

When I boast about God, it is not merely my opinion. I boast because of what the Bible tells us about God's indulgence. God showed excessive leniency, generosity, and consideration to His creation. He created every tree in the garden for Adam to enjoy. God also created a mighty river to feed the massive garden, and especially made a suitable partner for Adam. And even when Adam and Eve sinned, God was gentle and looked for them. He sacrificed an animal to clothe them. And even in punishment, God promised to send a Savior who would triumph over Satan. Even His banishment from the garden was an act of indulgence, for eternal life in a broken state, not reconciled with God, would have been worse than death.

The point of all this is not just to make us feel good. Knowing about God's indulgence corrects the image we have of God. Our picture of God comes into focus, from low to high definition. It affects the way we pray, and the way we see God in our daily struggles. In Genesis chapters 4-12, we see that God's indulgence is not a luxury we enjoy, but a necessity that we sorely need. Without it, we have no hope, no life, and no future.

In chapter 4, Cain offers an unsatisfactory sacrifice and kills Abel in a jealous rage. He is somewhat remorseful, and God promises that no one will harm him, lest they face sevenfold vengeance. God was indulgent to Cain, since we know from the Old Testament Law that death was a proper punishment for a murderer. But six generations later, Cain's descendant Lamech kills a man and brags, singing in verse 23, "Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy seven times." Eve needed the serpent to trick her into sinning. Then Cain killed his brother by himself. Then Lamech killed a man and was not even remorseful, but boastful of his sin. Moses is telling us, in these chapters of Genesis, that sin is a disease, gradually corrupting the human heart. From when sin was introduced into the world, humans became progressively worse. We are not sinners because we occasionally do individual acts of rebellion against God; we are sinners because we are infected with the disease that is sin, which gradually distances our hearts from God.

In chapter 5, we see what the result of that disease is. Generation after generation are listed; and all Adam's descendants, save Enoch, die. The message is clear, the world is infected with sin; it corrupts humans and leads to their death. We may think we are good people, but the

reality is that we are infected with the same disease as Adam, Cain, Lamech and their descendants. And that disease leads ultimately to death. We need God's indulgence, since through Jesus Christ He conquered sin and death for us. Without God's indulgence, we have no life, hope, or future.

One might think that the flood, described in chapters 6-9 would solve the problem of sin, since only a righteous few survived. But in chapter 9, we see that the first thing Noah does after the flood is plant a vineyard, get drunk, and expose himself shamefully as his son Ham mocks him. It is clear that the problem of sin wasn't solved. The cancer was cut off, but its roots were still in place. Finally, Moses ends chapter 9 with Noah's death. Again, nothing regarding the problem of sin was fixed. Chapter 4-12 show us that after God's indulgence in the garden and even in His punishment, sin grows and corrupts humanity. It is clear that humanity needs God's indulgence more than ever because without it, mankind has no ability in himself to return to a place of blessing from God.

In chapter 12, God tells Abraham to leave his home for Canaan and promises: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you; and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you." Abraham, like those before him, was infected with that death-bringing disease, sin. He deserved nothing, just like Adam, and like us. But God indulged Abraham and blessed him and the world through him. The only antidote for sin is God's indulgence; because being infected with sin, we will never deserve salvation. Thus any salvation God gives is excessive and indulgent. God gives the antidote to us for free and pays the price himself. Jesus is the embodiment of God's indulgence. Thus God's indulgence is absolutely necessary for us. It is not a luxury, but an unmerited necessity. Praise be to God who gives His indulgence!