

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Week 2 - Day 2: The Effects of Sin

Romans 7:15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

Since I have become a Christian, I have seen plenty of areas in my life that have changed. My thoughts and actions that were seen as evil or unloving have mostly changed to thoughts and actions that show love. God has changed me but that doesn't mean I am no longer affected by sin. Don't get me wrong, there are still thoughts that are sinful. Sin is part of our nature and is deeply rooted in our hearts. We, like Adam and Eve, have consciously decided to submit to the kingdom of the serpent and are formed from the same ground that was cursed in Genesis 3.

I may not be perfect, but God chooses to use those who would trust Him to define good and evil to move His *kingdom purposes* forward.

While sin is in us, God mercifully moves to change us. Understanding that we are still suffering from the consequences of sin should cause us to do everything we can to grow closer with God so that we might be brought back into His kingdom. In the New Testament passage above, we see a man named Paul wrestling with his own sinful desires and not understanding why he had a hard time changing. Just like Paul, you and I struggle to do what we ought to be doing.

Genesis 4:3-5, 8 In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, 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, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.

Cain spoke to Abel, his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

The result of sin in the human experience is death. Abel's death was not because of something he did wrong, but because of sin in Cain's life. Notice that we are not necessarily told why Cain's offering was refused. While God had His reasons for denying Cain's offering, we see how sin grows. Cain grows resentful of his brother and kills him. Cain's story shows us that sin is alive in this world and has escalated just over the course of one generation.

Genesis 4:24 Lamech said to his wives: Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.

Lamech was Cain's great-great-great-grandson. Now, five generations have passed and the effects of sin have grown to a point where Lamech boasts about it. This pattern is the same for sin in the world today. Sin only grows as time goes on. It started with disobedience and now has increased to include murder, hate, intolerance, jealousy, and the list goes on.

Gen. 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. ⁶And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷So 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.

Instead of a kingdom family of people who would submit to God's rule and spread God's glory, God sees a kingdom of people who willfully have chosen to submit to the rule of the serpent spreading sin throughout His creation. This new reality grieves God because sin puts a divide between us and God. In His hurt, God has every right to wipe the earth clean of His image-bearers.

But does He?

Gen. 6:8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

Not quite! In His mercy, God spares humanity. Even though we are all sinners, we read that there is still one who remembers God. Genesis tells us that in his generation, Noah was righteous and, "walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). Even with the sin of the world, God's kingdom was breaking through in the person of Noah. How was this possible?

Hebrews 11:4, 7 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...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.

It is by faith that Noah trusted God to lead Him to distinguish good and evil. Today, we also follow Him because of the faith we have in Him even though we may not see where it leads. Our faith in God doesn't mean it will always work out to be good. Like Abel, it could result in devastation. Ultimately, we must trust in what God says is good no matter the challenges or setbacks. God uses all for His glory. Eventually, God would flood the earth and wipe out sinners looking for a new start through Noah. After the floods die down, here is the interaction between God and Noah:

Genesis 8:20-9:1, 11 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.” And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Everyone else around Noah thought he was crazy when he built an ark, but Noah trusted in God’s warnings and had faith that His commands were good. Because of the faith that was shown by Noah, God promised that He would never again flood the earth. It was the faith of one person, in a world of sin, that proved to God there is still hope for humanity in this world.

The story of Noah introduces us to a key pattern of the Bible. In the midst of a world of sinners, God seems to single out the one person who He finds to be humble and faithful towards His promises. God then showers His blessings on this person and sets His **kingdom purposes** of restoration in motion through them. Throughout this study guide, we will search for these people in the Bible and see how God uses his humble and faithful servants to restore His kingdom family under His rule in His place.

At the same time, we must realize that these people, like Noah, are still sinners by nature of being descendants of Adam and Eve. In fact, Noah sins right after God miraculously protects him and makes a new promise with him.

Genesis 9:20-21 Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.

If only one of God’s faithful servants could fully conquer the kingdom of sin!

For now, we learn from the stories of Cain, Abel, Lamech, and Noah that while we try to live a life of righteousness that glorifies God, we all partake in the sinful nature of Adam and Eve. Knowing this reality should help us relate to the suffering and hardship of others. First, it is important to remember that we are not above anyone because we know God. The difference between us and our neighbor is that we know we are sinful. When I first became a Christian, I started to judge my friends and try to hold them accountable to what God commands of us. I quickly realized that I cannot hold them to a standard that I could never keep myself. Second, by understanding that all people are sinners, we should begin to feel for those who are lost. The gospel message is that there is hope for us who are lost in the one who will come to crush the serpent and fulfill God’s **kingdom purposes**.

Because of Noah's faithfulness, God decides to spare mankind. But the clash between humans under the kingdom of sin and the kingdom of God is far from over. How would God continue to fulfill His *kingdom purposes*? Who would be these humble and faithful servants? Finally, who would be the faithful servant that would crush the serpent?

-Kyle Wilson

Share the Gospel: The story of Noah introduces us to a key pattern of the Bible. In the midst of a world of sinners, there seems to be one person who God finds to be faithful towards His promises. God chooses to use this person so that He can set His *kingdom purposes* in motion. As Christians, we are the ones to whom culture should look in order to find one who is faithful and one who is on a mission to bring God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven!

Personal Observations, Reflections, and Prayers: