

Noah and the Flood: Genesis 6
 Ben Reaoch, THREE RIVERS GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH
 Sunday morning, July 1, 2007

This morning we're going to look at the story of Noah and the Flood, and we're going to see a very clear portrayal of the Gospel. We're going to see sin, and judgment, and grace. Sin was increasing in the world, and God brought judgment upon that sin. But God also had mercy on a man named Noah, for he was a righteous man. He was righteous by faith. And I desperately want every one of us to be impacted by this Gospel message. We are all sinners, and we all deserve God's judgment. But we will escape that judgment if we are trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sin. By faith in Jesus Christ we are counted righteous. And if that is true of us, then like Noah, we will survive the coming judgment and be blessed by God.

Sin and Grace in chapters 4-5

Before we come to chapter 6 I want to point out how we see both sin and grace in these early chapters of Genesis leading up to the story of the Flood. In chapter 4, which we looked at last week, Cain, the seed of the serpent, killed Abel, the seed of the woman. This is a tragic effect of the Fall. In the very first family, there is jealousy and anger and murder. The narrative leaves no doubt concerning the devastating effects of sin. There it is! That's depravity. That didn't happen in God's perfect original creation, but after Adam and Eve disobeyed by eating of the forbidden fruit, this is the predicament. We see sin in all of its ugliness.

But we also see God's grace. At the end of chapter 4 we read that Seth was born to Adam and Eve. Seth replaced Abel. The seed of the serpent did not triumph, as it may have seemed. God provided Seth to take Abel's place. Then the last sentence in chapter 4 says, "At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord." What an evidence of God's grace this is! This is worship. People were calling upon the name of the Lord. There is sin and there is grace.

Then chapter 5 records Adam's descendants through the line of Seth, and it first hearkens back to chapter 1 and the pronouncement that mankind is created in God's image. But then the record of these generations relentlessly drives home the point that death is a result of sin. Again and again, it speaks of death. This is what God said would happen, and it happened indeed. Adam died. Seth died. Enosh died. Kenan died. Mahalelel died. Jared died. Enoch . . . did not die! Verse 24 of chapter 5 says, "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Again, in the midst of sin and the sad effects of sin we find a wonderful display of grace. Death is the penalty for sin, but God's grace is bigger than that. God can bestow His grace on individuals and cause them to walk with Him, and God can forgive their sins, and He can rescue them from the punishment for sin.

Sin and grace are interwoven throughout these chapters, just as they are interwoven in our lives today. The tragic effects of the Fall are all around us, and yet God's grace stands out in stark contrast to the depressing darkness of sin.

SIN ABOUNDS

In chapter 6 the interplay of sin and grace continues, but the chapter begins by recording the expansion and intensification of sin in the world. The first verse says that "man began to multiply on the face of the land," and then we see that sin multiplied as

man multiplied. As the population increased, sin increased. I'm not going to go into the difficulties of interpreting these first few verses, but one simple point we can take from this introduction in chapter 6 is that one of the major ways in which sin increased was in the sphere of sexuality.

Verse 5, then, makes this incredible statement about human sinfulness. Listen to this, and I pray God will give you ears to hear. Because you must understand your own sin in order to understand the Gospel. We must acknowledge our desperate situation before we can understand the solution. Here's the problem. Verse 5 says, "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." I don't see how God could have made it any clearer. This is our condition apart from God's grace. We are sinners to the core. Apart from God's grace, everything we think, everything we say, everything we do, it is nothing but sin. It is nothing but rebellion against God and an attempt to exalt ourselves.

Maybe you have trouble reconciling this statement with your own experience. Because you might be thinking, "I'm not *that* bad. Sure, I admit that I'm not perfect. Who is? But I'm not evil. And surely it's not true that 'every intention of the thoughts of my heart is only evil continually.'" If those kinds of thoughts are going through your head right now, let me suggest to you that your perception of sin and depravity is not in line with the Bible's teaching on these things. And I'll admit that those objections go through my head as well. I don't want to admit that I'm *that* bad. But God's Word is clear. *We are that bad!*

It's only by God's grace that anybody does anything good. Among unbelievers, God bestows common grace which restrains sin and produces all kinds of actions that are helpful to society. And among believers, God's grace is slowly but surely transforming us into the likeness of Christ. Praise God for His grace, and be all the more amazed by His grace as you realize what you are apart from His grace. Every intention of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil continually. That's our sinful nature. That's who we are apart from God's grace.

