

God's Striving Is Not Forever

by Kjell Olsen

The sermon emphasizes the urgency of recognizing God's striving with humanity and the need for repentance before it is too late.

Duration: 58:42

Scripture: Genesis 6:3, Genesis 6:5-8, Proverbs 28:13

Topics: "Heart Corruption", "Godly Relationship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the prevalence of violence and corruption in society, using the example of a recent rape incident at a university hostel. He emphasizes that violence begins in the heart and includes not only physical acts but also anger and hatred towards others. The preacher also highlights the idolization of vile behavior and the downward spiral of evil that led God to decide to destroy mankind. He concludes by urging listeners to prioritize their relationship with God over worldly popularity and to seek deliverance from distractions and worries.

Transcript

That is why we are here, to hear, to listen, to experience God speaking to us. And we read from the first book in the Bible, Genesis chapter 6. Of course the favorite story and the one known by everybody, pagan and Christian alike, is Noah and the Ark. I am going to rather look at the conditions that led to this catastrophe.

And I can call it God's striving. And the main emphasis being in verse 3, but we are going to read from verse 1 to 8. Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful, and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. The Lord said, My spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh, yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.

They were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came into the daughters of men, and they bore children to them, those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in his heart.

So the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. We'll just read to that point.

Let's bow and pray. Lord, you present us with your holy inspired word. Inspire us now, Lord, as we study it together.

Save us, Lord. Save us from the condition of the people of that day. Help us, Lord, to be like the very few, Noah and his family, who found grace from you.

Lord, you see the many distractions that can pull us away so that we lose out completely from your speaking today. Lord, deliver us from thinking of and being distracted by the anxieties and worries and the many things that can pull our heart away from you. Lord, grant that every word would be inspired and full of your Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' name, amen. The condition of this earth at that time in particular was so corrupt and so evil that God began to plan its destruction. So we note firstly that God takes a very strong interest in his creation.

He watches it. He observes it. He is closely related to everything that happens.

He does not stay far off and he is not invisible, even though it may seem this way. The evidences of God are all around us, but much more, we are evident to him and he observes every small action and thought and inclination of the heart. That is why God says in verse 5, Then the Lord saw that the wickedness on earth was great.

Can you bluff yourself? Can you possibly think and assume that God could see all this and not see you? Do you hope to escape and somehow because of God's silence and that he is not immediately reacting regarding your lifestyle, do you think that therefore he is not there and will not sometime do something about it? What was it that grieved God so? How come God got to this point where he says in verse 3, I will not strive with man forever. Let's look in particular at verse 2. The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and they took wives for themselves whom they chose. Now some of this is a mystery and we don't really understand.

For it goes on to imply that there were strange things that happened like in verse 4 and it speaks there about the giants that resulted. And I'm not going to try and keep you amused with interesting theories of what happened and what it might have meant. Were these angels? What did it mean by saying the sons of God? Who were these giants? What happened to them? I'm going to leave that all aside.

Let's rather just take the plain obvious meaning here. That which is applicable to you and me. Notice here firstly that God's grief, his sorrow was not just regarding the world's condition as we read later on in verse 5 but regarding the condition of the sons of God.

Whoever it means. But perhaps these were the godly ones as some say. These were people who knew.

Remember that there were many generations before them. The population wasn't just a little family. It was a big population by the time.

And many men of God had lived. These were, it says, the sons of God. To me it seems obvious from this that they began to fall into sexual sin.

They began to look beyond the borders of what God had put around them. Marriage had already been ordained by God between Adam and Eve and the people in this generation were fully aware of what God had decreed and of the goodness of marriage. And it's not that they didn't get married.

It says they did get married. But it implies here in verse 2 that they looked beyond what God had set up as a border for them and they just chose whom they wanted to and it was based on the grounds of physical attraction. It says the sons of God looked to the daughters of men and they noticed that they were beautiful.

There was a new awareness that came about among the godly ones. Physical appearance began to be the criteria for marriage. For it says they noticed that they were pretty and then they married them.

You see, God was being excluded from marriage which he had ordained. Whether this meant proper marriages or just relationships and just living together, who knows. It could also mean that they had multiple wives.

