

Depravity and Grace 11-5-06

Genesis 6:1-8 (NIV)

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⁵ The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. ⁶ The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. ⁷ So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Genesis reads like a roller coaster. You have creation and all its perfection followed by the fall of man. It rises to the birth of the sons of Adam and their worship of God and plummets again to the depths with the murder of Abel followed by the evil lineage of Cain. We rise again with the lineage of Seth calling on the name of the Lord and reach the heights of Enoch's walk with God only to be followed by our passage today that seems to be the deepest descent of all. If you didn't keep the glorious promise of [Genesis 3:15](#) in view, it would be enough to have us ever despair of any hope in man's outcome.

¹ When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. As I pointed out last week, there may well have been millions of people in the earth in the days of Noah. The variety within our genome began to be expressed in beautiful way. It was then that the sons of God began to lust after the women of the world. This is one of the most controversial passages in the Old Testament. Three opinions have become the most popular interpretations of this passage and it centers around the interpretation of the Hebrew expression *ben Elohim*. Who are the sons of God?

From the context we might think that the sons of God are the line of Seth. We just finished with a summary of the lines of Cain and Seth. It would at first seem that the sons of God are the men in Seth's line and these beautiful daughters were from Cain's line. That has certainly a problem throughout history. Men from godly families have been ensnared by the beauty of a godless woman who were able to turn man's heart away from God. We see that in the Bible stories of the Children of Israel and the Midianite women ([Numbers 25:1-2](#)), Samson and Delilah ([Judges 16:4-5](#)), and Solomon and his wives ([1Kings 11:4](#)).

Commented [notes1]: 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."
Gen 3:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, 2 who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods.
Num 25:1-2 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 4 Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. 5 The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver."
Judges 16:4-5 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.
1 Kings 11:4 (NIV)

If we look at the use of the term "sons of God" in this patriarchal period, we find that it most often refers to angels. (Job 1:6; 2:1; Daniel 3:25) But we also know that angels are not sexual beings. Jesus said that in heaven we will be like the angels, neither marrying or given in marriage. To the Hebrew way of thinking marriage was consummated by sexual intimacy. This would imply that angels are without sexual orientation. If these are angels, how can this be possible? We know that fallen angels desire the bodies of people. A part of Jesus' ministry was driving these evil spirits out of people that had been taken over by them. (Matthew 8:16) Apparently they desire the sensual experience of possessing humans.

We have further indication that these were fallen angels in several New Testament references. 1Peter 3:19,20 tells us of Jesus preaching "to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey." 2Peter 2:4,5,9; addresses fallen angels in context with the flood. See also Jude 6. It appears then that these fallen beings inhabited men out of lustful desire to take a number of women to use for their pleasure. This is also the understanding of the early church fathers in regards to this passage. Even further back, the ancient Jewish writings held the same interpretation.

Lamech was the first polygamist (Genesis 4:19) and now the demon possessed are taking on harems. Like the sin of Eve in the garden, they saw, they desired, and they took. Notice that it is apparently with the father's permission as they are given in marriage. It is hard for us in our affluent culture to understand that giving your daughter in marriage was sometimes relieving the family of another mouth to feed. The fathers must have been so selfish that they gave them to any man that would take them regardless if he had other wives.

³ Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." These ancient ones lived about seven times as long. Was this an experiment gone wrong? Did God say, "Oops, let them live too long and they get into real trouble; let's try one seventh as long?" God doesn't make mistakes. I believe this is an illustration for us to learn from. We often think that if so and so had more time they might turn to the Lord. If they went through a few more dead ends maybe they would see the Lord is the only One that can fill their empty hearts. The lesson of these ancient ones is that long life, beyond a certain point, only gives us more opportunity to turn from God, not turn to Him. You often hear the excuse, "When I'm ready to die, then I'll get right with God." It's not likely. (Acts 7:51)

The longer the Spirit of God contends with us, strives with us, the harder we become. Somewhere down that road if we don't yield, we become irrevocably hard. It is like a mother lovingly telling her child that a certain friend is not good for them. The more the child sneaks away to play with that friend the harder he or she becomes. One day the child either wakes up and sees why their mother is so insistent, or they disappear into a world of darkness so that they never have to be bothered with mother's voice again.

