

Text: Gen. 5:1-6:8

Title: "Rules and Exceptions from the History of Mankind"

Time: January 27, 2008 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Sometimes it is a good thing to be the exception to the rule, isn't it?

It was the Christmas Eve of 1998 that I found myself driving through a small northern Wisconsin town on my way back to my sister's place in Dunbar, WI. It was dark and beginning to snow heavily. I was on my way back from the closest Walmart they had up there, which was in Iron Mountain, MI –the upper peninsula of MI, having had to make an emergency trip there for some last minute supply for a happy Christmas.

I was enjoying my Christmas carols and the beauty of that northern scenery while driving along that deserted country road, when I saw in my rear view mirror the flashing red lights of a police car. At that hour of the night, in the middle of the snow storm, on this deserted country road, on Christmas Eve, the local sheriff had decided to pull me over and give me a ticket for going 35 mph downhill in a 25mph speed zone.

The rule was that people who go more than 25 mph in that zone were to receive a ticket, but I had all kinds of reasons why I thought I ought to be the exception to the rule that particular night. It was late Christmas Eve, after all, snowing, and I was from out of town and could not be expected to know the rule. I wanted to be the exception, but instead I got a ticket and was forced to conform to the rule by paying the fine.

I want to organize our study of the passage we read this morning around the themes, *rules* and *exceptions*. Moses specifically calls this section the book of the generations of Adam

or mankind (5:1). The next section is the generations of Noah (6:9). The word *generations* could also be understood as the times of someone or the history of someone.

One of the wonderful things about scriptural truth is the fact that it is firmly rooted in historical truth. Genealogies like the one we read this morning help to demonstrate this. Luke clearly understood this passage as descriptive of the facts of history (Luke 3:36-38), and in order for us to share the faith of this Christian apostle, we too must hold this passage with the same high regard. The historical facts before us in Gen. 5:1-6:8 teach us some important rules and exceptions regarding the human race.

I. Rules that apply to the entire human race.

A. Every man is created by God in His own image (5:1-2).

Application: We have spent a lot of time on this doctrine in our study of the early pages of Genesis, but Moses repeats this theme here because it is so vitally important. In his review Moses emphasizes 4 truths about man:

(1) mankind is made in God's likeness and image – man is not an animal, he is morally responsible to God;

(2) mankind is male and female – man is not something in between these; human heterosexuality is a fact of God's creation and human anatomy; homosexuality is a behavioral perversion of this design (no human is a homosexual; every human is either male-heterosexual or female-heterosexual, even though some people behave in a sinful homosexual way);

(3) mankind is blessed and named by God. One of the great joys of parenting is choosing the name of a child. God chose mankind's name. We are His offspring and designed to know and enjoy his Fatherhood. Our sin which separates us from

this relationship with Him is a perversion of His original design.

B. Every man is a gift of God's blessing to his parents (5:2, "he blessed them," God's blessing begins with the command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28); the phrase *he begat* X and the phrase *he begat sons and daughters* appear a total of 29 times in chapter 5).

Application: We live in a culture that has lost sight of the fact that children are a gift of God's blessing to their parents, haven't we? Roughly a million unborn children will be brutally slaughtered through abortion this year in the United States. One of our college students wrote a paper about why this is wrong in his University of New Hampshire English class, and he was given a very difficult time in part because his teacher did not share his views. Half of this country wants to elect a president that will make sure that this slaughter continues funded and unabated by the federal government.

The Bible teaches a different rule. Every man is a gift of God's blessing to his parents. Our kids are God's precious gifts to us, and we need to be good stewards of these gifts. Our children's ministries in this church are absolutely vital because the well-being of our children in the faith is absolutely vital. We ought to take these wonderful opportunities very seriously and make the most of them for the good of our kids.

C. Every man's days on this earth are numbered (we are given these numbers, and then we read over and over again *and he died* (8 times)).

Illustration: Bible commentaries sense a need to pause and provide a word of explanation when they come to these long pre-flood lifetimes in Genesis 5. Simply put, men and women do not live that long anymore, so we would like to understand better why these did.

Archeology has uncovered a number of Ancient Near Eastern texts that also remember the existence of men with great life spans prior to a universal flood, although these usually involve tens of thousands of years and stories to go with them that are equally fanciful. Some Bible students in the past have tried to explain these life spans as the result of a water canopy atmosphere that existed prior to the flood that shielded mankind from harmful solar rays and provided a healthier environment. Two difficulties with this understanding are (1) these environmental factors do not seem to have that great of an impact on aging, and (2) Noah lived 350 years after the flood, apparently unaffected by these new damaging environmental factors.

There has been some fascinating research accomplished in recent days in regard to the relationship between genetics and aging. There are, of course, many external factors that can cause someone to age and die, but beyond this there is also a genetic clock that ticks within our cells that tells them when to stop dividing. Some clocks are set to longer life spans than others, and this can be demonstrated through breeding experiments and the like.

