

The Olive Branch

Have you ever heard the expression, "extend the olive branch"? Do you have any idea what it means?

Actually, the expression to "extend an olive branch" means an offer of peace or reconciliation. It has a biblical origin. It comes from the Book of Genesis. The sign that the flood was over was an olive branch brought back to the ark by a dove.

Olive branches are symbols of peace. They continue to be used in works of art which are meant to suggest peace.

In Ancient Greek and Roman times, people would offer literal olive branches. In Rome defeated armies traditionally carried olive branches to indicate that they were surrendering.

According to experts, olive trees take years to mature and war is typically very hard on olives because people cannot take the time to nurture them and plant new trees. Therefore, the offer of a new olive branch would suggest that someone is tired of war, whether it be an actual war or a falling out between friends.

Text: Genesis 6:5-7 "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 And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷ So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."

1) How did things go so bad so quickly?

- a) In Genesis 1:31 the Bible says that, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was *very good*". But here, the next time we read the words "*God saw*" we are told that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth."
- b) The son's of God and the daughters of men.

Genesis 6:1-4 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. ³ Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

- i) This is a very controversial passage that has been debated for centuries. Some believe these son's of God were Angels. Others believe they were men who were possessed by some kind of demonic or angelic spirits. They connect the giants with the marriages of these super men and women.

Here is a safe principle regarding Bible interpretation. Whenever possible, always go with the most literal explanation of a passage. This is the way I interpret this passage.

Ron's best interpretation:

- (1) The "son's of God" was the title the writer used for people who knew God and walked with God. This phrase is used many times in the bible for devout followers of God.

Enoch (the great grandfather of Noah) proved to us that there some even in that day who had become incredible close to God. For Enoch walked so closely with God that the Lord took him home (Ge. 5:24 "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.")

- (2) The "daughters of man" was the title the author used for beautiful women of idolatrous ungodly men.

- ii) Young men (son's of God") who walked with God, began to marry "whomever they chose." The result was moral chaos verse 5, "the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

We often find ourselves living in the middle a world gone bad. A world filled with strife; chaos and evil.

- c) Did God actually regret creating man?

(v.6) says, "the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart."

- i) How can a God who never makes mistakes be sorry over something he did? When we say that we are sorry about something, what we usually mean is: "I wish it never happened."

- (1) But there are times when we may do what is best and yet be sorrowful about doing it—such as when we discipline our children or confront a brother or sister in sin.

- (2) My emotions may be sorry for having to discipline my children. But my mind and will know it is the right thing to do. So I do it sorrowfully, but with **no regrets**.

This is how we explain Genesis 6:6. On the level of his divine will, God knew that creation was not a mistake. But on the level of his emotions, the way man turned out brought great sorrow

Lets read the text again: Ge. 6:5-7 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 And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷ So the Lord said, "I

will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.”

Look at verse v. 8 “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

2) How did Noah find Favor with God?

a) King James Version says “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8). This is the first thing that is told us about Noah. Grace (favor) is the foundation of every life that is well pleasing to God.

i) This is the first time the word “grace” is used in the Bible.

ii) It was when the sin of the mankind had reached its climax that grace was exercised and powerfully displayed!

(1) This is God teaching us from the very beginning that our joy filled existence does not depend upon our own merit but rather the Grace that comes to us when we put our Faith in God.

(2) Romans 5:20 “... But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

b) Noah found Favor through Faith

Heb. 11:7 “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”

i) The Groundwork of His Faith: “... being of God warned of God ...”

Learn to hear God in the light so you won't be tempted to doubt him in the dark!

ii) The Range of His Faith: “...events as yet unseen ...”

(1) How limited is your faith? Do you quietly give God ultimatums?

(2) We must be ready for some things which we have never seen before.

(3) Take the limits off your faith life!

iii) The Reverence of His Faith: “... in reverent fear...”

The lack of reverence is what gets us in trouble with God. Ours is a generation that lacks the fear of God.

iv) The Evidence of His Faith: “... constructed an ark ...”

Radical faith leads to radical obedience which often leads to radical actions. “Faith, if it hath not works is dead, being by itself” (Jas. 2:17)

v) The Urgency of His Faith: "... the saving of his household ..."

(1) God is a Family Man! Believing God for your household is right!

(a) Because Abraham exercised faith, God gave to his seed the land of Palestine.

(b) Because Rahab believed the report of the spies, her whole household was preserved from destruction.

(c) Because the Canannite woman believed God for the scraps off the table, Jesus healed her daughter! Jesus said to her, "O Woman, great is your faith" (Mt. 15:27)

(2) The security and eternal safety of your household is greatly affected by your commitment to faith!

vi) The Witness of His Faith: "... this he condemned the world ..."

(1) What brings condemnation on the world? Sin

(2) What is sin? Refusing to believe God Rom. 14:23, we read, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

(a) Sin is more than an act, it is an attitude. Sin is the exercise of self-will, self-assertion, self-independency.

(b) Faith is also more than an act, it is an attitude. Faith in God is a coming to the end of myself. Faith is absolute dependency on God, no limits!

vii) The Reward of His faith: he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

(1) Faith brings us into a right relationship with God. It makes us righteous.

(2) "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Ro. 4:3