Breaking Bad — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 6:1–13 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, April 30, 2023 · *Living Right*

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Right now we're in the book of Genesis, and so if you have your Bibles, you can open them to Genesis chapter 6 as we continue making our way through this book. And I'm going to open with a question that my granddad used to ask me. He's gone on to be with the Lord now, but his name was Daddy Bob, and this was one of his favorite topics to talk about. And the question is, why is it that things, when left to themselves, tend to drift towards a place of decay? You ever wondered why that is?

You never drift, in other words, you never drift to the place that you actually want to be. You can create a beautiful garden, you can create a beautiful house, and if you just leave it without some form of outside intervention, if you just leave it alone, inevitably and eventually it'll fall apart. Have you ever noticed that? And what Daddy Bob used to talk about, he said, "Wes, that's because of entropy." Has anyone ever heard that term before? Entropy. A couple of you have. He thought he was a brilliant scientist because he knew this word.

He was not a brilliant scientist. He was from Roby. There are no brilliant scientists from Roby. But he talked about entropy. Another way to talk about entropy is the second law of thermodynamics. Sure, maybe some of you have heard about that one more often. Basically the second law of thermodynamics, aka entropy, is this idea that in a closed system energy tends to disperse and structures tend to devolve or dissolve. In a closed system, in other words, if it's not an open system, where there's some kind of outside source of energy keeping things going, fanning things into flame, whatever energy you began with is not the same amount of energy you will end with, because there's something about this world, something about the universe in which we live, where things just kind of peter out.

And the second, maybe a related law to entropy, is the law of irreversibility, which says that once the things have petered out, there's no petering back in. Like, it's irreversible. Once it's broken you can't unbreak it. I remember when I was a little kid in grade school, I called someone a bad name. And I remember going to the counselor's office and she took a nail and she drove that nail into the piece of wood. And she says, "This is what you do when you say mean things to people. And you can say you're sorry, but when you say you're sorry"—she pulled the nail out—she says, "there's still a hole."

It scarred me to this day. I never forgot that lesson. You can't reverse it. Once you break something, you can't unbreak it. You can patch it. You can kind of try and put it back together, but there's still cracks, there's still kind of brokenness. And that's essentially what we've been looking at in the book of Genesis. I think there's probably a spiritual law of entropy at work in the world, or you could call it a social metaphysical law of entropy. And it's not just that our physical world operates according to the laws of physics, but in our lives, socially, in our relationships, and certainly our relationship with God.

You can have an open system or a closed system. You can have a system in which God exists and he is participating in your life and you are being rejuvenated and revived by him, or you can have a closed system in which you reject God and want nothing to do with his influence. But if you choose that system, if you choose a closed system, that rejection of God is going to set you up for disaster down the road. Because that goodness, that energy, that whatever that is you started with will inevitably and eventually dissipate.

And you'll end up in a place that's worse off than when you began. It's true in your finances, true in your relationships, your marriage, your relationship with God. It is entropy at work. Rejecting God leads to a state of ruin. And that's what I want us to look at this morning in Genesis chapter 6, verses 1 to 5. It's kind of a depressing text in some ways. But I think it'll be helpful for us because it's going to show us how things break, why things break, how they break, and how we can keep them from breaking in our life today.

So starting in chapter 6, verse 1: "When man"kind "began to multiply on the face of the land and" the "daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any" that "they chose." And "then the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh:'" and so "'his days shall be 120 years.'" And "the Nephilim"—oh, the famous 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, the Nephilim, "were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown." And so "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." That is the lowest of lows. Great wickedness everywhere in the earth. Every thought, only evil, continually. And so this

passage, if you haven't read ahead or if you're not familiar with the book of Genesis, this passage is actually setting us up for the flood. Now, it's not just Christian theology that teaches about the flood.

There's other civilizations, other religions. Almost every single one of those ancient civilizations has a flood narrative. There was some kind of big mammoth judgment from God on the earth in the flood. This passage is setting up why God chose to judge the world in that way. Every person, every thought, only evil continually. And so you see one man stand out, his name is Noah. We're going to learn about Noah next week. But what I want us to look at this week is how does that happen? How is it that in a civilization, you say today in a church or in a city or in your individual life, your family, how is it that things can go from great to terrible?

