

GENESIS 6:1-6

When people began to multiply on the face of the ground and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. Then the Lord said, "My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.

The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on earth and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord.

ROMANS 6:15-19

What then should we say: That the law is sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! But if it had not been for the

law, I would not have known sin. Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death or of obedience which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

IMPRESSIONS

Genesis 6:1-5
Romans 6:15-19

Toward the end of summer when my grandson, Geordie, was between summer camp and the start of school, we took him to Dayton for a visit to the Air Force Museum. If you haven't been there, I would highly recommend it. It is awesome in its scope and its exhibits many of which are hanging high above the walkways over your heads. As you might guess, lots of visitors were people of age, many of whom were likely veterans of Viet Nam.

Personally, I wanted to see the bomber my father flew on missions over Berlin during the Great War—a B26 Marauder. It gave me chills when I saw it—a twin engine plane with a machine gun nest in the nose and a gunnery on the side requiring a crew of six—two pilots, a navigator, a bombardier and two gunners. My father was the co-pilot. They flew 50 missions targeting railroads, factories and bridges which supported the German war effort. And every time they came under fire from the ground and fortunately skirted the flack the enemy sent up - There was not a single crew member over the age of 25 and they weren't all fortunate enough to survive. About half of those who flew never came home.

I left with a lot of Impressions which I would like to share with you. On the positive side, I was astounded by the science and technology that went into creating and constructing these machines of war. The evolution of the brain power required to advance from single engine fighter planes to F16 jets was impressive. The sheer size of a B26 suspended from the ceiling is jaw dropping. You really have no idea until you're standing beneath it.

After I saw my father's plane, Geordie was interested in the space section which held equal fascination and awe. It featured satellites, space capsules the astronauts ride in and a rocket at least 60 or 70 feet tall which

propels its cargo into space. We have all watched launches from Cape Canaveral on TV, but standing next to an actual rocket of three stages which somehow must get off the ground and drive through the atmosphere until the rocket then launches its cargo in a second stage and then a third stage which is required to get into orbit. Amazing! The ingenuity humans are capable of is eye-popping. And I'm sure we haven't seen anything yet!

On the negative side, however, I left with a profound sense of sadness with the realization that so much of this creativity was designed and implemented to destroy human beings, the environment, and bring ruination to cities and nations. The loss of life caused by our armed conflicts is disturbing and frankly, depressing. This was really brought home by a replica of a thermonuclear bomb. The sheer physical magnitude of this instrument of death took my breath away. We all had better hope that North Korea's paranoia and the Russian response to their losing war in Ukraine do not lead to nuclear attacks anywhere. If it survived at all, our species would descend toward extinction.

This is unfortunately not a new reality for our species and the scriptures reflect God's disappointment in us as well as offering us a way out. Genesis describes us perfectly: *The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the*

thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on earth and it grieved him to his heart.

Wow! Has anything changed? Salman Rushdie, best selling author of the notorious book “The Satanic Verses” for which he has a bounty on his head, reflects upon God’s frustration with humanity in his latest novel, “Victory City.” He concludes that every creator, be it writer, painter, sculptor, composer—including God--face the same dilemma. And that is that your creation acquires a life of its own and you cannot control how it will be used or interpreted by others. You give intelligence and the ability to build and destroy to your those you created, they may use it to develop a thermonuclear bomb. And they can actually paint themselves into an impossible corner between good and evil. It is the conflict that Robert Oppenheimer faced in developing the Atomic bomb. If you used it, hundreds of thousands would die. If you didn’t use it, many other thousands would die and the door would be left wide open for the enemy to beat you to the punch. It was a classic “Catch 22”—damned if you do, damned if you don’t.

On the other hand, the positive Impression I left with was hope. If we can do the wicked things, we can also do the loving things. What God has given us are choices. What if we invested all of this brain power we

have squandered on killing each other to bring solutions to our climate crisis? We could end poverty. We could clean up the toxins and pollutants which poison our earth. We could preserve the habitats of endangered plants and animals and so much more. The good we could do is endless.

But unless we act with love, our efforts will be futile and God won't have to destroy us because we will do it to ourselves. This is precisely the point Paul is attempting to drive home to the Christians in Rome. *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death or of obedience which leads to righteousness?* That's the choice. And thanks be to Christ who brought grace to us in his death for our sake, we have the ability and the responsibility to live out of love. *For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.*

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