

fundamentals

RULE IT !

understanding sin through Bible narratives.

What is fundamentals ?

As a pastor's kid, it is easy to take the greatness of the gospel for granted. The fact that the Master of the universe became man and died for me somehow becomes normal. Crazy stories such as of a little boy defeating a giant, and a man opening a sea with a stick become a fairy tale. When you're used to reading Scripture, it becomes easy not to pay attention to the fascinating teachings, mysteries, and revelations of a God who loves His creation.

The Bible is full of treasures that we skip over because we think we already know the story. Because we read the story of Jacob fighting God in Genesis 32 over and over again we think there's nothing more to learn there.

Because we heard the narrative of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3 sixty-seven times as a kid, we think there's no need to go back to read it and see if there is any new detail we can find there.

Fundamentals started as an initiative of 2 or more Church to provide a biblical study on books and themes of the Bible. The name is founded on our desire for Christians to have a solid foundation on core beliefs (fundamentals) of the Christian faith.

In the same way that you can never overdo the fundamentals of a sport, you can never overdo or overstudy the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Our goal is not to "reinvent the wheel" and bring some new revelation that was never seen before in Church History. No. The goal is to go to the text and just search for the revelations that are in the Text. In doing so, we pray that your desire, hunger, and curiosity to know more about the God who has revealed Himself in His Word may grow.

The goal of Fundamentals is to bring back that child-like spirit of excitement and wonder of when you first heard the story of Elijah going up to heaven in a chariot of fire, or Jesus multiplying the five loaves of bread and two fish. And being, once again, struck by these narratives to honor Christ with your daily living.

The Bible is filled with way too many good stories for us to take for granted.

Blessings,
Abner.

"We do not rule because we do not know the world as God's creation, and because we do not receive our dominion as God-given but grasp it for ourselves." - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Original Sin

- Christian theologians agree that original sin came through the sin of Adam. As the father of the human race and the representative of all his descendants, the guilt of his sin is placed on their account, so that they are liable to the punishment of death. It is primarily in that sense that Adam's sin is the sin of all.
- Man is wrong, all wrong, before God, and therefore everything he does is wrong. It is in this way that actual sin is always an expression of original sin.
- It is called "original sin" (1) because it is derived from the original root of the human race; (2) because it is present in the life of every individual from the time of his birth; and (3) because it is the inward root of all the actual sins that defile the life of man.

Non-Biblical Views of Sin

The Dualistic Theory assumes the existence of an eternal principle of evil and holds that in man the spirit represents the principle of good, and the body, that of evil. According to this view, the only escape from sin lies in deliverance from the body.

The Theory of Sin as Merely Privation assumes that the present world is the best possible one. The existence of sin in it must be considered unavoidable. Thus, sin is a necessary evil since creatures are necessarily limited, and sin is an unavoidable consequence of this limitation.

Pelagianism. Its main proposition is: God has commanded man to do that which is good; therefore man must have the ability to do so. Adam was the first sinner, but his sin was in no sense passed on to his descendants. Each man is his own Adam, and born into the world in the same state of being as the first man, commits the original sin himself.

Biblical Views of Sin

In Scripture, the English word "sin" has multiple names that convey somewhat different meanings:

- **Chatta'th** from the Hebrew root chet signifies having shot at a target and missed. It directs attention to sin as an action that misses the mark and consists in a deviation from the right way.
- **'Avel** and **'avon** indicate that sin is a want of integrity and rectitude, a departure from the appointed path.
- **Peha'** refers to sin as a revolt or refusal of subjection to the rightful authority, a positive transgression of the law, and a breaking of the covenant.
- **Resha'** points to sin as a wicked and guilty departure from the law.

Reformed theology.

- Fundamentally, sin is not something passive, but an active opposition to God, and a positive transgression of His law. Therefore, sin is the result of a free but evil choice of man.
- Sin is separation from God, opposition to God, hatred of God, and this manifests itself in constant transgression of the law of God in thought, word, and deed.
- Founded on the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, Reformed theology says that, because of the Fall, the nature of man, both physical and moral, is totally corrupted so that he cannot do otherwise than sin.
- From this foundational doctrine of original sin, flows two of the most known doctrines of Reformed theology: Total depravity and total inability.

Human freedom.

- Humans still have reason, conscience, and the freedom of choice. But having, by nature, an irresistible bias for evil, humanity is not able to apprehend and love spiritual excellence, to seek and do spiritual things, the things of God that pertain to salvation.
- In other words, Reformed theology states that the lack of freedom in humanity has to do with the inability to choose to do what pleases God in regard to His law.