Some men boast that they are not adulterers. They are just serial monogamists and that they just take one wife at a time and they get rid of that one and then they go to the next one. But there was a new awareness, a new atmosphere of the criteria for having a relationship.

It was around physical attraction. It says the sons of God noticed that the daughters of men were beautiful. They began to have a new awareness.

They noticed what they had not noticed before. It says that the daughters of men were beautiful. They began to have a new awareness.

They noticed what they had not noticed before. They began to have a new awareness. Isn't our present generation exactly the same? Physical attraction is really what matters.

And sometimes we are guilty ourselves of giving too much credit to a person because they might seem physically attractive. I don't want to go into detail, just to spare you. You know the implications.

Just think of the bondage it brings upon those who try to meet the criteria of being beautiful, so that they can be attractive to the opposite sex. Where they fall into bondage with their mirror. They've got to match the styles of beauty regarding hair, or their face, or their height, or their slimness, or whatever it might be, to try and appear beautiful because of the awareness, because of the conscientization, because of that new atmosphere of what beauty I hear that it's a new fashion even among men, I think in other more Western countries, America, where they have what they call botox parties, it's a type of, I think, an injection where they inject you into your face to get rid of the wrinkles.

They want to keep that freshness of youth, and they feel agony and pain at the thought of getting older. It is said that some have had so many of these injections that they cannot smile anymore it's a permanent frozen look on their face. Although the wrinkles are gone, they cannot change their expression because of the many injections.

In one church where we preached, a lady had come to the Lord, had got converted, she was a model. The doctors had taken fat from her behind, or her thigh, and implanted it into her lips to give her a parting look. But when the sons of God, when the children of the Lord begin to be aware of these things in the world, and there's awoken in them a desire to be like the world, and even to take these things to themselves in

marriage, in other words, in uniting themselves to this, then we are on the edge of destruction.

By that, of course, I'm not implying that you just let go and you lose all self-respect and dignity for who you are and what God has made you to be. Our bodies are the temple of God, and we ought to look after it. But here we find that the sons of God lost those borders which God in his love puts around his people, and they began to force their way through the barriers into the heart of the world.

It was based, their relationships were based on lust. They gave attention to those that they felt physically attracted to. Is there any of that inclination in your heart? You're inclined to fantasize about the one that you feel physically attracted to, and you don't have control of your thoughts and feelings.

Secondly, not only were the relationships based on lust, it was based on the exclusion of God. It says, wives whom they chose. Jesus said, in the last days, when the Son of Man is about to come, it will be as it was in the days of Noah.

They will be getting married, and they'll be giving in marriage. What's wrong with that? Well, this is the source of what Jesus was referring to. It meant marriage or relationships without God.

A life without God. Just imagine, the sons of God began to live and make decisions based on what they chose. And this brought God to the point, and he says to us today in his word, he says in verse three, my spirit will not strive with man forever.

For he is indeed flesh. And then God said, and his days will be 120 years. In other words, I'm going to reduce the length of their ability to be alive to just 120 years.

It sounds like a long time, but in actual fact, compared to the ages of the people at that time, if you look at the previous chapter, their lifespans were being reduced to about a fifth or so of what was normal. When this began to happen, Noah, it says in the last verse of the previous chapter, was already 500 years old. But God said, no, I cannot allow them to live so long with this depravity, with this increasing corruption.

They're going to die quickly. But now the lifespan of man is even shorter, indicating that the corruption has continued. That's why the Psalmist said three score and 10, just 70 years will be the lifespan and another 10 years if he's fortunate to have a little bit more time.

God then began to work in ways that would cause us not to just live freely in the sinful way and to keep that ability to to continue with our perversion and sin. But verse three also tells us that the people who had the spirit of God were not worthy of it anymore. My spirit will not strive with man forever.

But it also shows us and should humble us that we are just flesh. We are just breath, and that breath is given us by the spirit of God. And we're one breath away from the end.

The rug is pulled out from our feet, so to say. We have no reason to pride ourselves. What are we but just a breath away from death? Even if we are giant-like, for it continues to say in the next verse about the giants that there were, who were strong, heroic men.