GOD'S RESPONSE

Next we need to understand God's response to sin. Sin requires judgment. It requires punishment. God is a God of justice, and therefore He is obligated to punish sin. Verses 6-7 show God's just and righteous response to sin, and these verses give us a unique window into the nature of God. This is a profound glimpse into the mind and heart of God. Verse 6 says, "And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." This verse reveals God's heart because it shows how intensely He feels about sin. It reveals to us how powerfully His emotions are stirred in response to sin. Sin grieves the heart of God.

Some people take statements like this and conclude that God was surprised by the situation. He didn't think things would come to this, and now He wishes He hadn't created in the first place. But that view fails to understand the biblical teaching on God's sovereignty. God is in control of all things, and He is working all things according to His good purposes. Even bad things, even the Fall, and the downward spiral of sin resulting from the Fall. All of these things are part of God's plan to reveal the full spectrum of His glorious attributes. He is revealing not only His love and mercy, but also His righteousness and justice. God is not surprised by the dismal effects of sin. In fact, it is all part of His plan for this universe. It is part of His sovereign will, or we could call it

His secret will. We don't understand all of God's purposes, but everything that happens is part of His sovereign, secret will.

At the same time, God's revealed will, or His moral will, shows that He hates sin and is grieved by sin. And that's what we're seeing in this verse. Even though God ordained this sin to occur, He is still saddened by it. I talked about these two wills of God in a sermon entitled, "God's Providence Over Evil," which I preached at the beginning of chapter 3, and you could listen to that sermon or read it on our website if you want to learn more about this.

The illustration that is most helpful to me is thinking of a beautiful work of art. The work of art represents God's overarching plan for His creation. Every aspect of the artwork is skillfully crafted in order to display the wonderful attributes of the artist. And when God looks at the artwork as a whole, He delights in it, for it reveals His glory in the most perfect way. However, there are many very dark areas in the artwork. There are areas where shades of gray and black serve as a backdrop for the brighter hues. And when God looks at those dark areas of the painting, and He looks at them apart from their place in the context of the whole, when He focuses on those dark areas, He is grieved. His heart is saddened when He looks at our sin.

This is what verse 6 reveals to us about God's emotion and deep sorrow over sin. God is not apathetic. His actions are not cold and calculated. He is a God of emotion. The sin of mankind affects Him. It grieves Him, and in this case it grieved Him to such an extent that He felt sorry that He had made man.

In verse 7 God states His intention to judge mankind, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." We've seen the effects of sin, and now comes the judgment. Later in the chapter, in verse 17, God tells Noah, "I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die." The Flood is God's judgment on the world.

GOD'S PATIENCE

Realize, though, that even in this there is grace, because God demonstrated great patience with these sinners who deserved immediate punishment. It's easy to read this narrative and assume that the Flood came relatively quickly after God stated His intention to blot out mankind. But the process of building the ark would have taken a very long time, especially considering it was just Noah and his three sons working on it. They built a boat that was 450 feet long and 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. It was as long as one and a half football fields. And it wasn't like these guys had a bunch of power tools and heavy machinery. This was a long, arduous project.

The text doesn't tell us exactly how many years they spent building the ark, but it does tell us that Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth after he was 500 years old (5:32), and it also tells us that Noah was 600 years old when the Flood began (7:6). And some believe that the 120 years mentioned in 6:3 refers to the length of time until the Flood. Whatever we make of these numbers, we can assume that it took Noah and his sons decades, possibly almost a century, to build the ark. And during that time there was the opportunity for repentance. The evil world that surrounded Noah had a period of grace. They were living on borrowed time. They deserved to be punished immediately,

and yet they continued to wake up each day and go about their daily lives. They ate and drank and worked and played, all in rebellion against God.