Wesleyan theology.

- Sin is the consequence of the exercise of the God-given gift of freedom. In other words, sin is an accident of man's nature and not an essential element of his original being.
- Wesleyan theology will affirm that men *must not* sin, but all men *do* sin.
- Sin is whatever violates the relationship and causes separation between God and mankind.
- Summarizing then, it can be said that sin is to miss the mark by violating the covenant and thus falling short of the life God intended for us.

Prevenient Grace.

- Prevenient grace testifies to God's being the initiator of our relationship with Him and reveals Him as one who pursues us.
- Grace in Wesley's theology of prevenient grace is the active presence of the Spirit of God within all human beings. As such, grace is inherently relational and dynamic.
- The presence of the Spirit leads to a desire within human beings for a relationship with God. In other words, God acts to enable human beings to respond to God who, in turn, responds to their response.
- Even in the midst of depravity the Spirit responds to, limits, overcomes, and redirects the sinful intentions and evil consequences of human persons and social structures. The Spirit can and does bring good out of evil without legitimating evil.

Notes:

"The story does not want to aid our theologizing. It wants rather, to catch us in our living." - Walter Brueggemann

The Text

Genesis

2¹⁶YHWH 'ēlōhîm commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; **17**but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." [...] **19**Out of the ground, YHWH 'ēlōhîm formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. [...] **25**And the man and his wife were both 'ārôm and were not ashamed.

3¹ Now the serpent was more 'ārûm than any beast of the field which YHWH 'ēlōhîm had made. And he said to the woman, "Even if 'ēlōhîm said don't eat from the tree, so what?" **2**The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; **3**but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, 'ēlōhîm has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" **4**"The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! **5**"For 'ēlōhîm knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like 'ēlōhîm, knowing good and evil."**6**When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. **7**Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were 'ērôm, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. **8**They heard the sound of YHWH 'ēlōhîm walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of YHWH 'ēlōhîm among the trees of the garden. **9**Then YHWH 'ēlōhîm called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" **10**He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was 'ērôm; so I hid myself."

What's this story about?

- In fact, this narrative is quite an obscure text. No clear subsequent reference to it is made in the Old Testament, though there are maybe some links in Ezekiel 28.
- The Old Testament is never interested in using this narrative as if it were the explanation of how evil came into the world.
- There is no hint that the serpent is the embodiment of the principle of evil, though the claim has been made since intertestamental times.

Wait, a talking snake?

Some cool observations.

- There's a snake that talks!
- When looking at 2:16-17 we usually focus on the prohibition of not eating from the tree of good and evil, but ignore the permission to eat from any tree of the Garden - including the tree of life!
- No word for "sin" occurs in chapter 3.
- A closer look at 3:6 makes clear that while Eve was talking to the snake, Adam was present the whole time.
- Both '*ārôm*' and '*ārûm*' come from the Hebrew root '*āram*'; therefore perhaps the author intends to say that both humans and the snake were cunning and naked.

Who are you?

3¹ "Even if God *said* don't eat from the tree, so what?"

- If all you need to do is examine your desires to find out what God wants of you; if your essential self is easily and naturally identified with your passions *you are an animal*.
- If desire is something you have, not something you are; if God addresses Himself to your mind and asks you to rise above your desires, or to channel them constructively *you are a human*.

From a world of true and false to a world of good and evil.

- In attaining "knowledge" of good and evil, humanity didn't gain a better intellectual understanding of right and wrong. We gained an experiential understanding of these things. We began to know right and wrong from the "inside."
- [Perhaps] In the pre-tree world, humanity could discern clearly what God wanted, and their own desires, while powerful, did not cloud that vision. In the post-tree world, that clarity is lost. Human desire intrudes and becomes an inescapable part of the moral calculus.
- No longer do we see a clear world of "true" and "false"; now we see something that is ever so slightly different. We see "good" and "evil" - terms that blur the distinction between virtue and desire.

