

## 5. We cannot take God for granted

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Date: 24 June 2009

Preacher: Bob Fyall

[ 0 : 00 ] 6, it's on page 5 of the Bibles, and we're going to read the first 8 verses. It's the last one in this series, Hope for a Hopeless World, and I'm calling this We Cannot Take God for Granted.

Well, that's Genesis chapter 6, reading verses 1 to 8. When man, and that is mankind, humanity, 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 day 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 into the daughters of man, 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 was sorry 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, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.

[ 1 : 39 ] But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Amen. That is God's word. May he bless it to us. Isn't it true that every day that passes brings its crop of bad news?

Warfare in various countries, famine in others, and all kinds of personal tragedies to individuals and to families all around us, and indeed to our own selves and our own families.

The question that's continually asked, and indeed we ask it ourselves, is why doesn't God do something about it? If he is all-powerful, why isn't he doing something to sort out the mess?

And if he's good, why does he look on the suffering and appear to be unmoved? Now that's a question that people have asked since the beginning of history, or at least since the fall.

Why doesn't God do something? And the answer to that is that once God did something, did something on a spectacular, dramatic scale, and this is the next story.

[ 2 : 51 ] We're not going to be getting on to this at this point. When he sent the flood, he was doing something about the sin and evil of the world. Something so drastic, something so terrifying, something so all-embracing, that it rooted out so much sin and evil from the world.

Of course it didn't root it out completely. He had to send Jesus to die on the cross to do that. But when we say, why doesn't God do something? When he does something, this is the kind of thing that he does.

We're on the verge of the great judgment known as the flood. And the Lord Jesus Christ himself says, speaking to his disciples, as it was in the days of Noah, so will be in the days of the Son of Man.

That is to say, the period between his coming to earth and his coming again. The whole period we're living it. And Peter, in his second letter that we were looking at some weeks ago, sees the flood as a preview of the last judgment.

So we're on the verge of the flood here. We're on the verge of, as I say, an answer to that question. Now as we've looked at these chapters in the last few weeks, we've seen two streams running through them.

[ 4 : 09 ] First of all, there is God's loving purpose. And then there is humanity, helped by the serpent, helped by the devil, trying to destroy these.

In other words, there is hope. There is God's loving purpose. But there's also hopelessness, because humanity have chosen the wrong way. And once again, we're going to look at these two realities as they run through these verses.

First of all, we're going to look at humanity's arrogant rebellion. That's the first thing these verses tell us about. Humanity was made in the image of God.

And that meant particularly two things. That meant humanity was made male and female, that human sexuality, in the context of the bond of a man and a woman, is good, it's wonderful, and it's to be celebrated.

And also they were given dominion over the earth. They were made God's stewards of creation. Now, both of these gifts remain after the fall, but both have been corrupted and perverted.

[ 5 : 13 ] The God-given gift of sexuality has been perverted into lust and into exploitation. The God-given gift of dominion over the earth has been perverted into tyranny, into abuse of the created order.

And we saw a few weeks ago, if any of you were here, Lamech, that sinister descendant of Cain, showing both of these things. But now we reach new depths.

And the context is the rapid expansion of the human race, when man began to multiply on the face of the land. In other words, the promise of God to be fruitful, to fill the earth, still remains.

And as we saw as well, this is not, don't imagine this is a primitive world, with people running around in animal skins and grunting at each other with wooden implements.

And so it's a highly sophisticated world. Back in chapter four, there are cities, there is agriculture, there is industry, and there are the arts. So what's happening then?

[ 6 : 19 ] And the first thing that's happening is what you can only call the demonizing of humanity. Humanity is going headlong the way of the serpent. We are told that the sons of God came into the daughters of men and bore children to them.

Now there's been a great deal of argument about who these sons of God are. Some have argued that they are the godly descendants of Seth, Adam's other son after Abel was murdered by Cain and that the daughters of men are in fact the daughters of Cain.

Now that doesn't make sense because both Cain and Seth had many, many descendants. They were a mixed bag like anybody else's descendants. Rather, it seems to me they're the godless descendants of Lamech, mentioned back in chapters four.

