

Welcome/Introduction/ Bibles

Genesis overview:

1-2: Creation account—God speaking everything into existence. And it was good. And it was very good when man was created.

3: Fall—Adam and Eve choose to not believe God and go against his clear instruction to not eat of the one tree God said not to. The serpent and the earth are cursed. Adam and Eve suffer the hardship of the consequences from their sin, and they are then banished from the garden.

But within the stark consequences of sin, there is a flickering light of hope.

(ONSCREEN) Genesis 3:15 I will(God cursing the serpent) **put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”**

With God there is more than a flickering of hope. God has a plan. He will send the One who is the true light, and he will show up to crush sin and death.

4: The human race is off to a great start. The first couple, become the first parents to two boys, with the eldest of them becoming the first murderer. Sin didn't take long to destroy what God himself called very good—human life itself. Sin always *escalates*. It never remains *static*. As we will see too clearly in the story before us.

Look at verses 1-7 and as we do I will provide commentary as we walk through it. **(1-7) Now Adam knew Eve his wife,** (the one flesh union is still in effect and God's grace is present. A/E are obedient to be fruitful and multiply) **and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.”**(maybe, just maybe, Eve is thinking that she has given birth to THE head crushing man who will take vengeance on the great deceiver of mankind-Yembi Yembi) **² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.**(shepherd and farmer—they are living out the image of God by exercising dominion over creation) **³ In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.** (good news: there is a level of relationship between C/A and the Lord. There's the practice of bringing a sacrifice to God. Bad news: God rejects Cain--and we don't know exactly from this text why God rejected Cain—but we get a hint from the fact that it just wasn't his sacrifice God rejected but Cain himself) **So, Cain was very angry, and his face fell.**(it seems a bit understated in the text, but whenever the Bible says someone is very angry, it never leads to anything good) **⁶ The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?(God knows btw) ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? (that is the definition of a good life, accepted by God) And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.** (Sin is crouching

and its desire is destruction. And the response is to do whatever possible to keep it at bay)

Cain is literally at a crossroads, and he needs to...

Choose the better way (v1-7)

What we have in this passage is two ways to live. Two stark contrasts between two brothers who are on two very different paths. The way of Cain or the way of Abel.

Cain is given the opportunity to choose properly. God calls him out. Literally. Change your way. Don't do what is right and destruction is ready to pounce.

Now just be clear. Sin is not some ambiguous thing out there. Before we blame Satan or the people around us, sin finds its home within us. Crouching at the door of your heart, to be unleashed in order to have its way with you. Every moment of every day.

One of the ways sin is described in the Bible, is by comparing it to a being on a path heading for a destination. Think Pilgrims Progress—an allegory for the Christian life—Christian being the main character of the story. John Bunyan is simply stealing from the Bible.

In **Matthew 7** Jesus says, when one believes they are set on the straight and narrow path. Taken from the wide and easy way with everyone else, heading to destruction. We are placed on the straight and narrow path that is the hard path of righteousness. And God's will and plan for the believer is to remain on that path that leads to life—the celestial city. That path is God's will for the life of a believer. Shown to us from God's Word, and illuminating our path as we walk.

Sin is any deviation from that path—It's turning to the right or to the left. Any deviation in thought, motive, desire, speech, action is sin. Sin always escalates. And it never ends well.

(ONSCREEN) James 1:14-15

¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Sin is a deadly chain reaction.

I understand this is an extreme example of sin. And hopefully everyone in this room will not choose to murder. But it clearly shows what resides in the heart of man. BTW, Jesus says later that if you hate your brother, have murdered him within your heart. The danger for the beast of sin to devour you and take you off the path of righteousness is ever present.

As believers, we have a choice every single day to choose the way of Cain/sin or the way of Abel/faith.

I mentioned earlier, that from the text we can only speculate on why Cain was rejected by God. But the author of Hebrews helps us out a little with some insight.

(ONSCREEN) Hebrews 11:4

⁴ By *faith* Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his *faith*, though he died, he still speaks.(his example is still relevant for us)

By faith Abel approached God. Abel believed that *without faith it is impossible to please God*. Even if you do exactly what you are supposed to do, do it void of faith and it isn't accepted. That's what we have before us.

By faith Abel offered to God; He did so with both genuine fear and belief: By faith, with a genuine *fear* of God, he offered his gift to the Lord—in complete submission, with sober trembling, in immense awe, and with all reverence-- that's the fear of the Lord. With genuine *belief*; he believed that God really exists and is who he says he is.

Let's finish Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. I think that exemplified Abel. Not Cain. God had no regard for Cain, because Cain had no regard for God.

And what did Abel's genuine faith lead to? Righteousness. Fellowship. Acceptance---LIFE. No different with us; *Isn't that what happened when you first believed? When you first came to God in faith?* You were declared righteous because of Jesus. You were blessed with the very presence of God knowing true and intimate relationship-- fellowship with him. You were so accepted that you were adopted in and given a permanent seat at the King's table. That is the better way.

We can also learn to...

Listen to a better word (v8-12)

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.(far from Cain being the one to crush the head of the serpent, he is the one that crushes the life of his very own brother) ⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" (sound familiar? Cain is following in the footsteps of his dad when God called to Adam in the garden) He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"(its play on words in the Hebrew—Am I the shepherd of the shepherd? It's a despicable attempt to deflect from what he has done) ¹⁰ And the Lord said, "What have you done? (again, the exact words spoken to Eve—Cain's mom) The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. (God knows all, but he hears all too) ¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. (here we have the first recorded curse of a person—serpent/earth)¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. (your farming days are over) You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."

