

Grace: God's Remedy for Evil

From Genesis

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Bible Text: Genesis 6:1-8

Preached on: Sunday, September 30, 2007

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I would like you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to Genesis chapter six. We'll read together the first eight verses of Genesis chapter six.

Hear God's Word.

Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were 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. Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.¹

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you for the grace that comes to us in Jesus Christ. We pray now that you would be pleased to come and dwell in our midst, work in our hearts, and grant us that grace we so much need, as Noah found, that we might live properly before you. We ask these things in the good and gracious and powerful name of Jesus Christ who is the only King. Amen.

This past winter, I think it was, in Wilkinsburg a father struck his barely two year old daughter, knocking her out, because she didn't go to sleep as he thought she should. He

¹ Genesis 6:1-8.

wrapped her in a blanket and took her to a nearby park and in the subzero weather left her there. Tiny footprints in the snow revealed that the toddler wandered in the snow for a time before she froze to death.

More recently a young man stabbed two of his twin siblings not too far from here. One of them died and the other was seriously injured. The pastor of the family was one of my students at Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Perhaps a little closer to home, a young man here in Penn Hills stabbed his cheerleader girlfriend over 16 times and she bled to death.

What is the answer to such evil? There is only one answer to such evil. It is God's grace. It is not education. It is grace. And the text which is before us this morning, which lays out in such a graphic way the evil in the world, responds and shows us that the only remedy to the evil in the world is the grace of God. And you, therefore, must trust the grace of God in Christ, the only remedy you have and I have. Trust the grace of God in Christ; grace is the only remedy for evil.

The text begins with an evil that we don't readily recognize. Look, if you would, with me at verses one and two in Genesis chapter six.

Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.²

The evil here is believers marrying unbelievers. This is what the text is setting before you and me. There are some who would say, "No, this is a picture of angels coming down out of heaven and finding the women of the world attractive and cohabiting with the women of the world." But I submit to you that this is not the proper exposition of this particular text. It is the coming together of those who are the children of God, those who are the followers of God, and those who are the children of the devil.

This is what the book of Genesis really is all about. It begins with Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed." Ultimately, of course, we know that the seed of the woman is Jesus Christ. But there is that collective singular there with the word seed. When you go to the hardware store and you buy a bag of seed, what do you get? You get thousands of seeds, do you not? And that is the idea behind this word. And in the book of Genesis we have the two lines, the two seeds that come before us, the children of God and the children of the evil one. And that is what Genesis is really all about.

If someone argues, "No, think about the Nephilim. They are the offspring of the angels and the women with whom they were cohabiting." Well, look at verse four for a moment. "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward."³ The

² Genesis 6:1-2.

³ Genesis 6:4.

Nephilim *were already* there in the world when this situation arose in Genesis six verses one and two. In addition, I want you also to mark the fact that it is not angels that God comes and judges in this text and in the following chapters. It is men and women whom God judges. And so the situation, you see, has to do with men and women, men and women who have come together improperly, the sons of God marrying the daughters of men.

And in that text in Genesis which I already related to you, “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed,”⁴ the idea is that God puts a division between his children and the children of the world, between the children of God and the children of the devil. And it is improper to break down this division, this barrier God himself institutes in this world between his Church and the people of the world. But this was what was going on. Great evil arises out of this tearing down of the divisions which God himself institutes. We don’t readily recognize that this is the case.

But, again, look at verse four and see what is happening here. “The Nephilim were 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.”⁵ Children are coming forth. And part of the problem is that when believers marry unbelievers the likelihood is that believers are going to be weaned away from the truth of God. Therefore the children they raise are not going to be brought up in the church. They are going to be brought up in accordance with the standards of the world. The population of evil is going to be increased in the world. This is the great difficulty and this is part of what we see in this text. “The Nephilim were 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.”⁶

Now these Nephilim were probably not only individuals who were of great stature—giants, as it were—but they were likely individuals who were giants in evil. The very word Nephilim takes us in this direction. The root of the name in the original language means “fallen.” These individuals were fallen human beings, fallen men. They were the epitome of evil. They were giants in evil. They were the Hitlers of the day, the al-Zarqawis of the day. This is the kind of individuals they were. They were the Ahmadinejads of the day. Did any of you listen to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s recent speech at the United Nations? Do you know what he spoke about? He spoke about the coming of 12th Imam and about peace ruling in the world because of the rise of Islam. He gave a theological lecture to the United Nations. He is evil incarnate, I would say to you; he comes preaching an evil religion to the world. And similarly these Nephilim are the epitome of evil. They are the Darth Vaders of the world.

I find it very significant that when *Star Wars* was popular—and some of you will remember this—when *Star Wars* was popular and the toys came out.... Do you remember the gear that came out which you could buy in the stores? The Darth Vader gear was very popular. There is something about the appeal of the dark side. There is

⁴ Genesis 3:15.

⁵ Genesis 6:4.

⁶ Ibid.

something about the appeal of evil. And so the sons of God looked upon the daughters of men and they saw that they were good, like Eve looked at the apple. She saw the fruit, the forbidden fruit. It was good for food and desirable. And so the sons of God took wives for themselves whom they chose, whom they chose, not whom God chose. Yes, they took whom they chose. And what took place? Sons and daughters were born to them.

I want you to see that the results of all of this can be rather disastrous. Would you turn back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter seven with me? Look at the words of God here with regard to this kind of situation in Deuteronomy chapter seven.

When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away 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 stronger than you, and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them.⁷

Did you catch that?

Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.⁸

You see, the problem is that there is the likelihood of being weaned away from the things of God. Some young people especially will say, maybe those of you who are a little bit younger in the congregation here would say this. “No, I have been taught, ‘Greater is he that is in me than is in the world.’”⁹ We therefore think of ourselves as strong. But let’s heed the warning of Scripture. Remember Paul also says, “Flee from youthful lusts.”¹⁰ Don’t stand around in these situations. Flee from them. And so you need to take heed to the warning and not get involved with unbelievers. The Bible is telling us it can be dangerous.

And why would we not take this seriously? Well, go back with me to Genesis chapter six. I think the reason is that we don’t really grasp the depth and the power and the virility of evil. We don’t get it the way we should. Look at verse five. “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the

⁷ Deuteronomy 7:1-2, 3.

⁸ Deuteronomy 7:3-4.

⁹ See 1 John 4:4.

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 2:22

thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”¹¹ You see, this text comes in this context, friends, in the context of believers marrying unbelievers, the resultant families, the resultant propagation of evil, and the tearing down of the division between the Church and the world. It is in this context that God looks down and he sees that evil is great in the world.

The reason I point this out to you—and I am rather urgent about this—is that we too often take verse five and extract it from its context. We then use it as a proof text to talk about the doctrine of total depravity. I do think this doctrine is true. But I submit to you that we should leave this text in its context. In doing so, we find that the situation is much worse than we first realize. If we take that text out of its context and just deal with it on its own we do not grasp the full impact of depravity. This is why I am so urgent about this.

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”¹² The Lord looked and he saw what was going on in the world. He could see, plainly, just like we can see what is going on in the world. But God’s vision did not stop with just the outward appearance.

What does the text say? God’s vision was penetrating into the very hearts of men and women. And God knew—as would later be written in Scripture—as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.¹³ If there is a deep heart problem and this is the root of the problem, this is how individuals actually are. This is how you are and this is how I am. And so what does God look and see? Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was only evil *in his heart*. And what about the heart? Look at the text again. “Every intent of the thoughts of the heart...”¹⁴ The thoughts of the heart. Every thought was evil. Now, I don’t know about you, but this is a little hard for me to get my mind around; *every* thought was evil. Is this how you think about yourself in an unbelieving state or in a former state?

The text doesn’t stop here, does it? “Every intent of the thoughts of [the] heart,”¹⁵ God speaks of *every* purpose of *every* thought, *every* inclination of *every* thought, *every* attitude of *every* thought. That is, every good thought toward someone has an evil motive or an evil intent. Every thought is therefore only evil. And what is the last word in the text? Well, in the *New American Standard* it is “continually.” In the original language, “All day, all day only evil.”

And once again I remind you of the context. Look at verse two. “The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever

¹¹ Genesis 6:5.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See Proverbs 23:7.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

they chose.”¹⁶ And the determination was, “I will do as I desire. I reject God’s desire.” This is the personal determination. This was the evil thinking of the sons of God.

And how does God respond in this particular circumstance? Notice carefully, friends. God looks and sees the evil. His patience wears thin. The time comes when he will no longer put up with this evil. Verse three. “Then the LORD said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’”¹⁷ God looks and he says, “Enough is enough. The time is coming and it is coming quickly. I will no longer strive with people. I will no longer send forth my Spirit into the hearts of men and women to convict them of sin.” This is part of what the Spirit’s striving is about. “I will no longer send forth my Spirit to do that sort of thing.”

And this striving is also striving using the Word of God. The Spirit strives with us sending forth of the Word of God with the preaching of the Word of God. Notice in verse three it says, “Nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”¹⁸ God was pleased to send Noah to preach the Word for 120 years before the flood. And you can imagine how Noah was received, how they laughed at him and scorned him. And you can imagine that the time would come when people would no longer have the privilege of hearing the Word of God. What would we think if we no longer had the privilege of coming together to hear the Word of God? This is what happened here in our text. God is saying, “Enough is enough.” And so he determines to judge.

