

February 21, 2021

God and Man

The goal of this series is to help us better understand our God and ourselves through the stories and accounts recorded in the early chapters of Genesis. From the very beginning of Moses' account of creation we have, I think, come to understand that God has always been and that his power is so great that he spoke creation into existence.

We have also come to understand that man was created in the image of God in the sense that we were designed to be eternal and that we created with the capacity to understand the difference between good and evil; right and wrong, and to make choices about our behaviors based on those understandings.

By the end of Genesis 3 we must, I think, conclude that God is also a God of accountability. Even though he deeply loves us, he must, because he is God, hold us accountable to his fundamental "...**law of sin and death**..." As humans we have the power to choose for ourselves what we will believe and how we will behave, but because God is God, we will also always be held accountable for those choices.

In the account of Cain and Abel in Genesis, chapter 4, we can see these truths reflected again. These two sons of Adam and Eve bring sacrifices to God. Cain, we are told, "...**brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord.**" Abel, on the other hand, "...**brought the fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.**" God looked with favor on the sacrifice of Abel, but not on the sacrifice of Cain.

These sacrifices are not sin sacrifices, but very probably, thanksgiving sacrifices. So, why did God consider Abel's sacrifice better than Cain's? I have come to believe that the difference is in the attitude behind the sacrifice. Cain offered God 'some' of his crops, but Abel offered the best parts of the firstborn of his flocks. Without reading too much into this account it would seem to me that Cain is just 'going through the motions' but Abel is moved to offer his very best to God.

If these conclusions are accurate we can, I think, understand that God always wants our very best. He will never be satisfied with 'some'. This truth is one we all struggle to address in our day-to-day lives. We tend to give God some of our devotion, some of our time, some of our effort, but God desires, and yes, even demands our very all. He will ultimately accept nothing less. Our relationship with God is, and always will be, an all or nothing relationship. We can never get by with 'some'.

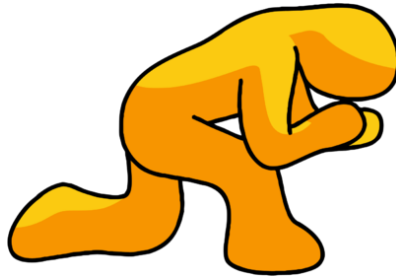


The rest of the story about Cain and Abel also shows us a lot about ourselves. Cain is wrong. He has chosen not to do what he needed to do to be right with God. Instead of owning his wrongs, he blames them. His response when he understands his wrong choices is to become angry and in his anger to blame Abel for his own failings. All of us are like Cain, I think. When we choose to do something wrong and come to understand that we are wrong anger is our most common 'knee jerk' reaction. In fact our anger is more often than not, an indicator of our feelings of guilt.

Cain's guilt-driven anger is so deep that he lays a trap for his brother Abel, and murders him. Like Cain, many of us tend to make more and more wrong choices trying to undo the consequences of our first wrong choices. We dig ourselves in deeper and deeper trying to escape responsibility for each wrong choice.

Cain murdered his brother, David had Uriah killed, and Judas committed suicide all because they could not accept responsibility for the wrongs they had done. One of our most common failings is our inability to accept responsibility for our own wrong choices.

Think about how these stories might have ended differently if those who sinned by making wrong choices had just accepted their personal responsibility for those sins. Think about how often in your own life and mine we have made the situation worse and worse making wrong choice after wrong choice trying to escape our guilt when our stories could have ended so differently if we had only accepted responsibility.



"I have sinned..." (Luke 15:21)