

Why? - Genesis 4:6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *The Socratic Method*

1. Socrates was a Greek philosopher who lived in the 5th Century BC.
2. He was short, ugly, and incredibly brave!
3. Because he was utterly honest, he was the kind of man who had really close friends and intensely fierce enemies.
4. People tended to either adore or abhor him.
5. Socrates' method of teaching wasn't really to teach at all; he asked questions.
 - a. in dealing with his students he asked probing questions that forced them to think deeply about the meaning of life, truth, and justice.
 - b. when he encountered politicians and people of influence in the Greek world, he would ask them why they did and said the things they did.
 - c. then he would simply wait for them to answer.
 - d. those answers provided the fuel for even deeper questions.
 - e. and slowly but surely people would come face to face with the inconsistencies and hypocrisy of their lives.
6. It was this method of instruction that ended up getting Socrates into trouble with the authorities.
 - a. the youth of Athens, through the answers they themselves had discovered by facing Socrates' probes came to see the injustice and inequity Athenian society was built on.
 - b. they agitated for change that threatened the power and security of the establishment.
 - c. Socrates was condemned as a fomentor of rebellion and a corrupter of the youth of Athens and sentenced to death by drinking poison.
7. He was sentenced to death – for asking questions!
8. The real problem was – they were questions, the answers to which were too troubling to think about.

B. *God's Method*

1. What's interesting about the story of Socrates is that we find God doing the same thing with the first family in the early chapters of Genesis – He asks them questions.
2. This is His consistent pattern when He comes to confront their error.

II. TEXT

A. 4:3-7

3And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. **4**Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, **5**but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

6So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? **7**If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

1. At this point in the story of mankind, Adam & Eve have eaten of the forbidden fruit and been banned from the Garden.
2. They have two children – the firstborn Cain and his younger brother Abel.
3. As Cain and Abel come to worship God, Cain brings from his crop while Abel brings from the herd.
 - a. God was pleased with Abel’s offering but not with Cain’s.
 - b. He probably showed His acceptance of Abel’s offering by sending fire to consume it, whereas Cain’s offering just remained there on the altar.
 - c. notice Cain’s reaction; instead of asking the Lord what was wrong and making the necessary correction, he gets angry and it shows in his face & body language.
 - d. he’s really worked up – and the focus of his anger is Abel!
4. Hebrews 11 tells us the reason Cain’s sacrifice wasn’t accepted was because it wasn’t coupled with faith.
 - a. Abel came with a sincere heart to worship and commune with God.
 - b. Cain came out of mere duty; his offering was a function to perform, an appointment to keep, but his mind & heart were somewhere else.
5. When God demonstrated His acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice, Cain grew jealous and angry.
6. This was proof he was out of touch with God!
 - a. his reaction ought to have been repentance and earnestness in asking the Lord to show him why his offering was unacceptable.
 - b. but Cain didn’t really care about that – He was more concerned with the damage done to his pride.
 - c. his brother’s acceptance made his rejection more obvious.
 - d. so rather than looking inward to where he’d erred, Cain blamed Abel!
7. God saw Cain’s reaction and asked –

“Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?”

- a. God knew the source of Cain’s anger because God looks on the heart.
 - b. this is why Cain’s offering hadn’t been accepted; his heart was wrong.
 - c. and the wrongness of his heart grew worse when it was confronted with the reality that God was not fooled by his pretense at worship.
8. When God asks, “Why are you angry?” it’s not because God doesn’t know.
 - a. He asks because He wants Cain to stop and take stock of where he is.
 - b. God desired that Cain would start asking himself why he was feeling angry.
9. Cain blamed Abel. So God makes the query even more pointed; “If you do well, will you not be accepted?”
 - a. God says, “Cain! It’s not about Abel; it’s about you!”
 - b. “Your offering wasn’t accepted because your heart’s not right.”
 - c. “Once your heart is right, then all will be right.”
 - d. then God goes on to add the alternative and a warning –

“And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you

should rule over it.”