The Bible is a bloody story. And the bloody trail started as soon as Adam and Eve sinned. God sacrificed animals in order to clothe the nakedness of A/E. It quickly got even worse in chapter 4 as *human* blood is spilled.

What we learn from this passage is that blood has a *voice*. And it uses that voice to cry to God, and that bloody voice is heard. And from the first murder, the blood of the innocent has been crying out.

The person may be silenced, but the blood of the silenced continues to speak.

If that was the case from the beginning, how much more now? The amount of innocent blood spilled from Abel until now is unfathomable. From abortion, to holocausts, to wars, to ethnic cleansings, to neglect, to abuse, to dictators; how much innocent blood has been spilled? Blood that *screams* for justice. As Abel's blood was speaking, "Who will avenge me?"

The way of Cain has led to sin which always leads to death. Here it is the death of his brother, but I'll make the case later that it's the eternal death of Cain as well.

But there is a better word being spoken and it's being spoken by someone else's blood. (ONSCREEN) Hebrew 12:24 ⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. What is the author of Hebrews telling us? That there is a blood that is still speaking. And it speaks a better word than even the righteous Abel could ever speak.

Even though the death of Jesus is the greatest injustice ever committed. The blood of Jesus is not crying avenge me!!! No, his blood screams---*forgiveness!*

The blood of Jesus, is a blood that saves and forgives...*God making peace by the blood of the bloody cross of Jesus (Col. 1:20)* The blood of Jesus speaks louder, clearer and better.

Would you be free from the burden of sin? There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood; There is power, power, wonder working power, in the precious blood of the lamb.

Jesus is about forgiveness for all who will come to him. Jesus is the Word that became flesh. And his blood speaks a better word. With some day Jesus returning to right every wrong and injustice.

The Bible is a bloody story...and thank God that it is.

Choose the better way, listen to a better word and lastly be sure to...

Receive a better grace (v13-16)

¹³ Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear.(unlike his own Dad, Cain doesn't accept the consequences of his sin. Rather he whines about the gracious reprieve of the Lord) ¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." (Cain plays the victim even though Abel was the true victim) ¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.(grace, amazing grace—do you see the

grace?!)¹⁶ **Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod east of Eden.** (what a depressing last sentence)

We operate in the economy that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. Abel is good. And yet this is what he gets for his faithful walk with his God? Don't put that in the promo brochure.

"Come follow the Lord of Hosts, and maybe get the chance to have your head bashed in."

Cain is evil and yet what he gets for killing his brother is not the heavy hand of judgment from God...but protection through the personal touch of God.

Let me state the obvious; there is nothing that seems fair about this story. This story should offend your sensibilities. Not just because of the violent nature of it, but because of the seemingly disregard for justice and fairness. I get it, "life isn't fair". But this is pretty unfair.

But what is clear from this story is a clear picture of God's ridiculous grace. Grace and mercy is all over the OT, we just need eyes to see it.

Like right here in this story; Before Cain murders, God pleads with him. He literally comes to Cain and attempts to lovingly correct him. Grace.

But even after Cain murders, God shows immense mercy. I think Cain deserves to die. 5 chapters later God initiates the death penalty, but here God doesn't demand the life of Cain for the life of Abel.

But there's more, God gives Cain what he doesn't deserve; *protection*.

He promises to avenge Cain if something happens to him. Good thing Abel is not around to hear that one.

What Cain gets is God's specific *earthly* grace. I call it *earthly*, because it is only *temporal*.

I believe, Cain is specifically experiencing God's *common grace*. *Common grace* is what every single person who lives on God's creation experiences every second of every day. Believer or not, everyone gets to experience a level of God's grace.

Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of Lights. Those gifts bless everyone. From the proper rotation of the earth to the incredible sunset—God's grace. From a beautiful sunrise to the needed rain for crops—God's grace. From new life to 100 yrs of age—God's grace. Delayed judgment—God's grace. No matter what people choose to attribute that grace to, it doesn't change the fact that it comes directly from the hand of God.

That's what Cain received, BUT... Abel received a much ***better*** grace. How can I say that if he was murdered? Where was God's grace for him?

First off, God gave Abel the faith to offer his sacrifice. *Grace*. Secondly, God accepted Abel's sacrifice. *Grace*.

Thirdly, I believe Abel stepped into God's perfect presence when he was murdered—which is the *greatest grace*.

When his earthly life was snuffed out, his eternal life took completely hold—that is *eternally saving grace*. It is a keeping and permanent grace.

So, even if the righteous are murdered, or beheaded like the 70 Christians in Congo just were, they are safe, secure and kept. Not necessarily removed from the fire of affliction and suffering. But kept while in the fire. Even if that fire takes their life.

That is saving grace. An everlasting grace.

It doesn't look like it but, within this story, Abel is safe. Not according to our measly definition of safe, but in God's economy, Abel is still very much alive. While at the same time, within this story though Cain is very much alive, he is cursed, dying and heading toward eternal death.

There is no indication that Cain repented. Every time he is mentioned in the Bible, it's negative.¹ **John 3¹² We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.** But that doesn't mean that Cain didn't have a chance to repent. I believe God's loving kindness toward him was with the hope that he would return in godly sorrow. But without him repenting, though he lived a marked and protected life here, he is now eternally facing the judgment of God.

Cain went away from the presence of the Lord never to return. Sad and unnecessary.

There is saving grace for everyone. Even Cain the murderer. He just needed to believe by faith that God would forgive and restore him. Like Paul the murderer who believed and received. Like of any of us who believed and received.

It begs the questions; have you received a better grace? You may know he is good. But do you know that he is great? Don't live only knowing his grace here. Live to know his saving grace for eternity.

There is a better way, a better word and a better grace.