Take away:

Notes:

The Text

Genesis

1²⁸ *ēlōhîm* blessed them; and *ēlōhîm* said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

4¹ Now man knew Eve his wife. She conceived, gave birth to *Qayin*, and said: “*qānîti* [I have acquired] a man with *YHWH*’s help.” **2**She again gave birth to his brother *Hevel*. *Hevel* became a shepherd of the flock but *Qayin* became a tiller of the land. **3**And in the process of time *Qayin* brought some produce of the land as an offering to *YHWH*. **4***Hevel* also brought some firstlings of his flock and their fat portions. *YHWH* paid attention to *Hevel* and his offering, **5**But to *Qayin* and his offering he paid no attention. So *Qayin* was very angry and his face fell. **6**Then *YHWH* said to *Qayin*: “Why are you angry and why has your face fallen? **7**Is it not the case that if you do well, then lift up! And if you don’t do well, then sin lies crouching at the door, its desire is unto you, yet you can rule over it. **8***Qayin* said to his brother. When they were in the field, *Qayin* rose up against *Hevel* his brother, and killed him.

What's this story about?

- This narrative is characterized by gaps, silences, and fateful unexplained actions that provoke more questions than solutions.
- It appears that whatever the cause of Cain’s rejection, the text is more interested in his response to it than it is in delineating the details.
- If chapter 3 represents the fall of humankind, chapter 4 represents the fall of the family.
- Perhaps this narrative sets in place key themes for the rest of Genesis: family conflict, primogeniture, sibling rivalry, and divine promises given to the non-chosen.

Some cool observations.

- The narrative starts with humanity apparently doing what *YHWH* called them to do in Genesis 1:28.
- Cain was never actually named Cain. He just was Cain.
- *Qayin* and *qānîti* come from the root *qānâ* which means “acquire.” So probably, the narrator is making a wordplay with Eve’s speech. Another assumption is that maybe Cain chose to be a farmer because in doing so he was acquiring the soil for himself.
- Abel’s name means ‘vapor’, ‘vanity’ or ‘breath.’ More precisely *Hevel* means the steam that scapes one’s mouth on a cold winter’s day.
- While the birth of Cain was celebrated by Eve, no interjection of joy whatsoever is recorded regarding the birth of Abel.
- Cain is perhaps the first person in history to come up with the idea to offer sacrifices to God.

What is he doing?

- The immediate reaction of Cain to the rejection of his offering was his expression of excessive anger, and utter disappointment and depression. His anger literally affects the expression of his face.

Why did YHWH accept Abel's offering but reject Cain's?

Here are some assumptions:

- (1) God prefers shepherds to gardeners.
- (2) Animal sacrifice is more acceptable than vegetable offerings.
- (3) God's motives are mysterious: His preference for Abel's sacrifice reflects the mystery of divine election.
- (4) It was the differing motives of the two brothers, known only to God, that accounts for their different treatment.
- (5) It was the different approach to worship that counted and that this was reflected in the quality of their gifts.

"Why are you angry and why has your face fallen? Is it not the case that if you do well, then lift up! And if you don't do well, then sin lies crouching at the door, its desire is unto you, yet you *māšal* over it.

- "Crouching" is frequently and plausibly identified with the Akkadian *rābišu*, denoting various officials and also demons, especially those that guard entrances to buildings.
- Here then sin is personified as a demon crouching like a wild beast on Cain's doorstep.
- Sin is an aggressive force ready to ambush Cain. However, the Eternal makes it clear that Cain can master the beast!
- Not doing good is not the same thing as doing evil. It's simply being neutral. It sounds like God is saying that Cain, by choosing evil, will somehow become vulnerable to sin.

"Why has your face fallen? If you are active, if you seek out the good - you can lift up your face. And if you are neutral - if you do not act positively - you can't tread water. While being neutral is not itself an evil, it does leave you vulnerable to evil. Sin lies crouching at the door, and even the most well-intentioned neutral party can still become its prey."

Take away:

Notes:

*"They made a calf at Horeb, they bowed themselves down to an overlaid image
They swapped their Presence for a likeness of a grass-eating bull"*
- Ps. 106:19-20

The Text

Exodus

24¹² Now *YHWH* said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction." **13** So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of *ēlōhīm*. **14** But to the elders, he said, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them."

