

Genesis 6

Given at Beth Messiah
Sydney
1 June 2002
By Bob Mendelsohn

Noah (Part 1)

“And Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord”

For those who are with us for the first time today, we have been studying the book of Genesis. Each week we take a section or sections of the book and see if it has anything to say to us, as 21st century people.

Today we speak about a somewhat familiar section of the Bible, it's the introduction of the man named Noah. Noah, whose name literally translates 'comfort' is introduced as a 500 year old first time father. Wow, imagine him in LaMaze classes and sorting out how to wrap nappies over his three boys, Ham, Shem and Japheth. But beyond the geriatric concerns for new fatherhood, Noah is said to have found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Unmerited favor and kindness would be his. Today we want to see the need for grace, and the way to find grace, and what to do with grace once you have found it. Read text. Genesis 6. [onliners it's at the end][also there are many notes today at the end on difficulties in the text]

The need for Grace

Man was in serious trouble with God, living in opposition to His plan and direct statements. Mankind was rejecting God's ordinances and dismissing, denying and doubting God's Word. Remember, that was the triad of sensations and situations that Satan desired for humans in the Garden. Dismiss, deny and doubt what God said. So the testimony of the Scripture here is " Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that

sons of Anak, Goliath, and his brothers had any angelic forbears because of their great stature; nor is there any reason to suppose that the antediluvian giants and supernatural forbears.

What Genesis 6:1-2,4 records is the first occurrence of mixed marriage between believers and unbelievers, with the characteristic result of such unions: complete loss of testimony for the Lord and a total surrender of moral standards. In other words, the “sons of God” in this passage were descendants of the godly line of Seth. Instead of remaining true to God and loyal to their spiritual heritage, they allowed themselves to be enticed by the beauty of ungodly women who were “daughters of men”—that is, of the tradition and example of Cain. The natural result of such marriages was a debasement of nature on the part of the younger generations, until the entire antediluvian civilization sank to the lowest depths of depravity. “The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” (Gen. 6:5, NIV). The inevitable result was judgment, the terrible destruction of the Great Flood. Rambam says that the people were the judges in the cities, who should have been aware of their great power over the weaker ones, but I think he's situationally eisegetic.

The way to find Grace

If we cannot look to ourselves or our situations, if we cannot look to our religions or to our forbears, then to what shall we look to find Grace?

The Bible gives us our clue we need in the phrase in verse 8.

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. We have seen God's eyes looking around the world; His voice was heard in the Garden, and He found our first parents wanting. Now He is looking for someone, for anyone who will be His person in the new generation. He found Noah.

וְנָח מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה:

The rabbis of course make Noah righteous long before this grace finding, but the text doesn't say this. We simply have to lay the credit on God who gave without merit to Noah. Grace is unmerited favor. It is undeserved. God did not give Noah grace because Noah had been a righteous person, Noah had not been a saved person before he became a saved person. Does this make sense? If it were deserved, it would not be 'grace'! It seems that the main purpose of the story is not to show why God sent a flood but rather why God saved Noah. The message is quite straightforward. God saved Noah because he "walked with God" and did not "corrupt" God's way (cf. 5:22-24) This was in direct response to God's call, to God's Word, and Noah who found grace, lived in grace. But I preempt my later comments.

John Piper, whom I love to quote in these sermons, wrote in his book The Pleasures of God " Paul describes grace as the enabling power of god's work, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me did not prove vain, but I labored harder than all of them, yet not I , but the grace of God which is with me" Grace is not simply the pardon of Paul's sins, it is the power to press on in obedience." (page 244-245). Piper says that grace is not simply leniency when we sin, that is, not getting the punishment we deserve. He says, 'grace is the enabling gift of God not to sin."

Perhaps this is what I'm trying to say about Noah. God made him 6 things.

1. God makes Noah his confidant. He tells him generally of His displeasure with the world, and His desire to destroy it. Then God discloses the specifics, that He will use a flood, which by the way had never happened in the earth.
2. God makes Noah His covenant man. Covenant in regards to the Sethite line and covenant in terms of grace and favor. Noah did not make himself one; God made him one.
3. God makes Noah a monument of saving mercy. People throughout history will refer back to Noah, in the Gilgamesh epic, and in other tribal stories still told worldwide, there is a person, a hero (in Gilgamesh it was Utnapishtim) who alone rides the ark with his family through the great flood. Jews, Christians, Muslims, all point back to Noah.
4. God makes Noah a great blessing to the world and an eminent type of Messiah. (By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Heb. 11:7)
5. God made him a preacher of righteousness to the men of his generation. The comfort that comes to the people of God is a result of our repentance. Let me be very clear on this one. The Hebrew word for comfort, not the word "Noah" which also means this, is Menachem. Some men are named this in the Bible. The play on words is often based on a mistranslation, of Noah as comfort, from some similar root as Menachem. Noah... hear it? As some kind of linkage, but the linkage is not there. However, he did

preach and he did warn. He did want the people of his generation to hear God's word and to believe it. What a tiresome ministry and one that ended in failure.

6. God made him a savior to the inferior creatures, providing shelter for them, sustenance for them. And to his own family.

What to do with Grace once you have found it

Obedience of faith (Romans 1.5, 16.26) is the phrase the Apostle Paul, the Rabbi from Tarsus, used to help us understand this.

Rom. 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the **obedience of faith** among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake,

Rom. 16:26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to **obedience of faith**.

God wants us to keep on keeping on. He wants us to be like Noah of whom we read, 'he "walked with God" and did not "corrupt" God's way (cf. 5:22-24)' After you receive grace, you have to live in it! What did Noah do, straightaway after receiving grace? He built an ark. Oy. Imagine the neighbors. Imagine their taunts. By modern standards it is comparable to a small cargo ship. The ark was about 140 meters long, 23 meters wide and 13.5 meters high. Made of עֵצֵי-גֹפֶר wood. The Hebrew is uncertain, may mean literally transliterated 'gopher' bark. The window was for light, for air, and for view.

"Walking with God" is the way to life, not just a mere "keeping" of a set of laws. This theme is associated with those who could not have had a set of "laws," which shows that there is a better way to live than merely a legalistic adherence to the law. We saw

Enoch last week who walked with God and was not, for God took him. This week we see Noah walking with God and later we will see the same of Abraham. This idea of walking with God is what I've been calling "the pleasure of God in relationship" with humanity.

This contrast is seen over and over

Summary.... So what?

Some final thoughts in summary, and maybe for your consideration.

1. Intermarriage is a killer, and causes long ranged pain and suffering
2. The same problems that cause the unbelievers to collapse cause the righteous to shine
3. God will never leave the world without the righteous to be present
4. Nothing is hidden from God
5. No one is punished by God except those who refuse to be changed by the grace of God

Brothers and sisters, we have eternal life due to the Saviour, due to His love and forgiveness. No amount of good works will give us enough information to help us overcome evil. No amount of information will help us overcome our own evil inclination. Only the messiah can repair our relationship with God and give us pleasure with Him.

If you have never experienced this eternal and new life about which we are speaking, if you are yet outside the relationship with God, then pray with me. If you haven't yet been restored into communion with Him, then why not pray this prayer and ask God to forgive you of your sins, whatever they might be, and come home to pleasure with God?

back to Him. It's relationship with Him for which He longs. He wants you to not 'stand divided', but to be wholehearted in relationship and devotion to Him.

In *The Last Days Newsletter*, Leonard Ravenhill tells about a group of tourists visiting a picturesque village who walked by an old man sitting beside a fence. In a rather patronizing way, one tourist asked, "Were any great men born in this village?" The old man replied, "Nope, only babies." A frothy question brought a profound answer. There are no instant heroes—whether in this world or in the kingdom of God. Growth takes time, and as I Timothy 3:6 and 5:22 point out, even spiritual leadership must be earned.

Y'shua certainly fulfilled that, didn't He? He walked with His Father each day, and demonstrated that relationship to us. What we do with Him, what we do with the Messiah who died for us and rose from the dead, that's where the rubber meets the road of daily life and daily relationship with God.

Enoch was right there, and God took him.

What will you do with God, and with His Son Y'shua the Messiah?

Brothers and sisters, we have eternal life due to the Saviour, due to His love and forgiveness. No amount of good works will give us enough information to help us overcome evil. No amount of information will help us overcome our own evil inclination. Only the messiah can repair our relationship with God and give us pleasure with Him.

If you have never experienced this eternal and new life about which we are speaking, if you are yet outside the relationship with God, then pray with me. If you haven't yet been restored into communion with Him, then why not pray this prayer and ask God to forgive you of your sins, whatever they might be, and come home to pleasure with God?