With reputations, with heroic reputations. They were famous in their day. Doesn't matter to God.

He said, I'm going to get rid of all that. I will not strive with man forever. I will be drowned with their fame, with their heroism.

All the famous will be gone. Are you busy working towards your reputation? Maybe just to get the popularity of your friends? Even if you're the most popular, the most famous in your generation, by the next generation, they have forgotten you. And certainly by the next generation, you are just unknown.

What are we? What are we but flesh? Our popularity ceases to be. A famous man died, is it just two days ago, Johnny Cash, famous from the 50s and 60s and some of the 70s, known as the man in black. He died, I think it was just two or three days ago.

Johnny Cash. Most of you younger people will say, who's he? Only we who are in the slightly older generation than you happen to know his name. Fame perishes.

Suddenly you are gone. And in the next generation, you get forgotten. Thankfully for Mr. Cash, he apparently turned to God through Billy Graham and he became a Christian and spent the last years of his life serving the Lord.

What I'm getting at though is, dear friend, that little bit of popularity which you crave for, which you lust after, is worth nothing. We don't even know the names of these men in verse four where it says, they were mighty men of great fame. They were about to get wiped out.

We live in a violent world. Just two days, three days ago, I got a phone call and they said, do you want to ensure your life against violence as South Africa is such a violent society? You might get hijacked, you might get killed, you can get insured against it. Violence has become like a norm, a normal thing in our society across the world, but we know it especially in South Africa.

That's one of the things that angers God, for we read in verse 11, the earth also was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence. In other words, the normal circumstance, the normal way of things was violence. Abusing your neighbor.

It's just reading these days about the great day of the agreement between England and America during the Second World War on a ship in the Atlantic, it was called the Atlantic Charter, and on that ship about a thousand men, top officers, were gathered. President Roosevelt of the USA and Winston Churchill of Great Britain were on the deck of that ship with the thousand men. And they sang hymns together, they knew that the dark cloud of war which was already upon Britain but was going to come upon the face of the whole earth, they knew that violence was coming that day and they made an agreement, a charter between them.

They sang hymns, they prayed together, and Winston Churchill writes in his book, it was a great day to live. And he said after that, in the next sentence, half of us, half of us on that deck in that service were about to die. Because of the violence unleashed upon the earth at that time in the Second World War, 55 million people were going to be dead in a short time.

Last week on the 11th of September was the second celebration or commemoration of sorrow about those who were killed on 9-11, as they call it now in America, where 3,000 souls were lost in a single hour just at the World Trade Center. Violence has become a norm. Let's get closer to home though.

What about that violence of abuse in other ways as well, not just killing but harming and damaging through other ways? Look at the curse of rape in our country. Last weekend, four students from the University of Pretoria took a matric girl into their hostel, into the well-known traditional hostel and raped her there in front of other students. Children, babies are being abused.

Such things shouldn't even be mentioned but they are happening. God looked upon the earth and behold, it was filled with violence. But you know, violence which ends in bloodshed is not just an act of murder where you physically remove the life of a person.

It begins in the heart. And that is why Jesus spoke straight to the heart. He says it's not just if you kill your brother but even if you are angry with your brother, you hate him, you have murdered him already.

Are your words about your neighbour, your friend, maybe somebody in your family filled with violence, filled with bitterness? Getting irritable, getting upset with somebody, being touchy, getting angry, all that is part of this violence. If you had the means to kill and get away with it, you would do it. Worse than that, violence is sometimes even glorified and those who are more violent are considered to be the main o's, the heroes.

Things that are vile are considered to be wonderful and praiseworthy. One of the most vile TV stations, MTV, had their awards just two or three weeks ago apparently. It's an American network and they had their shows for their greatest heroes and what I read about one of the main awards was given to a man who was famous and is famous for a song about pimping girls and he came with girls tied, they were half naked, tied with dog collars and chained to him.

He walked in with his dogs. He was a hero. So there is the hero worship of what is vile in the sight of God.

Another reason that caused God to be angry and to make his final decision that he's going to wipe out mankind except for those who had grace, those who would use his means of escape in the ark was that this was a continual and total evil. It was a slide downwards spiraling down that there was no chance of them coming back again. They had got to the point of no return.