Not necessarily they're all descended literally from him, but they were like Lamech in that they sold themselves totally into the control of the serpent, of the demon.

And by doing so, they tried to pollute the human race and prevent the serpent crusher coming.

Verse two, they saw the daughters of men were attractive.

[ 7 : 37 ] Verse two, and they took as wives any that they chose. Now this word took is a violent word, snatched. Sometimes it's translated elsewhere in the Old Testament as raped.

In other words, these were sexual predators. That's what's happening here. It's not godly marriage. It's not a young couple joining together in the presence of God before these witnesses.

This is predatory men who take any they choose. When the sexual appetite goes wrong, and we know this in our own culture, it's always women who suffer most.

Women become objects of lust for men. Women become simply the object of the desires of fallen men, rather than being treated in their own right as part of the image of God.

And this is the kind of offspring they have in verse four. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and afterwards they were mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

[ 8 : 38 ] You see what's happening. These predatory guys who wanted to rule over the earth produced giant descendants.

What happens when you have giant men? You have giant sins. It's not that you have people who are more like God. You have people of a greater capacity for sin.

And one of these people is mentioned in Genesis chapter 10, figure of Nimrod, the founder of the city of Babylon with all its sinister associations. And then later on, in the second book of Samuel, you read of the family of Goliath, the giant, of course, whom David had conquered before.

And obviously in that city of Gath, there was a kind of defective gene that produced abnormalities. See, that's what happens when people go away from the order of the Creator.

They don't become like God. They're dragged further and further down. And who can doubt the same kind of things are happening in our society. They are prevalent in our day.

[ 9 : 44 ] That's why the Bible is so relevant. I mean, as I have studied these chapters again, I've been amazed. I shouldn't have been amazed, of course, but I've been amazed at how relevant it is to the world around us.

You will be like God. Otherwise, you'll be arrogant. You'll be self-sufficient. And that's the other thing, arrogant self-sufficiency. Notice, they are the sons of God, so-called. They're not God-like, of course, because they've gone the wrong way. The sons of God behave like sexual predators, and they behave as warlords. Deviant sex and violence spread throughout the whole earth.

And later on, in verse 11, the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. But look at God's assessment. Verse 2.

Now, here's a staggering point. Verse 2 comes after verse 1 and before verse 3. Now, that's pretty obvious, but I think it's also deliberate. In verses 1 and 2, we have a description of the human condition.

[10:50] In verse 4, we have its consequences. And then in verse 3, sandwiched in between, is God's assessment. What's God's assessment of these predators and warlords?

His assessment is, he is flesh. In other words, vulnerable, frail, totally lacking in any possibility of controlling his own destiny.

You see, this is another attempt to be like God. The attempt, and instead of being like God, they're simply showing evidence of their own frailty, their own humanity.

You see, the Bible is not sentimental about human beings. See, there's two extreme views about human beings. One is that human beings are wonderful. Human beings are God-like.

The other is that they are little more than simply animals. Now, the Bible doesn't hold either view. The Bible's view is they are made in the image of God.

[11:50] Made to be with God. Made to be like God. But when we choose our own way, we descend lower, indeed, than the level of the animal. It's a realistic view. It's neither a sentimental view, nor is it a dismissive view.

Attempt to reach heaven. And a reminder that only the Spirit of God sustains humanity at all. In Psalm 104, the Spirit of God animates the whole of creation.

And his days shall be 120 years. I think that's probably the time between then and the flood, rather than saying the average lifespan is going to be 120 years.

I don't think that's what's being said. When God pronounces judgment, he always gives the time to repent. And that's what God is saying. God's saying 120 years from now, you're going to need to repent.

And of course they didn't. So that's the first thing then. Humanity's arrogant rebellion. The second thing is God's good plan. Because God is determined.

[12:55] God is committed to a new creation. And once again there is judgment. And there is salvation. And look at verse 5. The Lord saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth.

Every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. In other words, God's judgment is going to be fair. Because humanity has gone beyond the pale.

The image has been totally perverted. The word translated intention or desire, probably a better word, is the same word that's used in chapter 2 of God forming humanity.

God formed. God shaped humanity. You see, when God shapes something, it's good. When humanity, trying to run away from God, shapes something, the result is disastrous.

And here is what happens when humanity tries to create outside of God's plans. The story of Frankenstein who made a monster that then turned on him and created him.

[13:58] The story of our technology, which is so amazing, so spectacular, and yet which so often destroys us. The internet is an absolutely wonderful invention.

But most of the sites on the internet are pornographic sites. That doesn't mean the internet is wrong. It doesn't mean the internet is evil in itself. It simply means that something which humanity, in their cleverness and in their genius, have created, has been turned to bad purposes.

Just the same as has happened all through history with books, happened with television. This always happens when humanity tries to create outside the God-given boundaries. So God will judge.

He must be consistent. God saw the wickedness was great. In chapter 1, when God saw his handiwork, over and over again it's described as God saw it was good.

It was very good. Over and over again. Now here, God's seeing is such that it's going to mean judgment. And he was sorry and it grieved him.

[15:04] God is not an unfeeling being across leagues of super space. God feels passionately and deeply. It's interesting, the word grieved is related to the word used of the curse on humanity in chapter 3.

Sorrow and grief will come upon humanity. And now God is feeling that sorrow and that grief. You see, God weeps over his fallen world.

God weeps at the suffering of humanity, at the evil of humanity. Because this is the God who one day in Jesus is going to weep over the city of Jerusalem on which he has pronounced judgment. Oh Jerusalem, if only you had turned. And the flood is a preview of the last judgment for all of creation. The land, man, animals, creeping things, the birds of the heaven.

For I am sorry. Does that mean that God is fickle and changes his mind? It doesn't mean that at all. God is totally consistent. He will carry out his purpose of creating a new heaven and a new earth.

[16:14] But when a threat comes up against that, then God is going to deal with that threat. The new heaven and the new earth are not going to be populated by human beings who have gone the way of the serpent, by a creation which is subject to curse and earthquakes and tidal waves and tsunamis and cancer and all the rest of it.

The new creation is going to be filled with people who are in the image of God. And with the whole of creation is going to be restored. And God is heartbroken at what has happened to his creation. And God wants his creation back. In my study I have a picture which is very special to me. It's a picture of a deer standing in a forest in the mist in the early morning.

Now suppose that picture were to be stolen. And I'm not particularly wanting the thief to be caught and fined. I want my picture back.

And God wants his picture back. And God will have his picture back. Both in humanity and in creation. So not only will he judge, he will save.

[17:28] Verse 8. A gleam of hope in the darkness and hopelessness. But Noah found favour. This would be better translated grace.

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. It wasn't that Noah had anything good in himself. But that Noah liked Enoch before him.

We're told this actually in the next verse. Noah walked with God. As I said before, even in those early days, before any Bible had been written, God was obviously revealing himself to people. We don't know how he did it. We don't know anything about the techniques. Some people, one or two, Enoch, Noah, followed him. And by following him, stood out from the rest of their contemporaries.

The Bible has a word for that, doesn't it? They had faith. By faith, Noah. By faith, Enoch. That world is our world. As we look at this, we could be looking out onto the world around us.

[18:32] We could be looking at our television screens. Indeed, we could be looking into our own hearts. And in our world, as in that world, there is a choice to be made. Are we going to follow the way of the serpent?

That way that leads to destruction? Or are we going to follow the way that Enoch and Noah followed and walk with God? My prayer is that every one of us in this building will follow in the way of Enoch and follow in the way of Noah and so find hope in a hopeless world.

Amen. Let's pray. Lord God, we praise you that when we had gone far away from you, you sent your son to die for us and for our salvation.

That when your world looked set to be destroyed, that you carried out your glorious purpose of a new heaven and a new earth. We look forward to that day and pray that in the days to come, we may live to anticipate that new world, that new creation.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, thank you very much for coming. Do come again next week. There will be a new series beginning. I'm not sure.

[19:48] Or perhaps there will be a one-off next week. There will certainly be a new series beginning in a week or two. Thank you. Thank you.