How is it that righteousness or right living gets destroyed in your life and the lives of your children and our culture and our nation, how is it that righteousness gets destroyed? And I think at least there are two phases or two ways that that happens that we can learn from this text. And then we're also going to see God's response to that happening in our life and how we should respond to his response. And so if you like to take notes, Genesis 6:1–8 shows us how the world went wrong. Our text is a blueprint for how individuals, cultures, and systems break bad.

You can have the right thing, you can do the wrong thing, but when you take a system and you cut off God from the system, it inevitably is going to break bad, and we're going to see in this text how that breaking bad happens. So to catch you up if you're new to the book of Genesis: in Genesis chapter 1, God creates the heavens and the earth. He creates man and woman. He creates them in his image. He makes them good and perfect and everything's great. They are married at the end of Genesis 1.

They are fruitful, they are multiplying, they're cultivating the earth, everything's awesome. He tells them, don't eat from one tree. It's a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The day you eat of this tree, you're going to surely die. And then in Genesis 3, the serpent, who is a stand-in for Satan, he comes along and says, "Did God really say you couldn't eat from any tree? And surely he doesn't mean you're surely going to die. I think you can eat it. Don't you think you can eat it?" And Eve's like, "I think maybe I could eat it and should eat it."

And so she ate it and then she gave it to her husband, who was standing there with her, dropping the ball in his role to be a leader in the home and godly influence in the person that he loved. And when they do that they receive the consequences of sin, which is alienation from God. They invite brokenness into their life. They are disrupted in their marriage relationship. They are disrupted in their responsibility over creation, and they are separated from God and paradise. They're cast out of the garden. And so they are east of Eden trying to figure out how to do life without God in this closed system.

And what we saw in chapter 4, if you weren't with us, is that Cain and Abel were the first children to Adam and Eve, and Abel was apparently the child of the promise, because God had told them in Genesis 3:15, "I'm going to send someone from the seed of the woman who's going to reverse this curse and make things good again." And then Cain was like, "Nope, not Abel. I'm going to kill him." So he kills Abel. And then we get to Genesis chapter 5 and we're like, "Okay, now that Abel's gone, what's going to happen now?"

And we see this new righteous line in Adam from Seth, and then in chapter 6, we see what I would call Satan's second attempt to thwart the seed of God's promise. In Genesis 3:15, God says, "I'm going to send someone eventually from the seed of the woman who's going to crush the head of the serpent, destroy evil, defy death, reverse the curse." It wasn't Abel, it didn't happen with Seth, it didn't happen with the ten lines of Seth, so what's going to happen now? Satan is attempting to thwart that promise, but this time he's not doing it through the anger of Cain and Abel.

This time he's choosing a different vector of attack, and that vector is marriage and family. And so much of what we're going to see in today's passage relates to your relationships and your married life, your dating relationships. And Satan's way of destroying righteousness in your life by attacking that vector of love and marriage. If he couldn't do it through Abel, perhaps he'd be successful in this way. The big question before we look at how the righteousness is destroyed is the Nephilim. How many of you have heard the term *Nephilim* before?

It's like a Jerry Springer Christian debate. Everyone loves to talk about the Nephilim. And if you have no idea about the debate, I'm about to clue you in on it and your life will never be the same. Some people think the Nephilim are like these angel-demon slash human hybrids who are giants who have supernatural abilities and all fashion of conspiracy theories have arisen as a result of that and then some people see them as like the Avengers from ancient days, like the mighty men of old. Who are they? But when you have a thorny interpretive issue like that and you're trying to figure out who are the Nephilim, and what are you talking about, demons and humans having babies?

That sounds kind of crazy. When you're trying to untangle an interpretive knot like that, it's really important that you examine the text in light of its context, okay? Always look at it—never read a Bible verse, in other words; always look at a Bible verse in light of its context. And if you look at the context, who are the Nephilim? The Nephilim are the offspring of who? The sons of God and the daughters of men. So before we can know who the Nephilim are, we've got to know who are the sons of God and who are the daughters of men.

And so if you ask that question, well, some say there's basically four views. I'm going to show you all four, and you know, you can have whatever view you want to have. I have my view. But the first view is that these are fallen angels. And the reason that they say that is because

the word *Nephilim* comes from the Hebrew word *naphal*, which means "to fall." And so they would say these are fallen ones, but not fallen ones in battle. These are fallen angels. And the reason that they say this is because in Job chapter 1 and in Job chapter 2, verse 1, Satan appears with the sons of God, which are clearly a demonic court hanging out with Satan to accuse Job in the heavenly court.

