

Genesis 6:1–8

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[0 : 00] Again, that is Genesis 6 verses 1 through 8. Please stand for the reading of God's word. When man began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were attractive, and they took as their wives any they chose.

Then the Lord said, My spirit shall not abide in men forever, for he is flesh, his days shall be a 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.

These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. 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.

And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, men and animals and creeping things, and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, you may not have noticed it while listening to the text.

[1 : 25] You may not even have seen it with your own eyes while following along in your Bible as that text was read. But I promise you, it was there.

Right there. In this text. And more than that, it was stated in such a way that the writer intended for you to see it.

He wants you to take it in. He wants you to behold something. He wants you to set your eyes on it. And so then the question must be, well, what is it?

It is simply this. We can find God's favor. That's where this text is moving.

There it is. Right there. Look at it. For yourself. Verse 8. But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. That's the line that all the previous seven lines have been leading to.

[2 : 28] That's the conclusion, the explosive truth that's put forward by way of contrast. Look at it again. Verse 8. This is not a but God text.

This is a but Noah text. The writer is offering the reader something exciting, something experientially known by way of emphasis.

Noah is the Bible's first fully formed figure who finds God's favor. Certainly we saw Lemeck last week, seventh generation who walked with God.

But Lemeck was but a charcoal sketch. He came and went within two verses. But Noah now will show you someone who finds God's favor, and we'll walk with him for chapter after chapter after chapter.

Let me put it to you this way. There's something here for you. There's an amazing love for me. If Noah found God's favor, then you can as well.

[3 : 45] Why not us? Why not you? Why not me? What makes that possibility of finding God's favor so stupendous or exhilarating for me in my study this week is to see the tumultuous setting in which that truth, that diamond is set.

That's really, if you look at it, the function of the first seven verses. It is a tumultuous setting meant to elevate the reader's mind and heart until they see by way of conclusive contrast that even so Noah found favor.

I want you to see those lines today as the writer intended to reveal them. These parallel thoughts in verses 1 through 7 that magnify the mystery of verse 8.

Take a look at verse 1 and verse 5 and see the similarities for yourself. At a time when man began to multiply on the face of the land.

Now listen to the parallelism in verse 5. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth.

[5 : 08] It's actually closer by way of lexical connection than the translation that I've just read from. It really is. When man began to multiply on the face of the land, verse 1, the Lord saw that the wickedness of man also multiplied.

The word great in verse 5. Identical to multiply in verse 1. And so this text as a whole then is standing before you today wanting you to see something.

Not merely what men saw in verse 2 or what God saw in verse 5, but what Noah received in the eyes of the Lord, verse 8.

And it's simply this. Noah found God's favor at a time when mankind multiplied and God saw that the wickedness multiplied with us.

It's as simple as that. As we multiply, so does our wickedness.

[6 : 20] But Noah found God's favor. So how does the author elevate then our heart utilizing this strange text in verses 1 through 7?

How does he state things there in such a way that you should go home magnifying the Lord for his amazing love and favor?

How does he do it? Well, in verses 1 to 4, we see something here. His favor comes at a time when we in our fallen state had been multiplying on the earth.

But what multiplied with us? Our own wanderings, which led to God restricting our time here.

I mean, you can see the centerpiece of verses 1 to 4 right there in verse 3. Then the Lord God said, My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh.

[7 : 31] His days shall be 120 years. There is a restriction of our years based upon the wanderings of our life.

Well, what were the wanderings in verses 1 to 4? It seems to me that his intention for Adam and Eve to multiply his likeness in their offspring had become derailed.

To the point where the very institution of marriage was no longer functioning in ways that revealed his likeness.

That's really what's happening here. Now let me just read it for you. Verse 1 and 2. The daughters were born to them, and the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were attractive, and they took as their wives any as they chose.

The precise nature of other wanderings in this text relates to the breakdown of God's design in marriage. Now there are two common ways of thinking about this text, so let me just roll it out to you.

[8 : 55] First is kind of the sensational interpretation. Some people have looked at this and said, well, what's going on here? And they've taken the sons of God, which is used at times elsewhere in the scriptures as heavenly beings, to refer in this place to a fallen angelic host.

A fallen angelic host whose appetite for destructiveness manifests itself in sensuality and by agitating individuals into a perversity of love for one another and they choose anyone that they see. It's almost as though you're watching a movie where there's a demonic host at work among the sons of men that destroys the union between a man and a woman.

So the interpretation then would be that there are fallen heavenly beings who descended or fell to earth who were attracted to the daughters of men and through some demonic activity took hold. Indeed, the translation then goes on in verse 4, they would say, and then these were the Nephilim, the demonic mighty men of old.

