

Two Brothers and a Lamb

So, approximately 5000 to 6000 years ago Adam and Eve lived in a perfect garden paradise—the Garden of Eden.

When God put them in the garden He only gave them one commandment—“Don’t eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

Like any father he wanted to preserve the innocence of his children ... they were in fact created in His image.

However, as we saw last week, they disobeyed God and this first act of sin not only caused them to fall short of the glory of God ...

... it now means that everyone born has sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Adam and Eve were perfect because they were created in God’s image but we are all sinful because we are not perfectly in God’s image ... we are fallen.

In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. ² He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created. ³ When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. (Gen. 5:1-3)

All of humanity is in the image of Adam ... not God.

God don’t make no junk but sin does.

We are a copy of a fallen copy.

Because of Adam and Eve’s sin all of creation bears the curse of that sin.

... this is where every evil and depravity come from

... this is where every wicked thought and action was born.

... this is where sickness comes from.

... this is where death comes from

... this is where thorns and thistles come from

And because Adam and Eve were no longer perfect, they could no longer stay in the perfect garden.

... not only that there was another in the garden God no longer wanted them to eat from.

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever "--²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.²⁴ So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen. 3:22-24)

Isn't it interesting that God never forbid them to eat of the "tree of life" and yet they completely bypassed that tree and went straight to the only one God told them to not eat from.

It's interesting that we find this same tree in heaven.

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,² in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Rev. 22:1-2)

So, Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden and that brings us to Genesis 4 which is the first picture of life in the outside world.

... In this story we find two sons who are farmers and tenders of sheep because, as the curse of sin demanded "by the sweat of your brow you shall eat food."

... that's why in another place you will read that a man who doesn't work shouldn't eat.

Let's first read this story.

Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD." ² Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. ⁴ Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; ⁵ but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. ⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷ "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." ⁸ Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"¹⁰ He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. ¹¹ "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." ¹³ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! ¹⁴ "Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."¹⁵ So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. (Gen. 4:1-16)

There are at least three powerful truths that rise up from this story.

1. Painful experiences can bring positive results.

The first lesson we learn come from the words of Eve, “**With the Help of the Lord I have brought forth [acquired] a man**” (4:1)

In one way (on face value) Eve’s words seem to be positive, because she is acknowledging the Lord’s help.

But in another way, you can see that she is boasting that she has “brought forth” a man in the same way that God “brought forth” Adam.

... and we see this kind of thing throughout the book of Genesis ... in fact throughout the history of the world.

Time and time again we try to make, or get, with our human efforts (and fail) the blessings that only God can give.

... to often we push aside God's promises in favor of our own attempts.

That will be the **story of the tower of Babel** ... they try to make their own successful world without God.

God promised Abraham a son ... but when things didn't happen or looked hopeless because they were so old ... Sarah convinced Abraham to sleep with her servant Hagar.

... and sometimes God lets us "do our own thing" so that we can learn that it is better to trust in God.

Sarah's servant did get pregnant by Abraham, and she had a child they named Ishmael... but later Sarah also got pregnant (as God had said) and the promised son Isaac was born.

The Israelites are the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

... and if you are wondering about the negative consequences of Abraham sleeping with Hagar you have to look no further than the middle east at the unending conflict between Palestine and Israel.

One of the interesting parts of this story is Eve boasts over Cain which "she brought forth" but not over Abel.

... and as we see Cain ends up killing Abel.

Now, compare Eve's early boasting to what she says when her third son is born.

"God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him." (4:25)

(I have brought forth vs. God has appointed)

She knows that God has given her a child to replace lost Abel and Seth (the younger child) becomes the one

... It's all God!

Pain hurts, nobody likes it ... everyone tries to avoid pain but what we often fail to see is the positive aspect of pain.

When you burn your finger on a hot plate you immediately recoil to keep from burning it severely ... and then when you get near a plate like that the next time you are more cautious.

One of the worst things about leprosy is that you don't feel pain ... so you can cut, burn, step on something sharp and hurt yourself terribly but no know it till later.

There is physical pain, emotional pain, even mental pain ...

Pain is never pleasant, but it can be profitable.

Let me say it this way:

Pain is often God's instrument to reveal who we are and what we need.

We see over and over again in the book of Judges that it was only when Israel was oppressed by the Midianites of the Philistines that they turned God.