And so they say, well the sons of God are fallen angels in Job, so the sons of God must be fallen angels in the book of Genesis. The second thing that they point to to support this view is another book. It's not a biblical book. It wasn't written during the time of Genesis. It was written way, way later, but it was ascribed to the great-grandfather of Noah,[1] or the seventh son of Adam, a seventh son of Seth that we looked at last week, and his name was Enoch. And the book is called the book of Enoch.

Has anyone ever heard of the book of Enoch before? A lot—like the History Channel loves to talk about the book of Enoch because they say, "Well, this one's not included in the canon. It must be a secret. And so I want to know what the secret is." And so they focus all the attention on the secret book of Enoch. And in the book of Enoch, in the first, it's broken into, I think, five[2] different parts, but in the first part, the book of Enoch talks about the Watchers. And the Watchers are the sons of God in Genesis chapter 6,[3] and basically they say that the Watchers are fallen angels who mated with humans, and when they made these babies, these babies had supernatural strength.

They had great abilities, they were super, super wise. Basically, Azazel, who was the demon leader of a horde of fallen angels—Azazel intermingles with the human race. He teaches them arts and science and special secret knowledge, but then he also corrupts them morally and spiritually. And so their offspring coming from this line of corruption, they wreak havoc on the earth, they consume all of the available resources, and then eventually they develop a bloodlust and start eating people to the point that they actually start eating themselves. And if you think that sounds crazy, I think it makes a fantastic sci-fi movie.

I wish someone would make a sci-fi movie of the book of Enoch. And it does sound fantastical, but the reason that they would say that might be true is because in the book of Numbers the Nephilim are mentioned again. And the Nephilim are part of the giants that are in the land of promise, and they're like, "We ain't going in there. I know the Lord gave us that land, but you got the Nephilim in there, the sons of Anak, and they are huge, and we don't want to fight huge people like that."

So are they fallen angels? Well, here's my problem with the view. It could be fallen angels. My problem with the view is Jesus says in the book of Matthew that angels neither marry nor are they given in marriage. And yet you have these angels marrying the daughters of men. The other problem I have is in the book of Numbers, that's post-flood. Whoever these

people were, they did not survive the flood. And so the Nephilim in Numbers I do not think are the same descendants as the Nephilim in Genesis chapter 6.

Maybe they claimed the name of the Nephilim. I'm sure there was an oral tradition, and maybe those Nephilim were demonic and giant and all that stuff, but I don't know for sure that these people are. Secondly, the book of Enoch is not a book in the canon. The book of Enoch was written way, way, way, way, way later than the book of Genesis, and so it's not super reliable as to the actual oral tradition of Enoch. I think it was kind of this secret knowledge that was propagated by the Gnostics and I think it was almost an entertaining way to make sense out of a thorny interpretive passage and make it intriguing to people.

Maybe it is true, maybe it isn't true, I think probably not. The second view is that they're not fallen angels, but they are *naphal*: they are the ones who cause others to fall. In other words, they're the Avengers. They're the heroes. They're the mighty men of old, the mighty men of renown. And so these sons of God were not demonic or angelic. They were just amazing people who had babies with amazing women, and they had amazing babies, and they became great warriors. The third takes the phrase *sons of God* in a much more basic and spiritual sense, and it just says sons of God are sons of God, just like you and I are sons of God.

If you repent of your sin and you trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, you become a son of God, you become a daughter of God, you're a child of God. And so they would say that these sons of God stand for redeemed humanity. To me, I know this isn't nearly as exciting as demon warrior hybrids. To me, it makes a lot more sense because if you look at the context, what's the context? You've got two lines. You've got the line of Satan, and you've got the line of God. You've got the line of Cain, you've got the line of Seth.

There's two trees. There's God's tree, there's Satan's tree. You can either be part of the redeemed or you can be not part of the redeemed. And I think this is basically Moses' way of saying godly believing men married ungodly unbelieving women. How are they redeemed? How can they be Christian? They're not Christian in the sense that we're Christian because Jesus hadn't come and so how could they be saved by grace through faith? Well, just because Jesus hadn't gotten on the scene doesn't mean they couldn't be redeemed by faith in Jesus Christ.