15 Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. **16** The glory of *YHWH* rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day, He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. **17** And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of *YHWH* was like a consuming fire on the mountaintop. **18** Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

32¹ Then the people realized that Moses was long overdue coming down from the mountain, and so they came together against Aaron, and they said to him, "Get busy! Make *ēlōhīm* for us who can lead us, because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we have no idea what has become of him." **2** So Aaron said to them, "Snatch the rings of gold from the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me." **3** All the people snatched from themselves the rings of gold that were in their ears, and they brought them to Aaron, **4** who took them from their hands and immediately began to press the gold with a metalworking tool. Thus he made a calf with a shaped sheathing. Then they said, "These are your *ēlōhīm*, Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." **5** When Aaron saw their reaction, he built an altar in front of it, and then Aaron made an announcement: he said, "A feast to *YHWH* tomorrow!" **6** So they got up early the next day, and they offered wholly-burned offerings, and they brought completion-offerings. And then the people sat down to eat and to drink, after which they rose to *ṣāḥaq* [frivolity/ play].

What's this story about?

- It's a story about identity. The special treasure-people whose identity has been established by the Presence of *YHWH* are suddenly in danger of becoming a people with no identity at all.
- Typologically, the golden calf incident points backward as well as forward. It points back to the fall of humankind in Genesis 3. It points forward in Israelite history to the temptations of religious syncretism in the era of the monarchy.
- This story deals with the issue of trust.

Some cool observations.

- Though the readers know for how long Moses would be gone, the Israelites had no clue of the time he would spend on the mountaintop. There is no evidence that in his previous trips to the top of Mount Sinai he had ever stayed overnight.
- Perhaps, Israel's problem is not here with Moses' leadership, but with Moses' absence.
- While pagans were known for building altars in front of their gods so that the deities could see the offerings, we read that the altars for the Tabernacle and later temple were located in their courtyard - with no direct line of sight from the ark in the holy of holies to the altar.
- The Hebrew word for "God" and "gods" is the same, *ēlōhîm*. The form is grammatically plural, and whether the sense of the word is singular or plural depends on the surrounding context. In this case, therefore, because of the plural pronoun "these" and verb "brought you up", *ēlōhîm* seems to suggest a plurality of gods.

Why a calf?

- From Mesopotamia to Egypt the bull is a symbol of fertility at times, but it is also a symbol of strength, might, and fighting prowess.
- It is commonly accepted by Old Testament scholars today that the ancients did not equate an idol with the god, but it was some sort of earthly representation of that god. Specifically, it was thought that calves or bulls functioned as pedestals for the gods seated or standing over them.

How many voices do you hear?

- On one side we have YHWH's voice calling the Israelites for Himself, asking them to draw near Him. Taking heed of this voice would mean that the Israelites would need to relearn what it means to worship.
- On the other side, we have the voice of the "snake," whispering that probably this God was gone with His fellow friend Moses and the only alternative left would be turning back to the ways they were used to.

"Sin lies crouching at the door, and even the most well-intentioned neutral party can still become its prey..."

- The real reason why Aaron crafted the idol is unknown. In verse 5 it seems like he wants to make use of the golden calf to keep the people faithful to YHWH.
- He even builds an altar, and proclaims that there will be a "festival to YHWH" (*hag layhwb*) the next day.
- Paying close attention to Aaron's actions we can see how, throughout the whole situation, he couldn't pick a side. He neither stood for YHWH nor totally embraced the idolatry of the people.

Take away:

Notes:

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate..." - Gen. 3:6

The Text

2 Samuel

11¹In the following spring of the year, when the kings march out to battle, David sent Joab with his servants and all Israel, and they devastated the Ammonites and laid siege to Rabbah. David, however, remained in Jerusalem. ²Then one particular evening David got up from his couch and, as he walked about on the roof of the royal palace, he saw from the roof a woman bathing. And the woman was very beautiful. ³So David sent someone and made inquiries about the woman, and he reported, "She is Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." ⁴Then David sent messengers and took her. When she came to him, he slept with her (she had just purified herself from her uncleanness). Then she returned to her house. ⁵When the woman realized that she was pregnant, she sent a message to David, saying, "I am pregnant." ⁶Then David dispatched a messenger to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷When Uriah had come to him, David asked about the well-being of Joab and the army, and about the progress of the war. ⁸Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet!" So Uriah left the royal palace and a present from the king was sent after him. ⁹However Uriah slept at the entrance of the royal palace with the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his own house, ¹⁰When it was reported to David that Uriah had not gone down to his house, David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" ¹¹Then Uriah answered David, "The ark as well as Israel and Judah are dwelling in temporary shelters while my lord Joab and my lord's servants are camping in the open field. How can I go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As surely as **YHWH** lives and as you yourself live, I will not do such a thing!" ¹²Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here another day and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day. But the next day ¹³David invited him to eat and drink in his presence, and made him drunk. However, in the evening he went out to sleep on his couch with the servants of his lord and he did not go down to his own house. ¹⁴In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by Uriah. ¹⁵He wrote in the letter: "Send Uriah into the forefront of the fiercest battle, and then withdraw from him that he may be struck down and die."

