

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-6 Self Out-of-Balance

Vihaan and Krish were best friends. They had grown up together in a small village. As the years had passed, their small village had grown much larger. Krish was a worker on a farm. He had married young and now had two children. His meager pay never seemed to cover the expenses of his growing family. Vihaan had chosen not to marry. He had lived very frugally and had bought his first three-wheeled truck about the time that Krish had married. Now, five years later, Vihaan owned four more vehicles and his small business of transporting people and products was growing rapidly. Vihaan and Krish tried to remain friends, but their life choices were taking them down separate roads. Krish envied Vihaan. He saw his friend's growing wealth and thought it unfair. All of their friends seemed to be advancing in life, but Krish was stuck barely able to survive. It was not fair. Why should Vihaan have so much and he have so little? Krish craved success. He craved the prestige Vihaan had earned in the village. These selfish desires slowly turned to a deep anger and resentment.

In the dark hours of the morning, Krish snuck into the yard where Vihaan kept his vehicles at night. "If I cannot have wealth, then neither will Vihaan!" Krish thought to himself as he poured water into the fuel tank of each of Vihaan's vehicles. "Tomorrow none of Vihaan's vehicles will work. He will lose much money repairing them."

In this story we see the age-old battle between self and social relationships. Selfish envy and pride destroyed a long friendship. In our last lesson we learned that man's Inborn instincts are toward self. Adam and Eve originally had a perfect relationship with God. This relationship of pleasing God balanced man's instinct toward pleasing self. When Adam and Eve sinned the relationship with the holy God was broken. Adam and Eve sinned and thus they were no longer holy. A holy God could not have close relationship with something unholy. Mankind was now out-of-balance. All that was left in them was selfishness. And people who are selfish have a very difficult time having relationships with others.

After Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden, life became very hard for them. No longer could they simply pick fruit to eat. Now they had to till the soil, plant crops, and then bring in the harvest. They also raised animals that they could herd, so that there would be meat for food and skins for clothing.

Eve became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Cain, which means, "I have created." For, as she said, "With God's help, I have created a man!" Her next child was his brother, Abel.

Abel became a shepherd, while Cain was a farmer. At harvest time Cain brought the Lord a gift of his farm produce. Abel brought "of some of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions" and presented them to the Lord. The Lord accepted Abel's offering, but not Cain's. This made Cain both dejected and very angry. His face grew dark with fury.

“Why are you angry?” the Lord asked Cain. “Why is your face so dark with rage? It can be bright with joy if you will do what you should! But if you refuse to obey, watch out. Sin is waiting to attack you, longing to destroy you. But you can conquer it!”

But Cain continued to be angry. He was very jealous that God had accepted his brother’s offering and had rejected his. One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let’s go out into the fields.” And while they were together there, Cain attacked and killed his brother.

Afterwards the Lord asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“How should I know?” Cain retorted. “Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?”

But the Lord said, “Your brother’s blood calls to me from the ground. What have you done? You are hereby banished from this ground which you have defiled with your brother’s blood. No longer will it yield crops for you, even if you toil on it forever! From now on you will be a fugitive on the earth, wandering from place to place” (Gen 4:1-12).

It is very difficult to have relationships when you are out of balance. Cain is an unfortunate example of the extreme nature of self. In this story he exhibited three aspects of selfish instincts. First, he saw that his brother’s sacrifice was accepted by God. The apostle John called this the “lust of the eye”. He was jealous and wanted this acceptance for himself. The jealousy grew to deep anger. Interestingly, his anger was not focused upon God, who had rejected his offering, but instead was focused upon his brother. Cain’s pride was hurt. This fed his rage. The apostle John called man’s deep pride “the boastful pride of life.” Finally, to satisfy his selfish jealousy and hurt pride, he lashed out at his brother and murdered him.

Mankind, out-of-balance and left with only self, goes on to tragic relationships and all kinds of sin and selfish behavior. There are three primary instincts that the apostle John says are the root of all worldly sin. He wrote, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1John 2:16, NASB).

The lesson is **important** because it demonstrates that mankind has a difficult time making relationships, because of his selfish nature.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that mankind’s instinctive selfish nature leads to all kinds of sinful behavior. Thus, it can be said that mankind’s selfish instincts are a sinful nature.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. Why was Cain so angry with his brother Abel? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said that Cain was angry because God accepted Abel’s sacrifice and rejected his, you are correct.
2. What did Cain’s jealousy and rage lead him to do? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said that Cain’s jealousy and rage led him to murder his brother, you answered correctly.

3. What is at the root of mankind's sinful nature? [Pause 5 seconds.]
A. If you said, "Mankind's selfish instincts," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to this lesson as many times as is necessary to learn this concept of selfish human instincts and the need for self to be balanced with God. Then explain this concept to someone else, telling the story of Cain and Abel in your own words. Make sure that you can get this concept across to them.