

CAIN & ABEL, GENESIS 4

The Formidable Unforgotten #1

◆ **Intro:** Cain and Abel were two brothers, and sons of Adam and Eve, our first parents. Interestingly, we know very little about their childhoods or lives, with the exception of the incident when one killed the other; the first murder recorded in the Scriptures.

◆ What's true in science is also true in human nature; things tend to go from good to worse. In science we call this the second law of thermal dynamics. In anthropology we call it sin. Before the 20th Century a lot of people believed mankind was basically good. After two world wars, it became evident to the populous that that wasn't so true. But as the atrocities of man grow more distant, people again start to think the best of themselves. Now I don't want to be Jonny Raincloud here, but it is not healthy for us to pretend that down deep people are basically good. Oh there is wonderful goodness inside human nature. But as scripture makes clear, that goodness is eclipsed by a greater force of evil and every person has the virus. Cain and Abel's story teaches us not to put our trust in ourselves for a better future. Maybe the best way for this to sink in is to admit personally that ...

◆ **1. My sin compounds, and I have by nature a huge capacity for it.** It is the nature of sin to multiply that which does not lead to health. It's just like cancer cells; these are regular body cells that continue to grow when and where they should not. Sin is cancer in the same fashion, it is a living, growing reality. It's like revolving credit on your credit card. You might pay the minimum balance, but that just means you'll pay

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30% interest on the lump still owed, and that lump never disappears because you don't pay it off, so you pay interest on the same money over and over and over, month after month, year after year! Moral wrong builds up like lime deposits on your faucet aerator. (You'd think, how does mineral deposit get on that little screen with water washing over it every day!) This is how sin is in the human heart. It collects.

◆Cain is our example. The text says he brought "some" of his produce, while Abel brought his best to God. (This is the first mention of any kind of worship of God in the Bible.) Presumably dad and mom (Adam and Eve) taught the boys to thank and honor God. But there is a clear contrast. Cain is going through the motions, shuffling into church, (so-to-speak), and tossing a buck in the offering so he doesn't look bad. No heart in it. Things just go down the slippery hill from there. We might call Cain's attitude simple complacency: he doesn't care much, or think much about it.

◆Hit the pause button. Is there an area in your life where you're being complacent? That is, not concerned about it. Not giving any genuine attention to. Not caring is the first step on the stairway down to the basement of life.

◆But that simple complacency leads him to jealousy of his brother who is approved, and then to murder. I mean, what was he really thinking? That killing Abel would make him look better?

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There is no logic in our sin. He kills his brother merely because he feels bad about how he looks!

◆ *"Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous."*
1 John 3:12, NIV.

◆ Rather than repent of his complacent view of God, he is caught in the snowballing addiction to looking good so much so that his only thought is to remove the light that displays his darkness; his brother.

◆ **B.** I wonder if we notice what's happening psychologically in Cain. On the one hand, Cain wants terribly not to look bad. He lusts for approval (people can lust for many things: achievement, wealth, sex, recognition). His lust/desire leads him to anger. Psychologists call this a "lust-rage polarity". Constant dominant desire, pursued in ways that never really pay off, leads to constant underlying frustration and dissatisfaction with life. A lustful person is often also an angry person and vs.

◆ On the other hand, Cain hurts, shamed because he acted unacceptably. His hurt is covered by anger, which is almost always our first reaction, and his anger leads him to murder. Anger and murder are the same root of course. What did Jesus say?

◆ *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to*

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judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." Matthew 5:21, 22, NIV.

◆ How you doing with this? Are you able to get really mad at someone? Are we the type that can boil over in repulsion to people who disagree with us, or even those who treat us poorly. Well then, Scripture would say we've got the murder virus in our blood whether we're asymptomatic or not.

◆ This wasn't temporary insanity on Cain's part. He premeditated it, drew Abel out into seclusion of the fields. We don't want people to see that we're doing wrong, and that's gotta tell you something about sin and wrong. There's a hidden nature to sin that keeps us from getting better. Let's ponder that characteristic of sin for a moment.

◆ Evil (call it badness, sin, wrong) by nature prefers to be hidden, and this keeps us from healing

◆ *"And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." John 3:19, 20, NASB.*

◆ Is there anything in your life you don't want people to know? Then you are right there with Cain. And it's a red flag, really! The

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hidden never stays where it is. As we have seen, it compounds, it grows. The hiddenness of cancer is one of its worst factors because it keeps us from addressing it until it's often too late.

◆ I don't care what you're struggling with in life, what it is that you do over and over, or go to over and over, of just can't stop yourself from, even though down deep you know it's not good and your true self wants freedom from. That bondage is your jail, and it's been in mankind since the first family.

