

As Goes the Home, So Goes the Society

Genesis 6:1-8

How important is the home? In 1989, Zig Ziglar said, “The evidence is convincing that the better our relationships are at home, the more effective we are in our careers. If we're having difficulty with a loved one, that difficulty will be translated into reduced performance on the job. In studying the millionaires in America (U.S. News and World Report), a picture of the typical millionaire is an individual who has worked eight to ten hours a day for thirty years and is still married to his or her high school or college sweetheart. A New York executive search firm in a study of 1365 corporate Vice Presidents, discovered that 87% were still married to their one and only spouse and that 92% were raised in two-parent families. The evidence is overwhelming that the family is the strength and foundation of society. Strengthen your family ties and you'll enhance your opportunity to succeed.”

You would think our culture would learn! But the difficulties we experience today are not unique to the 20th century. Difficulties at home were present in patriarchal times as well. Then, just as today, as went the home, so went the society! Let's examine this Scripture to see the truth we need to see for today.

We see first of all in verses 1-4 that the actions of individuals affect the family. These are without doubt some of the most difficult verses to interpret in all of Scripture. My wife had a college friend who once wrote to ask my opinion on these verses. To her credit, at least she was asking; most just ignore them so they don't have to deal with them! What does it mean?

Historically, there have been two interpretations, which in reality are miles apart. The first one is that the sons of God are either angels or fallen angels (i.e. demons) and the daughters of man are humans. In this scenario, we then have the intermarriage of angels and humans. Before summarily dismissing this notion, you need to realize that there are a number of reputable Bible teachers who hold to this. And there are a number of scriptures that “seem” to indicate such a possibility. For example, there are other verses where the term “sons of God” do refer to angelic beings (most notably in the book of Job). Jude, verse 6, from the New Testament, is often used in support of this view as well. There Jude says, “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” There's also the issue of the giants who are mentioned in verse four. This is the Hebrew word, Nephilim, which is the same root of the verb “to fall.” Hence a more literal translation would be, “the fallen ones were in the earth in those days.” It is argued that such a union (angelic / human) would account for these giants.

But Jude, verse 6 can just as easily be interpreted to teach the Satanic rebellion in heaven with the chains being a submission to the permissive will of God until the day of final judgment. Plus the issue of the giants (Nephilim) does not have to be explained by a union of angels with humans. This word is also found in Numbers 13:33, which is from an account years later. There we learn about giants (Nephilim) who were descendants of Anak. What then would be the source of giants then? We also read of Goliath the giant

(who was a descendant of Anak) in the Bible. Yet, nobody claims angelic paternity for him!

It seems to me more plausible to accept the other historical interpretation: the sons of God are believers, while the daughters of man are unbelievers. Thus we have the first instances of mixed marriages (believers with unbelievers). Old Testament scholar, Gleason Archer, says, “the . . . speculation that angels are referred to in Genesis 6:2 is a curious intrusion of pagan superstition that has no basis at all in the rest of Scripture.” To begin with, we’ve noted in earlier studies that angels and the institution of marriage are mutually exclusive (Matthew 22:30). So it doesn’t seem to fit to understand the sons of God as His angels. And if they are fallen angels (i.e., demons), why would they be called sons of God? Where else are demons so designated? The most natural reading certainly seems to indicate mixed marriages. What we see here is how the actions of individuals affect the family.

Notice then the *difficulty at home* (vv. 1-2, 4). First of all we see a **selfish choice** (vv. 1-2). What was the basis of their choice for a spouse? They chose only by the eye. They “saw that they were fair.” Nothing else mattered; they liked what they saw and they were going to have it! Like David with Bathsheeba or Samson with Delilah, the “lust of the eyes” dominated. Men, think about what attracted you to your spouse. For many, if not most, it was that initial appearance! Women are also notorious for their attraction to men to various selfish reasons; a nice car, lots of money, a position of influence, etc. Anytime we make such selfish choices it will lead to difficulty at home. This is true not only of choosing who you’re attracted to but also of our choices once we’re attached! If a man has a choice of going fishing or shopping with his wife, what will he choose? Far too many choose the boat over the bride. If a woman can buy either a luxury for herself or new golf clubs for hubby, which one will she get? Why should he have all the fun will probably be the predominant attitude among most. If children can hang out with friends or help with chores, what will most choose? Laziness and apathy abound all too often in today’s homes.

Inherent to all of us is a sinful, selfish nature which can only be overcome by Christ! We can continue to operate from selfish desires or bring them under Christ’s Lordship. Continuing our selfish choices is an action that will adversely affect our families for it will certainly bring difficulty to our homes!

This difficulty at home is also seen in **self-reliant children** (v. 4). The NIV translates the final phrase as “heroes of old, men of renown.” This certainly misses the point of the verse, but so does the KJV with its translation “mighty men,” which is equally misleading. Both of these sound positive, but such a positive statement would be a curious insertion if it is meant that way. Notice what goes before: “My Spirit will not always strive with men” (verse 3). Now notice what comes immediately after: “God saw that the wickedness of men was great” (verse 5). And sandwiched in between two such negative statements is such a positive one! That is, unless it’s not quite as positive as it first appears.

I think this is an equally negative statement pointing out how bad things really were. Such is well illustrated by a comment from Matthew Henry in his commentary: “the wickedness of a people is great indeed when the most notorious sinners are men of renown among them. Things are bad when bad men are not only honored

notwithstanding their wickedness, but honored for their wickedness . . .” The same self-reliant spirit then is prevalent today, and it’s devastating to our homes!

