



If I was talking with ten random people, and asked them to give me their conception of God, I imagine I would get slightly (or, even dramatically) different answers from each of them. If you've been here for any length of time, you have heard me often refer to how we as people can take pendulum extremes in our views. And I see this when it comes to our conception of God – even, and especially within the church. We have some people who view God almost like someone who just can't wait to destroy and torture people. Grace is almost foreign to this view. Then, we have the other extreme where people understandably resist that view, but they embrace a “god of grace” that isn't really an accurate description of God. He doesn't have much justice or hatred for sin. What I see in either of these extremes is that people end up emphasizing themselves instead of God.

In the “anger-only” view, people can tend to think that they are God's gift to the earth to tell everyone how wrong they are all the time. And, sometimes, these individuals seem to feel better about themselves as long as they can do that. But what about their sin? How does God view them? In the “grace-only” view, people seem to want to correct others on how ungracious they are and wrong they are. But they seem to do this in order to ensure that they're “safe” before God.

In either view, the people seem to really be emphasizing themselves and not God. But if we're going to understand God, we must focus on God – and not ourselves. But that's the perennial problem, isn't it? We, left to ourselves, are incessantly prone to focus on ourselves. This is what we see in Genesis – Eve and Adam focused on themselves. Cain focused on his own self. Lamech focused on himself. But then we get scenarios where people turned from themselves and focused on the Lord. When people turn from their own pride and turn to the Lord, we see God granting forgiveness, reconciliation with him and with others. We see hope that the curse is going to be reversed. But we see this happening because people see the God of justice *and* mercy. They understand what they deserve and humble themselves before the Lord.

Oh that we would humble ourselves before the Lord, too. I pray that none of us elevate our conception of who God is, but we would listen to what Scripture says and embrace it. Why? Because this is God's Word. This is God's description of himself, and if we don't listen to this, we're not listening to God (no matter what we feel like we're doing).

Now, I say all of this because as we continue in the Genesis narrative, we are coming close to the story of the Flood. God has shown mercy and grace and judgment. We see how God is fulfilling his promise to bring about a rescuer – the seed of the woman – but we also see how the serpent's offspring is increasing. All humans are born sinners, and when we go back to the beginning, we see that humanity is increasingly getting worse and worse. What's God going to do about this? Does God just let sin continue and let sinners build cities and enjoy his gifts? Lamech sure seemed to think so. But is God just a “God of grace” without any judgment? Or, maybe a better question is, “What is God like?”

This is the question the wandering Israelites ought to ask while they are headed to the nation God promised them because they were tempted to believe the other nations were the blessed ones. At times, the Israelites were tempted to believe God was just an angry Being who was against them. At other times, they were also tempted to think God didn't care about their sins because clearly God is gracious.

Can you relate to the Israelites? Do you ever view God as only judgment or other times, only grace? If so, this text is important for us to consider. Here in Genesis 6:1-8, we discover that **God's response to humanity's sin is personal pain, judgment, and grace.** We don't see either grace or judgment. We see both. And in seeing God this way, I think we also discover in this text, what a man named Allen Ross wrote: **Humans cannot seize divinity; they cannot overstep their bounds and blur God's distinctions. Such evil must be brought to a halt by divine intervention** (Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, p. 180). There's a warning and a help in this passage. Focus on God. Submit to him. Trust him! If you genuinely embrace God and who he is, then you will recognize your position and role as a human being. Did you hear that? To know God is to know everything – including how you ought to live. To overstep your bounds is to defy the Creator and to embrace death for yourself. So, this text matters. With this understanding, let's break down the main idea point-by-point.

God's response to **humanity's sin** is personal pain, judgment, and grace (vv. 1-2, 4-5).

I hope that we have seen so far that, story after story, we see God actually is immensely kind and compassionate towards rebels. Now, in saying this, I want to reemphasize what I've said in previous weeks. Just because God is showing grace doesn't mean that he approves what humans are doing. Remember Romans 2:4-5? **Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.**¹ I've been helped by how a man named James Montgomery Boice puts illustrates these verses. He talks of a wealthy man who is a miser. He receives gold coins, and he hordes them for himself. He doesn't spend them how they're intended. Instead, he puts them in the attic above his bed to be safe. He does this for years. And then Boice says, "But one day, while he is sleeping and oblivious to his danger, this great weight of gold breaks through the ceiling of his bedroom, comes crashing down onto his bed, and kills him. He thought of his wealth as salvation, but it was his death" (Boice, *Romans*, p. 220). This is how God's kindness works. It's meant to lead you to turn to the Lord, but you hoard it on yourself, and Paul says that there will be a day where all those gifts he has given will turn on you and indict you. God's kindnesses will either melt your heart and lead you to turn to him – because he's been so gracious towards you. Or, you will hoard the kindnesses for your own self and will be punished.

Is God's grace is a sign of God's patience and also calling us to turn away from our sin! And that's what we see here in verses 1-2 and 4-5. Verses 1-2 say, **"When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose."**² Verses 4-5 add, **"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."**³

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 2:4–5.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 6:1–2.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 6:4.

God, in patience, has allowed people to continue to live and procreate. But then what follows in these verses is probably one of the most confusing passages in Genesis. Who are the sons of God versus the daughters of man? Who are the Nephilim? These are just a couple questions.

So, let's go verse by verse and I think we'll begin to see more clearly. Verse 1 states that people were multiply – which is actually part of God's command to humanity – to be fruitful and multiply. Then, verse 2 says, **"the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose."**⁴ There has been a lot of study on who these people are. I won't share the various views. I'm just going to share with you what my personal view is. This phrase "son of God" from an Old Testament perspective could include ideas related to being in the position of executing justice and also being angelic. In Job 1:6, we read, **"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them."**⁵

I agree with many who believe that this phrase "sons of God" refers to human rulers. But they weren't just human rulers. They were rebelling against God, much like the serpent – and thus were seed of the serpent, so to speak. As powerful rulers, they were powerfully influenced by the fallen angels. This view isn't surprising elsewhere in Scripture. For example, in Daniel 10:13, we read about kings and kingdoms that had powerful spirits ruling behind them. While other nations might believe that rulers were part human and part divine – like Egypt stating the Pharaoh was divine – the Bible teaches that there is a superhuman element that can be behind rulers, but it's not God. It's Satanic. Now, how do we know it's Satanic? Look at the verbiage used in this text: the sons of God *saw* and they *took*. Where else do we read of someone seeing something attractive and taking it? Eve and Adam, right? It's the first temptation of the serpent, and these "sons of God" – these rulers – are continuing the pattern.

Now, who are they taking? They're taking the "daughters of man." Which simply means that they're taking women from various statuses in society. The emphasis of "any they chose" wasn't simply saying that each individual man was taking one woman. "[Any] they chose" seems to emphasize taking any and all they chose. In other words, I think we see here the idea of a harem. So, yes, people began to be fruitful and multiply on the earth. That is a fulfillment of God's command, right? Yes. But people are abusing others. They're not naked and unashamed. They're not joining in marriage between one man and one woman. No. They're viewing people as commodities to take and consume.

Ventura, we're not much different in our day, are we? I believe the current statistic is that 90% of men admit to having consumed pornography in the last month. That means if you're in Meijer, and you see ten men, the stats are that 9 of them have viewed pornography. But then there's more: 60% of women admit to consuming pornography in the last month. Why do I say this? We don't have harems in our country, but we are still like these evil rulers. We see, find attractive, take and consume. But this is a sign of rebellion against God. God created men and women in his image, to be respected and honored – not eaten by our lusts. Christians, do you understand the vile nature of sexual sin? Are you hiding in sexual sin? If so, I pray you'd come to the light and open up to the Lord and find help to turn from this sin!

But you might think, "What's the big deal? I'm not hurting anyone, am I?" That could have been what the people thought in these days, too. Verses 4-5 go on to say that the Nephilim were around in these days, and that the children from these harems became people of great renown and power! Who are the Nephilim? Some translations say "giants" because of how things are written later of them in the wilderness wanderings. Some ancient manuscripts chose the word "giant" because they were unsure of

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 6:2.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 1:6.

the meaning. Clearly, this people group had been around for a long time, and in Exodus, we're told they were very tall, but the emphasis here is that the Nephilim were very powerful. This would have been what the Israelites thought, too, in their day.

The temptation is to again think that sin leads to power. We constantly have this mindset of looking at the outside to evaluate whether something is right or wrong. But remember God's patience! His kindnesses are meant to lead to repentance. The question is whether or not they will repent. Will they turn to the Lord? We know they don't because the Flood is coming. And so, because they don't get immediate punishments, they presume on God's kindnesses, storing up wrath for themselves. The same is true for you if you do not repent. Will you turn to the Lord or trust yourself? Your sin is deceiving and lying to you. It's strangling you. Will you look to the Lord for rescue?

So, now we see humanity's sin. Let's now move to God's response to humanity's sin.

Personal pain (vv. 5-6). Let's read verses 5-6: ⁵ **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.** ⁶ **And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.** ⁶ If you mark in your Bibles, you might want to underline in verse 2, the word "saw" and then the word "saw" in verse 5. This creates a contrast. Humanity saw differently than God did. The sons of God did what they wanted, apart from thinking about God. They thought they were fine. But God saw their wickedness. Look at the wording here: every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. There's a persistent, insistent, incessant internal drive for sin. They don't want to live for God. They just don't think about God.

Years ago, if I recall correctly, there was a person I know who tried to state that you're not really disobeying God if you're not thinking about him. How can it be wrong if you're not thinking about him? He shouldn't take offense to that. Why would God call these people in Genesis evil if they're not thinking about him? Well, what if I make it through a day, and I haven't seen my wife, and when I get home, she says something like, "I missed you," and I say, "Wow, I didn't even think about you today!" How do you think she'd feel? Now, you might say, "That's different. She's your wife!" Well, it's true. The illustration is different. The difference between God and a spouse is infinite! You are created in God's image. You are created for relationship with him – and instead of choosing to submit yourself to him, you think only of yourself. That's the foundation of pride. That's seed of the serpent mindset, and it leads to all sorts of pain and sin in this world! Now, we see God's response to sin in verse 6: The Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. The word for "regret" here is the word from which we get "repent." But with God, it doesn't mean that God believes he did something wrong and needs to correct his error. God makes no mistakes. In the Old Testament, this word is most often used to refer to God intending to change his pattern in the future. If that's the case here, then that means something different is going to happen. And we know it will. There's a flood coming.

But why is this flood coming? Because this non-stop sinning grieves God's heart. Do you hear that? These words for "regret" and "grieve" actually contrast with Lamech's words after Noah was born and he prophesies that Noah will bring comfort and rest. When you regret something, you look for comfort. When you grieve something, you long for rest. God himself must bring comfort and rest.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 6:5–6.

Please ponder this further. God isn't simply a Being who longs to be angry. He grieves over human sin. Human sin, which ultimately is a rejection of him, tears everything apart. God, who is Life and brings all things together, cannot be rejected and everything be fine. To reject Life is to embrace death. To embrace death is to breed destruction. And yet, God in mercy, shows patience over and over again. But there is a point at which God says "enough." His response to human sin is pain. And then, we see another response:

Judgment (vv. 3, 7). Verse 3 says, ⁷“**Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.”**”⁷ Then verse 7 states, ⁸“**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.”**”⁸

Here we have the mention of the Spirit again. In Genesis 1, the Spirit appears to bring order from chaos. In Genesis 3, the Spirit comes to bring judgment for Adam and Eve in the “Spirit of the Day.” Now, we have the Spirit coming again, and he’s doing the same thing. I love how Victor Hamilton puts it: **Where [the Spirit] hovers there is order, and chaos is restrained. Where it is withdrawn, chaos flourishes unchecked** (Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: 1-17*, p. 267). The idea of the Spirit not abiding in man is speaking to removing life. Just as the Spirit brought life in creation. The Spirit being withdrawn will lead to an end of life.

Oh that we would understand how dependent we are on God! If he removes his life from us, we are dead. We are utterly dependent on him. And so, we read that man's days will be 120 years. This could either mean that God will shorten people's lives to no more than 120 years *or* that in 120 years, there will be death for mankind. I prefer the second translation. From this point, it will be 120 years and then the Flood. Then, verse 7 says that God will blot out man and animals. God's going to clean the earth like we clean our dishes. We remove the mess to be reused.

Do you see God's judgment here? Do you see this judgment has come as a result of God's patience and also as a result of his grief and sorrow? This is who God is. He's a God of judgment and pain and patience. And then we get one final glimpse of God's character through his response:

Grace (v. 8). We read in verse 8, **“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”**⁹ This word for “favor” means “undeserved merit,” hence the word “grace.” There was nothing Noah did to earn God's kindness. He didn't do something to save his life. No. God gave grace to Noah. God decided to not destroy all humans. Why? Because he made a promise after Adam and Eve sinned. There is going to be One who would crush the serpent. And while the serpent had inflicted everyone, and while it looks like following the serpent might lead to a better life, God gives grace to Noah and Noah is reconciled with the Lord. This would be another reminder to the wandering Israelites that God keeps his promises. The Israelites came from Noah. God is to be trusted. God has shown kindness to them. Will they receive his grace? And if they do receive his grace, how will they live in the world?

Now, we know that from Noah did come *the* serpent crusher. As the Spirit hovered over the waters of creation, so someday, we're told that a girl named Mary found favor with the Lord, and the Spirit hovered over the waters of her womb and she, a virgin, became pregnant with Jesus! And through Jesus, many others receive God's grace – undeserved merit – because Jesus, on the cross, took the punishment sinners deserved. God, in pain over humanity's sin, met that pain. Jesus, God the Son, took

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 6:3.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 6:7.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 6:8.

the judgment in himself and as a result, gives grace! As I think about people in Noah's day, I cannot help but think about the grace we have received, too. Let me read from Ephesians 2 as it describes us: **And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—¹⁰**

Now, if you have experienced this grace from God, how ought we to respond? In similar ways the Israelites ought to have responded: by declaring God's truth and grace to those around us. In Matthew 24:37-39, Jesus is recorded to have said: **³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.¹¹** What is Jesus saying? When Jesus comes back again, people will be living like they did in Noah's day. Do you see sin expanding and being celebrated in our day? Yes, in so many ways. And so many are increasingly just not thinking about God at all. They're presuming on God's kindnesses. But Jesus is coming again, and when he comes, he comes to judge. Are you ready? Have you turned to Christ or are you rejecting him? In 2 Peter 3, we read about the days before Jesus returns: **. . . scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.⁴ They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."¹²** Peter then writes how God sent a flood back then, and then says, **"the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly."¹³** You might hear these words and just think, "Well, it sounds like God just can't wait to punish," and your view of God is just that he's angry. But then Peter says that **"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."¹⁴**

So, is God a God of judgment or a God of grace? Bad question! He's full of mercy and justice. He's not either-or. So, there's two positive responses to a sermon like this: If you have never turned to Jesus, turn to him today. If you are a follower of Jesus, savor grace and trust the Lord. **God's response to humanity's sin is personal pain, judgment, and grace. Humans cannot seize divinity; they cannot overstep their bounds and blur God's distinctions. Such evil must be brought to a halt by divine intervention.**

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Eph 2:1–6.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 24:37–39.

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Pe 3:3–4.

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Pe 3:7.

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Pe 3:9.