

“WHEN GOD SAYS ENOUGH”
(Genesis 6:1-8)

This morning I want to talk to you about when God says enough. We’ve all had times in a store when we see a mom – and you may be that mom – who is strolling down the aisle with a couple of kids, and her kids are doing what kids do – they’re grabbing things off the shelf and begging mom to buy it for them, they’re picking on their sibling, and like a broken record they keep asking when they’re going to be done shopping. The mom shows incredible patience and restraint, but as her kids continue grabbing thing and complaining, there’s a certain point when her patience runs out. She says, “Enough is enough. Not another word out of you two. Any more of this and you’re going to get it when we get back to the car.” Whenever I see that, I have great empathy for the mom – because we’ve all been there – and it makes me happy that I’m going to be a grandparent and leave the heavy lifting to the parents.

We all know what it’s like to tolerate something for a period of time – perhaps a long period of time – and then there comes a tipping point where you say enough is enough. As we look at all that has happened in our world this past year, I’m sure you’ve asked as I have, “How bad do things have to get? What’s the breaking point when all the madness comes to a head and things implode?”

We know from God’s Word that a day is coming – we don’t know when – when the Lord will say, “enough,” and He will return in the clouds of glory to judge the world of sin and rebellion and restore the world to its Eden-like condition. But the Bible says that things will get worse before they get better.

To view God correctly, we must continually keep two truths in balance: His grace and His judgment. Like a good parent, God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth. At the same time, God is a just and holy God who will not tolerate sin and rebellion. Over and over in scripture we see God showing great patience and longsuffering towards people and nations, but when they do not repent and turn to Him, there comes a point where He says, “Enough,” and pours out His judgment.

The greatest judgment the world has ever experienced was the flood of Noah’s day, and in Matthew 24 Jesus used the flood as a preview of the future judgment to come. The flood is not just a story about an ark and animals, but it serves as a warning for you and I today to get ourselves ready for the coming judgment.

We’re in Genesis 6 today, and our passage describes the time period between the creation and fall of Adam, and the coming of the flood. It’s about a 1600-year period, and during this time you have two family lines who live side-by-side. You have the line of Cain, who killed his brother, and then lived apart from the presence of God and developed a secular culture. You also have the line of Seth, Cain’s younger brother, who led his family and descendants to call on the name of the Lord, the most famous of which will be Noah.

The sin that started with Adam and Eve, and carried on through Cain and his descendants, snowballs during this period and grows worse and worse – as bad as it’s ever been. At the same time, in this darkest of dark period, we also see God’s grace and mercy extended to every person, as well as His longsuffering patience in withholding judgment. But by the time we get to Noah, He says, “Enough is enough.”

What we're going to read this morning is perhaps the most difficult passage in the Bible to interpret. It's a bit of a mind-bender, and a passage the very best Bible scholars disagree on. It's important when we come to a passage like this that we don't get lost in the weeds, but to keep the main point and application of the passage in mind – and that is the reason why God sent the flood, and the grace He provides to escape it. So let's dig in.

The first reason He sent the flood was a **demonic rebellion against His created order**. Verses 1-4 say, 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 man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown (ESV).

During this 1600-year period – between the creation of Adam and the flood – there is a population explosion. Given a long lifespan, and some estimate that there may have been a billion or more people born during this time. Moses, the author of Genesis, then focuses our attention on the “sons of God” who see the “daughters of man,” see that they are attractive, and take them as their wives. This act – this marriage between the sons of God and the daughters of men is one of the main reasons that God sent the flood.

The question is: Who are the “sons of God,” and who are the “daughters of men?” The first paper I wrote in Bible college was on this topic, and I remember being absolutely puzzled over what this passage was talking about. I looked in my files this week for my paper and couldn't find it, which is disappointing because I would love to see what I wrote back then.

One view is that the sons of God refer to the godly descendants of Seth, and the daughters of men refer to the ungodly women from the line of Cain, who rejected God. What happened, they say, is that the godly descendants of Seth, driven by lust, were drawn to the outward beauty of the secular Cainite women and married them, and they didn't stop at just taking one wife, but they took as many wives as they wanted – and this intermarriage corrupted the godly line of Seth.