◆ **2. Technical improvement is not an indicator of spiritual improvement.** One of our first responses to failure is to determine that we will do better. This is a mistake we often make. We think humanity is on an ever rising plain, that education will make us better, that time will bring improvement, that our negative characteristics will dissipate with age. None of this is true! History has proved us wrong but we cling to this fantasy! In Genesis, the biblical author is showing us the escalating nature of sin, all the while culture is progressing.

◆ **A.** Adam's genealogy (Ch.4, interrupted by the first murder story) names people along with their giftedness. It reads something like this:

- ◆ Abel is called shepherd of the flock
- ◆ Cain is called tiller of the land
- ◆ Enoch is a city builder
- ◆ Jabal is called dweller in tents
- ◆ Jubal's line develops musical instrument.

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- ◆Tubal-cain, is called the forger of all implements of bronze and iron
- ◆John Dunbar is called “dances with wolves...”
- ◆It seems so progressive and positive. And we still like to pat our progress on the back today. After all, didn't mankind find and employ metal working? Didn't the Roman empire introduce us to a road network? Don't we have cars and planes? Haven't we put people on the moon, for goodness sake? Well, it doesn't have much to do with goodness, really. You see, *man's spirituality has not matched the trajectory of his technology.*
- ◆People do not mature spiritually just because they mature physically. I will not get better just because I get older. I can become better at doing things, but that does not make me a better person. Genesis is showing us this.
 - ◆First Adam and Eve directly disobey God and Eden is lost, and agriculture becomes a harder task. They leave Eden, but are nearby.
 - ◆Then Cain, the agricultural worker deepens the curse (v12). Now he can't farm at all. And he leaves the Eden area to go “East of Eden”, “out from the presence of the Lord.”(16) Things are going spiritually downhill.
 - ◆v9 when Adam was called out by God, Adam told the truth. When God approaches Cain, he lies. He even get's witty; “Am I my brother's shepherd” (the shepherds

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shepherd). Cain is much more hardened even than are his parents, Adam and Eve.

◆v23-24 Lamek boldly declares himself worse than Cain!

He has the same violent traits and rather than be ashamed, he thinks it noble!

◆Sin is more entrenched and humanity is further alienated from God than before. The writer's intent is to show us that mankind's guilt is well established and increasing with history in spite of his abilities.

◆And here's our lesson: I can live on my giftedness for a while, but unless my spirituality is ascending, my life will be all suffering and lostness anyway. My guilt and sinfulness will always drag my spirit downward even if my talent is headed upward. Even if I'm religious, that won't solve my sinfulness. Genesis has been trying to convince us all morning that we must stop telling ourselves things like...

◆I'll fix this. I'll do better.

◆Put it in the hands of the people and everything will be fine.

◆Put it in the hands of the government and we'll reach utopia.

◆We just need more education.

◆We'll find a way.

◆No we won't. In all the years man has been on the face of the earth the human heart hasn't evolved.

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◆“For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean’.”
Mark 7:21-23, NIV.

◆So what do we do. There’s really only one thing.

◆3. Regular, humble repentance, and power outside myself are my only real hope concerning my own wrong.

◆And that’s the one thing Cain doesn’t do! Come on Cain, say you’re sorry! Ask for forgiveness! But no. Let’s face it, most of us here right now might agree that we are sinful beings. But most of us here right now could probably not name anything about themselves in the last 24 hours that they *feel* is sinful. Actually, unless we are in the throes of a particular habit, or caught up in some extraordinary evil at the moment –we think of ourselves as pretty good, untroubled by significant moral lacking.

◆On the other hand, we can enumerate several things wrong with our spouse, friends and neighbors without much trouble at all. This just means we are mostly blind to our own faults.

◆There is only one answer to spiritual disease. It’s healing through Jesus Christ.

◆“The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are

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those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." 1 Corinthians 15:47-49, NIV.

◆ Therefore daily repentance is my best hope of fighting sin's build up in my life. This is regular spiritual discipline because sin is like hair/whiskers, it grows back every day. Christ is the only razor that can shave off sin. His blood is the moisturizer that protects us from God's cutting wrath against evil. Repentance is asking Jesus to make our faces clean.

◆ *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:7-9, NIV.*

◆ The answer to cancer is to kill that bad cells or cut them out. The answer to revolving credit is to cut up the credit card you can't afford. The answer to lime deposit is to dissolve it with Lime-Away or something. The answer to the power of sin, is confession, repentance, and help from outside myself.

◆ **Conclusion:** You and I, and for that matter, your little blue-eyed, pink-toed child have just as much potential to do evil as Hitler, Stalin, or Saddam. But all is not lost, friends. There is a way out of the jail of our sin. Accept help. Accept Christ. Bow your heart before his love and Lordship. Cain's sin was not that

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he did the wrong thing. But that when God invited him to do the right thing and draw nearer, he refused.

◆ *"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:1, 2, NIV.*