We know that after the flood, the human race went through a genetic bottle neck—everything started over with Noah and his family, and this happens to be the circumstance in which the loss of genetic characteristics can occur most rapidly in a species. Dr. Carl Wieland, a trained surgeon writing for *Answers in Genesis*, concludes the following in this regard: “This is consistent with our thesis here — there are genetic longevity factors. The availability of a great array of these in our pre-Flood ancestors might well explain their long lifespans, while loss of some could explain the subsequent drop.”

Application: Length of days is a blessing in Scripture: “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: for length of days and long life, and peace, shall they

add to thee" (Prov. 3:1-2). Although obeying God's Word cannot give us a better genetic makeup, it can contribute to external factors that protect our health from the risks associated with sinful behavior (note the death of actor Heath Ledger).

In addition, we ought to have great respect for people of many years. Their experience provides some important spiritual leadership to God's people (Ps. 148:7a, 12 leaves no room for a generation gap).

It is an inviolable rule of life that our days on earth are numbered, and the gospel we preach is man's only hope in the face of this stark reality, which so many chose to ignore until it is eternally too late.

D. Every man experiences tedium under God's curse (5:29).

Application: Lamech hoped that Noah would somehow bring him an escape from the rule of God's curse upon man. This is the deceitfulness of riches--the thought that financial independence can bring personal utopia. Prosperity does not bring relief from the tedium of God's curse; normally it only intensifies the burden of it. God desires that we enjoy our work, not that we seek an escape from it. Eccl. 2:24, "There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God."

E. Every man is a sinner who tests the patience of God (6:1-7).

1. Sin that brings God's judgment first destroys godly homes (vv. 1-2). There is some question about the identity of the sons of God and the daughters of men in verse 2. I think the context wants us to see the sons of God as Adam's godly line through Seth, and the sons of men as Adam's ungodly line through Cain. I think the context gives us two indicators of this. First, 5:1-3 reads as though God is actually the first Patriarch of the

godly line of Adam – as though the godly line is actually comprised of His sons and daughters. Second, in all of the genealogies of chapters 4-5, only one woman is mentioned by name. This was the sister of Tubal-Cain back in Gen. 4:22, and her name was Naamah meaning *pleasant* or *gorgeous*. Her name emphasizes physical beauty, and this is exactly the feature that the sons of God found so striking in the daughters of men (v. 2, “fair”).

Application: So understood this way, this passage teaches that sin that brings God’s judgment first destroys godly homes. Young people, you need to understand the importance of finding a spouse some day who loves the Lord and of raising a godly home for His glory. We need to look for more than what merely pleases the eyes in this regard.

1 Tim. 2:9 describes exactly what a Christian young man ought to be looking for and the appearance that a Christian young lady ought to be presenting: “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.”

2. Sin that brings God’s judgment first rejects God’s patient forbearance (v. 3, 1 Pet. 3:20, 2 Pet. 1:5). God’s judgment is held back by the patience of His forbearance, but there is always a limit to this patience. If you are living in sin, the clock of God’s forbearance is ticking. Like the tragic song warns, “Some day you’ll hear God’s final call of grace.”

3. Sin that brings God’s judgment exalts man over God (v. 4).

Illustration: One of our brothers here was witnessing to a lady the other day who told him that science was her God. There is nothing new or modern about this attitude. Every man and woman is a sinner who tests the patience of God.

## II. Exceptions that apply only to God's chosen race.

### A. Some men walk with God and escape death (5:21-24).

Application: The Bible is clear about the fact that the wages of sin is death, but it is also clear about the promise that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The writer of Hebrews makes clear that the key to receiving this gift and to walking with God is faith (Heb. 11:5-6).

### B. Some men find grace in the eyes of the Lord and are used mightily by him (6:8).

Application: Where would we be today without the faith of Noah? This sinful world that is rising up once again in rebellion against the God of the Bible in preparation for the tribulation days of God's judgment actually owes Noah an awful lot, doesn't it? He saved his household in a day of God's judgment; he preached righteousness that could have saved others had they responded; and he allowed God's plan for the world to continue on into the future. Why? He found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He by faith built the ark after being warned by God.

Conclusion: Have you been warned by God this morning? If so, you need to respond in faith so that you can find grace in God's eyes, rather than His judgment.

Every man must face the reality of these rules and exceptions in this world of sin. The rules that are applied to all are that God made you in His own image, that you are a gift to your parents and your children are so to you, that your days on this earth are numbered, and that you are a sinner who has tried the patience of your holy God.

But every man is also invited to embrace certain exceptions that come to God's chosen race in Christ. Some men walk with God and escape death. Some find grace through faith.

The rules are unavoidable, and the exceptions are offered freely but not guaranteed. Do you want to find grace in the eyes of the Lord?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*