At first glance, this would explain why God sent the flood. Anytime a believer compromises his or her faith and makes alliances with those outside the faith, the faith of that person and their family is corrupted, so that by the time you get to Noah, he is the only righteous man on earth. This is one view.

The other view, and the view I strongly lean to, says that the sons of God refer to fallen, demonic angels who try to corrupt God's creative order of marriage by taking on a human body or inhabiting the bodies of human men and having sex with human women. Hopefully, a lot of questions are spinning around in your mind as to how all of this can happen.

One reason many scholars take this view is because the only other times the phrase “sons of God” is used elsewhere in the Old Testament – in the book of Job – it refers to fallen angels. This view also fits well with Genesis 3:15, where God said that the offspring of Satan will be at war with the offspring of the woman. What better way to declare war on God than to corrupt the human race to try to prevent the coming of the Messiah who would crush the head of the serpent.

Another reason this view makes sense is because of two passages in the New Testament that describe a particularly egregious sin by fallen angels that fits what happens here.

The first passage is 2 Peter 2:4-5 where Peter uses the judgment of fallen angels in the past as a warning and certainty that God will judge people in the future. Peter says, “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.”

Certain fallen angels did something so egregious that it caused God to send the flood. We know from Revelation 12 that a third of the angels in heaven followed Lucifer in his rebellion against God, and were cast down to earth, along with Satan. Today these fallen angels are called demons – who roam the earth along with Satan, looking to disrupt and destroy God’s order and plan for the world. Here Peter says there are certain fallen angels who are not roaming the earth, but are locked in gloomy dungeons awaiting God’s final judgment. It’s hard to imagine some fallen angels being worse than others, but these demons were the worst of the worst. Their sin was so heinous that God did not wait to judge them, but locked them away in a spiritual prison where they are to this day.

What did they do? Jude 6-7 tells us... “And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.”

These verses, I believe, help explain what happened in Genesis six. These wicked angels did not stay within their God-ordered boundaries – worshipping and serving God – but sought to inhabit the bodies of human men and possess them. And these men were willing accomplices in helping Satan overturn God’s order. Once they opened themselves up to the demonic influence, all kinds of wickedness spewed forth, including immoral and unnatural marriage.

This helps explain how fallen angels – who do not have bodies – could have sexual relations with humans, and that is by entering their bodies in the form of possession. This makes sense because we learn in the gospels that demons crave human bodies to inhabit, and in the days preceding the flood that’s what they appear to do – trying to create havoc by subverting God’s ordered design.

What’s interesting to me is that during the tribulation period to come, Revelation 9 says that these same fallen angels will be released from their dungeon to unleash destruction on the earth, just prior to the coming judgment of Jesus when He returns. And at the final judgment, Satan and his demons will be cast forever into the Lake of Fire.

In verse 4 we get another glimpse as to what the world was like before the flood and a second reason God sent judgment, and that is an **arrogant disregard for human life**. Verse 4 says, The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown (ESV).

Another big question in this passage is who are the Nephilim? Verse 4 seems to imply that they were the offspring of the evil union between the sons of God and the daughters of men. “Nephilim” means “strong ones or tyrants.” According to Hebrew legend, the Nephilim were a race of giants or super-heroes who did great acts of evil. They were fierce and violent warriors who ran over anyone who got in their way. Down in verse 10 we read that “the earth was filled with violence.” The time before the flood was notorious for violence and lawlessness, and the Nephilim – with their size and power – were bullies who showed total disregard for human life. They used their great power, not to help people, but to overpower them and dominate them.

While the Nephilim perished in the flood – and there are no more Nephilim today – the spirit of their violent, arrogant ways lived on. Centuries later, when the twelve spies of Israel go to scope out the Promised Land in Numbers 13, and came back and reported that they saw Nephilim in the land, who were big and fierce and made them look like grasshoppers in comparison. Over the years the word Nephilim had become a term of fear, like the word “monster” or “bogyman” would invoke fear in a child. To the spies these people looked like the Nephilim of old.

The spirit of the Nephilim lives on. The Bible says that prior to Jesus’ coming, the world will be marked by great violence. They say that this past century was the bloodiest in human history. Tyrannical leaders like Hitler, Stalin, and Mao killed at least 60 million of their own citizens. Millions more have been killed by war and senseless acts of violence. Violence in our own country is out of control in many of our major cities, just like it was in the days of Noah.

Violence is the natural result of a society that rejects God and His order and design for creation. Once God is rejected, it creates a man-centered, selfish society where other people are not valued as made in the image of God. Jesus said that in the last days Jesus says that the love of many will grow cold, and people will be arrogant and lovers of self. When love for God and other people grows cold, hatred heats up and violence increases.

In verses 5-6 we see a third reason God sent the flood – **the total depravity of man...** “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.”

This is one of the key verses in all the Bible that describes how God views sin. One of the questions religion and philosophy wrestles with is whether people are basically good or bad or a mixture of the two. A recent poll I read says that 75% of Americans believe that people are basically good. We want to believe that about other people, and we want to believe that about ourselves. People may have their faults and flaws, but we like to think that their good outweighs their bad.

What we forget is that in our sinful state we are unable to see ourselves correctly. We are so saturated in sin that we’re like a fish that doesn’t know it’s in the water. It’s immersed in it, and it’s the only world it knows. These verses, perhaps as well as any verses in the Bible, tells us what God sees when he looks at people, and they tell us four things about sin.

Number one, sin is **internal**. The Lord saw the “thoughts of his *heart*.” We usually perceive sin as an outward act – someone steals or lies or cheats – but every outward act of sin begins within the heart. That’s why Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” How often do you hear about someone you thought you knew – someone who appeared to be a good, virtuous person – get caught in a disgraceful sin. Jesus taught in the gospels that if we take care of our heart – and cultivate purity in what we think about and desire – then our public life will be pure as well.

Secondly, sin is **progressive**. “God saw how great the wickedness of man *had become*.” I heard Bill Gothard say one time that “sin does not stand still – if not confessed and repented of it grows progressively bolder and more brazen.” We have seen the same thing happen in our culture in recent years as almost everything that once was considered sinful and wrong, is now accepted and applauded. On a personal level we must be aware that once we open the door to sin and let our guard down, it’s just a matter of time before we rationalize and excuse our sin and accept it as normal.

Third, sin is **pervasive**. “God saw that *every* inclination of man’s heart was evil.” Because we’re like a fish in the water that doesn’t know it’s in the water, we don’t realize how deeply and extensively sin permeates our lives. Theologians use a term called “total depravity,” which means that every area of our life is affected by sin – even the good things we do. The Pharisees in Jesus’ day appeared to be as good and as holy a people as you’d find anywhere – giving to the poor, praying, and fasting – but Jesus said, “All these good things you are doing are all for show. You don’t really care about the poor, and you don’t really care about me, you do all these ‘good’ things so that people will be impressed by you.”

Total depravity means that every part of my fallen humanity is tainted by sin – my motives, my desires, my decisions – all of it is corrupted by my sinful nature. This doesn’t mean that we’re as sinful as we can possibly be, or incapable of doing any good. Jesus said that even pagan people do good things. It doesn’t mean that when you do a good deed and help someone, that your motives are all bad – but it means that even our best deed might have ulterior motives that we’re not even aware of. Once we become aware of depth of our sinfulness, only then can we see our need for a Savior and run to Jesus for salvation.

Fourth, sin is **continual**. “Every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil *continually*.” Apart from the Lord, sin is habitual – it’s a daily lifestyle that consumes us and controls us. Once we come to Christ and our hearts are transformed, we begin to walk in a new way, and 1 John 3:9 says we no longer “continue” in sin. We’ve been born of God and are a new person. God gives us the power to say “no” to sin. We’re no longer held captive to the impulses of our flesh. And over time, we gain new habits and patterns, and sin less and less.

In this passage we not only get a look at the heart of mankind, but also the heart of God. Verse 6 says, “The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled” (ESV). What an amazing statement. After creating Adam and Eve, God said, “It is good.” Now after His creation has spiraled down into total depravity, it says that God regretted that He even made man and His heart was grieved.

This is an early example in the Bible of what’s called an anthropomorphism, which means that sometimes the authors of the Bible describe God with human characteristics to give us a glimpse of what God is like. We know as humans what it’s like to regret something, and in a similar way God regretted making people. This does not mean that God was taken by surprise at man’s wickedness and said, “I made a big mistake making people – I shouldn’t have done that.” God knows all things and is not shocked at the way things unfold on earth.

What verse 6 does tell us is that God has emotions, just as we who are made in His image have emotions. The Hebrew word for “regret” means “to sigh.” God feels great sorrow when His creation sins and rebels against His perfect design. Even though He knows it’s going to happen, it grieves Him in the same way a parent grieves a poor choice by their child. The deeper your love for them, the more their choices bring you sorrow. God is not detached and stoic, but a God who feels deeply about His creation.

In verse 7 God’s patience and tolerance reaches its limit... So the Lord 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” (ESV). At any moment God could have sent judgment, and for that matter, God could send judgment at any time on our world today. But God is extremely patient and merciful. Over and over in the Bible He gives people every opportunity to repent and be forgiven. But as a just and holy God, He cannot and will not allow sin to continue without consequence, and we wouldn’t want Him to. Imagine a world where evil was allowed to run rampant without justice. What kind of God would God be? People often complain about God’s judgment, yet will cry out for justice and fairness at the same time.

There reaches a point where God says enough is enough. Look again at verse 3 where God says, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” Another way of saying this is, “I will not protect my creation forever.” God set up creation with perfect order and design so that people could thrive and prosper, and be protected from harm. But whenever people defy His order and design and live their own way, God does not stop them but gives them over to the natural consequences of their choices.

I think that God is judging our world right now in that He is giving us over to the natural consequences of our choices. Sin has always been around, but it’s pretty clear that sin in our world is growing bolder and more brazen. And God grieves. But He says, “I won’t stop you, but when you defy my order and design, you will reap the consequences of what you’ve sown.”

And now in verse 7 God says the time of judgment has come... “I am going to blot out man and animal – everything that I have created – I’m going to judge the entire earth.” But even then, God is never quick to judge. He says to Noah’s generation, “You have 120 years... 120 years before I send my judgment.” That is grace. God always gives people ample time and opportunity to repent and come to Him for salvation.”

And there’s one man who did. Verse 8 says, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” The word “favor” can also be translated “grace.” Grace means receiving something from God that you can never achieve on your own. In a world sinking deeper and deeper into depravity, Noah stood out. Hebrews 11 says that by faith Noah believed God’s warning of judgment and built an ark. While everyone else was ignored God and lived as they pleased, Noah saw His own sinfulness and cried out to God for mercy. He recognized that without God’s grace, he would drown in the flood along with the rest of creation. It was only by God’s grace that He escaped judgment.

In our fallen state, we are conditioned to think that to find favor in God’s eyes, we must be a good person – we must do something to earn His favor – but Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” In other words, God doesn’t have to save anybody – we are all worthy of judgment – but He extends His grace to those who will believe in faith – believe that salvation comes only through Christ’s death on our behalf – who took our sins upon Himself so that we can be saved from eternal judgment.

The New Testament warns us over and over that another judgment day is coming. We don’t know if it is 120 years or two years, but Jesus is coming back to judge a sinful, depraved world. The reason He has not yet returned is because He is giving people – perhaps you – the opportunity to recognize your need for a Savior and run to Christ for forgiveness. But there is coming a day, and perhaps very soon, when He says “Enough. I’ve given you every opportunity to turn to me, but I will not let sin and rebellion go on forever. Now is the day of salvation. Come to me before it’s too late. Receive my grace through faith and you will be saved.”