Remember, Genesis 3:15, God is giving them a gospel message. He's saying from the seed of the woman will come a Christ, will come a savior who is going to crush the head of the serpent, reverse the curse of sin, and defy death through his person and work. I think they were saved by grace through faith in that promise. And so they are like Adam, they are like Seth, they are like Enoch, they are like that line of Seth, they are just the redeemed humanity. And then the fourth view is a variation of that view and says it's just the line of Seth.

The sons of God are the godly believing boys who came from the line of Seth, and they married daughters of men, aka unbelieving women from the line of Cain or whoever, wherever else. I think probably some version of this, although I could be totally wrong and we need to go back to sci-fi world. I'm actually fine with either one. If you believe God raised Jesus from the dead and you believe there's angels and demons, you certainly can believe that demons can wreak havoc on the earth. I just think it doesn't square with some of the context.

The point is, whoever they are, Satan's vector of attack is the same. His vector of attack is I'm going to ruin their marriage. I'm going to tempt them with physical beauty so that instead of choosing their spouse based on truth and faith in God and the right things, they're going to choose their spouse based on their physical attractiveness, and then I'm going to weaken and water down their faith in their marriage so that they're no longer effective advancing God's kingdom and furthering God's agenda. And that way the seed of the promise will not come.

And so that leads me to the first way that Satan destroys righteousness in your life, and the first way that he destroys righteousness in a culture, the first way that he does it is he promotes unholy alliances in your life. Specifically in marriage. That's why there are so many warnings in the Old Testament and New Testament about being they call it *unequally yoked*. And the picture is that of like two animals who are yoked together in this thing you would use to plow and do all the other things. And Paul actually says in the book of 2 Corinthians 6, verse 14, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" In other words, if you're a big strong bull like an ox because you believe in God and you have that open system with power and you yoke yourself with a frail little baby donkey, you're not going to get anything done. You're going to be totally unproductive. You're going to get nowhere fast because not because they're bad or evil or whatever, but because they're not with you. You're not moving in the same direction. You're not equally yoked. And so you're going to be frustrated, you're going to be undermined, and eventually, instead of you pulling her up or him up, they are going to actually slow you down, and so don't make that mistake.

Don't be unequally yoked. By the way, it has nothing to do with race. I know some people like to point to this as saying interracial marriage is somehow unbiblical. I don't think you can point to this as proof text for that. It has to do with their faith in the living God. So there's two phases to this. Unholy alliances have two phases. Number one: you become driven by the wrong priorities. When you become driven by the wrong priorities, that results in being linked up with the wrong kind of partners. What were their priorities?

Do you remember? It says that they saw that the daughters of men were attractive. This is an age-old issue. I can remember when I was dating, and I'm ashamed to say this. When I was

looking for someone to date, even in college, I thought to myself, "Really, I can change their theology. I can't change their looks. And so I'm just going to try and find someone who's totally beautiful." No one's laughing because you think I'm a terrible person. And I agree, it was a terrible thing to say, but that's how a lot of particularly young men are driven.

It's the wrong priority. You're driven by the wrong priorities. A lot of times young people will say, "I don't want to date a Christian girl, I don't want to date a girl from the church, because they're not as fun or they're not as exciting or they're not willing to do the things that I want to do sexually," and you're doing exactly the same thing that the sons of God, these believing men, believing boys did, and it was a tremendous mistake. Because when you allow yourself to be driven by the wrong priorities, you're going to link yourself up with the wrong kind of partner.

You'll be unequally yoked. And I'm not saying that people who don't believe in Christ are somehow wicked, terrible people. We're all wicked, terrible people. Everyone's a sinner. I'm not saying you're somehow morally superior to them. All I'm saying is that that discrepancy in your faith commitments is going to frustrate your relationship. You will not be able to get to where God wants to take you because of that discrepancy. Now, some people would take it beyond that and say, "Well, we need to be judgmental and holier-than-thou, and we need to distance ourselves from those people."

I think that contradicts other parts of the Scripture, like 1 Corinthians 5, which says, if you're going to disassociate yourself—"I didn't say disassociate yourself from the world. Otherwise you'd have to like go to heaven. You can't do that. It's not that I want you to disassociate from the world. I want you to disassociate from Christians who call themselves Christians but are sleeping with their" father's wife.[4] That was the case in 1 Corinthians 5. I'm not saying every person does that. But people who are saying they're Christians and they're not living like they're Christians, sure, kick those people out of the church, but don't disassociate from the world.

