

**God's Heart for the World**  
**Steef van't Slot**

**Lesson 3**  
**Part 1. Adam & Eve's Mission**

*Introduction*

When we fail, our failure does not automatically nullify God's calling on our lives. Very often we underestimate the consequences of sin in our lives and that of others. When we do not repent from sin, our hearts harden, and increasingly so, to the degree that time progresses. In fact there are only two sorts of people: the ones truly *with* God and the ones truly *without* Him. The former should reach out to save the latter, and such efforts should be bathed in prayer. In this lesson we will look at the fourth, fifth and sixth of the ten foundational themes: Man's part in God's mission; Man-made solutions for the sin problem and Conflict between brothers.

*Scripture reference*

**God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule ... over every living creature that moves on the ground (Gen. 1:28).**

**... Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord ... but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor. So Cain was angry (Gen. 4:3,5).**

**... while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him (Gen. 4:8).**

**By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did (Hebr. 11:4).**

*The story*

There they sat. Sad and defeated, counting their losses. Paradise lay behind them and they could not return. Adam and Eve had been disobedient to God in a horrible way. But they remembered that God had told them what He wanted them to do. He said that they should be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. He wanted them to use all its immense possibilities to serve Him. He gave them charge over all the animals everywhere. Full of remorse they decided to obey God to the best of their ability.

Adam and Eve started to do what God had told them to do. They worked the land, named the animals, ate the fruit of the trees and children were born to them. Bit by bit they started to understand the difficulties of life that God had mentioned before He sent them out of the Garden. Adam noticed how hard it was to work the land; thorns and weeds sprung up everywhere. Eve was confronted with the pains of giving birth. Often they regretted their desire to know evil, and how they got it by eating from the forbidden tree.

Yet, they also found satisfaction and happiness in each other, in their children and in their harvests. They served God and again felt His smile upon their lives.

They also noticed that after their sin in the Garden, sin was never really far away from them. From time to time Adam and Eve had arguments. Their sons had arguments. They even saw that not all animals lived in peace with each other. With sadness they understood more and more how heavy the consequences of their first sin were. From time to time they cried out to God and asked Him to restore peace to how it had been before. It did not happen; not yet at least. For the time being they even saw that sin increased. It became visible in many different forms. Every time they noticed this, their sadness grew and they tried to bring peace back to their home. Especially the frequent quarrels between their two sons Cain and Abel worried them.

After many years the differences between the two brothers came to a terrible climax. Cain killed his brother Abel and left home. In one day Adam and Eve had lost two sons: the youngest was dead and the oldest fled because in his tremendous guilt he could no longer face his parents. Adam and Eve cried, moaned and grieved for a long time. They had come to know evil in a yet deeper form – and hated it. Often they said to one another how horrible evil is. Sometimes they dreamed of going back to the time that they had no knowledge of it. If only they had chosen to obey God, instead of listening to the serpent!

*Scripture reference*

**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).**

**The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them (Gen. 3:21).**

**He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).**

*The story, continued*

After some time Eve became pregnant again and bore a son whom they named Seth. When the boy grew up his parents told him about God, about their time in the Garden and how they lost it. They also spoke about his two brothers and explained what happened. From time to time they heard from Cain and how he had left God and followed his own godless desires. Fortunately, in Seth they saw the same desire to serve God that they had seen in Abel before his death. Eventually Seth also found a wife and got children. That line of descendants did serve God.

Adam and Eve may have been wondering why the sons that were born to them were so different. Abel served God, Cain did not, but Seth again did. There were two different lines, the ones who served God to the best of their ability, and the others who have left Him. These parents may not have realized that God created them and their sons with a

free will. They all had abused that free will by disobeying God. Adam and Eve, after they were expelled from the Garden *repented and chose again* to serve God. Some chose to serve God and others don't.

Adam and Eve probably cried out to God, that He would find ways to bring their children back on His way. Maybe they visited them from time to time to see whether they could encourage them to repent of their ways and serve God again. Maybe they prayed for Cain, his wife, their children and grandchildren. They remembered the promise that God had given them, many years back in the Garden, that later a Son would be born Who would bring salvation from sin, by crushing the head of the serpent.