The Spirit of God contends with us all. Amen? There is not a person alive that doesn't realize that statement is true. They might deny it, but they know in their heart it is

Commented [notes5]: 6 One day the angels[Hebrew: sons of God] came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. Job 1:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 1 On another day the angels[sons of God] came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. Job 2:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." Dan 3:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 16 When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. Matt 8:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 1 Peter 3:19-20 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. 2 Peter 2: 4,5,9 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. Jude 1:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 19 Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. Gen 4:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Acts 7:51 (NIV)

true. The grace of God calls us to repentance and faith in Jesus. Then He calls us to a deeper walk. Finally He calls us to full surrender. He contends with us because He loves us, because He wants to rescue us. God set a limit to our life span because He knows that after 120 years we've either turned to Him or we never will.

You set the limit to how long He will contend with you in your allotted time. When you become irrevocably hardened, He will leave you to your fate. To further strive with you would only make your judgment worse. (Luke 12:47) What are you doing today in response to the loving Spirit of God striving with you?

⁴ *The Nephilim were on the earth in those days--and also afterward--when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.* Big question number 2 is who are the Nephilim? It is sometimes translated giants because of the ones in Canaan (Numbers 13:33), but there can't be a connection because of the flood. It could mean men of renown, or a fierce people group. There is anthropological evidence of giant humans in the form of size 22 footprints preserved in bedrock. We can only guess about these people. The important point for us may be a repetition of the lesson we saw in Cain's descendents, that greatness does not equate to spiritual wholeness.

This expression in Hebrew points toward sexual violence. It appears that the culture idolized these powerful men who took what they wanted. Before one of Mike Tyson's fights he boasted that because he had been convicted of rape, he would kill his opponent. In an earlier bout he had tried to bite off his opponents ear. Many men of renown in our culture are violent like these ancient ones and people pay top dollar to see them perform. One of the most popular independent video series of all time is a collection of amateur films of people meeting an accidental death. We have sunk to the level of the Roman arena in our entertainment. Be very careful what you feed your soul through your eyes. Blood lust and pornography are addictive to the fallen nature. Putting them together creates monsters. Feed the fallen nature and it will grow stronger.

⁵ *The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.* This is one of the saddest paragraphs in Scripture. This does not simply say that men were bad. This is not just a depraved society. We have those superlatives, great, only, every, and all. All they could think of, all they could imagine, every aspiration and dream of everyone was only evil all the time. That is utter horror. Before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah He said that the cry had come up to His ears. (Genesis 18:20,21) Unrestrained sin wreaks havoc on the human soul. Momentary pleasure leaves wounds in the soul that are so painful that torture would be putting it mildly. (Psalm 32:3)

We've seen many times in human history when man has complete power over others and can do whatever he desires. It is ugly picture of the human heart without God. To imagine that we are some kind of god, that there is some innate goodness in man that will eventually rise to the surface is to be intentionally ignorant of human history. (Romans 1:29-31) You and I are in desperate need of a Savior. The earth in the days

Commented [notes14]: 47 "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. Luke 12:47 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 33 We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them." Num 13:33 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 20 Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous 21 that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know." Gen 18:20-21 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. Psalms 32:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Romans 1:29-31 (NIV)

of Noah was so evil that every single individual was irrevocably hardened. That is a nightmare that we have no business even trying to imagine. That is hell on earth.

The way of Cain had won the hearts of man. The memory of Enoch was forgotten. Those days are coming again. Jesus said that as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of man. (Matthew 24:37) It is interesting that in regards to that future time Jesus uses the same phrase, being "given in marriage". (Matthew 24:38) It seems to indicate that the same sexually deviant forces will be at work. We are not there yet, but we are certainly headed in that direction. Our entertainment is increasingly filled with it. The internet is destroying lives by the thousands if not millions. Internet pornography is one of the biggest destroyers of pastors today. It is poison wrapped in sugar coating. Researchers tell us that it is as addictive as any drug. It activates a pleasure center in your brain just like any euphoric drug does. The devastating effects are seen in the news as we hear about the increase of rape and child molestation ending in murder.