What's this story about?

- This is a story to catch readers off guard.
- This is the great turning point of the whole David story.
- This is a story of how close to becoming an animal the most of the humans can be.

Are you sure this is David?

Some cool observations.

- The spring was a typical time for military campaigning in the ancient Near East; the winter rains had stopped and the labor-intensive harvest time had not yet arrived; thus, able-bodied men were available for military exploits.
- Uriah's name in Hebrew 'ûrîyâ, is a good Yahwistic name, meaning "Yahweh is my light." He was also listed as the last of David's "mighty men" in 2 Sam. 23:29.
- If soldiers on active duty were expected to observe sexual abstinence then Uriah in obeying David's suggestion would have committed a serious breach of the ritual law. This is partly supported by Uriah's determined resistance to David's efforts. It is possible that this, too, may have been an attempt to eliminate Uriah by legal means, at the same time, attributing the paternity of the child to him.
- We are not told whether or not the letter was sealed, and whether or not Uriah could read it. The essential point is that ironically Uriah was the bearer of his own death warrant.

David, the bad guy.

- Though a main character, it seems as if the author displays Bathsheba as an object that was taken, abused, and discarded by King David.
- David may have had his bed on the roof, and from this relatively high position, he would have had a good view of the neighboring houses and courtyards. Thus, there is no real reason to assume that Bathsheba actually intended to be seen by him.
- Why does the author tell us that Bathsheba was bathing?
 1. she would be at the time of the month when she was likely to conceive; 2. she was not pregnant when she went to David; and 3. the child was clearly fathered by David since her husband was away at war.
- David had put himself in a place where he could be tempted. Deep down he wanted to be tempted.
- By killing his faithful warrior, David was trying to protect his own honor.

"... if your essential self is easily and naturally identified with your passions - you are an animal."

- Though, from his first appearance, David has behaved as the best example of what a human can be, in 2 Samuel 11 it seems as if he simply cannot get past his passions and desires. Here are some examples:
 1. David does not keep his eyes from looking at Bathsheba.
 2. David completely ignores the fact that Bathsheba was married.
 3. David activates his survival mode in trying to hide from the whole situation.
- Throughout the narrative, David is surely depicted as cunning, never doubting what to do next.

Take away:

Notes:

The Text

Matthew

16¹³ Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi and began to ask his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' ¹⁴They said, 'Some, "John the Baptist"; others, "Elijah"; others, "Jeremiah or [another] one of the prophets"'. ¹⁵He says to them, 'And you — who do you say that I am?' ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, 'You are the *Christos*, the Son of the living God'. ¹⁷Jesus answered him, 'Happy [Blessed] are you, Simon *Bar-Jonah*, because flesh and blood has not revealed [this] to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I say to you, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my *ekklēsia*, and the gates of Hades will not prove stronger than it. ¹⁹I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'" ²⁰Then he ordered the disciples that they tell no one that he was the *Christos*.

²¹From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that it was necessary for him to go away to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be killed and on the third day to be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord. This shall never happen to you."

²³But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Away with you; get behind me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to me because your thoughts are not those of God but human thoughts."

|What's this story about?

- This is a story about the complexity of having Jesus as a Messiah.
- This is a crucial point in Jesus' ministry. From now on in Matthew, Galilee, with its enthusiastic crowds, has been left behind, and Jerusalem, with its hostile religious authorities, lies ahead.
- This is a story that clarifies who Jesus is. The man they were following was Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God!
- This is, once again, a story of the snake trying to find his way through with his smooth talk.

|Some cool observations.

- The fact that the people saw Jesus as a prophet implies that they believed him to be a figure of great significance and someone with a divine commission.
- Though we can't find the title "Messiah" in the OT, it is clear that by the first century, it was a title of hope to denote the human deliverer God was expected to send to his people.
- Matthew is the only NT gospel writer to use the term *ekklēsia* (Matthew 16:18; 18:17).
- "The gates of Hades" is a metaphor for death, which contrasts strikingly with the phrase "the living God" in verse 16. "Hades" is the NT equivalent of Sheol (the place of the dead). The imagery of verse 18 is of death being unable to swallow up the new community Jesus is building.