Look at verse five again. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Are you on a downward way where your life is coming apart and you sense that you are being pulled down? And not just your actions, but as we read in verse five, even the intent, the inner motivations and workings, the secret workings inside you are continually wicked.

The Bible says that the life of the righteous goes upward. In Proverbs, the righteous go upwards for they are headed heavenward. Or are you in the spiral down? Depravity is sinking you and you are just being pulled down.

Instead of thoughts towards God and desires and inclinations and longings towards the Lord, you have now longings as we had read about the sons of God, longings for the world, cravings for sin, and the intent of your heart is becoming continually wicked. Let this be your wake-up call because, dear friend, you can get to a point of no return. We don't know when that is.

We cannot judge. The Lord knows that he gets to a point where he says, I will no longer strive with you. Striving with the meaning, I will no longer plead with you.

I will no longer do battle with you. I will no longer call you. I will no longer draw you to myself.

I will stop striving with you. That is the main emphasis. And just if you can, even if you forget everything else, although I hope you find something valuable in the other points, but remember this, that God says, I will not strive with you forever.

Are there warning bells going off right now inside you where you see red lights flashing and you realize, I am in danger? The mortal dangers of the world and the violence and the possibility of my getting killed in violence, that's not my danger. But my real danger is that God says to me, I will not strive with you forever. If you continue continually and repeatedly, persistently resist the spirit of God, then this verse is for you.

I will not strive with you forever. You are even in danger of fulfilling what Jesus said about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, even if they sin against me, Jesus Christ, or against the father, but if they sin against the Holy Spirit, there is no forgiveness.

Which means if you continually, persistently, repeatedly, intentionally, purposefully resist the spirit of God, fighting against him, remaining the rebel, the time will come where God says, too late. Does that cause your heart to tremble? It should. Does it cause you to pray even now and say, God have mercy on me? It should.

And it should also cause you to stop in your tracks and turn around. That's what repentance means. God.

Dear friend, if you feel any longing to turn around and any desire to want to give up this lifestyle of sin that you are following, Thank God for that. He hasn't given up on you. Let me go so far as saying, you need to even desire to desire God.

Don't give up hope. If even though it feels like you're sinking into a pit, call out to him. Even if you don't feel like it, God can rescue you.

Keep in mind the theme today. My spirit will not strive with men forever. So if God is pulling your heart, tagging at your heart to come to him to repent, then respond instantly today.

The last verse of our text today was, But Noah found grace in the eyes of God. Verse eight. Thank God for grace.

Undeserved mercy from God. He is able to forgive. Even now, dear friend, even though you feel like you're on the way down and the spiral is becoming so fast, you're slipping down so quickly that you are even becoming afraid of yourself.

Jesus died to save the perishing, the dying. And a word also to the sons of God. You children of God, in other words, Be careful of the devil opening your eyes and awakening something in you that God doesn't want you to awaken to.

If that has happened and corruption has come in, you too, repent. Seek God's grace. He's willing to freely give it if you're willing to come and get it.

He who covers a sin will not prosper. But he who confesses and forsakes his sin will obtain mercy. Let's bow and pray.

Heavenly Father, you've recorded this so many thousands of years ago, but you've kept it up to date for us to read today. Lord, you say that while you speak and while it is still today, we should not harden our hearts, but we should respond today. Lord, the darkness comes where no man can work.

Thank you that it is day. Thank you, Lord, for the grace that you give us to choose you. Thank you, Lord, that you have the power to forgive and to save and rescue.

Lord, let there be those today who will respond today in their hearts and will thoroughly, completely turn around and repent. Confessing their sin and turning away from it. Lord Jesus, thank you that you bled and died to make it possible.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you yourself, you are that ark of salvation. And that through you, we can be rescued. Thank you that we don't have to wait for the flood, but we can have the confidence of salvation today.

Lord Jesus, we remember also our brethren out in many different directions in Europe and those who are traveling long distances, those who are at services and funerals right now. Please be with them and strengthen them, protect them. Be with us, Lord, now as we part.

Amen. Amen.

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