

Genesis 6:5 *The Need For Grace*

09/10/17

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.

(Pastor prays)

If there ever were a need for God's grace, that time is now. I don't mean the threat of Irma or the demands of life or the pressures of parenting. All these things do indeed call for God's grace, but I'm thinking in a more specific, personal and immediate way.

Because the world we live in is so troublesome, it's easy for each of us to become "tone deaf" to the seething sinfulness of our own guilty conscience. *We say that a man is a murderer because he murders. God says a man murders because he is a murderer. You sin because you are a sinner. Isn't that what Jesus said as He explained the need for grace? Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 15:17-19: Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? ¹⁸ But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.*

These are what defines a person. A person is contaminated not by what *goes in* but by what is *already* in his heart. That's a frightening thing. You need more than to change your ways. You need a new heart. What you need is the grace of God found only at the cross of Christ. We need the life-changing, soul-saving grace of God found in Christ.

With that backdrop, here we are back in Genesis, and the echoes of goodness that God saw in His creation are gone. In Chapter 1 the phrase "God saw that it was good" served as a refrain in His creation song. But that refrain is quiet now. Here in Chapter 6, the pleasing refrain of "God saw it was good" has given way to this hideous and disfigured image of His creation. You read it in verse 5. It doesn't say that God saw that it was good. What does it say? *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 tragedy is that those before the flood had no intercessor. Those who are going to die in Chapter 7 are like those who are without Christ sitting in the sanctuary.

Grace and grace alone...The unearned, undeserved, overbearing grace of a good God in Christ; that's all that can save us. I can't stand and condemn you. I have no righteousness of my own. Your own sin testifies to your need for grace. And what I hope to do in the next few minutes is twofold: first, to give the believers more reason to thank God for His grace and convince you to rely on His grace and not your own abilities; and I also hope to convince the unconverted of your need of God's grace found in Christ alone.

God's Grace Alone Can Save You

See Your Need for Grace

It's inside you. That's where the need is. Verse 5 is a remarkable verse. I would daresay there is not a clearer statement of the doctrine on total depravity in the entire Bible.

Let's be clear on what total depravity is...and what it is not. Total depravity does not mean that we are as bad as we can possibly be, and it doesn't mean that people who aren't Christians are not capable of doing good. There are plenty of philanthropic non-Christians in this world. This verse tells us that sin is not just an imperfection or just missing the mark or making a mistake. This passage tells us sin runs much deeper than that, that sin is systemic. It affects your whole system, like blood poison that runs through the whole body. Spurgeon said, "As salt flavors every drop in the Atlantic, so does sin affect every atom of our being." In verse 5 when God looks at man, He doesn't say "it is good" like He did back in Chapter 1. He sees the extent and intensity of our sin and the pervasive and chronic nature of our sin. James Montgomery Boice categorized our sin:

Our Sin Is An Internal Matter

It's not just an outward act like adultery, murder or theft. But it's the thought of the heart. Isn't that what Jesus said in the "Sermon on the Mount"? He said: "You have heard it said you shall not murder, but I say to you whoever is angry with his brother or insults his brother – that's murder. Or you have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery but I say to you everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has committed adultery already with her in his heart."

We look at someone's appearance and see that he's respectful, works hard, has a good job, loves his mother and we make a judgment call. It's why we can be fooled. Remember before David is anointed king, Samuel brings all of Jesse's good-looking sons before the Lord, and Samuel thinks Eliab looks like a king, and in I Samuel 16:7: *But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."* If that's true then Genesis 6:5 tells us God looks inside and finds wickedness.

We live in a world that has desensitized us to it. But we are much worse than we think we are and so are our children. And yet, so many hours and so much money and energy are spent on making our kids into respectable and nice *wicked* people. What we need is not more things to *entertain* us. What we need to see is our *broken* and *alienated* condition. We need to see that we are poor, wretched, blind and naked, and Christ has the riches, healing and clothing and He will receive us on the terms of grace that are settled at the cross. Verse 5 tells us that our sin is an internal matter.

Our Sin Is A Pervasive Matter

What I mean by that is that there is no part of who you are or what you think or how you live that hasn't been somehow affected by your sin. Nothing we think or do or plan is unaffected by our sin. Look again at the verse. Look what God saw – that every intention of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually. This doesn't mean that we don't ever do anything good or philanthropic or helpful or compassionate. It's saying what Paul said, that even our righteousness is like filthy rags. Like the Puritans say, "Even our tears of repentance need repenting from."

Our Sin Is A Continuous Matter

What I mean by this is this verse indicates that our sin isn't confined to the obvious sins we commit that people can see. It's more who we are than what we do. Look at this terrible verse again and see what God sees. *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.* Continuously. This is not a stage or something you grow out of or a midlife crisis. This verse tells us that the venom of sin is in the very foundation of our beings and has poisoned our hearts and the very marrow of our bones.

All of this is here, this verse is here to show us how utterly hopeless our condition is without the direct and radical intervention of God in Christ, to show you that you don't need a pep talk or coaching or encouragement. *Dead* armies can't fight *live* battles. You

need the Spirit of the Living God to awaken your heart to the terrible state you are in and to the saving power of Christ on the cross, to hear Paul say in Romans 5:8, *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* The unconditional, unchanging love of God. John tells us that we love Him because He first loved us.

Why is this verse here and what do we do with it? Believers? Christians? This verse tells you that you can trust Him; this God who loved you when you were in your sin and wandering alone in this world. This God found you and loves you in Christ with an everlasting love. He is going to work all things together for good. He forgives you. He will sustain you. He will protect you and He will never stop loving you because of the cross of Jesus. All of it is grace.

For those of you who are not convinced, this verse is here to show you that you are much worse off than you think. You don't need more sin management. You need what God alone can give. You need a Redeemer because you can't, in your condition, do anything to change. You need God the Son, Jesus, who lived a perfect life, earned righteousness and then died on the cross in place of sinners. He was a stand-in, a substitute. God raised Him from the dead in victory. God has done this.

Salvation is God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Turn from your sin. Turn to Christ.

(Pastor prays)