<b>THEME 4: MAN'S PART IN GOD'S MISSION</b>
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*Comment*

The first sending we read about in Genesis is the assignment, given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, in which man is destined to 'rule, be fruitful, increase, fill the earth, and subdue it'. This was man's original destiny and in spite of the fact that he jeopardized that assignment by sin, redeemed man will still be able to reach his destiny, namely to rule with Christ.

The original assignment implied the 'working of the garden and to take care of it'. Therefore, world missions includes *salvation* outreach to the whole man (spiritually and physically), as well as *caring* outreach to flora and fauna including the environment in which man lives. To neglect, defile or pollute God's creation, in whatever form, is to insult its Creator.

God's Mission is a mission of salvation which He spoke about for the first time just after the fall: the seed of the woman – Jesus Christ – will crush the head of the serpent, that is, gain final victory over the real enemy of mankind, Satan.

The original assignment is not withdrawn after the fall, but its execution encountered considerable hindrances from then on. We read in the Bible that there will be pain: in human reproduction; in marriage relationships; in agricultural reproduction and in the work place.

Failure does not automatically nullify God's calling on somebody's life. If that were the case, there would be no place for repentance or restoration and there would be no missionaries working in the world today. It is important though, that every missionary understands how serious sin really is. It can not be assumed that during our existence on earth we will ever reach a state of sinlessness. In a way, sinning can be compared with using rough wooden tools bare-handed. In using such tools tender hands contract blisters. If these are ignored, they will bleed. Eventually the hands will become callous and lose their sensitivity. Another example could be a heap of cement, just made ready for use. As long as it is stirred it stays flexible and can be used, but if it is left alone it will become hard. When we move away from the conscience-stirring of the Holy Spirit, we will eventually become hard and He can no longer reach us with His corrections.

Whoever has been saved by the Lord has a responsibility to reach out to other lost people and acquaint them with the good news of Christ's salvation. This is true for all normal church members, who are called to do local evangelism. It is also true for church members that have been called to take the Gospel elsewhere. They are called to do foreign missions, taking the Gospel over barriers of language, culture and religion. Whether one is a local evangelist or a cross-cultural missionary, both have to understand the seriousness of sin, everybody's need for salvation and the hardening effect sin has on hearts that slide back or refuse to repent.

### *Discussion & dialogue*

*Discuss what Adam & Eve's mission consisted of*

*What is the difference between salvation outreach and caring outreach?*

### *Comment, continued*

In the story of Cain and Abel we see theme 5 coming up: man-made solutions for the sin problem. From the day of the fall, man had to live with the manifold consequences of sin. His conscience often told him that he was wrong, that he was guilty towards his fellow man but most of all towards God. Man was bothered by his conscience; it was like a pain in his soul for which he sought relief. All the time he knew: I am wrong, I have to change. At the same time he understood by his frequently repeated sins that it is very hard to change, let alone do away with the accumulated guilt. Some cried out to God for help, others hardened their hearts and tried to silence their consciences.

We see the first pair of brothers in Genesis, Cain and Abel, present an offering to God. Both, mature men as they were, were conscious of their sins.

*Abel* had understood that there can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood and in offering an animal from his flock he simply followed the example of God, of which he had probably heard from his parents. He had come to understand that sin inevitably leads to death because when his parents had sinned, God killed an animal to cover their nakedness. Blood had to flow on behalf of them and Abel understood that it would be no different for him, so he voluntarily killed and shed blood to atone for his sins. It provided him with a cover in the eyes of God and his conscience then received peace.

*Cain*, on the other hand, had no such understanding. He probably did not know what to do about his sins and he had silenced the outcry of his conscience by hardening his heart. He accepted his sinful behavior by trying to convince himself 'that's the way I am' without trying to change. Yet, he still knew that his behavior was not right and one day, maybe following the good example of his brother, he decided that it could do him no harm if he too brought an offering. It is this hardened and unrepentant heart that still has some elementary sin-awareness left that starts to display religious behavior: it looks right, it may even feel right, but it is not, at least not in the eyes of God. Cain knew he had sinned but might have considered it too small a thing to kill and shed blood for, like his brother had done. It is obvious that he did not receive the inner peace Abel had and he noticed the difference. Because of that difference he became jealous, angry and depressed. After a while he translated his unhappy feelings into bitterness and the wish

for revenge, to get even. Later he could not bear it anymore and killed his brother who, by his godly character, kept shaking Cain's conscience awake which Cain had previously done his utmost to silence. Now at last he was delivered of this pain in the neck, called Abel.

It was by this first murder that an initial separation of mankind was initiated: that of those who follow God in His way and those who *think* they follow Him but are using their own methods. The first one, truly *without* God, persecuted the second one, truly *with* God and so it has been ever since. All throughout history the counterfeit followers have persecuted the true followers of God. It was as early as in Genesis that we see the first separation between the true and the false church. The separation will culminate into a worldwide conflict at the end of time, which the Bible calls the Great Tribulation. Between Cain and Abel we see the only real separation there is in all of humanity: the ones *with* God and those *without* Him. This has been true all throughout the era called 'time' and will remain true throughout eternity. Therefore it is of utmost importance that the first group does everything within their power to warn the second group and bring them back to God. That is our mission – a Mission really of which God is the Architect – a Mission that states that God wants no one to be separated from Him.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THEME 5: MAN-MADE SOLUTIONS FOR THE SIN PROBLEM</b></p>
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*Discussion & dialogue*

*Discuss the functions of man's conscience and how guilt should be dealt with*

*Why did Abel's sacrifice please God, whereas Cain's did not?*

*Comment, continued*

Finally we will look at our sixth theme, already introduced in the last paragraph, and occurring more often later: Conflict between brothers. Genesis is a book in which we find a number of brother-stories: one brother or closely related family member goes the way of God, the other does not. The ones who did not follow God's way made a conscious decision not to conform; instead they chose to remain on the way of death. This was not because they had to – salvation was equally offered to them – but because they wanted to, for a variety of reasons. We see at all such occasions that the straying brothers suffered great loss. This principle applies today as much as it did then.

*Six Pairs of Brothers*

With the *first* pair of brothers we see that Abel chose to follow God's ways and principles. Cain chose not to do so, sinned heavily and lived away from the presence of the Lord for the rest of his life. It would not be logical to assume that deliberate choices made on earth, suddenly change at the moment of a person's death. Choices made during life on earth have eternal consequences.

*Scripture reference*

**When he [Noah] drank some ... wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside ... When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, 'Cursed be Canaan...' (Gen. 9:21,22,24,25).**

*The brother stories, continued*

The *second* set of brothers we see with Noah's son Ham and his brothers. We do not read about Ham repenting changing his behavior after making fun of his father's nakedness. Therefore he brought a curse over his descendants. A thousand years later, a number of peoples that descended from Ham were partially driven out of the country that God had promised to Abraham, through the latter's descendants. It may look like as if this curse was universal, as if all descendants from Ham were predestined to damnation, but that was not the case, never has been, nor ever will be. God is good, always on the lookout whom He can save. There were individuals from these peoples that were saved, like Rahab or Ruth, because they joined Israel.

Later we read about Abraham and Lot, who were brothers in the sense that both were believers, but Lot's greed for material wealth finally brought him down. He left the line of the promise (Abraham) and with that the blessing and the purpose. He lost almost everything: all material possessions, his wife and his moral integrity, and was only just saved. Lot had received an earlier practical warning: he was taken captive by a confederation of kings who waged war against the king of Sodom, beat Lot and led him, his people and their spoils away. Abraham undertook a successful rescue mission: the true, God-fearing heir of the promises brought his straying brother back to where he (Lot) had chosen to live.

If only Lot had recognized the warning hand of God in this pre-judgment, he could have preached the council of God to his fellow-citizens, or, in case they would not repent, he could have left. His losses could then not possibly have been as big as they were when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed a few years later. The consequences of Lot's sin with his daughters, resulting in the conception and birth of the two half-brothers Moab and Ben-Ammi (from whom the Moabites and the Ammonites came forth) are not insignificant. Both peoples harassed the Israelites repeatedly in later centuries. It might all not have happened, had Lot stayed with Abraham. The choices of just one man may have far-stretching consequences for the wellbeing (or the opposite!) of the nations.

Abraham's slave son Ishmael didn't go along with his half-brother, the son of the promise, Isaac. Their mothers also made different choices. Firstly, the slave woman rebelled and later her son. As a result they had to be sent away. Had they submitted, they would have shared in the blessing. We see how rebellion leads to separation. God sanctioned this separation because of a lack of the right heart-attitude of Hagar and Ishmael towards Sarah and Isaac. God knew that without true repentance there could never be true reconciliation between the two. We have to pray for the conversion of the present-day Ishmaelites, known to us as Arabs, the majority of

whom are Muslims. The separation between Ishmael and Isaac is similar to the separation between Abraham's seed (the followers of Jesus Christ) and those who are not, that is all others. Without turning to Jesus Christ there can be no salvation for them. This applies to Jews as well. The only way of salvation for them is to believe in Jesus Christ the Messiah. Neither Muslim nor Jew has to perish. They can be saved. Salvation is offered to them. But who is willing to travel to their lands and tell them? The hostility towards all their brothers is seen in many places of the world today, where Muslims fight or even persecute Christians as well as Jews. Only Jesus Christ can break those huge barriers of hostility down, and He *died to do so!* Jesus is the One True Brother Who gave His life for all, so that all can be reconciled to God by the forgiveness of their sins, and be reconciled to each other as well. Jesus Christ alone can do what no Palestinian-Jewish peace-agreement can ever do.

The next pair of brothers is Jacob and Esau. They are two types of men, neither of them holy in themselves and both in dire need of salvation. Their destinations were determined by their choices and behavior, not by God's 'pre'-destination.

*Esau* represents carnal, self-willed nominal Christianity that is not being born again (despising his birthright). He refused to live up to the standards of his parents and married wives from an idolatrous Canaanite tribe. He represents a form of Christianity that neither submits to Christ (typified by Isaac) nor to His Church (typified by Rebecca). Esau-Christianity makes its own laws, goes its own disobedient ways which equals rejection of the offered way of salvation.

*Jacob* represents a form of Christianity that in the beginning differs little from that of his brother but on whom the promise rests and whose faith finally matures after God's severe dealings with him. The older was to serve, that is to submit to the younger. Had Esau been obedient to this word of God, he would have been blessed too, but he was indifferent and thought about temporal life only. He refused to submit and separation had to come. These stories show us (as does the story of Jacob's sons) that natural birthright is no guarantee for inheritance, but that promise is. Nobody can claim spiritual birthright on the basis of natural birth, for instance because one was born in a Christian family or culture, in a certain church denomination or by being a minister's, or a missionary's child. God has no grandchildren. A person can only become a child of God by being born into God's family. Therefore, it was never the oldest who inherited the promise but always the younger. In a spiritual sense, only our 'youngest life', the new identity in Christ, can inherit eternal life. Our old(est) life can never please God. Carnal Esau-religion will not see the Kingdom of God.

In the case of the separation between Joseph and his brothers we see the functional separation between one who made it to the throne and saved the land, and all the others who didn't. The latter needed to be saved themselves and never ruled, although each of them became founder of a tribe, named after them.

Finally, we see the revelation of Joseph to his brothers. He surprises, blesses, frightens, feeds and imprisons them, 'hijacked' one, tests them and weeps over them, as one day the Jews will weep over Jesus Whom they killed when they recognize Him at His return.

Joseph said to his brothers that they had to bring the youngest brother; otherwise they would not see his face again. It reminds us of what Jesus: 'But first the Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world to all nations and *then* the end will come'. This makes it very

clear to us that the end will not come (we will not see His face again) until all nations have heard the Gospel. Not until we bring in the last brother(s) to Him will we see Him, revealing Himself to us at His Second Coming.

<b>THEME 6: CONFLICT BETWEEN BROTHERS</b>
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*Discussion & Dialogue*

*Describe the main difference between the six pairs of brothers that were mentioned*

*Sum up why Lot failed in his 'mission' to Sodom and Gomorrah*

*Explain the difference between 'Esau-Christianity' and 'Jacob-Christianity'*

*Explain the spiritual principle that the younger brother should serve the older*

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**Lesson 3**

**Part 2. From Bad to Worse**

*Introduction*

Although Satan makes plans to defeat God and His purposes, God knows about these plans in advance. He is never surprised or out of His wits for solutions, and nothing can ever thwart God's plans for mankind. In fact, for every upcoming crisis He has His next missionary ready!

*Scripture reference*

**Lamech married two women, ... and said to his wives ... 'I have killed a man for wounding me ... If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times' (Gen. 4:19,23,24).**

**I make known the end from the beginning ... I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please (Is. 46:10).**

*The story*

Satan realizes that he succeeded in seducing man into a rebellion against his Creator. Man was expelled from Paradise and had death in his bones. The devil even managed to turn Adam's son into a murderer of his own brother. Yet he knew that there was no reason for optimism. God had already made a plan to send His Son on a rescue mission,



to save humanity. Satan had many ideas to stop Him, but thought that it would be even better to stop Him from going to Earth in the first place. He proceeded to lay out a vile plan of how to corrupt the human race to such an extent that it would become impossible eventually to bring forth the Savior.

Cain never repented of killing his brother, and therefore violence increased in his life, and even more in that of his descendants. Later Lamech came, boasting about how he demanded revenge for the fact that someone had wounded him. Such a cycle of revenge comes directly as a multiplication effect of not repenting from sin. On top of that, Satan built another stronghold in Lamech's life. He took *two* wives. That is different from how God had designed marriage. And so the devil must have reasoned, there will be plenty of God's people who hate violence and will stay far from it. But everybody loves sex, so maybe he could seduce God's people into the impurity that *unholy* sex will spread over humanity.

Long before Satan made these plans, God knew them. The plans had been designed to stop Jesus from descending into the world to save mankind from its sins. Satan's thinking was clever, because violent man cannot give birth to the Prince of Peace; neither can an adulterous unholy generation give birth to a Holy Son.

And so, God decided how He would remove sin from such an unrepentant generation that was corrupted beyond repair. Of course, there is no way to save those that do not *want* to be saved, but there was one man on whom God could rely. Although the whole generation was rotten beyond recovery, there was this one man, Noah and his family. God gave that generation one hundred years to repent, while Noah carried out his assignment and preached the message God gave him. Noah's generation did not repent only him and his family was saved. But because God created people with a free will, they had to have a chance to hear before judgment came. The Father was absolutely just. He would not ever be unjust to anybody He had created. It was time to call a missionary.

#### *Comment*

Because the devil is only a created being, there is nothing he can think about that God has not thought about first. We may think that the devil makes a plan and God reacts, but it is the other way around. God created man with a free will and man abused that ability to sin. Similarly God will use man who *does* choose the right way, to conquer the devil and make the latter's bad plans backfire on him. In that way God proves to the devil that *saved man is superior to the devil and therefore more fit to rule than he is*.

Many of the great people in the Bible prove this, when working out the mission God gave them in life. We only have to think about Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Jesus, Peter and Paul, to mention just a few. All of them were important missionary characters who, by their obedience and righteousness did God's work and pushed back the boundaries of darkness. They suffered, were ridiculed, and some even lost their lives; but in doing so they gained what they could not lose: an eternal heavenly reward. Will we join them?

*Discussion & Dialogue*

*Discuss other ways you may know from history or biblical data, how the devil tried to jeopardize God's plans and how he failed because God overruled*

*Which theme, treated in one of the past few chapters, is very visible in this chapter?*

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