So, in response to this difficulty at home, God gives a *decree from heaven* (v. 3). Here we see first of all a **timeless reality** (v. 3a). Our corrupt nature opposes the striving of the Spirit of God, but God, in His grace, strives anyway. He calls to us waiting for us to respond in faith. But although God’s patience is often long it is also limited.

Thus we note also a **temporary reprieve** (v. 3b). God is not saying here that man will never live to be more than 120 years old. Abraham (who came much later) lived 175 years! God is saying His patience will last 120 more years before He acts. Remember, reprieves are not pardons. You may think God won’t act in judgment. You may think what you’re doing is fine. Perhaps you even justify it by convincing yourself that God understands. But His Spirit won’t always strive with you. You may be enjoying a temporary reprieve now, but judgment will come! It did for the folks in Noah’s day and it will for you as well.

We often speak of the family as the basic building block of society; and it is! But what is the basic building block of a family? It’s an individual; perhaps a husband, a wife, children, or other relationships. It takes individuals to constitute relationships. And the actions of each individual drastically affects each relationship. We see here where the selfish, self-reliant spirit of individuals led to families not in line with God’s perfect plan. The same has the potential to be true for us, as well. Your life is not lived out in a vacuum, my friend. Realize that your actions affect your family.

We notice next then in verses 5-8 that the actions of families affect the society. A generation ago in our country we began to see the demise of the traditional family. Has it ever struck you odd that we’re now seeing the degeneration of society? I think there was a direct correlation in ancient times, as well as now.

Notice, then, *God’s discernment* (v. 5). God is no fool. Just as He looked then, He looks today, with an equally heavy heart. The word imagination in this verse means to fashion as a potter. John Phillips makes some interesting comments about the culture then; comments which can easily be applied to our day. He points out that in that day “men fashioned wicked philosophies.” The last few generations have seen the wicked philosophies of Socialism, Communism, Nazism, as well as dozens of other “isms” that have come our way.

Phillips further notes that the folks in this culture “formed obscene artifacts.” We don’t have to look far in our depraved world to find the same. It wasn’t long ago when the National Endowment of the Arts was sporting the artistic value of a crucifix being submerged in a jar of urine. They may consider it art, but the reality is that it was an obscene artifact.

Phillips points out how that early culture “eagerly espoused filthy causes.” Today’s peddlers of pornography are eager to push their wares on the unsuspecting, preying upon children via the internet. Such is indeed a filthy cause.

Phillips show us how the folks of this time “made fashionable vile sins.” Is homosexuality doing any less in our culture? It has made inroads in our society that has made it more than just fashionable; in many cases it has become the accepted norm!

Finally, Phillips points out how these ancient people “poured society into their own mold.” Today, society is being poured into a mold which is the logical conclusion

of the humanistic mindset. What Moses said some 4500 years ago can equally be said today; “the wickedness of man (is) great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart (is) only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).

We also see, however, **God’s disappointment** (v. 6). Many get concerned over this reference to God repenting. It’s an example of what’s called anthropopatheia; using human terms to describe divine feelings. The NIV translates this as grieve, rather than repent. Either way, repent or grieve is a love word. You don’t grieve for those you don’t love. Here we see the heartache of God over man’s rebellion and sin. Scripture says there are no tears in heaven. As hard as it is to understand, I believe there’s a part of God that looks at us sometimes and just weeps in disappointment over our sinful choices. I don’t know about you, but the last thing I want to do is grieve God!

The people of Noah’s day had so grieved Him that we see next, **God’s decision** (v. 7). It’s not like this was a snap decision like we often make. According to the chronology given (which we should accept as accurate), this was 1656 years in the making! God had been waiting, wooing, forbearing. But His Spirit won’t always strive with us. A line had been crossed. Mercy would now give way to wrath. That was His decision!

If you don’t know Christ, currently God is acting toward you in mercy. Judgment has yet to fall, but one day mercy will give way to wrath. But during this time of grace, there’s hope, if you’ll simply respond to Christ.

Notice finally, however, **God’s discovery** (v. 8). The word discovery is almost a misnomer. It’s not like God was in heaven saying, “I wonder if I can find anyone to save? Hey, look, there’s a guy named Noah. He’s about the best of the lot so let’s save him.” Noah was a sinner like all the rest. Why do I say that? Because the Bible reveals that we’re all sinners. But this particular sinner was a just man and perfect in his generations, according to verse nine. The word perfect (KJV) is translated blameless in the NIV. It’s not that he lived without sin and thus earned God’s favor. Rather, he was seeking to live for God, trusting in the promises of God. As a result, he found grace in God’s eyes. Grace is unmerited favor. It was not based on anything he did. He simply called upon God. Chronologically, Enos (who was Seth’s son) was alive until Noah was age eighty! Scripture says that during the days of Enos, “men began to call upon the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:26). Noah was reared in a believing family, but he too had to call upon God. It was that calling upon God that extended the grace of God to him. Today, the truth is still the same; if you call upon God you can experience His grace.

We have here, then, many families in the world of that time - yet only one that would ultimately survive. All the others would perish. These families had set in motion a series of unalterable consequences through their actions. Perhaps you wonder what’s the big deal? The big deal is that the actions of families affect the society. Eternity will reveal impact our families have upon society. You may feel unimportant or insignificant. But then again, Noah probably did too. Yet you’re never wrong when you live for God - even in such a crooked generation!