There are two very important truths here. First, God is patient. This is one of God's wonderful and merciful attributes. Peter refers to this 1 Peter 3:20, where he says, "God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water." Then in 2 Peter 3, after referring to the Flood, he says, "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." In the same way that God grieves over sin, He desires all to repent. This is His revealed will, even if it is not what He decrees to happen. His heart longs for all to repent of their sin and trust in Him. I know that there are a couple ways to interpret this verse. It's possible that the verse is saying God wishes that all *the elect* should reach repentance. But it's also possible that the verse speaks of God's revealed will. In His sovereign will He chooses to save the elect, but in His revealed will He wants to save everyone. As He says in Ezekiel 18:32, "I have no pleasure in the death of anyone . . . so turn, and live." And so He is patient. He holds off judgment as an act of mercy, in order that more might be saved. So we see an amazing display of God's merciful patience in the period of grace leading up to the Flood, and in our present age.

The passage in 2 Peter continues, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed." The second truth I want to emphasize is that we cannot presume upon God's patience. Don't assume that His patience will last forever. It certainly won't. The judgment is coming, and I plead with you to learn the lesson of the Flood. Listen to Jesus' words in Matthew 24, where He's talking about the end times and that great day when He will return to earth. Jesus says, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." That is a grave warning. Hear it, friends. Hear this warning. The world is not going to go on indefinitely. Your life will not continue on forever. It's easy to fool ourselves into thinking that, but one of two things will happen, and either of them could happen very soon. Either you'll die, or Jesus will come back. And when either of those things happen, you'll have to stand before the Almighty God. Judgment is coming.

The people in Noah's day had the same attitude that many have today. *I don't deserve God's punishment. God won't judge me. He's not coming back.* Noah's neighbors scoffed at him and ridiculed him for building the ark and for preaching righteousness. They thought he was a fool, building this enormous boat where there wasn't even any water. They watched him work, year after year, decade after decade. They heard him preach about God's coming judgment and the need for righteousness. But no one changed. They continued in defiance of Noah's preaching. They continued in rebellion against God's Word. Until one day, when the waters came. The fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened (7:11), and then

they knew. They knew that Noah had been right all along. And maybe some of them ran to the ark, screaming and shouting for help. But it was too late. Noah and his family and the animals were safe inside, and the door had been shut. God's patience had come to an end, and His judgment fell upon the earth.

Right now God is waiting patiently, but He will not wait forever. The Day is coming, and if you are not right with God you will be swept away in that flood. You will be destroyed. You will suffer for eternity in hell. Don't wait. Don't ignore this warning, for the day will soon come when it will be too late.

NOAH, RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH

We've talked about sin, and we've talked about judgment. But how does one escape this judgment? Once we understand that we're sinners, and we deserve God's punishment, how do we avoid that punishment? How do we get on the boat so that we aren't swept away in the Flood?

The answer is to be like Noah, who was righteous by faith. Look at 6:9, where it says, "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God." This does not mean that Noah was sinless. He was not perfect. But he lived a life that was dedicated to God. He walked with God. He trusted what God said, and he obeyed God's commands. Hebrews 11 sheds more light on the inner workings of Noah's righteousness.

By the way, when you need a good commentary on Genesis, or the Old Testament in general, go to the New Testament. This is one of the amazing things about God's inspired Word. The Old Testament points forward to the New Testament, and the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament and further explains the Old Testament in light of Christ. This great chapter in Hebrews provides us with an awesome commentary on Genesis. It mentions Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. In verse 7 it says, "By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith."

Do you see that Noah's righteousness was by faith? This is how one escapes the judgment. This is the kind of person who is rescued rather than judged. It's the person who believes God's Word. The person who trusts in God's promises. Can that be said of you this morning? Are you hoping in God? Have you repented of your sin, acknowledging that you have rebelled against God and deserve His just punishment? Have you turned to Christ in faith, seeing that He is your only hope? When that miracle occurs in your heart, you are counted righteous in Christ, and God will begin to make you righteous as He conforms you to the likeness of Christ.

If you are not in Christ, if you are ignoring God, ignoring His Word, ignoring the warnings of judgment, please don't take God's patience for granted. Don't foolishly squander the opportunity to heed this word of warning. Judgment is coming upon those who rebel against God, but He will rescue those who are living by faith in Jesus Christ.