You got to be in the world. Just don't be of the world. And so what Christians have to do is find this fine line of partnership, close, intimate friendship, marriage with people who are in the circle, even as we treat with respect, dignity, love, and influence people outside the circle. But when you allow yourself to be driven by the wrong kind of priorities, in other words, it's all about looks, it's all about money, it's all about compatibility, it's all about genetic makeup. You're being driven by the wrong priorities, it's going to end up in the wrong kind of partnerships, and you're going to have righteousness destroyed in your life.

Wrong priorities lead to wrong partnerships. It's not a warning against living in the world. It's not a warning against association with unbelievers. It's a warning against friendship with the world, love for the world, and fellowship with darkness. And the biggest problem is not even just what it does to you, it's what it does to the world. I think what God has done by His

grace as a way of helping it rain on the just and the unjust is he has a righteous remnant in the world who are there to restrain evil.

This is why Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "You are the salt of the earth"—you're supposed to slow down the decay of culture. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." So when you as a Christian are shining your light, don't put your light under a bushel. No. Let it shine. When you yoke yourself to unholy alliances, you're weakening, you're watering down the influence of righteousness on the earth. For what's in this generation and the next generation, you're allowing evil to run more and more rampant because you don't have a solid base of strength to advance the kingdom of God in the world.

And I promise you—you think the culture's broken now? You think the culture is bad now? If you were to totally water down the influence of the church, let's say just to remove the church altogether, boom, let's say the pre-trib rapture is actually true. And boom, there goes the church. We're out of here. The Holy Spirit, boom, it's out of here. This world would devolve into a mess of absolute chaos like you could not believe. He's left us here as a holy remnant so that we could restrain evil influence with righteousness, advancing the kingdom of God.

When you yoke yourself to an unholy alliance, you water it down. You dilute the influence of righteousness on the earth. Second phase, the second way that righteousness is destroyed is in verse 3. And it says the Lord actually starts speaking to mankind in the world or on the earth at that time, and he says, "My Spirit"—the Holy Spirit—"shall not abide" or contend or argue "with man forever," because "he is flesh"—in other words, he's mortal. And so "his days shall be 120 years." This is so fascinating. Some people say the 120 years is like, okay, no more living to 900 years old.

And you read the genealogy in chapter 5, it's like they're living to 700, 800, 900 years old. And so some people say this is God's judgment, he's capping off their lifespan at 120. That could be it. I don't think that's it. I think the Lord is saying 120 more years and I'm judging the world. The flood is coming. I'll give you 120 more years of grace and mercy and kindness, inviting you to repent and to change. But if you don't, come year 120, it's over. And so the phase one of righteousness being destroyed is unholy alliances.

I think phase two is the development of an unrepentant heart. So it says that God was striving or abiding with man. How was he doing that? I think he was doing that through preaching. Who was preaching? I think it was Noah. The book of 2 Peter says that Noah was a preacher of righteousness.[5] So I think what Noah was probably doing after God had spoken to him and warned him about the coming judgment—maybe Noah for 120 years had this ministry while he was building this ark: "God is coming, judgment is coming.

Repent, believe, trust in him"—and nobody would listen. In other words, God is contending with the human race, but the human race is not having what God is selling. And that's called unrepentance. And an unrepentant heart is the second way that righteousness will get destroyed in your life, even if you're a Christian. Even if you've repented of sin, trusted in Jesus for salvation, when you refuse to repent, when you say, "I'm only trusting Christ for a get-out-of-hell-free card, I don't want to stop sleeping with my girlfriend, I don't want to stop drinking and drugging and all the other things that I'm doing that I know God doesn't want me to do," that unrepentant heart will destroy righteousness, it will destroy that intimacy with God and the enjoyment of life that He's created you to possess.

Now it's no surprise why they would reject repentance. If you think about it, these are sons of God who married daughters of man, so these are men and women who are in covenant relationship. They don't want to repent. "If I repent, I'm going to lose my spouse. If I repent, my children are going to hate me, and they're the Nephilim, they're really big and strong, I don't want them to be mad at me. If I repent, I'm going to lose my influence in my workplace. I'm going to be ostracized by my culture.

Everyone else is doing it. Everyone else is wicked. I know I shouldn't be as wicked as them, but I just don't want to do what God wants me to do because the cost is too great." A lot of times for many of us the problem is not, "Well, I don't know what God wants me to do," or "I don't know if God thinks this is wrong or not wrong." For many of us, that's not the issue. We know what God wants. We know exactly what is and is not right in our life.

