrying with human women. Elsewhere the term "sons of God" refers to angelic beings. But this seems highly unlikely since angels are spiritual beings that do not marry (Matthew 22:30). While found in some pagan literature, there is nothing in the Bible which suggests that angelic beings incarnate themselves in human flesh and engage in sexual acts with humans.
 - B) *Wicked or demonized kings*
 - Others suggest that the "sons of God" were a line of demon-possessed kings following after Lamech in the line of Cain. This view seeks to connect the term "sons of God" with the demonic while avoiding the idea of incarnate demons reproducing with human women. The problem is that there is no mention of these kings in the text. It seems to be based primarily on conjecture.
 - C) *The righteous seed and the unrighteous seed*
 - A third option seems most likely based upon the immediate context of the passage and the gradual unfolding of Genesis as a whole. From Augustine down through Luther and Calvin along with most contemporary commentators, this view takes "sons of God" to refer to the descendants of Seth, the godly line whose genealogy was provided in the immediately preceding verses; and "daughters of man" to refer to the descendants of Cain, the line of unbelief and wickedness which was given at the end of chapter 4.
 - One of the chief sins of God's people described in the Old Testament was the regular transgressing of God's boundaries for marriage. Intermarrying with unbelievers and pagans was one of the characteristic ways that the people sinned against God. This sort of intermarriage was a grievous sin because it led God's people into the idolatry and immorality of the nations such that "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (vs. 5).
- **Nephilim?**
 - i. The original readers would have known just exactly who the Nephilim were.
 - ii. The reference to the Nephilim was a way that Moses provided a historical marker for the events he is describing: "The Nephilim were on the earth *in those days*."
 - Nephilim is a Hebrew word. In the King James Version it is translated as "giants." That may be due to the use of the word in Numbers 13:33 where the Israelite spies said that the "nephilim" who inhabited Canaan were so tall they felt like grasshoppers in comparison. However, most modern translations choose to simply transliterate the Hebrew "nephilim" rather than hazard an interpretation. But it seems that the verse itself gives us the meaning: "These were the mighty men who of old, the men of renown."
 - So, the Nephilim were not literal giants but giants in that figurative sense in which we still use it today. There is nothing in the text which suggests that these nephilim were the result of the unions described in verse 2. So, the Nephilim are best taken as mighty men of renown such as kings and warriors who were

often used as fodder for the myths of the Ancient Near East. For instance, Gilgamesh, the hero of the Babylonian flood myth may well have been based upon Noah.

2. God's fearsome judgment

Vs. 5

- The simple phrase from the creation account – “the LORD saw” (v.5) – is used once again as God looks out upon his creation. God is not a distant uninvolved deity. There is nothing in the world that escapes him. He sees all the details and events of our lives. Nothing is hidden from his eyes. Here we are told that what God saw was a very different picture from the world he had first made. He no longer sees that it is good, far less does he see that it was very good. Rather than a favorable evaluation God sees how great man's wickedness on the earth had become. How rapid, and comprehensive, and universal had become man's depravity. Indeed, the sin of mankind had become so comprehensive that the Lord looked out upon mankind and saw that “every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (vs. 5b).

Vv. 6-7

- What are we to make of the words in verse 6 that “the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth”? Or what do we do with the statement in verse 7: “I am sorry that I have made him”? Does this mean that God is repenting or changing his mind? Does this mean that at any moment God can change his mind about having made you? This is where we have to be careful and read our Bible not as a collection of individual verses but as a divinely inspired whole with One ultimate Author, namely Almighty God. We are to read each passage of Scripture in light of all the rest of Scripture. And we look to those passages that are most clear and definitive to help us understand those passages that for whatever reason are not as clear.
- One of the things we know about God from very clear passages of Scripture is that he does not change. This is the doctrine of God's **immutability**.
 - “For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.” (Malachi 3:6).
 - “Every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (James 1:17).
 - “And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret.” (1 Samuel 15:29)
 - “God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind.” (Numbers 23:19)
- We are not being told that God made a mistake which he then had to fix. Rather, Moses gives us language fit to our finite minds that we might understand the depth of the offense of sin. Yes, God is unchanging. No, God is not regretting in any way similar to the ways in which we experience regret. But God is also eternally righteous and morally perfect and just and therefore he is not indifferent about sin. The unchanging God expresses his righteous anger over sin precisely because he does not change.

3. God's continuing promise

Vs. 8

- The word translated “favor” here is the equivalent to our word “grace.” It refers to a kind of favor that is unearned but freely granted. It is a gift not a payment for services rendered.
- And here again we encounter the doctrine of God's immutability – that God does not ever change. He is the Lord our Rock. He is our mighty fortress; the strong tower in which we find safety. When we see our lives passing away like a vapor; when our hearts are tossed upon the waves of sorrow and uncertainty, we can fall upon him who remains unchanged even though heaven and earth pass away (Psalm 102:3, 25–27).
- As the church passes through great trials and temptations, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). In our ever-changing world, nothing can change God or his good plan in Christ. Our sins will bring Fatherly discipline upon us, but because we belong to the Lord we will not perish, for he does not change (Malachi 3:6). We can trust him though we cannot trust ourselves, for he is pure light without a shadow of change (1 John 1:5; James 1:17). His promises cannot change (Psalm 119:89), which is the anchor of our souls as we believe in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 6:17–20). His purposes cannot fail. How blessed is the people whose God is the Lord (Psalm 33:10–12)!