10. Cain faces a crucial moment of decision here; God has clearly laid out the options.
 - a. he can take stock of where he is and admit his failure, repent of it and be restored – right now –
 - b. or / he can continue on the path of pride, disregarding God, and blame Abel for his problems.
11. What’s crucial for our study today is to recognize HOW God dealt with Cain.
 - a. He didn’t condemn him –He didn’t come and squash him.
 - b. He came to him with a question –

“Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?”

12. Let’s read on and see how Cain chose to respond to God . . .

B. 4:8-10

8Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

1. Cain’s initial lack of faith in God, manifested in his unaccepted offering, has now grown to the point where he ignores God’s counsel outright.
2. Instead of admitting his own failure and lack of faith, his anger at his brother grew to the point of murderous rage!
3. Take careful note now of how God deals with Cain the second time -

9Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

4. God again begins with a question - “Where is Abel your brother?”
 - a. as before, He gives Cain the chance to admit his error.
 - b. but Cain pleads ignorance and innocence and even goes so far as to give a sarcastic reply to God. – “How should I know – am I my brother’s keeper?”
 - c. no Cain – you’re his murderer! Cain knew full-well where Abel was; dead in the field!

10And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.”

5. God backs Cain into a corner now. He lets him know that He knows what’s taken place.
 6. But He STILL gives Cain the opportunity to confess and repent – even when he’s committed murder!
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7. The story goes on and these verses have much else to teach us, but this morning I want to focus on the way God deals with Cain.
 - a. when Cain is falling and failing, God comes to him and asks questions calculated to expose Cain’s real need.
 - b. how does Cain respond? He shifts the blame to Abel!
 8. This isn’t unusual, it’s precisely what his parents did when God confronted them . . .

C. 3:9-13

1. Here we are in the Garden of Eden; Adam and Eve have just eaten of the forbidden fruit.
2. They suddenly feel the shame of their sin, grab fig-leaves to cover themselves and then try to hide from God when they hear His approach.
3. How foolish – to think they can hide from God!
 - a. this is one of the signs Adam and Eve had suffered a mortal spiritual blow
 - b. that they had so lost touch with the knowledge of God that they thought they could evade His sight.
 - c. look at the very first thing God said -

9Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”

4. Did God not know where they were? Of course he did!
 - a. He had probably walked to stand in front of the very bush or rock they were hiding behind.
 - b. then He called out “Where are you?”
5. Years ago, I enjoyed hiding from Lynn and the kids when they would get home from some errand.
 - a. I’d stow away in a closet or behind the shower curtain
 - b. they’d come in the house and say “Hi” but I’d remain silent.
 - c. so they’d go looking for me. I’d wait till they were right in front of where I was hiding then I’d jump out and give ‘em a good scare.
6. What was fun was when the kids would try to hide from me!
 - a. when they were young, they didn’t quite get it and would hide in places and ways that made finding them pretty easy.
 - b. they’d hide behind a door, but wrap their little fingers around the edge.
 - c. of they would crouch behind a plant that only hide them part way.
 - d. or they would get behind the shower curtain and giggle so loudly I could hear them a room away.
7. If what we read here in Gen. 3 wasn’t so tragic it would be comic – they thought they could hide from God.
8. But He knew where they were and asks the question - “Where are you?”
 - a. do you see what God is doing here?
 - b. He’s giving them the opportunity to confess and repent –
 - c. just as He did with Cain.
9. Look at Adam’s reply -

10So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

11And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

10. Again, God comes back with more questions!
11. I hope you see what’s going on here.
 - a. by asking questions of Adam, He’s inviting a response.
 - b. God knows full-well what’s happened.
 - 1) they’ve eaten of the forbidden tree
 - 2) and God had already warned them of the penalty for disobedience –

death!

