

THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN

Genesis 6:1-13

Abel, Enoch and Noah follow each other historically and also in the order of spiritual experience. It is only the man who has been accepted by God as was Abel that can walk as Enoch walked, and it is only the man who walks with God as did Enoch that can give powerful testimony for God as Noah did.

The opening verses of this sixth chapter of Genesis describe the state of the world before the flood. You will remember that at that particular time there were two distinct races upon the earth--the descendants of Cain and the descendants of Seth or, as we call them, the Cainites and the Sethites. The Sethites were godly people; they worshipped and served the Lord; they kept up the observance of family prayer; they recognized an unseen and spiritual kingdom; and they endeavored to fashion their lives in accordance with their belief. On the other hand, the Cainites cared for none of these things; they flung off the restraints of religion. Being materialists, they did not care to inquire as to whether there was such a thing as truth, or such a thing as righteousness, or such a being as God.

The blessing of fruitfulness given to man at his creation was not withdrawn on account of the fall. It was the purpose of God to create a race and to draw from among its members a redeemed family. Every individual conforms to the life and nature of the race, but each is sufficiently different to be marked off as an individual and known to God and loved by Him as such.

The best way that I know to explain verse two is that "the sons of God" were the descendants of Seth and that "the daughters of men" were the descendants of Cain. For some considerable time the two races kept completely apart; the Cainites went their way, the Sethites went theirs, and there was little or no association with each other. However, at this point the divided streams of humanity reunite. The women of the Cainite race came into greater prominence and exercised a greater influence of a certain kind than the women of the Sethite race; they were more obtrusive and less modest, wore more costly dresses, spent more time in adorning their persons and gave themselves up to the cultivation and practice of feminine allurements.

It was through the women of the Cainite race that the danger came in--"the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair." Their beauty attracted and ensnared them; their dress was exquisite; their manners were fascinating, though a trifle bold in comparison with the shy and retiring ways of the women of their own race; so the men first fluttered round and then fell into the net that was spread for them.

Captivated by the charms of beauty, these men cast aside the bonds of self-restraint and "took them wives of all which they chose." To please their fancies, they married as many wives as they desired, thus imitating the example of the descendants of Cain. Influenced by self-will and mere carnal affections, they chose their wives without any reference to God or to duty. The result was an intermingling of the two races and a very rapid increase of the corruption of mankind.

God did not permit them to rush headlong to their own destruction without interposing obstacles in their paths. He erected a series of barriers in

their way to keep them back from perdition. He gave them a gospel of mercy in the promise of the woman's seed; a ministry of mercy, raising up and maintaining a succession of pious men to preach to them and warn them of the results of sin; a Spirit of mercy to strive with them; a providence of mercy by measuring out to them a term of years, yet reminding them of their mortality. Verse three contains the first expression in the Bible of the principle that a limit or term is set by God to the opportunity to sin. The giants mentioned in verse four may have been men like Goliath of Gath, who was a freak of nature, gigantic in size. They seem to have been giants in wickedness as well as in physical characteristics.

God always looks down from heaven upon the children of men, perpetually watching their ways. He created man for His glory, and man has no reason for existence apart from the glory of God. God cares deeply and unceasingly how man behaves. As He observed the men who are mentioned in this passage, God saw that their wickedness was great. That is the only thing God has ever said about man that was great. Man's sin is truly great, but that is the only greatness the human race has.

Man's wickedness is his outward conduct, which is the fruit of a fallen nature within. Wicked works are the evidence of a corrupt nature. Man is not only a sinner by nature, but he is also one by choice. Notice that every imagination without exception was evil; that every imagination was nothing but evil, not partly good but only evil; that every imagination was nothing but evil always, without intermission, every day of life. This was our state apart from Christ and is the condition of every unsaved person today. Every imagination includes both purposes and desires.

Man failed to fulfil the great purpose for which God created him. Therefore, it repented the Lord that He had made man. Man repents when he changes his mind, his attitude and his actions. God repents when His feelings are changed and His acts are reversed. Moreover, man's wickedness grieved God. "Grieve" is a love word. It means to plunge into deep sorrow or to cause acute pain. God can be grieved by what we think, say and do. Sin always grieves God, whether in the believer or the unbeliever. It also deprives us of happiness, impoverishes our lives and destroys our usefulness.

As proof of the fact that "the wages of sin is death," God said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth." The Creator, and He alone, has the right to destroy what He created. It seems obvious that the words "create" and "destroy" stand here in simple contrast to each other. To create means to bring into being, and to destroy means to put out of being.

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." This is the first thing we are told about him. Grace is the foundation of every life that is well-pleasing to God. Grace is the source from which issues every blessing we receive. The point of this statement is that Noah was to be excepted from the general destruction. The grace of God is always the only foundation of salvation. On what grounds did Noah find grace? Certainly not on those of his own deserts. The only ground on which he could find grace was the sovereign eternal purpose of God Himself to bless him, and even this was manifested to him in grace. Probably Noah did not find favor in the eyes of men, but he did find grace in the eyes of the Lord, and that was honor and comfort enough. Those whom God favors are highly favored.

Little is told us of the parentage of Noah; yet sufficient evidence is revealed to indicate that he was the descendant of believing ancestors and the son of a God-fearing father. He began life at a time when it was growing harder and harder to live right. The world was very corrupt. But, in spite of that fact, Noah was a just man. The faith by which he was justified rendered him just before God. From grace comes righteousness. Noah was uncontaminated with the evils around him. He was exceptional as an upright man in a wicked world. The word which is translated "perfect" means upright and genuine, but it does not have any reference to the absence of sin in his life. Uprightness is the result of being righteous before God through grace.

Noah also walked with God. He is one of the two men of whom this statement is recorded. This statement implies the ideas of friendship and fellowship. It is noteworthy that such a thing was possible for him in the environment in which he lived. It meant independence and courage, for the masses were not walking in that way. Noah's piety did not prevent him from undertaking family responsibilities.

Two words sum up the conditions which prevailed in Noah's day--corruption and violence. These are the two great forms of human wickedness--the inward and the outward; and they are related to each other as are cause and effect. God wants people to walk in the way of holiness. Sin eats into His purpose for them and prevents them from enjoying its blessings or reaching its end. Corruption and violence are characteristics of the earth today. But, one thing is sure, nothing is hidden from God. It is a certainty that He will see to it that one day all sin, suffering, trouble and sorrow will come to an end.