

LESSONS LEARNED FROM CAIN AND ABEL

Text: Genesis 4:1-8

INTRO: Our text relates a story we have heard many times, but like other Bible passages, one can hardly reflect upon this text without taking note of some great lesson that he has overlooked in earlier studies. In this sermon, we want to examine 5 primary thoughts--5 lessons learned from Cain and Abel.

I. BROTHERS ARE OFTEN VERY DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER.

A. Cain & Abel were of different occupations, different temperament, even different religiously. And all this in spite of the fact that they were from the same background, the same teaching, the same influences.

1. While it is true that a person will always be to some extent a product of his up-bringing, in the final analysis, each person will be what he himself chooses

2. Cain's sins did not stem from some "inherited" sinful nature, but from his free moral agency. He chose to do wrong. He could have chosen to do right, vs. 7.

3. Cain's sin no more establishes the existence of an "inherited sinful nature" than Adam's sin suggests that he was created with a sinful nature. Neither is the case. Both individuals sinned by choice--not by God's design.

4. Adam & Eve, like other parents, were a mixture of good & bad. Their sin of eating the forbidden fruit is well known, but afterward, they continued to acknowledge God & His providence, vs. 1, 25.

B. The different occupations chosen by Cain & Abel may have influenced their differing religious practices.

1. There are other such cases in Scripture. Acts 19:24-28.

2. Of course it was not wrong for Cain to be a tiller of the ground-- but it was wrong to use his occupation as an excuse for ignoring the will of God. Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17.

C. Regardless of the reasons, Cain & Abel practiced different religions. Cain might have reasoned, "One sacrifice is as good as another."--But was it so?

1. In religion, there are 2 primary pathways: man's & God's. Isa 55:8-9.

Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain. (Jude 11).

2. Of course, with regard to man's way, there could conceivably be as many versions of religious practice as there are men. But only God's way is right. John 14:6; Eph. 4:5.

3. Cain's worship was rejected, not because of who offered it. God didn't "have it in for" Cain or play favorites with Abel. Cain's worship

was rejected because he did not worship in God's way. Cain, like Frank Sinatra & Elvis, did his way, Jude 11.

D. Even in God's spiritual family, the church, brethren will be different from each other in many ways.

1. They will hold different occupations, have different talents, abilities, opportunities.

2. They will have different weaknesses, problems, & strengths.

3. They will have different interests, hobbies, pastimes, etc.

4. Also, because of differing states of spiritual maturity, brethren will hold different convictions about some spiritual matters. Continued growth will minimize these differences. Lack of growth will tend to crystallize & magnify them & cause them to drive wedges between brethren.

II. NOT ALL WORSHIP IS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD.

- A. The Bible speaks of ignorant worship, Acts 17:23; vain worship, Matt. 15:9; will-worship (self imposed religion), Col. 2:23. But none of these kinds of worship is pleasing to God.

- B. The kind of worship God seeks and man must offer is that kind which is in spirit and in truth, John 4:24.

Now therefore fear the Lord, & serve Him in sincerity & in truth; & put

away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River in Egypt; Serve the Lord. (Josh. 24:14).

III. PEOPLE WHO ARE WRONG RELIGIOUSLY OFTEN BECOME ANGRY WHEN THEIR SINS ARE POINTED OUT. In such cases, friends sometimes don't act very friendly, and brothers sometimes don't act very brotherly. Cain didn't.

A. Perhaps in such cases, anger is in order--but it should be directed at self.

B. Of course, the anger is more often directed toward God or toward the teacher who teaches God's truth. Gal 4:16.

[Ahab] said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (1 K 22:8).

C. Cain took his anger out on his brother, whose worship had pleased God. The righteous man is a thorn in the side of every willful sinner--because the righteous man is living proof that the sinner himself could have lived acceptably.

IV. IN THE CASE OF CAIN, WE HAVE A CLEAR EXAMPLE OF THE PROGRESSIVENESS OF SIN.

- A. Self-willed.
- B. Envious.
- C. Angry without cause.
- D. Murderous.
- E. Deceitful.

V. BY THE NATURE OF THINGS, SIN CRIES OUT TO GOD FOR RETRIBUTION, vs. 9-10. Num. 32:23.

A. Christ died for our sins--if we will appropriate His sacrifice by obeying His will.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him & by His stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5).

B. But His sacrifice will avail only if we obey His gospel from our hearts, Heb 5:9; Matt 7:21; Rom 6:17-18.

La Porte, TX, October 18, 1981

Exton, PA, June 2, 1985

Exton, PA, December 14, 1986

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, November 6, 1994

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, November 7, 2004