- c. He would have been perfectly just to come with a simple word of condemnation.
 - d. but by asking these questions, God is inviting a response –
 - e. He's revealing His desire to see them restored to fellowship and communion.
12. None of these questions are sarcastic or harsh; they're all tender invitations to people who have fallen out of fellowship with Him because of sin.
13. God immediately comes to them with the offer of being restored.
14. But the path of restoration begins with confession, with owning one's personal failure and sin.
15. The problem these early chapters of Genesis show us is the tendency of fallen men and women to shift the blame to others.

12 Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

16. Adam admits he ate of the forbidden fruit, but only after placing the blame on the woman, and ultimately on God!
- a. "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."
 - b. Adam covers all the bases here – he blames everyone else and God.
 - c. poor Adam was just a victim
 - 1) why – in light of all the factors against him, how could he not sin?
 - 2) I mean look –
 - Eve was pressuring him and it's his duty as her husband to make her happy.
 - God had made her and set up their marriage.
 - God had even made the tree and set it there in the very middle of the Garden!
 - If He didn't want them to eat of it, then why had He even made it in the first place,
 - Or made Eve to tempt him?
 - 3) Adam is claiming the role of victim
 - He blames Eve
 - He blames God
 - He blames his environment
 - 4) he blames everyone but himself!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
 - d. but we expect that from Adam, right?
 - 1) after all, he's a man and so has an ego
 - 2) his pride will drive him to shift the blame to someone else
 - e. the woman won't make that mistake will she?
 - 1) she's more spiritually sensitive and humble
 - 2) surely she'll own up to her sin -

13 And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

17. Turns out Eve was a quick study and paid close attention to how Adam had

dealt with God's query.

- a. she also fails to admit her sin and shifts the blame to satan.
- b. "The devil made me do it!"
- c. now, it's true that Eve was deceived – but that doesn't absolve her of guilt!
- d. she was only deceived because she chose to invest in the lies satan told her.
- e. she wanted those lies to be true.
- f. As Romans 1:25 says, she exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

D. God's Offer & Man's Response

1. In Adam's, Eve's and Cain's response to God we see the typical pattern of sinful man toward conviction of sin.
2. All of us has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
 - a. all of us have violated His commands
 - b. all of us are guilty before the Lord.
3. The wages of sin is death, the just penalty for our moral failure is eternal separation from God.
4. Though He would be just to wipe us out the moment we sin, in His love and mercy He comes to us and offers restoration.
5. It begins with a question – "Where are you?"
 - a. He knows where we are, we're dead in trespasses and sins.
 - b. but His question lays bare the secrets and direction of our hearts.
 - c. it shows us that He's interested in restoring us to life & fellowship with Himself.
 - d. if we're honest, then we'll admit we're far from Him; and we're far from Him because of our own sinful choices.
 - e. others may have indeed contributed to our failure, but the bottom line is, we've sinned; it was our choice, the blame lies with me!
 - f. or, we follow Adam's example and blame everyone else.
 - g. if we do that, then God stops asking questions and simply pronounces doom.

D. David's Example

1. In contrast to Adam's, Eve's, and Cain's response to God we see King David's.
2. The prophet Nathan came to David one day with the distressing report of someone who'd committed a hideous crime.
 - a. this man was incredibly wealthy with vast flocks of sheep.
 - b. but he stole his neighbor's only lamb; his children's pet!
 - c. the rich man stole the lamb and made a meal of it!
3. When David heard this he flew into a rage and declared that the man who committed this terrible act should be executed!
4. That's when Nathan lifted his hand, pointed at David and said, "You're the man!"
 - a. his neighbor was Uriah and his lamb was his wife, Bathsheba.
 - b. David had taken her and then devised a conspiracy that led to Uriah's death.
5. David thought he'd kept his sin a secret, but nothing is hidden from the eyes of God and He sent His messenger to David with a question – "What shall be

done to the man who stole his neighbor's lamb?"