If you are trapped in this vice, get help immediately. I can give you tools to help you come out of it or direct you to Christian counselors that can help. Find an accountability person and sign up to Covenanteyes.org Put a filter on your computer. What you feed your soul with is the direction your life will take. What are you feeding your soul with? Don't let it get to the point of irrevocable hardness. Change direction today with the help of the Holy Spirit! Jesus has wholesome pleasure that won't destroy you. (Psalm 16:11) He will give you joy beyond your wildest dreams. Don't fall for the lies of the enemy of your soul. The price is way too high for pleasures that will only leave you thirsty for more. (Ephesians 4:19)

⁶ The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. When man suffers, God suffers. (Hebrews 4:15) He loves us. When we destroy ourselves or allow some evil to capture us and slowly torture our soul, God grieves. What a contrast to God's proclamation at the end of creation, "It is very good." (Genesis 1:31) In ten generations, the sin of man took the world from very good to demonically evil.

Understand that God is not saying, "I made a mistake." He knew this was coming in every detail. 1 Samuel 15:29 tell us that "the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret." He knows the end of the story. He knows the lessons we need to see and understand. The people of Noah's day freely chose to turn toward evil. God is willing to be grieved and have his heart filled with pain that we might see the need for grace. When we are willing to enter into a real family relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ we take the same risk, maybe not to the extent that God does, but we are willing to be hurt deeply so that we can allow ourselves to love and be loved deeply. Sometimes our brothers and sisters in Christ will cause us to grieve and fill our hearts with pain, but we still go there. We do not regret taking the chance because in doing so we find those who we can be in this deep relationship with and fulfill Jesus' command. (John 15:12)

⁷ So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the

Commented [notes19]: 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Matt 24:37 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; Matt 24:38 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalms 16:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. Eph 4:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Heb 4:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day. Gen 1:31 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:12 (NIV)

air--for I am grieved that I have made them. "Once again we see that the world is affected by the condition of our souls. (2 Chronicles 7:13,14) We affect the animal life in the earth. God made the animals for man, so when man faces judgment it affects all things made for man. God had determined that the only way forward was to wipe the slate clean and begin again.

⁸ *But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.* Our roller coaster ride soars upward. There is a man who has not given in to the collapse of morality. There is a man who refuses to go along with his pleasure-seeking world. There is a man that is willing to stand alone and be mocked as a weird holdover from the days of Enoch. Just by his refusal to participate, just by his separating himself from their pleasure-seeking events, by his willingness to hear the voice of God and obey.

Certainly, Noah was not perfect, or he would not need to have grace extended toward him. But Noah remembered the testimony of Enoch and lived it himself. That testimony said to everyone, "You don't have to live selfishly. You can be free from the pain of sin. You can have a relationship with God that is satisfying. You don't have to do what everyone else does. You can let the Spirit of God guide you in a different direction, a direction of meaning and genuine purpose." (Psalm 40:5)

Are there any Noahs among us today? Is there a man or woman who will refuse to care what the world thinks of them and walk with God, going God's way instead of the world's, walking at God's pace and not their own? Is there a man or woman who is willing to be so deeply in love with God that He becomes the reason they live, so that all the loves of the world and all it offers is just so much fodder in their eyes? Can anyone among us shun what the world holds up as desirable and refuse to let it capture your vision, refuse to reach out and take it to our self? (2 Corinthians 6:17) Is there a person of faith that believes God is and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him? (Hebrews 11:6)

While people play with the world and all it has to offer, they are looking at us and are wondering if we are for real. Have we really found it? Does it really fill our hearts? How the world needs to see authentic Christians who love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength and their neighbor as themselves! Noah found favor in God's eyes, not because he was perfect, but because He did not turn away from the grace of God. (Ephesians 2:8,9) That is what made him the testimony to his world and what will make you a testimony as well. Have you received His grace? Have you let it change your heart, your mind, your habits, your speech, your actions? Are there any Noahs among us who are willing to receive the grace of God and then walk in obedience to His voice?

We are being challenged by the testimony of these Old Testament patriarchs. It wasn't easier for them. It was probably harder. If they could stand strong with as little as they had to go on, can't we, who have the whole story and the Holy Spirit resident in us, walk with God as recipients of the grace of God so the world can see Jesus? (Matthew 5:14-16)

Commented [notes26]: 13 "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, 14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 2 Chron 7:13-14 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 5 Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare. Psalms 40:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." 2 Cor 6:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Heb 11:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. Eph 2:8-9 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matt 5:14-16 (NIV)