

The sermon

Intro

People living 969 years. People disappearing from the earth before they die. The sons of God. The Nephilim. Man's days "shall be 120 years." We've got a lot this morning. Let's go.

READ PASSAGE

Body

READ 5:1-32

Point 1: Walking with God (5:1-32)

5:1-3

Both male and female are equally the image of God (5:2).

"*image*" = replica, representation. Often refers to idols, a visible representation of a false god.

"*likeness*" = to be like, to resemble. Man is similar to God.

Likeness explains image. Man is a replica of God, but not an identical replica of God. We're like God, yet different than God.

Image/likeness pertains to our **nature** that's like God (intellect, feelings, desires, relational/communicating beings, capability to create musical instruments, work with metals).

After the fall, we remain God's image and likeness, but we're a marred image and likeness.

We don't think like God. We devise our own understanding of male and female, marriage, etc. We don't feel like God. We applaud sin and loathe righteousness. We sear our conscience to the point where there's no shame in lying. We don't desire what God desires. We want what God forbids (the sluggard life). We don't want what God commends (work). We don't relate to one another like God relates to himself (loving, unified, sinless harmony between Father, Son, and Spirit). We introduce hate into the equation because of our abusive words, selfishness, unwillingness to forgive, etc. We use our God-given capabilities to sing songs that glorify drugs, drunkenness, sexual immorality, and rebellion against authority. We create guns and knives that we use to terrorize, assault, and kill those created in God's image.

I'll repeat myself. We humans are incredibly gifted yet horrifically corrupt within. **We're endowed with capacity for great things, but, at the same time, we're broken, fallen creatures ruined by sin.**

So we reflect a distorted image of God. We don't make God look good. So because we humans aren't good (e.g., the suffering we inflict on one another), we conclude that God isn't good.

Do you see how we've twisted that around? We're not to blame for our evil, God is. We're not the one who's corrupt, God is. We're evil and we call ourselves good. God's unstained by sin and we call him evil. We've shifted the blame that belongs to us and given it to God. Absolved ourselves and made God the bad guy.

We need to be honest with ourselves. We need God to rescue us from our miserable condition.

When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son²⁹ and called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands." – 5:28-29

Lamech expresses hope of relief from the curse of the ground.

How would Noah bring relief from the curse? The offspring of the woman, Seth's line, was preserved through Noah. Eventually, from Noah's descendants, one would rise who would overturn the curse: Jesus Christ, the snake crusher.

Long ages

How do we explain people living 969 years? I think a good number of our fears about what people think are imagined rather than real. I've never had a person come up to me and say your faith is a fairytale because people don't live 969 years.

Maybe you have questions yourself? Explanations include:

1. Special favor on the godly line of Seth.

We're not told how long Cain's descendants lived.

2. Different environmental conditions before the flood.
3. God reduced human life spans as a result of horrific sin (6:3).

The question we need to ask ourselves is this: can God alter human lifespans? If we believe God can raise dead people from the grave, if we believe Jesus rose from the dead, we should have no issue with God's ability to alter human life spans. God is able to do what man can't do. Changing human lifespans isn't hard for God!

"and he died"

There's this repeated refrain: *"and he died."* Adam didn't die immediately after eating from the forbidden tree. But he died. His descendants died too. With one exception: Enoch.

"Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him" (5:24)

"Enoch walked with God" means he did life with God.

What does it mean for us to walk with God? We live conscious of God's word, God's presence, God's ability, God's providence throughout the day. I walk with God by meditating on God's word. I walk with God conscious of his empowering presence and my need for God's enablement. I walk with God by repeatedly praying to him. Not just before meal times or when I wake up or before I go to bed. I pray when I'm troubled, when I'm confused, when I'm worn out and want to escape, when I'm nervous, when I'm angry, when I'm ashamed of how I've conducted myself. Repeatedly I'm sharing my thoughts, desires, etc. and asking for his help.

I also walk with God conscious of divine providence. Like David, I believe God formed my days before I ever existed. Like Jesus, I believe no sparrow falls to the ground unless God wills it. Like Paul, I believe God is working all things according to the counsel of his will, including working all things for my good. Daily I walk with God trusting that he is good, sovereign, and wise. He's directing my steps well (Prov 16:9)!

