

CAN ONE LIVE RIGHT IN AN EVIL DAY?

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Genesis 6:8

The opening verses of Genesis six describe the state of the world before the flood. At that particular time there were two distinct races upon the earth — the descendants of Cain and the descendants of Seth. The Sethites were godly people; they worshipped and served the Lord; and they endeavored to fashion their lives in accordance with His will. The Cainites did not care for any of these things; they flung off the restraints of religion.

For quite some time the two races kept completely apart. Meanwhile the Cainite women came into greater prominence and exercised a greater influence than the Sethite women. They were more obtrusive and less modest, wore more costly dresses, spent more time in adorning their persons, and gave themselves to the cultivation and practice of feminine allurements. Their beauty attracted and ensnared the Sethite men. Captivated by their charms, these men cast aside the bonds of self-restraint and took unto themselves "wives of all which they chose." To please their fancies, they married as many wives as they desired. Influenced by self-will and mere carnality, they chose their wives without and 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 always looks down from heaven upon the children of men, perpetually watching their conduct and ways. He created man for His glory, and man does not have any 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 about man that God has ever said was great. Man's sin is truly great, but that is the only greatness the human race has. Man's wickedness grieves 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 in the unbeliever. It also deprives the sinner of happiness, impoverishes their lives, and destroys their usefulness.

In Noah's day the world was a seething and corrupting mess. The wickedness of man was great and every thought of the human mind was on evil continually. 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 Noah. There was grace even in that evil day, and Noah found it. Grace is available in the foulest years. Nobody is forced to be dragged down by the crowd.

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 foundation of salvation. On what grounds did Noah find grace? Certainly not on the grounds of his own merits. The only ground on which he could find grace was the sovereign and 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 sufficient honor and comfort for him. Those whom God favors are highly favored.

Little is told us of the ancestry 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 his 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 by the evils around him. He was exceptional as an upright man in a wicked world. And, we need to remember that, there was not a Bible for Noah to read, for it had not been written. There was no church for Noah to attend. There was not a single human being outside his own family to whom he could go and find someone to share his burdens. There was not one friend to grip his hand, to pat him on the back, or to encourage him at all. There was no friend with whom he could pray. He was the only man on earth who believed in prayer.

Noah was righteous. God said that he was righteous. He stood as a lone figure in those early years to prove once for all that all a man really has to have is God. Noah 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. He walked with God at a time when the world was exceedingly corrupt. God's revelation was despised and rejected. His repeated warnings were flouted. Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

It is noteworthy that Noah walked with God in friendship and fellowship in the environment in which he lived. It required independence and courage, for the masses were not walking in that way. Noah preached, but the only people who believed his message were the members of his own family. The world would not listen, but his wife and sons and his daughters-in-law believed the old gentleman. They accepted his message, which proved conclusively that they had confidence in his religion.

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. Corruption and violence are characteristics of our day. But, one thing is sure, and that is that nothing is hidden from God.

Having revealed to Noah His purpose to destroy all of the corrupt and violent people on the earth, God commanded him to build an ark. Promptly and faithfully Noah followed the instructions which God gave him. He did not make any suggestions to God as to how to improve the ark, or how the world might be saved in some other manner. He simply did as God commanded him. The Bible says: "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."

It is both encouraging and inspiring to observe his ready obedience and minute performance of every command of God in the construction of the ark, in spite of all the artillery of sarcasm and ridicule that was turned upon him. He was probably the most laughed-at man of his generation, but Noah obeyed God. He was faithful in the proclamation of God's message. As a preacher of righteousness he spoke of sin, but the people were not convinced. As a prophet he spoke of judgment, but they did not believe. As a faithful witness he spoke of a remedy, but the people would not heed. Nevertheless, in spite of a scoffing world, Noah obeyed God. There is always great power in obedience. Obey one command of God and you will have the faith to obey the next. Obey that command and more faith will come. Obey God and watch your faith grow.

Noah and his family were the only people who rode out the storm. High and safe and dry in the ark of God's mercy they survived the flood. Yes, Noah proved beyond peradventure of a doubt that one can live right in an evil day.