

## **Genesis 6:1-4 A Boundary Line**

**09/03/17**

*When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup> the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” <sup>4</sup> 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.*

*(Pastor prays)*

If the Old Testament had a twilight zone, then, upon reading this text, we have just entered it. In the holiday movie “A Christmas Story,” the little boy desperately wants a Red Ryder BB gun and everyone keeps telling him, “You’ll shoot your eye out.” I felt like that little boy as I talked with friends and colleagues this week. They were questioning my intelligence in preaching this text. Why is this text here and what good function does this bizarre little paragraph serve? Let’s get right into it.

In the text, we are introduced to a really ugly time in the history of mankind, a time that is so horrific, so sinful, and so depraved that God blots out all the living people (except Noah and his family). And what we have left is this mysterious and murky story of the sons of God and the daughters of men. Some say this is the strangest text in the entire Old Testament, and after spending the last week with it, I completely agree.

There is virtually no consensus as to how to interpret this passage. There are several views that are attractive, but I prefer to do here what I do with every passage: I take it at face value, read it in context, using the rest of the Bible to interpret. And in so doing, I’ve approached it the way the earliest and most orthodox interpreters have.

In this bizarre little paragraph, the boundary of Heaven and Earth are blurred. The boundaries of human and divine are breached. The boundaries of sexuality are broken and the boundaries of right and wrong are transgressed. And suddenly, this bizarre little passage has immediate application in our world. As the boundaries of marriage are erased, the sanctity of life is removed and even the basic understanding of gender, manhood and womanhood, are erased and moral restraints are cast off.

The writer of Proverbs twice says, “Do not remove the ancient landmark that your fathers have set.” And that’s exactly what’s going on in this passage and it’s exactly what’s going on in the world that you are living in. Whatever else this passage means, here is a monstrous pushing out beyond the ways of God, and a monstrous pushing out beyond the ways of God is relevant to our time. Right here in the U.S. there is a pressing out beyond the bounds of sexuality. In the world we live in, there are around us overpowering forces that drive us to overstep God’s clear boundaries. And when God-given limits are overstepped, it sets free powers which should have no place in our world. Even in this sanctuary this morning, there are people pushing out and even crossing the boundaries that God Himself has put up.

So, if you are thinking about it – don’t do it. If you have crossed some boundary, the Lord’s kindness will lead you to repentance and His grace in Christ is sufficient for your sin. Because, believe it or not, it turns out that God’s boundaries are for our good.

## **God’s Boundaries Are Our Blessings**

This sermon has three points that build on each other.

### **God’s Boundaries Are For Our Protection**

Let’s get right to the text. Verse 1 reads normal enough. Mankind began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them. But then in verse 2, something strange happens. Boundaries are crossed and in verse 2, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive, and they took as their wives any they chose.

I want to be able to support why I interpret this passage the way I do, why I believe the sons of God are fallen angels. All of the reasons have to do with the plain reading of the text. Here’s the first reason. Look at the contrast in verse 2: sons of God daughters of mankind. There is a contrast showing a broken boundary, something that was not to be crossed.

The second reason is the Biblical evidence (which is the best evidence). In Job, which is the oldest book in the Bible, look at chapter 1, verse 6. *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.* They are also mentioned in Job chapters 2 & 38. And in the New Testament, Jude 6, *And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left*

*their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—*

Even more pointed is what Peter writes about Genesis 6. 2 Peter 2:4-5 says, *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains<sup>l</sup> of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; <sup>5</sup> if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

You read these texts together and you realize God has graciously put up boundaries for our protection. He's done that from the very beginning. He did it in the Garden of Eden when He said, "from any tree you may eat, except that one." He did it with The Ten Commandments, set boundaries specifically for our protection. Martin Luther prayed through The Ten Commandments. You say "but that was when I was under the law, now I am under grace." You can't understand grace until you see you've broken God's law. Mt. Sinai leads us to Mt. Calvary and Christ.

And God has given us boundaries for sexuality. Single people are not to have sex before marriage. It is reserved for a faithful marriage between a man and a woman. There are clear gender values and clear gender roles in the home. Paul talks about boundaries in Romans 1 and back in Genesis 6 verse 2, the boundaries are clearly crossed. *The sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.* You see the progression in the passage. The sons of God saw, and they took. It's exactly the sentence structure found in Genesis 3:6 when Adam and Eve fell: *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*

It's self-centered, self-serving action. When the wrong boundaries are crossed, it always stems from a self-serving desire and often an ungodly desire. If the truth be told, some of you right now are standing at the boundary line, one that God has clearly defined in His word. You are looking over the fence at grass that is deceptively greener than the patch you are standing on. My friend, it is the devil's mirage. Don't move the ancient landmark. God put it there to protect you. Instead, run to the merciful arms of Jesus Christ. Come to the cross where all sinners find forgiveness. Gods boundaries are for our protection.

## **Crossing the Wrong Boundaries Brings Judgment**

Let me show you what I mean.

In verse 3 we see two areas of judgment when we cross wrong boundaries. The first is physical. *Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.* After this, there will be a limit on lifespan. You say "that is Old Testament" but then I would refer to 1 Corinthians 11 and The Lord's Supper. Paul addresses the issue of people that are dying because they have been mishandling what it means to remember the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. And then there is the spiritual judgment. *My Spirit shall not abide in man forever.* That's a frightening thing that the Spirit of God, long resisted, will cease to strive with you. This world operates under the common grace of God. He sends rain on the just and the unjust, common grace. As believers in Christ, we have received an exclusive, specific grace in Christ. This passage indicates that God will not endlessly and forever permit His life-giving spirit for those who disorder His creation. This happens in churches all over this city that are either dead by way of no one going there or they are amusing themselves to death. It happens in whole societies.

There is something called "The Nashville Statement" that came out last week. Go and read it. It is basic orthodox, Biblical Christianity on manhood and womanhood and sexuality. And our world has flipped out over it. We live in a world that is not far from having God's spirit pulled away. God withdraws His spirit from individuals who are not believers. He did it with Samson and Saul.

### **In Judgment, There Is Mercy**

Chapter 6 is the beginning of a larger story. In Chapter 7, the rain started and judgment came. In the midst of worldwide flood, look at God's judgment on those eight people: *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. <sup>12</sup> And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. <sup>13</sup> On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, <sup>14</sup> they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature. <sup>15</sup> They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. <sup>16</sup> And those*

*that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in. Mercy. God sealed them in.*

God set boundaries for your protection: Sex, Money, Attitude, Family, Law. Our crossing boundaries calls for judgment. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is like the Ark in Genesis 6-7. He is the Greater Ark and He calls you out of the flood of this world to enter his rest. V. 16 says, the Lord will shut you in and what God seals no man can break.

Are you safe in the Ark that is Christ? You can be. God who is holy created you in his image. Because of your sin, you are separated from God. Jesus Christ lived perfectly, died sacrificially, rose victoriously, ascended gloriously. And if you will turn *from* your sin, and turn *to* Jesus, you can be saved in Christ.

*(Pastor prays)*