

Lesson 6

Man's Ineptitude: The Consequences of Sin

Introduction: The stage is set for redemption. Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden; now there is a brokenness that needs remedy. In only one generation, Adam and Eve's first children show man's utter inability to approach God—an indomitable consequence of sin.

One of the key attributes or characteristics of God that we are going to see over and over through the entire Bible is, first, God ALWAYS communicates. Secondly, His instructions are ALWAYS trustworthy and clear. This is one of the characteristics about God that separates Him from the gods of all other religions. Our God loves us with a love that surpasses all knowledge, and proof of that is the extreme effort He puts into making Himself and His word known to mankind.

Mankind, however, is extremely sinful and bent on disobedience, and even though God is explicit in what He says, man often defiantly rejects His wisdom and chooses death, which in turn reveals the grace and mercy of God all the more as He patiently reasons with and waits on those who flagrantly disregard Him. God is always waiting for people to listen and turn to Him from their wickedness.

Cain and Abel both came to present offerings to God.

- **Read Genesis 4:3-4.**

Cain believed in the existence of God just as much as Abel did. If he didn't, he would not have brought a sacrifice in the first place. But just believing in the existence of God didn't make Cain acceptable to God. **See James 2:19.**

Cain was born a separated (from God) sinner just as his father Adam had become. Therefore, his only hope was to come to God in the way that God had revealed.

When Adam and Eve realized they were naked, they fashioned themselves fig leaves. God gave them clothes of skin (**See Genesis 3:21**). The reasons they needed the clothes God fashioned were threefold: (1) the problem was deeper than nakedness, (2) blood covered sin, and (3) they were unable to do anything about sin. The fig leaves failed to deal with any of those three problems.

Just as Adam and Eve couldn't fix themselves and become acceptable to God in and of ourselves, we have no way of restoring our broken relationship with God. If God didn't intervene and make a way for Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, and even us today to be restored in oneness to Him and thereby be made acceptable, we would all HAVE to die and go to hell! There would be no other option for deliverance.

BUT in His mercy, God did offer a way for them to come to Him. Now, Genesis 4 doesn't tell us that God had made it clear to them how they were to approach Him. But based on other passages and truths that we know to be true, I believe it's safe to say that God did indeed make this instruction clear to them.

1. They would have had the testimony of God killing two animals to clothe their mother and father after they had sinned.
 - The point with this was that God clearly wanted Adam and Eve to be restored and made acceptable to Himself, for He was the One who did it! So it's very apparent that God WANTS man to know the truth regarding how to be restored to Him.
2. Secondly, **Hebrews 11:6** makes it clear that "it's impossible to please God without faith." Therefore, for Abel's sacrifice to be acceptable to God, it had to be made in faith—faith in the facts and not just a "wishful hope."
 - Therefore, for Abel's offering to have been made with "faith in the facts," he had to have known what the "facts" were. God had to have made it clear to them how they were to approach Him.
3. Another indication that Abel was following God's instruction is that Abel brought "of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat" to God. Later, in **Leviticus 3:16**, we see that this was

exactly what God had told the Israelites they had to bring as an acceptable sacrifice.

- So, to think that Abel thought up the idea himself of bringing a sheep and its fat is contrary to the whole emphasis of scripture. God doesn't accept anything that originates with man.
4. And lastly, we know that in Noah's day, animals were already recognized or classified as those that were clean and those that were unclean. Therefore, it's very likely that in Cain and Abel's time, the animals had already been classified by God in this way.
- If you look at Leviticus 11 and the emphasis that is put on the lamb sacrifice, surely it could not have been a coincidence that Abel chose a sheep to sacrifice—a clean animal which was the perfect picture of the sinless Son of God. *See 1 Peter 1:19-20.*

Therefore, based on these truths, we believe that God had clearly communicated to them the way in which they could be made acceptable to Him.

- **Read Leviticus 17:11 and Hebrews 9:22.**

We know today that the blood of animals doesn't cleanse sin. But sacrificing a lamb was important for two reasons. It kept before them the fact that the "wages of sin is death," the very thing that God promised would happen if they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Disobey and you will die. And most importantly, it was a continual

foreshadowing and pointing to the promised One, whose blood truly would cleanse us of our sin.

God accepted Abel's offering.

The real issue with Abel and his sacrifice was the fact that he BELIEVED God. Abel demonstrated his faith in God by coming to Him in the way that God had said (**Hebrews 11:4**). Abel obviously believed that he was a sinner, or he wouldn't have brought a sacrifice. Abel also believed God's promise to his parents in the garden that the seed of the woman would destroy Satan and save man from Satan's power.

Faith that is acceptable to God is based on what God says. God was pleased with Abel's offering, for by FAITH, Abel believed God's promises and thereby did what God had told him to do. It is presumption and sin for us to think that we can approach God in any way other than by faith in what He has told us to do in His word.

Genesis 4:3-4 refers to Cain's sacrifice as "produce from the ground," and Abel's as brought from among the "firstborn" of his flock. They say it was the issue of it not being from among the first fruits rather than the fact that it was produce and not a lamb. Either way, we can't lose sight of the real issue here. That is the fact that God truly provided a way for the sinful to be restored to oneness with God and be delivered from the penalty of sin. He not only provided the way, but He also graciously communicated it to man,

so that mankind could receive eternal salvation. We can see God's love, grace, mercy, power, and sovereignty revealed all in one fell swoop.

God rejected Cain's offering.

God rejected Cain's offering because Cain thought he could come to God in his own way according to his own understanding. He did not approach God with blood of sheep as God had instructed them. What does it tell us about Cain? He didn't believe God! God will always reject those who try to come their own way. Because we are sinners, anything that originates with us is unacceptable to God. We must keep in mind this fact of God's eternal plan that was in His heart from before the world began.

Based on that fact, we know God was very purposeful to make sure that all things were heading toward the fulfillment of that plan. He would NOT have left any of it up to man to figure out or do according to his own understanding. Only God can provide the way for people to be accepted by Him. We saw this clearly with Adam and Eve after they had sinned, and now here we are seeing it again with Cain and Abel.

Discussion: What are ways that unbelievers try to obtain blessing or salvation or acceptance, etc., according to their own wisdom today? What are ways that believers seek to obtain God's acceptance and blessing according to their own understanding?

Cain refused to listen to God.

- **Read Genesis 4:6-16.**

This whole exchange between God and Cain reveals a few things to us about God and mankind both. Again, we see the faithful communication of God over and over. First, He had made it clear what they were to bring in sacrifice. Then God somehow communicated to Cain that his sacrifice was unacceptable, for Cain was angry about it.

Then God communicates more with Cain, reasoning with him and imploring him to believe God the way that Abel had done. God also provides a warning to Cain of the “sin that is crouching at his door.” Again, Cain disregards God and kills Abel.

God again approaches Cain and pursues him, asking Cain the same kinds of questions that He had asked Adam after he had sinned. The last we see of Cain he is wandering off from the presence of the Lord rejecting His grace and offer of acceptance.

We should note that it wasn't bringing the wrong sacrifice that led to Cain's judgment. It wasn't even the killing of his brother that ultimately led to his judgment. It was the fact that Cain had turned His back and rejected God's grace that ultimately led to him being judged. For Cain was already a sinner before he brought the wrong sacrifice or killed his brother. Remember? He was born outside of the Garden of Eden separated from God.

Cain's descendants followed Cain's example.

- **Read Genesis 4:16-24.**

Cain's descendants were brilliant people. They built towns, raised cattle, and made tools and musical instruments, but they were not interested in knowing God. They followed Cain's example of rejecting God. Think about the terrible effect that unbelief had already had on the world at that time. Because Adam and Eve sinned, ALL of mankind was sent into sin and separation from God. Adam and Eve's first son Cain murdered his brother.

Cain turned away from God and would not listen to what He said. Cain rejected God and all of his descendants lived in rejection of God, too. In Genesis Chapter 4, the human race has only been in existence for a few generations, and you can clearly see the rapid decline away from God!

- **Read Romans 3:9-18.**

Without the divine intervention of God, man would be without ALL HOPE!

The Birth of Seth

- **Read Genesis 4:25.**

In the Garden of Eden, God had promised that He would send a Deliverer who would overcome Satan.

From Eve's comment in verse 25, we can see a tremendous hope that she must have had in that promise that God had given them.

It seemed pretty apparent how excited she was back in Chapter 4:1 that maybe Cain was the one. Then, at some point, it became pretty apparent to her that Cain was not the one. She then must have thought that Abel was supposed to be the one, but obviously Cain had killed him. So, when Seth was born, again you can see the excitement for her hope in the promise was again renewed. Today, however, we know that Seth was the one through whom God planned that the Deliverer would come into the world.

With Seth's descendants, people once again began to believe God and worship Him.

- **Read Genesis 4:26.**

It can be tempting to focus on people at this point, and speculate about how, after what had happened with Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve may have raised Seth differently—or maybe at least did a better job of raising him to trust in God. But the real issue here is the divine intervention of God! You saw how bad things were rapidly progressing within just a few short generations.

However, God had a plan of redemption, and in spite of the sinfulness of mankind, He divinely intervenes, “stops the bleeding” so to speak, chooses to use Seth to bring about the line of Christ. At the end of

Chapter 4, the statement is made, “*then men began to call upon the name of the Lord.*”

Without God’s divine intervention and calling people unto Himself and creating that hunger to know Him within them, NO ONE would have ever turned back to Him! The eternal plan of redemption originated in God’s heart before time began. The carrying out of that plan throughout history was ALL done by His divine intervention.

God left only ONE needed component for His plan to be carried out up to mankind.....SIN!

To further emphasize man’s ineptitude, take the example of the Israelites in the Sinai desert. God went to great lengths to prove His trustworthiness. God reminds the Israelites of His gracious and divine intervention. **Read Exodus 19: 3-8.**

Before giving the law, God Himself describes His delivering of Israel from slavery: “you saw what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle’s wings and brought you to Myself.” He doesn’t say, “I bore you on eagle’s wings and delivered you, or brought you out of slavery, or unto freedom” but “I brought you to Myself”! He then offers a covenant based on obedience, and the Israelites should have heeded past experience.

- **Read Exodus 16:1-4.**

Well, you know the outcome of the command in verse 4. Before offering Israel a law-based covenantal relationship with Himself in Chapter 19,

God first “tested” them by telling them to NOT do one little thing. “When you collect manna each day, only collect that day’s worth. Don’t collect extra and try to save it for the next day.” God was requiring this to teach them that they could trust God for each day’s provision. The test wasn’t for God to find out anything; He is all-knowing. It was for Israel’s benefit, to show them that they were incapable of following even the simplest and easiest to carry out of commands—to only gather a day’s worth and to not gather on the Sabbath. The Israelites promised to obey the Lord.

Discussion:

1. Discuss the difference between sincerity and reality (in regard to being obedient and following God). **The Israelites sincerely desired to be obedient to God (nothing wrong with that desire) but missing was their understanding of their own ability.**
2. Name another example in scripture where we see someone not understanding that difference. How about in our own lives?

So, in Chapter 19, when God offered this law-based covenant with them, they should have fallen on their faces before God and said, “NO, we want You to keep fighting for us! We want You to keep carrying us on eagle’s wings! We want our relationship with You to be based on your grace and mercy, not on our obedience! We have grumbled and doubted you at every trial and we couldn’t even follow the simplest

of commands to not gather more than one day's worth of manna. We are incapable of obeying You.”

C. H. Mackintosh, in his notes in the Pentateuch states: *“Instead they made one of the most presumptuous vows that any human could ever make: ‘All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do.’ Not, we will TRY to do, or we will ENDEAVOR to do. This at least would have communicated a level of distrust in themselves. But, no, they took the most absolute ground, ‘WE WILL DO.’”*

And it wasn't just a few people. It says that ALL of the people made this same bold and presumptuous vow. They were like Cain who thought that he could please God by what he offered to him. Through this lesson, we can see that the only chance of understanding how God wants to be approached is by His telling us. We will fail to worship God how He requires without this revelation. Praise the Lord, we now have His Spirit to lead us in proper worship of Him—a worship with renewed heart.

To go deeper into this topic, read Lesson 12 in the full Knowing God curriculum.