- Peter's response in verse 22 is unlikely to have expressed his feeling alone. Just as he spoke for the other disciples in declaring Jesus to be the Messiah, so now he expresses the horror they all shared at Jesus' perverted idea of the Messiah's mission.

Peter and Cain.

Yes, I know that that doesn't sound like a fair comparison at first. What does Peter have to do with the first killer of human history? Well, I do believe they share two main things in common:

1. Peter and Cain resembled boldness in responding to God - Cain responds through his offerings, Peter responds with the declaration that Jesus is the Messiah.

2. Peter and Cain overreact to God's response to them - Cain does not lift up his face, Peter rebukes Jesus.

The usage of the strong verb "rebuke" displays Peter's overreaction to Jesus' affirmation. It also indicates that he believed that the prospect Jesus has outlined is not a goal to be fulfilled but a disaster to be averted; other people might suffer at the hands of the authorities, but certainly not the Messiah.

Who is talking, Peter or the snake?

"The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!" - Genesis 3:4

"And Peter took him [Jesus] aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid, Lord. This shall never happen to you.'" - Matthew 16:22

- Regardless of how the snake interpreted God's voice and how Adam and Eve felt about eating from the tree of knowledge, the truth always was that from eating from it, they would die. Regardless of how discouraged the disciples felt about Jesus' definition of being the Messiah and how that didn't feel good or right, the truth was that Jesus had to die.

- Following that line of thought, we can [perhaps] say that Peter and the snake try to re-interpret what has already been interpreted by God Himself.

- The True Human has no business with what's not true!

Take away:

Notes:

The Text

Matthew

16²¹From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that it was necessary for him to go away to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be killed and on the third day to be raised. **22**And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord. This shall never happen to you." **23**But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Away with you; get behind me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to me because your thoughts are not those of God but human thoughts."

26³⁶ Then Jesus came with them to an estate called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go away over there and pray." **37**He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him, and he began to be overcome with distress. **38**Then he said to them, "My soul is deeply distressed to the point of death. Stay here and keep awake with me." **39**And he went on a little way and fell on his face in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me; and yet not as I wish but as you wish." **40**And he came to the disciples and found them asleep, and he said to Peter, "So you couldn't keep awake with me for a single hour! **41**Keep awake and pray that you may not be put to the test. For the spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak." **42**Again he went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass away without my drinking it, let your will be done." **43**And he came and again found them asleep, because their eyes were weighed down. **44**And he left them and went away again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing again. **45**Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep on and rest! The hour has drawn near, and the *Son of Humanity* is handed over into [the] hands of sinners. **46**Get up, and let's go. Look, my betrayer has arrived."

What's this story about?

- This is a story of overcoming our desires.
- This is a story about crushing the head of the snake.
- This is a story of true humanity!

Some cool observations.

- Apart from references to Jesus' compassion (9:36), Matthew has virtually no reference to Jesus' emotions prior to this point. This makes the emotion of the present episode stand out the more.
- The additional phrase in verse 38, "to the point of death" might be paraphrased "so very sorrowful that I could die" or even "so very sorrowful that it is killing me."
- The "little way" of verse 39 (Luke 22:41 says it was about a stone's throw) suggests that Jesus was still within earshot of Peter, James, and John (prayer was normally aloud, even when praying alone).
- The spirit/flesh contrast does not occur elsewhere in Matthew. Here [perhaps],

the “flesh” is not so much evil or in itself opposed to the will of God, but represents human weakness over against the desire of the “inner self” to do the will of God.

“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me...”

- The temptation of fleeing from the cross was a temptation greater than any of us will ever have to face.
- It is at the Gethsemane that the dreadful reality of what Jesus is facing has now struck Him.
- What is happening in Gethsemane is not the discovery of this as a new fact, but the need to come to terms in emotion and will with what he has already known in theory.
- In Jesus' prayers (vv. 39,42) I see a human struggling with His emotions. But in Jesus' prayers, I also see a human overcoming his emotions and holding fast to the truth!

...yet not as I wish but as You wish.”

- If in the previous classes, we saw how humans failed to actually be humans, in the person of Jesus we see someone excelling in being a true human. Overcoming His desires and emotions, He was faithful to what was true - the will of the Father.
- Looking at Jesus we have an invitation not only to share in His eternal life but also to share in His true humanity.
- Looking at Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, we can obey the words of the Eternal to Cain in Genesis 4:7. We can rule the beast. **We must rule the beast.**

Take away:

Notes: