Social Networking, Part 2 (Fallenness)

Genesis 11:1-9 Wednesday, November 18, 2014

*Ge 11:6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.*

# Introduction

1. In last week’s lesson, we gave a short history of modern-day social networking – the kind of social networking that relies on computer technology, particularly the Internet.
2. We also offered this definition of social networking:   
     
   A mediated form of interaction in communications and relationships that takes place through the Internet and relies on video images and some form of written or oral communication.
3. We pointed out that “social networking” as a concept was not invented when Al Gore didn’t invent the Internet.
4. There is nothing new under the sun – including social networking.
5. We have named it, as if we invented some new thing. But the truth is, social networking has been around ever since God created the second person.
6. After the Fall, we see an all-too-common feature of relationships introduced – a feature that has only been magnified through the power of technology.
7. Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell *when the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.*
8. I will say more about this later, but for now, I will only point out that this feature of our fallenness regularly shows up in our relationships.
9. Technology serves to exaggerate it, as it does with most of the things it influences.
10. The end of Cain’s story brings in another element of social networking – a city that was built to replace Cain’s relationship with God.
11. Cain’s city could be pointed to as the first social network that was built in order to provide security in this dangerous world – security in relationships; security that did not rely on God.
12. We skipped over Genesis 6 and the glaring sin of man, when God saw *that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*
13. Certainly, we can surmise what the social networking of that day involved, and the way it enhanced man’s fallen nature.
14. But when we left off last week, we were at the Tower of Babel. I want to spend some time there tonight.

# Division

Here we see the first of the Features of our Fallenness:

## The Genesis of our Fallenness

1. If we are to understand social networking, it is essential that we understand the Tower of Babel.

* The tower was built in the days of Peleg (Gen 10:25); if you do the math (in Genesis 11:10-16), this was just 101 years after the Flood.
* Noah lived for 350 years after the flood; Shem for 500 years after the Flood. So both of them were certainly alive when this tower was built.
* And the truth is, in that 100 years, the population of the earth was again exploding.

1. Twice in Genesis 9, God reminded Noah and his sons of their duty to fill the earth (Gen 9:1, 7).

* And so, when the population grew, Genesis 10:32 tells that Noah gathered his children and their families, and divided them into nations, assigning them to a part of the earth to fill.
* Genesis 10 gives us this “Table of Nations.”
* But when men should have scattered into the places Noah commanded, men united together against God.
* You might remember Ham for his sin against his father; Ham brought forth a son named Cush, and Cush had a son named Nimrod.
* Genesis 10:8-9 describes Nimrod as a mighty one in the earth, a mighty hunter before the Lord. He was a giant, and a great hunter.
* The Hebrew word for “mighty” is *gibbowr*. Gibbowr is used synonymously with the Nephilim in Gen 6:4.
* We have every reason to believe that Nimrod himself was a giant, perhaps a Nephilim.
* The ancestors of Cush were the Ethiopians, and were men of great stature.  
    
  Isa 45:14 Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, **men of stature**, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine...
* *Gibbowr* describes Nimrod’s strength, but also his status.
* Nimrod was a *proud tyrant*, a bold man who magnified himself.
* Eastern tradition has painted Nimrod as a *gigantic oppressor* of the people’s liberties, and as an *impious rebel* against the Divine authority.
* Nimrod was a powerful man.
* Greek tradition calls Nimrod “Orion” the giant hunter.
* And because he was both a giant man and a bold one, the rebels against God flocked to follow him.