Walking with God means daily having God's word impressed upon our thoughts, daily communing with God in prayer, daily leaning on God's enabling grace, daily resting in God's providence.

Enoch disappeared without experiencing death because he walked by faith.

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. – Hebrews 11:5

With Enoch, there's a hint that walking with God by faith is the key to rescue from death!

Practical question: am I walking with God by faith?

READ 6:1-5

Point 2: Sinning against God (6:1-5)

“the sons of God”?

1. The sons of God were human judges or rulers, possibly evil descendants of Cain.
2. The sons of God were fallen angels/demons who took on human form and had marriages with human women.

Angels are referred to as *“sons of God”* in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7. 2 Peter 2:4-10 highlights how God simultaneously punishes the wicked while rescuing the godly. When Sodom and Gomorrah were incinerated, Lot was rescued. When the angels sinned, and were chained in gloomy darkness, Noah was rescued. Jude 6-7 speaks of angels who indulged in *“sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire,”* like Sodom and Gomorrah, leaving their proper domain.

In my research, 2 Peter/Jude commentators favored this view.

3. The sons of God were human, godly descendants of Seth who married evil women who didn’t fear God, including Cain’s line.

Because the Genesis 6 punishments are against men, the sons of God are men.

In my research, Genesis commentators favored this view.

“The Nephilim”?

1. Hybrid offspring of demons and human women.
2. Famous, noble human warriors.
3. Infamous, dishonorable human warriors who filled the earth with violence (6:11).
4. Some believe they were giants.

Conclusion

Believing that New Testament authors inspired by the Holy Spirit are the best interpreters of the Old Testament, I conclude the sons of God were angels.

120 years?

1. Lifespans reduced to no longer than 120 years.
2. 120 years till the flood happens.

People still lived over 120 years after the flood (Gen 11:10-26, 32). On the other hand, lifespans gradually and significantly reduced after the flood. It could have been a judgment that wasn’t immediate, like death. Because it’s assumed the Genesis account isn’t historical, the world recognizes only one person in history to have lived longer than 120 years: Jeanne Calment of France (122 years, 164 days; died 1997).

I’m inclined to believe 6:3 explains the lower lifespans.

As for the Nephilim, they were alive when the sons of God entered the daughters of men, and after those events, so they weren’t the product of the union. It’s an evil time when *“the earth was filled with violence”* (6:11), so the Nephilim were probably mighty warriors who committed acts of violence that prompted God to flood the world.

Unions with fallen angels creates evil influence. Evil multiplies as humans multiply.

6:5

When the LORD looked upon his creative work in days 1-6, he was pleased. Now God looks on a world where humans have multiplied and filled the earth, but he doesn't like what he 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. – 6:5

“great in the earth” means there was a lot of wickedness. It wasn't limited to a few bad guys. Evil was all over the place! ***“every intention of the thoughts of his heart”*** means their inner being (heart) was totally corrupted. Every plan, every purpose was evil. Hearts ruled by evil desires. ***“only evil”*** = no Godward aspirations, no Godward desires, no Godward passions, only evil. ***“continually”*** = all of the time. No break from evil desires. No wonder the earth was filled with evil.

“every intention...only evil...continually” This is the doctrine of **total depravity**. It's not that every person is as bad as they could possibly be. It's the fact that every aspect of our being has been affected by sin. What we think. What we feel. What we love. What we desire. Our motives. Our relationships with others. How we use of our mouth. How we use our God-given abilities. No aspect of our being is left unaffected by sin.

Genesis 6:5 is how sinful man acts when there's no fear of God and there's no stated laws and there's no stated consequences! That's why we need laws. That's why we need to be born again.

Everyone ever born, minus Jesus, is in need of saving. Sin manifests itself differently in different people. But sin always manifests itself. It's not just a few bad guys out there.

