

He Gives More Grace

BY ALEXANDER NEWMAN

The earliest murder in Scripture is recorded in Genesis 4. The story of Cain and Abel has been scrutinized up and down, but over all, it's a simple story: sin corrupted everything, including the relationship between family. Abel was a man of faith – what God asked of him, he did. In our text, Abel never spoke, he only let God speak for his innocent blood and pure soul. He was a character defined by silent obedience, but I want to spend some time with Cain. It is recorded that after his sacrifice was not accepted by God, his face fell and he was angry. We can imagine just how perturbed he was that his upstart little brother had won the favor of God, and he had not. Many stories of “gods” center around a similar idea. For instance, there's an ancient Greek myth where two gods are vying the favor of a city – but both of them can't be the patron. To compete for the gods' attention is partially what ancient cultures were about. If you fought in enough wars, participated in enough lascivious acts, did more violence for the glory of the gods, then your gods would do you favors. The gods would look favorably on you because you put other humans in their rightful place – under their feet. I believe the account of Cain and Abel teaches us not only about the expectations He has for our treatment of other humans (Am I my brother's keeper?), but also how different the one true God contrasts with the perception of other gods. Just look at God's response to Cain's anger: **“Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?”** In some ways, the rest of Scripture replays these stories. People compete and vie for God's affection while God keeps reinforcing that all who do well and fear Him will be accepted. Cain's anger is unfounded. He acted as if only Abel or he could be accepted. Instead, God told Cain that both could receive His blessing and have His attention if they do well. This kept replaying throughout Abraham's family, primarily between Esau and Jacob, but also between the sons of Jacob and their selfish actions. The turning point in the family was Joseph's humility, understanding that God had made him powerful and great so that the family would be protected (Genesis 45).

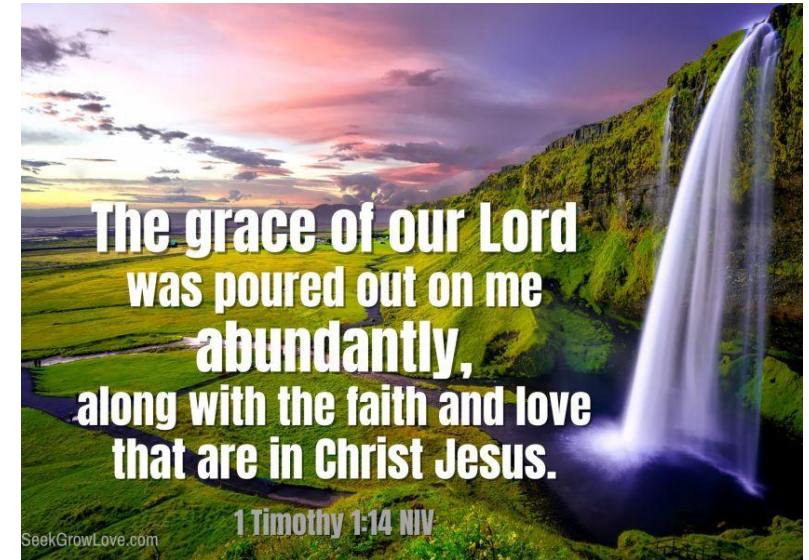
We want to be favored. We want God to look upon us and say, “I care deeply for you.” The demonstration that God sees all of us is in the person of Jesus. As John introduces Jesus, the main character of all history, he says this: **“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and**

his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” ([John 1:9–13](#)). John teaches us that through Christ, there is no need for infighting for glory. We don't need to fight each other for God's attention. Instead, every single person who trusts in Jesus is given the unbelievable privilege of calling God our Father, and He is well pleased to call us His children. We're not much better than Cain – filled with anger, prejudice, and pride. But God's mercy allows us to be the true humans we were born to be. John continues: **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me’”). For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known” ([John 1:14–18](#))**. God did not stay far off, allowing us to battle selfishly to be seen. Rather, He took on flesh to reveal the one true God – full of grace and truth. What does it mean to be full of grace? I believe the implications lie in the idea that God has no needs, but instead He gives of Himself. We have deep needs for love, for comfort, and certainly for our sins to be forgiven. We have comfort in Christ because He reveals the fullness of God's grace, which John describes as grace upon grace. That means even more than we could ask or think, God can give. God likely gives us things that we may never acknowledge or know, maybe not until we reach heaven.

God is not looking to trip us up. He's not having us compete for His favor. We certainly should not be fighting each other so that God pays more attention to us. He proves His desire and love for us in Christ. We can venture confidently in our pilgrimage because God gives us strength through His grace.

2 Corinthians 12:9

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.



We invite you to stay for our **Weekly Fellowship Lunch & Afternoon Devotional!**
We hope you'll stay and eat, fellowship and worship with us immediately following morning services.

For your calendar.....

Weekly Fellowship Luncheon	Sunday – 12:00 Noon
Singing Night	June 3
Ladies Bible Study	June 5 – 11:00 AM