The problem is we think if we change, if we do what God wants us to do, then it's going to cost too much and we're not willing to pay the price. "If I do that, I'm going to lose my boyfriend or my girlfriend. If I do that, I'm going to lose my job at the workplace. If I do that, my marriage is over." And I know—I've said it, I've been there, I've done that, and I probably will be there, I will be there in the future. That's the human nature. The problem is you're lying to yourself.

The cost of repentance may be high, but what you're going to see in this text is that the cost of resistance ultimately is even greater. In other words, God is offering you this olive branch. He's saying, "Just come, just do it my way, it will be better, I promise." And you keep saying, "No, no, no." There comes a time where the Lord basically says to you, "Okay, have it your way." This is Burger King, baby. This is the kingdom of God. We're going to Burger King. Have it your way. C.

S. Lewis says there are people who say to God, "Thy will be done," and then there are people who God will eventually say to them, "Thy will be done." And that is an act of God's judgment on your life. It is a form of His wrath. That's what Romans 1 talks about. In Romans chapter 1, it talks about how the wrath of God is being revealed or cast on the world. And the way that God's wrath is revealed is not by God taking some lightning bolt and

striking people dead. It says in Romans chapter 1, verse 24, the wrath of God is God giving you up.

Have it your way. "God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves"—just like Genesis 6. Oh, you want it all about physical beauty? Have it your way. Verse 28—or not 28, 26, 27: "God gave them up to dishonorable passions." This is the whole bit about homosexuality. Men sleeping with men, women sleeping with women. How does that happen in a culture? It's basically God saying, if you're going to keep resisting me, have it your way. And reap the rewards, reap the consequences.

Verse 28: "God gave them up to a debased mind." In other words, they became morally confused because they said of what was wrong that it was right, and they said of what was right that it was wrong. You see so much of this in our culture. What is that? How does this happen? Why is everyone crazy? It's the wrath of God. He gave them up. This is what you want. Have it your way. It closes. It's such a tragic note. Verse 32: "Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die"—in other words, God flooded the world because of this, he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of this; they know God is going to judge unrighteousness, yet they do them anyway—"they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them."

Here's the point. You have a God in heaven who knows you, who loves you, who has a plan for your life to help you flourish and find joy and contentment and peace. But if you keep on rejecting him, and you keep on kicking the can down the road, and you say, "Not today, maybe next week," And you do that over and over and over again. Here's what's happening. Every time he invites you and you reject him, your heart gets a little harder, and a little harder and a little harder and a little harder, until eventually God is going to say, "The 120 years are up"—or the 120 days, or whatever it is in your life—"the time is up.

I hand you over." And then all of a sudden you don't hear from God anymore. Then all of a sudden you don't sense any sensitivity to the things of God. You want nothing to do with church. You've totally isolated yourself. You're in a dark, cold corner, all by yourself, of your own making, because God is basically saying, "I will not contend with you forever." If you look up the Hebrew word *abide*, it's not just like, "I'm going to stay in his heart." It's "I'm not going to argue with you forever.

I'm not going to debate this issue forever." Imagine like an inferior employee and a superior boss. And the inferior employee is telling the superior boss, "You're full of it, you don't know what you're talking about. I've been here, I'm on the floor, I know everything that's going on." And the boss is like, "You are a total idiot. You have no idea what you're talking about. You're clearly in the wrong. I'm kind of humoring you by having this conversation, but you

better remember I write the checks around here. And if you're going to keep insisting and being a bullard like this, I don't have to have the conversation.

And so I'm just going to go." And that's basically what God does to people who refuse to repent. The cost of repentance is high. I know it's high. But the cost of resistance is even greater. And that's what we're going to see next. But before we go there, I just want to leave you with the question: How much longer is the Lord going to strive with you? I distinctly remember seasons in my life where I was not living for the Lord. And a preacher would preach a sermon kind of like this, and I would think to myself, "I need to repent, I need to stop," and I wouldn't do it.