[10 : 32] That's certainly one way to look at it. It's certainly sensational in every respect. Let me give you the way I tend to view it instead. Not sensational by way of understanding, but contextual.

The thing I would say about the sons of God and the daughters of man, as do most Jewish commentators, is that they come right on the heels of the two genealogies in chapter 4 and 5, namely the offspring of Cain and then the offspring of Abel.

And the offspring of Cain, you can see in chapter 4, verse 1, she says, I have gotten a man. But with the birth of Seth, in verse 25, I have God's appointed one, another offspring, so that you have these two genealogical lines traced down through seven generations.

And the sons of God, namely the offspring of Seth, whose parents began to call out upon the name of the Lord, disregarded any attention to divine will for marriage and life and imitating the glory of God and the likeness of God.

And they took from the line of Cain, daughters of man, anyone who they would choose to be married to. This is certainly in line contextually with what is taking place, that there is a compromised state of marriage that in the pre-Diluvian world, even from the godly line of Lamech who walked with God, the children didn't hold the day and went about marrying anyone because they were attractive rather than those who had a heart and an inclination to call out to God.

[12:40] I think of contemporary applications just by way of an aside in pastoral ministry. 1 Corinthians 7, Paul will actually indicate you're free to marry as a Christian anyone you want to marry as long as they are in the Lord.

And there's something mysterious then about the marital union that is to be reflecting his image. And I've often counseled people in this very regard who I've been able to say, it isn't that you can't love someone who doesn't believe what you believe about Jesus.

Certainly you can, people do every day. It isn't that you can't work out your faith problems that are going to emerge in marriage. One is a Christian, one is a non-Christian because I've actually watched people do this every day.

The problem with a Christian marrying a non-Christian isn't that you can't love them, isn't that you can't walk through life and work things out with them. It's that by nature, your faith union cannot replicate God's intention.

[13:56] His intention was that male, female, man, woman were in his shared likeness so that the world would see the plurality of his personhood, the beauty of the Father and the Son and the Spirit.

And by nature, your marriage can't do that if you as a Christian marry someone who's a non-Christian. Paul will go on to talk about all kinds of ways to mitigate life in the midst of all these things.

But this is, to me, what is happening here. The inescapable moment in time where you have two genealogical family trees and the line of Cain walked toward revenge and self-rule.

The line of Seth, although fallen, found men and women nevertheless calling out on the name of the Lord and now their offspring intermarrying whoever they choose without any indication then that God's image or likeness can be replicated.

Which is why God then comes in verse 3 and says, I must restrict his days. You and I are incapable of carrying forward his ways.

[15:22] And yet, in the waywardness of our heart, nevertheless, by verse 8, God will extend favor.

God's favor can be found. The Nephilim of verse 4 are not as mysterious as you might initially think. They appear later in the Torah. In fact, in Numbers chapter 13 as this same writer is reflecting on Israel's failure to go into the promised land after having been called to do so.

And in verse 32 of Numbers chapter 13 we read, So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, The land through which we have gone to spy it out is a land that devours its inhabitants and all the people that we saw in it are of great height and there we saw the Nephilim the sons of Anak who come from the Nephilim and we seem to ourselves like grasshoppers and so we seem to them.

The Nephilim were distinctly larger than life and there is every indication then in the text that not only was there a period in time where men and women lived longer than they do now just as we saw last week but they also there were descendants among us that they actually lived larger or higher than what is normal so that by the time you get to the world gone by and characters like Goliath emerging they are the outliers of a day in which the world had men of renown and so this then is what is stated in the first movement of the text when man began to multiply on the face of the earth when men began to marry without any regard for the likeness or image of God being propagated through them when that occurred namely at the time where they not only lived long but grew large at that time

[17:49] God said I must restrict the days upon which you tread the face of the earth and it moves on it's not only when we began to multiply but we must ask then how do verses 5 through 7 highlight the stupendous joy that's coming in verse 8 how do verses 5 to 7 amplify the wonder that not only when I wandered can someone find favor but look at this it isn't just at a time when you were restricted in years it came also at a time where God was going to remove us from the face of the earth you see it again verse 7 so the Lord God said 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 this has its own provocative nature to it and the provocative nature to these

verses is the human personality with which

God is described by way of his emotion or his affection it says the Lord God saw that the wickedness of man is great in the earth in fact the pervasive nature of our being was evil continually not that you and I can't be worse than we already are but that every facet of our life every area of our mind and heart and will is pervasively bent toward wickedness and evil and notice the personification then of this human emotion verse 6 and the Lord regretted that he made man on the earth it grieved him to his heart and later in verse 7 I am sorry that I have made them and the elephant in the room of course is does God change his mind did God make a mistake is he starting over because he wasn't capable of accomplishing what he wanted I prefer to think of the way Calvin thought of these verses and what's going on here this is what he writes quote because it could not otherwise be known how great is God's hatred and detest of sin therefore God accommodates himself to our capacity in language Calvin goes on to say God clothes himself with our affections in order to more effectively pierce our hearts with the gravity of sin we think so little of our sin that God is willing to accommodate himself to human affection or emotion to indicate for us how we actually ought to feel regret sadness sorrow God accommodating himself to human emotion is a tutor then on how our sin ought to affect us which then leads you to this wonderful surprise

