

The Way of Cain

by Chip Brogden

The sermon explores the contrasting paths of Cain and Abel, emphasizing the importance of giving God our best from a heart of true worship.

Scripture: Genesis 4:3, Genesis 4:13, Exodus 22:29, Matthew 16:25, John 3:27, Hebrews 11:4, 1 John 3:11, Jude 1:4

Topics: "Worship And Sacrifice", "Heart Motivations"

Description

Chip Brogden preaches about the contrasting ways of Cain and Abel in relating to the Lord, emphasizing the importance of giving God our first and best with a heart of worship and love. Abel's sacrifice was accepted because he gave the firstlings of his flock, while Cain's offering was rejected as he gave only some of the fruit of the ground. The sermon delves into the heart motivations behind our actions, highlighting the danger of self-centered religious sacrifices and the consequences of following the way of Cain, which leads to hatred, destruction, and separation from God's presence.

Transcript

"Woe unto them! They have gone in the way of Cain..." (Jude 11a)

From the beginning of recorded history we find two paths, two principles of relating to the Lord. There is the way of Cain, and there is the way of Abel.

Cain was the firstborn son of Adam and Eve. Abel was the younger brother of Cain. Scripture tells us that Cain tilled the ground, while Abel shepherded sheep. One day the two brothers bring an offering to the Lord. Cain brought some of the fruit of his crops. Abel brought the firstlings of his flock - one translation says, "Abel brought several choice lambs from the best of his flock" (Genesis 4:4a, NLT).

Both were brothers. Both gave an offering to the Lord. Outwardly speaking everything seemed fine. But the Bible says that "the Lord accepted Abel and his offering, but the Lord did not accept Cain and rejected his offering" (Genesis 4:4b,5a).

At first glance the Lord's decision to accept Abel and reject Cain seems rather arbitrary. Both worshipped the Lord, and both brought the Lord a sacrifice. What makes one acceptable and the other unacceptable?

Hebrews says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (11:4a). The difference is very subtle, but if we are very careful and studious, we can find the difference in the language used to describe each offering. Cain gave "of the fruit

of the ground", while Abel brought "the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof."

What made Abel's sacrifice more excellent than Cain's?

Simply put, Cain gave "[some] of the fruit": a portion set aside from the rest of the crop, but not the best, or the first; Abel, on the other hand, gave the "firstfruits", selecting the firstborn from the best of the flock. Cain gave what was leftover, while Abel brought the Lord's portion first.

Such a small distinction, but the hearts of men are revealed in small things such as this.

In Genesis the Lord had given no command for making an offering to Him. Men were free to give, or not give, as they saw fit in those days. But the principle of giving God the first and the best is clearly presented later in the Mosaic Law: "You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe fruits, and of your wine. The firstborn of your sons shall belong to Me, as well as the firstborn of your oxen and sheep" (Exodus 22:29,30a).

Abel did not need a law for worship, because he had a heart for worship. Similarly, Abel did not need a law for giving, because he had a heart for giving. Laws are for those who have no heart motivation, no Spirit and Truth, who have to be guided by rules and regulations, institutions and organizations. Abel loved the Lord, and the Law of Love told Abel what needed to be done.

Now does God really need crops, wine, oxen and sheep? Of course not. Everything belongs to the Lord. The principle here is that by giving Him the first, and the best, we acknowledge His Lordship over all that we have - realizing that "a man can have nothing unless he receives it from heaven" (John 3:27). God requires 100%, not 10%.

The issue is not "to tithe, or not to tithe". We are looking at the heart, not the numbers. The Pharisees tithed and they were rotten to the core. Legalistically setting aside a percentage every week like a miserly old Scrooge does not get to the heart of things. The crux of the matter is, "Am I wholly submitted to God? Do I realize He owns me and everything I have? Does He have the preeminence in me, the first place? Or is He second place?" This cannot be measured in dollars or percentages. Either He is Lord OF all, or He is not Lord AT all.

Now the way of Cain is all about religious sacrifice, doing one's duty, begrudgingly giving to God whatever suits us, all the while retaining Self as the center. All is for Self - bringing the offering, making the sacrifice, going through the motions, keeping up appearances, and pointing to these "evidences" as proof that we are doing God's work.

But the way of Cain goes beyond the mere failure to render to the Lord the things that belong to the Lord. Evil is not limited to something bad or immoral; evil is the natural, inevitable result of acting in the best interest of Self. It may be good, but it is good for me, pleasing to me, able to make me wise, able to make me like God, it meets my needs, and so on. Self, for all its seeking, is never satisfied, is never content, is never at peace, is always wandering - and wondering.

What was Cain's reaction to the Lord when his sacrifice was rejected? Was it, "I have sinned against heaven, and against You"? Was it, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me"? Was it, "Search me and know me, teach me and lead me in Your ways, that I may know what truly pleases You"? Did he go to Abel and say, "My brother, you have something in your relationship with God that I lack. Let me learn of you so that I, too, can know how to worship God in Spirit and Truth"?

No. The Bible says, "Cain was very angry, and his face became dark with rage." Confronted with his own unreality and religious pretense, Cain did not choose repentance and reformation, he chose anger and self-justification. Rather than be adjusted to God's Purpose and God's Will, Cain decided he knew better than the Lord knew. Cain wanted God to be adjusted to him, not the other way around. He wanted to recreate God in his own image, and reinvent God as a matter of his personal convenience. He was not serving God, but serving his own idea of who he thought God is. His sacrifice ought to be accepted; therefore, he thought, the Lord is wrong, and Abel is wrong - but not me!

The Lord, however, did not adjust Himself to Cain, nor did He allow Himself to be manipulated by Cain's vain imagination. "Why are you so angry?" God asked. "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you persist in following your own way, remember that Sin follows Self! It desires to master you, but you must master it instead" (Genesis 4:7, paraphrased).

Cain ignored the warning. He could not change God's mind, and he would not change his own mind. So he did what most religiously blind men do - he carefully planned the murder of his little brother Abel, lured him into a field, and killed him in cold blood. All this to eliminate the threat to his own ego.

Ever since, the children of the Flesh have hated the children of the Spirit. Ishmael mocked Isaac, Saul persecuted David, the religious leadership condemned Jesus and had Him crucified. Love has grown cold, and no one wants to be their brother's keeper. John the apostle writes:

"This is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (I John 11-13).

And to clarify, John explains that "the world" is not limited to lost sinners, but includes those who call themselves brothers when they are anything but. The greatest threat to the simplicity of Christ is not some wicked sinner out in the world, but the religious men and women who are following the way of Cain, people from within our own ranks:

"Some godless people have wormed their way in among you... these people mock and curse the things they do not understand. Like animals, they do whatever their instincts tell them, and they bring about their own destruction. How terrible it will be for them! For they follow the evil example of Cain, who killed his brother. Like Balaam, they will do anything for money. And like Korah, they will perish because of their rebellion." (Jude 4,10,11 NLT).

Those who follow the way of Cain will find that the ground is cursed. It will not produce anything for them. They will never be fruitful. They will never be satisfied. They will wander the earth and will never know the genuine presence of the Lord. But Cain remains stubborn, even complaining about God's judgment: "My punishment is more than I can bear (Genesis 4:13). The flesh justifies itself at every turn.

So much for Cain. What if you are Abel? Is there any practical advice for you?

First, do not let Cain prevent you or distract you from giving your first and your best to God. If you get focused on Cain your face will grow dark with anger and you will eventually become just like him. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, body and strength. Be recklessly devoted to Him, and let Cain go his own way.

Second, do not let Cain lure you into a field with wonderful promises, cries for help, or offers of friendship. He has an ulterior motive. Look for the mark in his flesh and stay away from him (cf. Genesis 4:15). Do not go to him, but let him come to you.

Third, if Cain attacks, do not resist. Realize your love for God makes you a threat, as well as a target. Also realize that God did not prevent Cain from killing Abel, even though Abel was righteous. This only means that death is not the end, but the beginning. So become a living sacrifice, let the blood and water flow. This is the work of the Cross. Do not fear the shedding of your own blood, only fear shedding the blood of another. Cain will receive his own reward, and you will receive yours. Those who lose their life for His sake will find their life.

My Father, our failure to love one another, our failure to be our brother's keeper, is a grievous sin that shows we are following the way of Cain. We ask Your forgiveness. Instead, make us sons and daughters of Abel that we may know what is pleasing and acceptable in Your sight. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chip-brogden/the-way-of-cain/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net