

GENESIS 4:1-15
ANGER AND PRIDE WHEN THINGS DON'T SIT WELL

¹Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." ²Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. ⁴Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, ⁵but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

⁶So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

⁸Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. ¹¹So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹²When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

¹³And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! ¹⁴Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me." ¹⁵And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

Do you desire to be on top—in some aspect of life, in some circle? To be on top, to be number one, feels great—whether getting done first, doing the job the best, winning in popularity, having the most strength, authority, brains money, looks. "Superiority" comes with being on top. To be further down generates resentment and anger.

Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, had two sons, Cain and Abel. "Cain" means "acquired" —"I have acquired/gotten a man from the Lord," Eve said. "Abel" means "breath, vapor"—perhaps signifying that life is so "non-touchable and abstract." Cain and Abel had different interests. To this day God makes each different from another; you are not a clone of someone else. Cain was all about tilling the ground, agriculture, farming. Abel was a keeper of flocks, a sheep-man, concerned for the needs of each sheep as shepherds are. Both had godly callings. In fact, Jesus Himself is described as 1) the firstfruits of the harvest, in His resurrection from the grave—that is, the first of a long line of souls to be raised from death; and 2) as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world—that is, God's sacrifice for us. You, with whatever gifts and abilities the Lord has given you, also serve the Lord—farmer, rancher, welder, tech.work, health care, teacher, bookkeeper, mom, etc.

We are not told how old Cain and Abel were, when they brought offerings to God. In the previous chapters, nothing is even written about God desiring offerings or sacrifices to be brought to Him. Cain and Abel must have learned this from their parents. Surely Adam and Eve freely honored the Lord with offerings; for He had made them, blessed them, and spared them from the "just desserts" of their disobedience. In love and compassion He had promised He would send One into the world, to be born the seed of the woman, to put Satan in his place, to be our Savior. Cain and Abel brought offerings. Abel's sacrifice was pleasing to the Lord. Cain's was not. How did God indicate so? Maybe it was the direction of the smoke!? But, what was wrong with Cain's offering? Was it the type of material Cain brought—crops of the field? No! Hebrews 11:4 tells us, *By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.* Abel's sacrifice was offered in faith—that is, in trust, knowing that God would send a Savior whom Abel himself needed for forgiveness and righteousness before God. Joy and love were in Abel's offering. Cain's offering, on the other hand, must have been brought merely as an outward obligation, something that was expected. The difference was huge. The Lord is always interested in the heart, not in the "material" given. Abel willingly brought the firstlings and the fat—the "best"—to God. Cain apparently just brought "something." His offering was not an offering of the faith and love of his heart.

Cain became angry when his sacrifice was not accepted. His unhappiness was seen in his face; "his countenance fell." He was not "on top," not in first place, his sacrifice not acceptable to God; and he was angry. Perhaps Cain felt God was playing favorites. (Certainly, playing favorites is never a good or right thing.) Also Cain was angry with Abel. Abel made him look bad. Good behavior always makes bad behavior look bad. These things

did not suit Cain. The Lord, in His kindness and love, came to Cain, to warn him about his anger and the sin which was looking to seize him thoroughly. God would help him master his unhappiness. You also cannot battle sin on your own. You need the love, concern, and pardon of God in Jesus to steer your heart and your will to honor Him.

Cain did not master the sin at his heart's door; his anger grew. He spoke with Abel—likely in a very pleasant and deceptive manner. Then out in the field, he killed him! ended his life, got rid of him. Now Abel's offerings, and life of faith in the Lord could not "bug" Cain. Sin makes a person stupid. How do two wrongs make a right? Uncontrolled anger, leads to hate, and hate leads to murder. Do not let anger grow in your heart. With God's help, forget the issue and stop stewing about it; or, even better, talk it out with the person and resolve it. Unresolved anger only grows worse. Pride gets into the picture as well. Pride does not like to forget or resolve anger. Pride wants to be on top, and will not back down. Unchecked anger and pride only lead to deeper sins—such as beating a dumb animal, wrecking good equipment, destroying precious possessions, tongue-lashing a friend or family member, doing physical harm, giving way to hate and murder. God says, "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer." Murder takes place in the heart, long before with the hands. It is a vile sin.

After Cain's devilish sin, God spoke with him again. "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain lied, "I don't know." God knows all. Sin makes a person stupid. Cain's pride added, "Umm, God, this is a foolish question. Don't You know, I am not my brother's keeper. I don't watch him every minute." Pride dodges the truth. Pride will not admit wrongs. Pride says, "I'm on top"; and pride becomes angry if someone says otherwise. Stop denying your sin. Stop lying to God and others about your sin. Stop trying to blame God. "God, You made me this way; You put me in this position." There is no evil in God.

Why did God ask Cain these things, if God knows all? God was opening the door for Cain's repentance. He was seeking for Cain's heart to say, "Lord, (with a sigh of hopelessness), Lord, I have sinned—shamefully, wickedly, and stupidly. Lord, forgive me. Can You forgive me? Forgive me for the sake of the Promised Savior who will come and pay the price for me. Lord, please." God wants every heart to repent, to give up on self, to trust His promise of forgiveness in Christ.

Cain's anger and pride did not repent. Because Cain had shed Abel's blood in a field where Cain had sought the Lord to grant him crops and harvest (sin makes a person stupid), God announced to him the plan going forward. "The ground by which you seek to live, and which you have defiled with your brother's blood, will not produce good harvests for you. Your relationship with the land is cursed. You will have to move from place to place to "eek" out a living. You will not be able to say, this place is home. You will be a wanderer, vagabond, fugitive, always on the move." Take note, brothers and sisters, a willful life of any sin only brings unhappiness.

One might ask, why did God even allow Cain the murderer to live? Didn't God later say that murderers should be put to death? Yes. Here we simply trust God's ways. God doesn't have to explain Himself to us. We marvel at His grace, giving Cain more time to repent. For us each day is a day of grace to draw closer to God.

As far as we know, Cain never did repent of taking his brother's life—for sure not this day. He did regret the consequences that he would have to face. "My punishment is too great. I will have to wander. People will want to kill me." (By the way, Adam and Eve did have other sons and daughters, Genesis 5:4.) Suddenly Cain was concerned about someone ending his life! Beware, do not just regret punishment for wrongs. Regret the action, the sin! Repent! In Jesus there is forgiveness. God told Cain that He would deal seven times more severely with anyone who killed him. God even set a mark upon Cain, to tell others, "Hands off!" We have no idea what that mark was.

Why did Abel have to die? God does not tell us. We trust our Father. God took him home, even through a wicked act. Abel is still held up to us as a faithful believer, who died for his faith.

It's a rather gloomy account. Yet our hearts are pointed to a bright light at the end of this dark tunnel. God blessed Adam and Eve with another son—"Seth, which means "established." Adam and Eve's family line would be "established" in Seth. From Seth would come Noah, Abraham, etc. all the way down to Jesus! Jesus would also be a "son" mistreated and put to death in innocence. YET the blood of Jesus cries out to the Father for your pardon, for forgiveness for our sins, washes clean those who trust in His name, the crucified and risen Savior! Although you sin and are not top-notch in God's eyes, yet in Jesus you do finish at the top! He is your Redeemer, setting you free from your guilt and punishment at the price of His own blood—even your sins of anger and pride. In Adam's special son, the great-great-great-etc. grandson born through Seth, you are saved! Hymn 158:4 says "Abel's blood, for vengeance, pleaded to the skies: but the blood of Jesus, for our pardon cries!"

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---