I mean just look then at how this text has moved as we multiplied in our perversion and waywardness and as we multiplied in number so did our wickedness when God saw that we did as we pleased and he therefore was now called to do what he must do both restrict our years and remove us from the earth Noah found favor that that that elevates given the tumultuous context of the verses but Noah found the gaze of God in ways that reverse the finality of death and secure a future hope favor because

Noah was better no we will see in the coming chapters that the righteousness of Noah is not the consequence of his conduct or his condition the righteousness of Noah is a consequence of God's giftedness it's not what was naturally within him it is what God bestowed on him favor in its most simple terms then is a gift to have someone's favor does not mean that you've acquired it by your righteousness to have someone's favor is to be given a gift that they've determined to give you this is what Moses also found if Noah is the first full blown figure of human favor with

[23 : 28] God Moses also finds God's favor you might recall if you've read through the Old Testament that after the golden calf incident Moses says to the Lord I have found favor in your sight and I would like to see you and God hides him in the cleft of the rock and goes by him why because Moses himself was holy and righteous no because God saw fit to let him see his backside as a gift of his own glory unto him Mary found God's favor in Luke chapter 1 where the angel says that you have found God's favor it doesn't mean that Mary herself was righteous within but that God himself was going to implant the righteous one in her in fact the New Testament when they reach for a word to translate what you find for favor here guess what word they have to come up with grace to find the favor of

God is to be given the grace of God now when you think about that then we really ought to sit for a moment what Noah finds when men are multiplying!

in waywardness and in wickedness is grace! That is the greatness of our text while your years will be restricted indeed they are already now numbered and while you and I will one day stand before his presence having been removed from the face of the earth for his justice will require nevertheless nevertheless even so but as Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord so can you so can I so can we how how is it that this amazing grace to take one spirit full how is it this amazing love to take a great awakening line how is it this amazing love how can it be that thou my

God should die for me how is it how do I see it how do I access it how can you know it how can you experience it let me be as clear as I can for the coming week if you walk into a community group this week and spend more than 10 minutes inquiring again on the Nephilim or the demonic angelic host or whether they are natural citizens of the earth who marry without regard for God's will you have missed everything this text is moving toward it ought to be a moment in life where the community of Christ church sits virtually and in person and magnifies the name of the Lord through the notion that favor can be found and that's the story that ought to be told the story of your waywardness but his mercy the story of your wickedness but his grace the story of your lowliness that elevates the Lord Jesus Christ through whom grace does come Noah Noah prefigures as you'll see next week this redeemer but in our text Noah prefigures the redeemed he's

not merely the one who's going to look like a rescuer on the ark he in our text is the one who found rescue and how by being a recipient of God's grace and how does one receive God's grace by receiving the work of

[28 : 20] Christ and how does one receive the work of Christ by being told by someone that in his righteousness and love your sins can be forgiven and how is it that they're forgiven not by that which you do but by the one in whom all things were done for you and how do I get from me to him from fallenness to favor!

by faith in the one whom God sent to rescue the sons of men from their own wayward ways and wicked hearts it is by trusting that in Jesus full payment has been made for your waywardness it is by celebrating that in Jesus his righteousness replaces your wickedness it is that Jesus becomes for you the lover of your soul the one upon whom you lean the one you walk with this is everything for us as a church I'm telling you that the favor that Noah found that Moses knew of that Mary received can be had by you let me just close by reading to you that very truth from Hebrews chapter four since then we have a great high priest who's passed through the heavens Jesus the son of God let us hold fast to our confession for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace let me put it to you in the Hebrew way draw near to the throne of favor that we may receive mercy and find grace or find favor to help in the time of need do you see it do you have it the the writer is so clearly asking for you to lay your eyes on it today for just as man saw and did what he did God saw and did what he must but Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord our heavenly father I pray for all of us that that the conclusive line of the text would so fall upon our hearts with wonder and it would be a wonder only magnified given our understanding of the ruin and so while you needed to restrict our years and while you need to remove us from the face of the earth may the wonder of your favor yet come to rest upon us may each one today know this love this amazing love this but Noah love this but me love in Christ's name we pray amen well let's stand