And it is only by God's grace that one day he finally broke through and broke my will and I surrendered back to him, but it was an act of grace. It could have been too late. Is it going to be too late for you? Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day where if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts like they did in the wilderness, like they did in Genesis 6, but repent and believe. God's response is in verses 5 to 7. He "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 so look at this: "The Lord regretted"—or the Lord repented—"that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." This is the law of entropy at work. They were thinking, "We can keep our sin at bay. You know, I'm just married to her. It's not like I'm doing everything she's doing. I can keep sin at bay." No, you can't. It got worse and worse and worse to the point that every thought, every intention, only evil continually, and then God says, "I wish I never would have made them."

Could you imagine, some of you have children, could you imagine having that thought about your child? "She is so bad, so disruptive, such a weight on our shoulders, so demonic. I love him. I love her. I just wish they would have never been born." And not joking, but meaning it. This is where God's at. And so the Lord said, "I will blot" them out. "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," because "I am sorry"—or I repent—that I had ever "made them."

It's true that God is merciful. It's true that He is gracious. The book of Numbers says that he is slow to anger. He is abounding in steadfast love. But if you keep reading the rest of the verse, it says, "But he will by no means clear the guilty." And I think sometimes we forget this in Western culture, Christianity even, we think of Jesus and God as this ever-loving good, good Father, and he is. But true goodness is also justice. For God to be truly good, he must also be just, which means sinners deserve retribution.

Wrongs need to be righted. If a God is a good God, He will right those wrongs. And if we commit wrongs against a holy God who is good, part of his goodness requires him to by no

means clear the guilty. Sinners deserve their wage. The wages of sin is death. And God's saying, I'm going to remove them. I'm going to wipe them off the face of the earth. Now what are we to make of this? Well, it would be tempting to say, "Well, isn't that God angry? But this is the God of the Old Testament.

And we worship the God of the New Testament. And the God of the New Testament is a God of mercy and grace, and he's not all about Sodom and Gomorrah, burning things down and flooding the earth." But that's not biblical Christianity. Biblical Christianity is God is unchanging. What he was then is what he is today. And not only is God the same from Genesis 6 and today, we're the same. The world of Genesis chapter 6 is eerily similar to the world we live in today. There's all sorts of the same mistakes, all sorts of the same kind of entropy and chaos and disorder, which means their problem is our problem.

And what was their problem? Their problem was not even the things that they did wrong. What does God say? He doesn't rebuke them because their actions are only evil continually. What does he say? The thoughts are only evil continually. The intentions of their what? Of their hearts are only evil continually. It'd be one thing if the only thing bad was the actions. Then we could just kind of manpower, willpower, change our actions, and God is cool. That's not biblical Christianity. It's not just a works-based religion. It's a religion of the heart.

It's about your relationship, it's about what's going wrong here. And the book of Jeremiah says that the heart is desperately sick. Who can understand it? It is deceitful. We need someone to change what's in here, not what's happening here and with our hands and with our feet. The root of our problem isn't our sinful actions. It's our wicked heart. And so how does God cure our wicked heart? The solution to that problem is actually in verse 8. It says that Noah found favor in the eyes of God. Now, a lot of people point at this verse and say, well, Noah found favor in God's eyes because Noah was righteous.

It's kind of like everybody was bad in the world except Noah. He was—and it does say in verse 9, he was righteous, he was blameless in his generation, etc., etc. But I think we're misreading the story if that's what we think. I don't think Noah was righteous because if you keep reading, first off, in verse 7—or verse 5—it's only evil continually. If you keep reading down to verse 12, it says God "saw the earth," it "was corrupt"; "all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth." I think all flesh includes Noah.

I don't think he was a good man. In fact, I know he's not a good man, because what he does after he gets off the ark I wouldn't recommend. But even though Noah was wicked, God is gracious. And so God comes to him in verse 13 and he graciously reveals truth to him and says, "Noah, I have determined to make an end of all flesh." And Noah's probably saying, "Oh, even me?" Yes, "for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth." In other words, I'm going to flood the earth.

And then he tells him to build the ark. And basically here's what Noah's doing. Noah, even though he's a wicked man, God reveals himself. He reveals a gospel message: "Your sins have separated you from me. Your sins have invited my judgment, but if you will repent of your sin and you will trust me and you will build the ark, you will be saved." In other words, Noah is pleasing to God. How did Noah become righteous? He didn't become righteous by his actions. He became righteous by grace through faith. He repented of his sins, he trusted in God's deliverance, and as a result, he was made righteous.