1. Nimrod led the rebellion against God, built a city, and then a kingdom in the land of Shinar.

* You might wonder why the people were so quickly turned from God, so quickly turned to rebellion.
* They had just witnessed the devastating power of God in the Flood.
* Remember that this rebellion was on the part of the *survivors*, the family of Noah, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord.
* Surely, they should have a sense of gratitude because of the salvation of the Lord.
* Nor was any of this forgotten, because Noah was still preaching to his children.
* But in this we see the human condition played out. Our hearts are prone to rebellion, prone to wander.
* The flood destroyed sinners, but it did nothing to destroy sin itself.
* No doubt the same slanders were leveled against God here as before --- that God was a miserly Creator --- magnificent in creating, but miserly in sharing.
* Only now a new slander must have been raised against God, that he was a bad-tempered tyrant who will not forgive.
* No doubt men pointed to the Flood as proof of this --- the case in point of divine overkill.
* The celestial tyrant overreacted before, and what is to restrain Him from doing that again?
* So when Noah announced the divisions of the nations, Nimrod and his band of rebels rose up against him…
* “God wants to scatter us so that He can again destroy us.”
* Cain’s City of Enoch was his attempt to create a rival reality, a city to fill his need for God without God, independently of God.
* We can assume that the city of Cain and other similar cities became the centers for rebellion against God before the Flood.
* We can assume that these cities and their rebellion against God eventually moved God to say that   
    
  “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”
* I believe that the men of Babel considered the cities of Cain to be a failure. After all, the flood *destroyed* them.
* Now they needed to expand Cain’s city, to improve that technology in order to make themselves a better way to escape God.
* And thus they built the tower of Babel.

1. They decided to make three things – a city (named Babel), a tower and a name. They said, *Let us make us a name…*

* Two things you should know about the “name:”
* First, they named the tower after themselves…
* And secondly, they intended that this tower should make them famous.

1. The “name” here refers primarily to a reputation – their desire to make themselves known, to be famous.

* In other words, they made an idol of *themselves*.
* John Gill commented…  
    
  they proposed by erecting such an edifice to spread their fame, and perpetuate their name to the latest posterity, that hereby it might be known, that at such a time, and in such a place, were such a body of people, even all the inhabitants of the world; and all of them the sons of one man … so that as long as this tower stood, they would be had in remembrance, it being called after their names;
* Philo says that as they made a brick, each person carved their name on it.
* Their purpose was to make a name for themselves…   
    
  *Lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.*
* Here we see their rebellion against God.
* Theirs was a covenant disobedience, as they refused to obey God’s command to subdue the earth and have dominion over it.

1. With that tower, Nimrod offered three things:

* first, *a symbol to unify the people against God*,
* secondly, *a tower to protect them from God*,
* and thirdly, *a token of their rebellion against Him*.
* They stated that intention in this phrase: *let us build us… a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.*
* They intended to build that tower literally to the realm where God abides.

1. So it was that in this area we now know as Baghdad, Iraq, Nimrod set up his own kingdom in opposition to God.

* Babylon was the center of his kingdom, in the land of Shinar.
* Micah 5:6 calls Babylon the land of Nimrod.
* Consider the beginnings of Babylon and you will see that from the start, Babylon has always been the place of rebellion against God.
* From Babylon as the center, Nimrod set up a large and expanding kingdom, which grew to 8 cities, including Ninevah.
* And in his rebellion against God, Nimrod led the people to build the tower.   
    
  (from MHC) For what ends they built. Some think they intended hereby to secure themselves against the waters of another flood. God had told them indeed that he would not again drown the world; but they would trust to a tower of their own making, rather than to a promise of God's making or an ark of his appointing.
* The tower in particular was a point of unity – man made an idol with the intention of uniting around it.
* Again, what did they say? “lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

1. In response, God resolved that the tower should be destroyed.  
     
   And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

* The word “do” in verse 6 is the same Hebrew word translated “make” in the early chapters of Genesis. The word is found 6 times in the Creation account.

Ge 1:26 And God said, Let us **make** man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

* So, in Genesis 11:6, God was literally saying, “this they begin to *make*, and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to *make*.
* They are making in order to protect themselves in their rebellion, in order to escape God when the punishment came.
* When God determined to destroy the tower, the Bible doesn’t say that the ***tower*** was destroyed*.*
* Rather, the Bible tells us that God destroyed the tower *by confounding their language.*

1. Language played an integral role in what they were attempting at Babel --- the first verse of Genesis 11 tells us that the “whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.”

* Language enabled them to build this tower, and when God confounded their language, they were prevented from building it.
* Since God confounded the languages of earth, there has never been a common language or a “universal” language, with 2 exceptions:
* Music has often been referred to as the universal language.
* And technology is a universal language.

1. And technology has given us a sort of tower, an image (if you will), a technology that functions to unite men and at the same time allows them to make a name for themselves.

* And that new tower of Babel comes to us in the form of social networking.
* More than simply allowing people an avenue to connect, social networking has an incredible power to unite people around a cause.
* This power has been used for good, and it has been used for evil. The power is undeniable.
* I have noticed that the more connected our culture becomes through social media, the more we have started to sound alike.
* We all like the same things, say the same things, speak in terms of the same moral platitudes.
* Someone said, “when everyone thinks alike, no one is thinking.”
* Yet, more and more, our culture is developing its own orthodoxy, and more aggressively policing for heresies.
* The preachers of tolerance have no tolerance for any who dare point out that their emperor is riding around town in the buff.
* With one voice, our culture is busy praising the fine cloth that his invisible clothes are cut from.
* Social networking has united our culture like never before.

1. Underlying that unifying power is the power of communication that is amplified in social networking.

* And beneath it all is a quest for image, for name. “Let us make us a name.”
* John Dyer pointed out that “When God created the garden, he put humankind in it to reflect his image. At Babel, we find humans creating a city as their anti-garden and a tower as an image to themselves.” (p. 104)
* We might refer to Facebook as the great image to modern culture.
* Facebook (and the other various social-networking sites) are image-driven sites, and therefore image is very important.

## The Heart of the Problem

1. The way technology highlights what we are, enhances it and magnifies it.

Social networks are driven by our innate longing for relationships, for friendship, for acceptance, for value and worth in this world. The advances in social media demonstrate this deep longing, but do not satisfy it. In fact, it could be argued that the advances only serve to drive it. Our longing grows deeper, our deep dissatisfaction more apparent, the pain sharper.

And this is what drives the idolatry of it. We depend on it so much, and it demands more and more and gives so little back in return. As we rely on social media to take the edge off our hunger, we also allow it to control our lives and our thinking more and more, and that is what makes it an idol.

1. The Narcissist effect
2. The idol factory

We are asking the question, “Does our use of Social Networking tend towards idolatry?” Does an issue exist here? Clearly, the answer is “yes.” Idolatry is anything that replaces God, whether it be God’s priority, His place in our lives, or His purpose for our lives. We see how obsessed people have become with their profile, with their “brand” (as it now frequently called). We see how addicted we have become to Facebook and Twitter. We see how much we depend on these avenues of social networking. We see how much our worth and identity is wrapped up in the number of friends we have, in who our friends are, in what our friends are doing, in what we are doing that we can brag about, and so on. These are all marks of idolatry. And yes, it now permeates our culture. It has become the replacement for a relationship with God. And if you think about it, it only makes sense. Modern-day social networking of the Facebook/Twitter generation has a transcendent quality. It is something beyond us, something we don’t fully understand or recognize. Our dependence on it is invisible to us. This is what gives it the power to enslave us.

From that time until now, mankind has trusted in his own ability to communicate in order to escape the effects of the curse without relying on Jesus Christ. Man has attempted to create a new kind of unity around relationships and social networking that eliminates any need for God. This is the very mind of the idolater.

## The Features of our Problem

1. Careful, Your Profile is Showing

* Profile – your personal brand
* Status
* Exhibitionism
* Friendship or “Fans”

1. The Escapist World of Social Networking

* Voyeurism
* Escaping reality
* Escaping responsibility

1. Facebook Envy

# Conclusion

J. Gresham Machen --- “The world is restless today. There are many voices but there is no peace. Men are feverishly saying to a god manufactured to serve the social needs of man: ‘Deliver me; for thou art my god.’ They are trying to produce decency without principle; they are trying to keep back the raging sea of passion with flimsy mud embankments of self-interest; they are trying to do without the stern, solid masonry of the will of God. When will the vain effort cease? Shall we continue on our wanderings? Shall we continue to stagger like drunken men? Shall we still fashion a divinity that shall serve our utilitarian ends? Shall we amuse ourselves with idols? Or shall we return unto God?”