Verse six.

The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.’¹⁹

God looked. He saw the wicked. Calvin approaches the text something like this. “God looked at the creatures that he had made and he said, ‘Are these the creatures that I have made in my image and in my likeness that are so perverted and dead with sin? Do they really look like the creatures that I made and placed in the garden to love me?’”

How many of you have seen the movie *Lord of the Rings*? Do you remember that little creature Gollum in *Lord of the Rings*, that shriveled, pale, green eyed creature eaten by lust and greed, lust for that ring and by greed to have it? No longer looking anything like the creature that God had made, he is consumed by self and by evil. Is this what God looked down and saw, something like this? And so he exclaims, “No, not my creatures. I will judge and blot out man from the face of the earth.”

¹⁶ Genesis 6:2.

¹⁷ Genesis 6:3.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Genesis 6:6-7.

There is a little thing we need to understand about what is happening in verses six and seven. Too often people like us have said, “Oh, God loves the sinner, but hates the sin.” Is this what you see in verses six and seven? I don’t think so. What you see in verses six and seven is that God destroys the sinner. And I submit to you, my friends, that each one of us has to take a very close look at this. Either Jesus Christ has paid the penalty due to you for your sins or you, yourself, are going to pay the penalty for your sins. This is the upshot of it. This is what this text is telling us. And that God loves the sinner and hates the sin is a half truth. It is true for you, thankfully, if you know Jesus Christ.

Now this is a pretty dark text, isn’t it? But there is sunshine that comes through. Look at verse eight. “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.”²⁰ That little word “favor” is really the word “grace.” “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”²¹ What is the answer to evil? Grace. This is the only answer. And this is what this text is telling us, you and me.

And who was Noah? Look with me at Genesis chapter five and verses 28 and 29. Who was Noah?

Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. Now he called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed.’²²

Who was Noah? Noah, in his day, was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Noah in his day was the prototype Savior. Noah, in his day, was the one who was foreshadowing the great Savior to come who would give rest to his people. Yes, Noah gave rest to his family. With regard to Noah and his family we can say, “Many are called, but few are chosen.”²³ But in addition, as the prototype Savior, Noah was pointing forward to Jesus Christ who would enter into this world to give rest to people like you and me.

Are we not therefore reminded of John 3:16? “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”²⁴ And what did Jesus Christ do? To me this is the startling thing. Jesus Christ came down from glory and entered into a world that was hostile to him. This hostility was manifested in so many ways. Finally, all those opposed to him sought to kill him. Some of them succeeded and put him to death on a cross.

But he had the victory by rising again from the dead. Then he poured forth his Holy Spirit after ascending on high and assuming his position on the throne of the majesty on high. He is dispensing grace by his Spirit today. He pours out his Spirit into the hearts of men and women and young people like you and me today. Praise God for his grace.

²⁰ Genesis 6:8.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Genesis 5:28-29.

²³ Mathew 20:16, 22:14.

²⁴ John 3:16.

Grace is the only remedy for evil in this world and it is God's grace in Jesus Christ. Noah found grace.

And how is it with you this morning? How is it with you? Have you found grace in the eyes of the Lord? Is this where you are this morning? Has God been pleased in his mercy and in his grace to change your hearts, to give you new thoughts and new intentions and new purposes? Is this what God through Jesus Christ has done for you?

There is an old saying, "But for the grace of God there go I." And do you know what, friends? Except for the grace of God I submit to you, I could be or you could be that father who took his daughter out into the freezing temperatures wrapped in a blanket, leaving her to freeze to death. Except for the grace of God you and I could be that man. Except for the grace of God you could be the young man who put a knife in the chest of his sibling. Except for the grace of God you could be that young man taking the life of his cheerleader girlfriend. Except for the grace of God...

Any of you here who do not know Jesus Christ, you who have not experienced the grace of God in Christ, you must come to Christ. You must trust the grace of God in Christ to cleanse you from the evil that is in your heart and to forgive you of your sins. The only remedy for evil is the grace of God in Christ, my friends. You must, you must trust the grace of God in Christ. Trust the grace of God in Christ; the only remedy for evil is grace.

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, thank you for your Word. It is a good Word. It is a sure Word. It is a hard Word. And I pray this morning, Father, particularly for people who do not know the grace of God in Christ. And I pray that you will be pleased to arrest them and pour out your love in their hearts by the Holy Spirit that they might find grace in your eyes. I pray, Father, for some who stepped out before the note of grace was struck in this message and I pray that your grace will arrest their hearts that they might know your love to walk in your love and understand—as we all should—that the only remedy for evil in this world is your grace, the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Hear us we ask in his good name for it is in that name we pray. Amen.