For Sampson it took being blinded and being shackled to a grist mill to get him to turn to God.

David wrote: *It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes. (Ps. 119:71)*

Paul tells us that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness.

James writes that the trying of our faith builds patience.

“We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.... No doubt pain as God's megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment. it removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of the rebel soul.”- C.S. Lewis

Painful experiences can bring positive results.

2. Our Attitudes are an Indicator of our Heart

And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So, Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

The second lesson comes from Cain, and it come first and foremost in the attitude of his heart.

... There is no substitute for a pure heart

In the story we find both Cain and Abel bringing an offering to worship God which proves that they were accustomed to the worship of God.

... this wasn't the first time

... but this may have been the first time for them (rather than Adam) to bring the offering.

In this part of the story, we discover **the two elements** that pleases God in worship.

First, we see the need of a pure heart.

(In the Beatitudes Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”)

True worship begins in the heart and the object upon which the heart focuses.

We read that God did not accept Cain's offering and before you can even ask “why not” we find out.

... God does not accept Cain's offering because Cain's heart is not right because of his response to God's rejection.

... Rather than appeal to God for answers to why his offering was rejected, Cain gets angry.

... first at God in verse 4 and then at his brother Abel in verse 8.

But I want you to notice mercy in the way that God responds to Cain's anger.

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

When your heart is not right, you will not do well, sin will conquer you ...

"God not only objects but abhors the sacrifices of the wicked, however splendid they may appear in the eyes of men." – J Calvin

[there is a way that seems right]

... this is the whole agenda of Satan, to conquer and destroy you.

GOD SAYS TO CAIN, "YOU NEED TO MASTER THE SIN IN YOUR HEART!"

There are two ways Cain can go at this point.

... He can persist in his proud heart and refuse to bring a blood offering ... or he can humble himself and obey and find favor and fellowship with God.

What will he do ... what will He do?

In Deut. 19:11 Moses tells us that the murderer "lies in wait for his neighbor and rises up to kill him."

This is exactly what we read here ...

And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Cain was so angry at God and so jealous of Abel that in anger he killed his own brother!

Cain's attitude of anger proves that when he brought his offering to God his heart was not right.

In order to have a right relationship with God you not only need a pure heart, you also need the right sacrifice.

I've read some newer scholars who say that the fact that Cain brought vegetables and produce rather than a lamb had nothing to do with God rejecting his sacrifice.

Let me just go on record to say that the whole context of the Bible teaches us that a blood sacrifice is necessary for a right relationship with God.

Cain's sacrifice is the fruit of 'cursed ground'—cursed ground that required the work and effort of man in order to produce fruit.

... yes, Cain may have brought his very best fruit and it may have been beautiful...

... but God refused to accept it because Cain's sacrifice represented a false religion

... Like every false religion it was bloodless and the fruit of man's work

From the very beginning God wants us to know that we are not saved by our works or our own righteous efforts ...

... no matter how hard we try we can't save ourselves

... We need a perfect sacrificial lamb!

Cain's sacrifice represents every other religion that says "DO" Abel's sacrifice represents Christianity which says "DONE" ... it has been done for us.

Like Abel, Cain knew what God expected but decided to ignore God and "do his own thing."

... do what suited him.

... maybe Cain thought God would see his vegetables and say, “Oh Cain, you are so much wiser than me ... this is so nice.”

When people go looking for a church sometimes that is what they are doing—

... they are looking for a religion that suits them

... and churches make the same mistake on the other side ... they try to give people what they are wanting and looking for

... the Church needs to be more concerned about what God says than what people want.

Cain’s offering came from a self-centered man who thought that God should conform to his desires and wishes.

The Apostle Jude, speaking of evil and wicked people says, “*Woe to them? For they have gone the way of Cain...*”

... Even at the end of the Bible God is still talking about Cain’s attitude and sin.

Abel didn’t bring a lettuce or a lemon he brought a lamb ...

... Abel’s offering was accepted because he had the right heart and the right sacrifice.

The writer of Hebrews (11:4) tells us that Abel’s sacrifice was more excellent than Cain’s—Abel through faith obtained righteousness.

... and where did Abel’s faith come from? You can’t have faith until God speaks.

Abel had faith because he heard what God said.

Faith is a fruit, result, consequence of God’s speaking.

Faith is taking God at his Word and that is exactly what Abel did.

Abel, even without the written bible, knew and understood God's plan of redemption.

Listen to what Jesus said in Luke 11:

⁴⁹ “For this reason also the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah (Luke 11:49-51)

Abel was a prophet, and the Pharisees were partakers in Abel's death because their religion was the religion of Cain ...

In fact, Acts 10:43 tells us that every prophet had the same message.

“Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.” (Act 10:43)

The work of redemption wasn't something that God just stumbled upon in the New Testament.

Revelation 13:8 tells us that Jesus Christ was slain from before the foundation of the world—that means that when God created man, he already had bloody Calvary in His heart ...

Before the worlds were formed God had planned our redemption.

- The Old Testament says somebody is coming.
- The New Testament Gospels say somebody has come.
- The Epistles and the Revelation tells us that somebody is coming again and that somebody is Jesus.
- Jesus is the hero of the bible.

Read it. From the second child of the first family the message of Jesus was told.

... of HIM all the prophets bear witness.

Painful experiences can bring positive results.

Our Attitudes are an Indicator of our Heart

3. God's Mercy is Wider than our Expectation

Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!"

There is no question that Cain is the villain of the story ... but God shows mercy to sinners and villains.

First God comes to Cain with questions and of course Cain responds with questions of his own.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"¹⁰ He said, "What have you done?"

Cain answers a question with a question because he is deflecting ... he knows he is guilty.

... God knows Cain is guilty (as with Adam in chapter 3) ...

God wants Cain to admit and verbalize his guilt.

¹⁰ He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. ¹¹ "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." (Gen. 4:10-12)

Here in the picture of Cain's banishment we see not only a reflection of the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden but also a prophetic echo of Israel's future banishment to Assyria and then Babylon.

God would not be God if he was not both holy and just.

But the glory of God is truly revealed in God's response to Cain's plea.

¹³ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! (Gen. 4:13)

Although most English versions read “my punishment” the sense of the Hebrew word is really “my iniquity.”

Cain is not merely complaining about the punishment, to some degree he is expressing remorse over his sin.

And we know that because of what is said next.

¹⁴ "Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." ¹⁵ So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him. (Gen. 4:14-15)

Cain says, “O God I’m going to be driven out of my community, I’m going to be vulnerable and unprotected.”

Cain’s appeal for protection proves that even Cain has had some change of heart.

... Cain’s request for protection from God means he is finally admitting that he needs God.

... **Now this is not repentance** ... but it is a sign that he is beginning to feel the weight of his sin.

... God pities Cain and acts mercifully towards him.

Why? Paul says it this way.

⁴ Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)

God’s compassion toward and undeserving Cain is with intention.

... there is the possibility, and the hope, that as Cain wanders the earth he will come to the place where he would offer to God the right sacrifice.

You must see that **God's mercy is wider** and **His longsuffering longer** than you and I would ever expect.

"God's love is an exercise of his goodness toward sinners. As such, it has the nature of grace and mercy. It is an outgoing of God in kindness which not merely is undeserved, but is actually contrary to desert; for the objects of God's love are rational creatures who have broken God's law, whose nature is corrupt in God's sight, and who merit only condemnation and final banishment from his presence." – J.I. Packer

This part of the story shows us that we can throw ourselves upon the character and mercy of God and we will not be disappointed!

We don't know if Cain did ... but we do know that Cain could have.

This is grace shouting at us from even the earliest pages of scripture.

I want to live you with this question. **Where are you at today?**

- Are you in the place of Eve where we are trying by your own efforts to get the blessings that only God can give?
- Maybe you are in the place of Abel where you feel you have been unjustly treated.
- Perhaps you are in the place of Cain feeling angry, bitter, and jealous.
- Maybe you are facing the just rebuke of God for sins you have committed.
- Possibly is that you just feel lost, untethered, floating, wandering through life.

No matter where you are the mercy of God is calling you, by faith to receive the full measure of His redeeming grace.

I don't care who you've been or what you've done ...

I don't care what you think people think of you ...

I don't even care if it's true or not ...

No matter where you are you can throw yourself upon God and if you do ... you will find that our God is **FULL OF GRACE AND RICH IN MERCY!**