6. David's anger was so hot because he was consumed with guilt over his own sin.
7. And when Nathan revealed the story was about him from the beginning, David knew he could not duck the judgment or blame someone else.
8. We read David's reply in 2 Samuel 12:13 –

So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

9. Just after this David sat down and composed Psalm 51. Listen to these words and contrast them with the response of Adam, Eve, and Cain.
 - 1 **Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.**
 - 2 **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.**
 - 3 **For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me.**
 - 4 **Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.**
 - 5 **Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. ["I'm a sinner through and through!"]**
 - 6 **Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. [Be honest about my sin.]**
 - 7 **Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**
 - 8 **Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken [through conviction for sin] may rejoice.**
 - 9 **Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.**
 - 10 **Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.**
 - 11 **Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. [Don't stop convicting me of sin!]**
 - 12 **Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.**
 - 13 **Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.**
 - 14 **Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. [David even asked for forgiveness for the sin of murder!]**
 - 15 **O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.**
 - 16 **For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.**
 - 17 **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.**
11. Friends, here's why God calls David a man after His own heart – not because David was perfect –
 - a. but because when his imperfection manifested itself, he didn't blame others.
 - b. he admitted his error and threw himself on the mercy and grace of God.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Our Age

1. We live in an age that seems bent on refusing to admit personal guilt.
2. We've become artists at redefining sin and shifting the blame to others.
3. This world has become highly skilled at dodging responsibility for moral failure.
4. Our courts are filled with supposed "experts" who spin out elaborate explanations for why serial killers are really only the victims of abuse and so not responsible for their actions.
 - a. every bizarre and violent action is excused
 - b. every crime is to be blamed on environmental factors, or nurture deficiencies.
 - c. society is the cause of every evil.
5. Instead of looking within at the rottenness of our dark & sinful hearts, we look at what Mom or Dad didn't give us.
6. Sexually transmitted diseases aren't the result of a sinful and promiscuous lifestyle, they're the result of a lack of government funding!
7. And all the while psychology, the new religion & darling of the modern secular age, seeks to deafen us to the inner questions God ask us through the conviction of the Holy Spirit by stripping us of the sense of guilt and shame.
 - a. sin is redefined as an alternative lifestyle
 - b. eternal, universal morality is squeezed into a personal preference
 - c. truth is dragged off it's absolute throne and made a wax nose that can be bent and twisted into whatever someone wants it to be, whatever the moment demands.

B. Adam Or David

1. When the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin, how do you respond – Like Adam or like David?
2. When you sense the inner question of God, "Where are you?" what's your answer – Do you imitate Eve or David?
3. In 1 John 1 we find this -

8If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

4. I want to end this morning by looking once more at how God approached Adam, Eve, and Cain.
 - a. He came with a question – showing His invitation and desire to see fallen man restored to fellowship with Him.
 - b. by asking the question, God was inviting a response, one that would lead to a conversation and restored communion.
5. As we saw last Sunday, when we're tempted to sin, the devil loves to paint God as a Cosmic Killjoy who wants to keep something good from us.
6. Then, once we fall, satan tries to make us think that God is angry and ready to rain down judgment and pain on us.

7. No one wants to approach God if He's all worked up and angry with them, so that's the image the devil loves to propagate.
8. Is that what we find in these first chs. of Genesis? Is God all hot & bothered and ready to rain lightening bolts on sinner's heads?
9. Not at all – He's the One who comes to fallen man and initiates the attempt at restoration.
10. God hasn't changed! He still wants our relationship with Him to be restored.
11. That's what Christmas is all about; God coming to man in the Person of Christ and making the way for us to be restored FULLY to Him.
12. One last thing – as with everything else in our relationship with God, the reality of confession and repentance toward the Lord is manifested in our relationships with one another.
 - a. when I stand in right relationship with God, I will stand in right relationship with you.
 - b. that means I will admit my error, confessing my sin and failure in my earthly relationships too.
 - c. where a person does not accept blame and admit their guilt in earthly relationships, it's a sure sign they are not in right standing with God.
 - d. 1 John 4 makes it clear that God has designed it so that the quality of our relationship with Him is made visible by the quality of our relationships here.