

THE FRUIT OF HATE

Genesis 4:1-15

The home of Adam and Eve, which was of divine appointment, was designed for the increase of the human family and for the training of their children. Genesis four takes us into their home after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden and introduces us to their first two children.

I. The Story.

The birth of a child is always an exciting event, and one can easily imagine that it was especially so when the first boy ever to be born made his appearance. To these parents his coming was a greater miracle than that of their own existence. What joy! What concern for his welfare! And what plans for his future!

Eve acknowledged the power of God in the birth of her son in the words, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," or, as another version has it, "I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah." Thus Eve gave the credit for her great joy to the proper Person. Every parent should recognize that each child is a divine gift to be cherished as a sacred and precious trust.

This first boy was named "Cain," signifying an "acquisition" or a "possession" of great value. This baby was indeed a treasure that was potent with possibility. When their second son was born there was not any indication that Eve rejoiced as she did over the birth of Cain. It was quite obvious that she did not expect very much from him. This second son was given the name of "Abel," which signifies "breath," or "vapor," or "not lasting" and which was prophetic of the brevity of his earthly life.

These parents were faithful in their God-given responsibility to the extent that they taught their sons to work. They did not allow their boys to spend their time in idleness, but required them to develop their youthful energies in useful and helpful employment, thereby reminding us of the necessity and dignity of work as one of the very essentials of human life and progress.

These brothers were quite different in their personalities, interests, and occupations. Abel chose the gentle and peaceful work of a shepherd or keeper of sheep, which was a very honorable vocation during the early centuries, engaged in by such famous men as Moses and David. Cain chose a more active occupation and became a tiller of the soil or an agriculturist, a vocation which has become more important with the passing of the years. Abel's occupation caused him to depend more upon the blessing of God than upon his own skill and efforts. Thinking that he produced the results which he obtained with the labor of his hands, Cain was more inclined to rely upon himself than upon God for help.

These brothers were taught to worship as well as to work. Born of the same parents, reared in the same home, taught the same things, and living in the same environment, these brothers became worshipers of the same God, in the same place, at the same altar, and in the same way, namely, by the presentation of offerings. They knew what many present-day church members have not learned, namely, that worship is giving rather than getting, or ascribing rather than appropriating. Their parents had taught them that there was an appointed time when they should enter God's presence, and that an appointed means of approach to God had been established and designated.

II. The Sacrifices.

Instead of centering our attention on the two men themselves, let us now focus our attention upon the difference between their offerings. Their offerings were not even the same in matter.

Cain brought an offering from "the fruit of the ground," in recognition of the fact that God was his Creator and was therefore worthy of his homage. Abel brought an offering from "the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof," in recognition of his need of a covering for sin. Cain's thank-offering was an act of homage and was bloodless. Abel's sin-offering was a plea for forgiveness and was one of blood and life.

Believing that God could be pleased with the results of a man's own works and accept him because of them, Cain brought to Him the fruit of the earth which God had cursed, and presented His offering with much personal satisfaction. Cain reminds us of self-centered and self-righteous people today to whom the blood of Christ is repulsive and who, therefore, trust in their own character and works for salvation. Even though his offering cost him considerable labor, and was presented with much personal satisfaction, God would not accept it as an offering for sin.

In making his offering, Abel brought of "the firstlings of his flock," or the best that he had. Abel simply took a lamb, slew it, and took it to the Lord. And he did so by faith. Abel recognized the fact of sin, the penalty of which is death, thereby acknowledged that he was a sinner, admitted that he was under the penalty of sin or deserved to die, and presented a substitutionary victim to God. His sacrifice, in which atoning blood was shed, was therefore at once Abel's confession of sin and his faith in the interposition of a substitute. Abel's lamb prefigured "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Having prepared the soil, planted the seed, cultivated the crop, and gathered the harvest, Cain was quite proud of his achievement. Neither his approach to God nor his offering gave any indication of any consciousness of sin or need of atonement. Like many today, Cain desired God's blessing, but he wanted it upon his own terms. Depending on the works of his own hands, he approached God in his own way and thereby deprived himself of blessings which he would have received had he come in God's way. Because he rejected God's way of access to Himself, Cain's offering was rejected.

Abel believed what God had said about the way in which to approach Him. Depending on God's grace and acting on faith, Abel approached God in the divinely appointed way, whereupon his offering was received. It was not accepted on account of Abel's goodness, but because of his faith. Hebrews 11:4 says: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

III. The Sequel.

When God rejected the offering of Cain and accepted the offering of Abel, Cain was highly displeased. He was offended because his brother had pleased God while he had failed to do so. Disappointment, an inferiority complex, jealousy, and envy caused Cain to be very angry.

Knowing the heinousness of the sin of murturing jealous anger, and permitting it to bear fruit in rash behavior, God intervened and called upon Cain to examine himself and discover the reason for his attitude.

Like many other sins, anger frequently results from a lack of consideration. People would not cherish anger if they would stop to think seriously and honestly why they were angry. The real reason would be so trivial that it would put them to shame.

The Bible says, "And Cain was very wroth," or, as we would express it today, "It burned him up." God's question, "Why art thou wroth?", was asked for the specific purpose of arousing Cain to the grievous disorder in his spirit and conduct. In mercy God made an extra appeal to him, but he was so furious that he closed his ears to it. The attitude which he assumed toward his brother was very unseemly in its character, unjustifiable in its cause, and wrathful in its manifestation.

Naturally, Abel had noticed the anger of Cain, when God made a difference in His response to their offerings, but his subsequent attitude toward him had left Abel under the impression that Cain had forgotten it all. At least, Cain talked with Abel as if he did not have anything against him.

Hypocritical Cain deliberately led his brother out into a field where others would not see what he was about to do. Conscious of his inferiority, and with jealousy, malice, and hate smouldering in his heart, Cain killed Abel. This was murder in the true sense -- premeditated killing. Cain's attitude toward God was wrong, and the fruit of that was hate which resulted in murder. When Cain murdered Abel he proved that he was under the control of Satan.

There was not a human witness to the murder of Abel, but God had seen the crime. God immediately brought Cain to task for slaying his brother. God asked Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" To that pointed inquiry Cain replied, "I know not," thus denying any knowledge of the murder and attempting to conceal his sin. Thus Cain's sin of murder was followed by that of lying to God.

Cain knew where the body of his brother was. He knew that Abel lay in death not far away. The blood of his brother, soaking the ground where he had fallen, was even then crying out to God for justice. Cain was not able to escape God, Who confronted him with the simple and direct question, "Why had thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." In attempting to lead Cain to repentance and confession, God informed him that he was his brother's keeper, and that Abel's blood cried unto Him from the ground for vengeance. Cain was a free moral agent and therefore responsible for his actions. God wanted him to know that sin cannot be hidden successfully by any man. He informed Cain that he could not escape the responsibility for what had happened to his brother.

God's judgment upon Cain for his sin, which was unconfessed and unforgiven, thrust him out of his home and made him a wanderer and a vagabond, but he was never able to get away from the cry of the blood of his brother whom he had murdered. Instead of receiving forgiveness, Cain complained that his punishment was more than he could bear, but that did not help him in the least. Even though blood may be hidden, its voice will still be heard.