That kind, dependable, hard-working co-worker, relative, etc. who isn't a Christian that you want to be around. That person needs to be saved. Every aspect of that person's being is affected by sin. Their sin might be restrained for a variety of reasons, but sin's still there. Maybe their speech is courteous because they've learned verbally assaulting people doesn't end well and they long to avoid conflict? Maybe they've learned to work hard because they've found out lazy people don't get promoted? Maybe they do kind things because they long to be liked?

Non-Christians can have good qualities. Jesus concedes sinners love those who love them in return. But they're still wholly affected by sin. You might not see the struggles with alcohol and pornography. You might not see the rage they keep hidden at work. You might not see the selfishness that kills their marriage. You might not see the bitterness they have towards a relative. You might not see the fear of man that prevents them from having the courage to follow Jesus. They're corrupt. They're broken. Their thoughts and desires are twisted. The Bible tells me so.

Sometimes sin is restrained by religious upbringing, wanting to please others, desire for a good name, fear of harmful consequences, etc. Sometimes sin is amplified by corrupt parents and peers. It sounds like that's what was going on in Noah's day. Sinners lived godless lives (e.g., Cain's line) and others followed in their steps. Friends encouraged one another to go all out for evil. So sin spread. And nobody cared.

Application

Christian, you've been born again. New desires have emerged within. But sin still affects every aspect of your being. So you need to walk with God. The Lord's prayer is a good way to start. Because it assumes a struggle with sin.

Practical question: is walking with God decreasing my sin?

READ 6:6-8

Point 3: Grieving God (6:6-8)

It seems as if God admits a mistake. I should have never created these people. Given what we know from the rest of Scripture, it would be a mistake on our part to believe God makes mistakes.

God has exhaustive knowledge of the future. God knew this was going to happen. He wasn't caught by surprise.

God is a planner. God declares his plans. God carries out his plans. Without fail.

One of the things God purposed before the foundation of the world was the salvation of sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, –

Ephesians 1:3-5

Before the foundation of the world God determined to make a people holy and blameless. Which indicates there would be people who weren't holy and blameless. Rescuing a people from sin was always part of the plan. Sin didn't catch God off guard. The cross was planned before time began.

God isn't turning to plan B. God isn't scrapping his plans. God is immutable. He doesn't change. Immutable in his perfections. He never becomes more and less omniscient (all-knowing). He never becomes more and less loving.

Immutable in his eternal plan. Everything remains on course. The snake crusher will strike the serpent with a fatal blow. There's hope for the human race.

So if God isn't admitting failure, what's being said here? Sin affects God. God isn't indifferent to sin. Sometimes Scripture highlights God's anger towards sin. Here Scripture highlights God's grief over sin.

Today, when he sees someone murdered or a school shooting, God is troubled. When he sees people robbed of their money by an identity theft scheme, God is troubled. When he sees people selling drugs in your neighborhood and addicts made and families ruined and people dying, God is troubled. God is touched by human evil. That's what's being said.

Touched so much by sin that God determines to wipe out the human race and animal life. As with Adam's sin, the multiplication of wickedness upon the earth affects the ground and the animals.

“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.” – 6:8

With Noah, there's hope for the human race. Eve's offspring won't be totally obliterated. They'll live on through Noah. And one day, the snake crusher will come through Noah's descendants!

We'll explore the nature of this favor next time in Genesis.

Application

The point is God is affected by our sin. Ephesians 4:30 warns believers of grieving the Holy Spirit through our sinful behavior. On the flip side, God takes pleasure in righteous conduct rooted in Godward motives stimulated by the work of his Spirit. Romans 12:1 speaks of giving ourselves as living sacrifices that are acceptable to God.

A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is his delight. – Proverbs 11:1

Honest business dealings make God happy.

God saves us to make us new. To move us from sinners that distress him with our wickedness to his beloved children who trust him and please him through our obedience.

Practical question: am I pleasing God today with my intentions and conduct?

Conclusion

On the cross, Jesus died as a substitute, to make the unholy and guilty holy and blameless through his death.

If you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, if you see your sin, if you see that you've broken God's commands, if you see that your heart is infected by sin, turn to God for forgiveness and a new heart to fight sin. Turn from sin by trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus.