

October 23, 2020 - "Consequences"

Genesis 4:10-12

10 The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

12 When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

A Tale of Two Brothers

Campfire Tales

Consequences

Genesis
4:10~12

Special Music:

Making Decisions

Rizon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTxvwwNhwPQ>

THE TOSS

It was homecoming at Patterson High, and Jake was suited up and ready to take the field for the game against East Podunk. His coach had made him team captain only a few short months ago after Sam broke his leg in the game against Newton. Even though Jake was a senior, he hated making decisions and felt totally unqualified to captain. But here he was. Helmet in hand and first on the field. Jeff trotted along beside him acting as his second.

Being the home team, Jake knew that he didn't get to call the coin toss. That was the responsibility of the East Podunk. When they reached center of the field, they both shook hands with their opponents as the referee got the coin ready. Jake did not want to be here and nervously toed the turf. In most of the high schools in their areas, the coach predetermined the call and gave it to the captain. But, Coach Barnes at Patterson believed that leaving the call in the hands of the team captain helped to build good leadership skills.

"Ready?" the referee called out. Everyone nodded. The coin was flipped high into the air, turning wickedly in the wind. Why did there have to be wind?

"Heads," the East Podunk team captain called before the coin hit the ground.

"Tails," shouted the ref after looking at the coin. "Patterson chooses."

Jake crinkled his toes in his shoe. He knew everyone was waiting on his answer. This was the homecoming game. He couldn't make a mistake. What to do? Take the ball or kick? If he chose to take the ball, East Podunk would use

the wind to their advantage on kickoff. If he chose to kick, East Podunk would force Patterson to kick into the wind. He just knew someone was going to think he made the wrong call. Sam had been their kicker and the new kicker was untested in a situation like this. The wind was pretty high and he didn't trust the new guy to be able to compensate. At the same time, if he elected to receive, East Podunk would take advantage of the wind and Patterson would probably be stuck at the 20 just because the ball would fly over the endzone on the kickoff.

"We'll receive," said Jake. As he saw it, taking the ball on the 20 was a better option than allowing East Podunk a better field position if the new guy had a hard time kicking against the wind. He stood up confidently, looked at the ref and said again, "Yeah, we'll receive."

And the East Podunk chose to kick with the wind, just like Jake thought he would. Good thing Patterson's running game had improved so much over last year.

Back on the sideline, Coach Barnes let Jake know that he was pleased, and the decision had been a sound one. Now they would have to play their best and see if the result justified the decision.

Consequences can better be referred to as results. Some are calculated. Some are defined. Others can be totally unanticipated. Some can be difficult. Others can be hardly noticeable. But each and every consequence is an attempt to change direction, whether an accident in nature or a specifically applied event occurs.

As much as we want to separate the nature of the human heart from the laws of science, the observances made in scientific discovery often apply to the human heart as well. For instance, Sir Isaac Newton's Three Laws of Motion.

1. An object at rest remains at rest, and an object in motion remains in motion at constant speed and in a straight line unless acted on by an unbalanced force.
2. The acceleration of an object depends on the mass of the object and the amount of force applied.
3. Whenever one object exerts a force on another object, the second object exerts an equal and opposite on the first.

In terms that all of us are able to understand:

1. An object doesn't change its speed or direction unless something else causes it to change its speed or direction.
2. The acceleration of a object is based on how dense it is and how hard it is pushed.
3. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

We all learned those in science class whether we remember them or not.

Although I have always found physics fascinating, I'm not here to teach you a lesson on physics. But I do want to show you how these same laws that we think are relegated to the physical universe can also be applied to the human heart. Let's take a moment and think about that. Every time we hear the word "object", we are going to replace it with the word "heart."

Law # 1 - A heart doesn't change its speed or direction unless something else causes it to change its speed or direction.

Isn't that true of the human heart. Our hearts often give us direction. It can force us to move slow or fast. It can make us run toward danger or flee for the sake of survival. It can reveal love to us. It can also reveal hate. It can help us discover the nature of God while at the same time giving us the choice to ignore God. Our hearts set the pace for our lives. Selena Gomez sings the song "The Heart Wants What It Wants." Our hearts give us potential, direction, and speed. That doesn't change until something interacts with our hearts and changes that potential, direction, or speed. Love, marriage, children, friendship, work, art, passion, and everything else that we do is driven by what the heart wants. And whatever interacts with our heart to change its pace and path can be good for us, or bad for us, or dangerous for us, or exciting for us, or fulfilling for us. And sometimes, we have to close some of those doors to protect our hearts. And sometimes we have to listen to our hearts to open new doors. But all those changes occur through collisions in our lives. Collisions with people, collisions

with desires, collisions with career choices, collisions with finances, collisions with art and music, collisions with teachers and mentors, and yes, collisions with The Almighty. That is how Newton's First Law of Motion works within the human heart to lift it, change it, or in some cases, destroy it.

People have the ability to change their goals as their situations change. "I am a alcoholic and a louse, I will go to AA, dedicate myself to cleaning up, apologize for my actions and change the direction of my life." Or they can say, "I am perfectly happy being a alcoholic and hurting the people who love me. It is all so hopeless so I will just continue on this path until I die." God has graciously given us the ability to be our own catalyst when it comes to change. Objects can't do that. They cannot will themselves to change. But God also created an environment where outside events can force us to re-examine our path. That doesn't guarantee change, but it does encourage it. Things like incarceration, forced rehabilitation, and intervention, feelings, and life experiences can also be catalysts that encourage us to change.

Law # 2: The acceleration of a heart is based on how dense it is and how hard it is pushed.

This one can be a little harder for us to see but let me help you visualize it. How driven is your heart? Have you ever encountered something that you just had to have? You might say that it consumes you. I got to get that new boat, or that new car. I just have to get the cabin in the woods. That woman or man is the only one I want to be with. I have to get that doctorate I have always wanted. I

want to write the great American novel. The greater the desire, the harder your heart has to work to help you get it. Your acceleration towards that goal is driven by the fuel in your heart. Whether the goal is worthwhile to anyone else or not is irrelevant. The heart wants what the heart wants. The heart gives us the persistence to pursue what the heart wants, sometimes to the detriment of everything and everyone else around us. The heart can be a laser-focused beast and will devour anything and everyone in its path to get what it wants. Those of us who are Christians understand the kind of strength and self-control that is required to tame that beast within us. We also understand that such change can only be brought about by our relationship with God.

If we turn it all over to God, He will take over the reins, bring us a fresh outlook, point us in the right direction and insure our path. But He's not there to ride shotgun. Leaving Him in shotgun mode, often means failure for us. God is not a sometimes God, a sometimes change, or minor course deviation in our lives. There are plenty of people in this world that believe in the philosophy of Jesus without ever taking time to get to know Him. But if we really want significant change, God is a full come to a stop and change course kind of event for us. Only He knows which buttons to push, pedals to press and wheels to turn. When we yoke our hearts with God heart, His heart becomes dominant, and we find ourselves follow His lead to ensure success. We have no choice but to leave the driving to Him if we want positive change. The surest way to bring about negative change is make Him ride shotgun in our lives.

Law # 3: For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

The is the most difficult one. It is not hard to understand, just difficult accepting. This is the one where we are forced to be accountable for our actions, good or bad, and the results of those actions, the consequences of our choices. When we push against our circumstances in life, life often pushes back. Life wants us to remain in stasis, unchanged. Change can hurt. And no matter how good we think the change might be for us, life is not going to make it easy for us to push back. Life can be hard. Sometimes it's like leaning into a hurricane. It's impossible for most of us unless to do that unless we have some help, a rock to put our legs against, someone to push us.

Our entire lives are filled with opposites pushing against each other as we try to maintain our balance. Good vrs. evil. Mercy vrs. revenge. Money vrs. poverty. Love vrs. hate. Gravity vrs. weightlessness. Joy vrs. sorrow. War vrs. peace. We do not enjoy conflict, but the human spirit is developed and hardened through conflict. We hate having to look in the mirror. Most of us want good in our lives, but we want to be able make wrong choices as well. We believe in mercy, unless it is us who been wronged. We want money if for no other reason than to avoid poverty. We want love, but we cling to hate. We like the security of being grounded by gravity, but we sure like the feel of weightlessness. We want joy in order to avoid sorrow. We want peace, even if we have to destroy the world to get it. There is no way for us to embrace just one side of any of these coins. It takes both sides to truly appreciate what we have. We have to work hard to

maintain our balance. We have to become rooted in the principals of God rather than embracing the dichotomy of the world.

Preacher, you are way off track here, missing the mark, avoiding what we are supposed to be talking about today. Consequences. Well, actually, it is very much to the point when we think about it.

10 The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

12 When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

We need to understand that although we have the freedom to make our own choices, those choices come with responsibility. Those choices we make are only one side of the coin. If we make a choice we have to take responsibility for that choice. We have to be willing to accept the consequences for our words and actions. How often do we only look at one side of the coin without taking time to flip it over and see what it will cost us? What will it cost somebody else? Balance. The world is often self-correcting. God made it that way. It was always a part of His plan.

Caine was angry with God. He chose to embrace that anger and redirect it into jealousy. He then took the action of killing his brother. And then he lied to God about it. All without looking at the other side of the coin. Did he really

believe that there would be no consequences for what he had done? Did he really believe that he could get away with lying to God? Did he even take a moment and think of what this might do to his parents and their community. Did he really believe that he could choose to knock the world off center without the world self-correcting? Even though he had regular conversations with God, he didn't even bother to ask God what he had done wrong to begin with, why his sacrifice was rejected, why his brother's sacrifice was accepted. Even though the concept of murder and what it meant, he never stopped to ask the only one that could give him an answer what killing his brother actually meant. His conversations with God must have been very one sided. Kind of like our own prayers, so often.

“God, I have a problem. Here is the solution to the problem. I ask that you implement my solution. That is all.” “God, the bills are piling up. I need to win the lottery. Please give me the lottery numbers. That is all.” “God, my neighbor said some really nasty things about me. I'm going to take my revenge. Please give me the resources to take that revenge. That is all.” “God, my brother has embarrassed me by being better than me. I'm going to get rid of him. I'm not going to tell you about it, but I want you to continue to bless me. That is all.” Goodness, our conversations with God can be so lopsided when we think God needs to respect our actions, words, and hidden agendas. We are so messed up and full of hubris when we talk TO God rather than talking WITH God. When Cain tells God, “I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?”, God responds with today's scripture:

“What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.”

When we first read this, it is easy to come to the conclusion that God is referencing the actual murder that Cain has committed. But if we look deeper we might be able to see that God is referencing the obvious lie that Cain has told in order to avoid taking responsibility for what he had done.

“Where is your brother?”

“I don’t know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

“Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.”

“You are lying to me and the evidence is screaming out the truth. I can hear him! Can’t you?”

Eye rolls and shrugs generally don’t find their way into scripture. Do you remember the first time that your teenager rolled their eyes at you and then shrugged you off? That exactly what I see happening here.

“So what, God? What are you going to do about it?”

The human in us wants to believe that God IS going to do something about it. We expect to find a smoldering black stain on the ground where Cain stood. A cosmic ZAP! Secretly, I think that we want to see God carry out “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” in this situation. We want corporal punishment because we believe that it is the only justice in this case. But justice is too often used as an excuse for revenge. We expect God to point His finger at Cain and bring justice (read revenge). But He doesn’t. Not only that, He doesn’t point His finger at all. We are told that God curses Cain. But that is not what the scripture says. The scripture says:

11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

12 When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

The curse is not presented as a punishment, but as a consequence. You did this. You made this choice. And this is what is going to happen because of the choice you made. This is what it takes to restore balance.

In a way, it is the perfect response. Remember Newton's third law? "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." Caine took his brother's life and then lies to God about it. The curse that he comes under is an equal and opposite reaction, a law that God built into the creation equation. This is not an "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth." It's a little more complex than that. Sometimes we are too close to something to see the justice. And this is about justice, rather than revenge.

Caine has always been a farmer. He doesn't know how to be anything but a farmer. It is his purpose in life. It is more about "who" he is, rather than "what" he does. Caine plows fields, plants seed, helps to make things grow to feed his community. It is how he serves his community. He doesn't really know how to do anything else. If you have ever talked with a farmer who has had to stop farming because of things outside of their control, you will understand how heartbreaking this is for Caine. A person called to farming would almost rather die than give up farming. If you take farming away, you take away the purpose, the calling, the reason for living. It is so much more than just their livelihood. It is part of their spirit, their soul, the reason for their existence.

And that is what happens to Caine. The curse basically takes his life away leaving him just a shell. It takes his purpose, his home, his community, his reason for being. He

is forced to wander the earth. He will never again know that joy of what feeds his soul, planting seeds and watching them grow. He will never again know the joy of the harvest. Although we may feel that the punishment doesn't fit the crime, God sees the justice that comes with the curse. In a very real sense, Caine dies that day as he is banished and left wandering without purpose.

This week, I want us to ponder Newton's three laws and how they relate to our own hearts. What is the catalyst for change in our lives? Do we even want change? Are we willing to look at both sides of the coin before we make a decision? Are we willing to take responsibility for our actions? Every decision we make has consequences. Even the smallest ones. God truly wants for us to make the right decisions, so He makes sure that we understand that He is always open to a good discussion concerning those decision before they are made. But we have to come to Him with an open heart and ears that hear as we listen intently for His input.

Consequences are the result of our action or inaction in this world, this Creation that God has made us responsible for. We are our brother's keeper, and our lives should exemplify that.

God bless you all!

AMEN

Copyright © 2022 Rev. Walt Wellborn

Scripture references provided under copyright by:

**THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973,
1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved
worldwide.**