Noah is saved in the same way that you and I are saved. It's not by doing better, trying harder, standing out from the crowd. All have sinned, all have fallen short of the glory of God. The only way that you can be pleasing in the eyes of God is to receive grace. And how do you receive the grace of God? You receive it by faith. We're saved by grace through faith. In other words, favor with God cannot be earned. It is only received. And so if you're here this morning and you're one of those people who would say, "You know what, I've been resisting and resisting and resisting, and I know I need to do better and I know I need to try harder," the word of God to you is to say that's not the solution.

The solution is a new heart. The solution is a heart of stone replaced with a heart of flesh, and that happens by God's grace, not by your effort. It's not about what you do, it's about what Jesus Christ has done for you. And the ark is a type of Christ. The ark saves Noah and his family from judgment. It delivers them from the flood. That flood represents the flood of God's judgment on us because of our sin. And the only way we can escape the flood of God's judgment is through faith in Jesus Christ.

He is our ark. He is our deliverance. And you don't receive salvation or favor with God or righteousness through self-effort. You receive it by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so if you're here this morning and you need righteousness, it's not through what you can do. It's what Jesus Christ has done for you. And this morning, if you would repent and trust in Christ for salvation, you will be saved. And the best part is that that grace of God and salvation doesn't just save us from sin, but it transforms us into saints.

It helps us to build arks and to obey God and to stand out from the crowd and to be blameless in our generation, not because of what we do, but because of what the grace of God does in us as we repent and believe in Him. And so as we enter into a time of response, I want to invite you to make that decision. If you've not surrendered your life to Jesus Christ for salvation, we'll have a time of response where you can come forward and I can pray with you and talk with you about that decision.

You can also scan a QR code if you want to have that decision privately later on in the week. Others of you are Christians and there's sin in your life that needs to be repented of. And maybe you're like me, and it had been years and years and years. But the Holy Spirit finally broke through this morning and he's saying, "Stop delaying. Do it today. Repent today. Go

make the phone call. Go dump the boyfriend. Go make it right." And if that's happening in your life, that's a grace of God that you need to respond to this morning.

If you want prayer for strength and help, I'll be happy to pray with you and for you. But let's respond to the Lord as he leads. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time and your word, and we do pray that we would be men and women who are found righteous in our generation, that the pillars of righteousness would not be destroyed in our lives and our families and our church, but that we would stand strong—not stand strong in our own strength, but, as we just sang about, my God, my God, we need you.

We need your grace, we need your strength, we need what only you can provide, and you only provide those things to the humble, to the lowly to those who recognize that we need you. In our Scripture reading, you said that you are near to the brokenhearted, that you bind up the broken in spirit. And Jesus told us that blessed are those who mourn, because they'll be comforted. And so even though you've spoken a difficult word this morning, even though you've rebuked us, we pray that you would meet us in our brokenness, bind up our wounds, help us to surrender completely and fully to your will and your way.

And we pray that you would bless that obedience with a demonstration of your faithfulness and provision and kindness and grace. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "the great great grandson of Noah"; Enoch was Noah's great-grandfather (Enoch fathered Methuselah, Methuselah fathered Lamech, Lamech fathered Noah), "the seventh from Adam." Source: Genesis 5:18–29 (ESV) and Jude 14 (ESV), BibleGateway; Wikipedia, "Book of Enoch." ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "I think six different parts"; 1 Enoch is conventionally divided into five major sections (Book of the Watchers, Book of Parables, Astronomical Book, Book of Dream Visions, Epistle of Enoch). Source: Wikipedia, "Book of Enoch." ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "the Watchers are the nephilim in Genesis chapter six … the Watchers are a offspring of fallen angels and humans"; in 1 Enoch the Watchers are the fallen angels themselves (identified with the "sons of God" of Genesis 6), and their offspring with human women are the giants/Nephilim. Source: Wikipedia, "Book of Enoch" (The Book of the Watchers, 1 Enoch 6–7). ↩
4. Transcript note: spoken as "sleeping with their mother-in-law"; the case in 1 Corinthians 5:1 is that "a man has his father's wife" (his stepmother). Source: 1 Corinthians 5:1 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩
5. Transcript note: spoken as "The book of Hebrews says"; Noah is called "a herald [preacher] of righteousness" in 2 Peter 2:5 (Hebrews 11:7 speaks of Noah building the ark and condemning the world, but not as a preacher). Source: 2 Peter 2:5 and Hebrews 11:7 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