

The Way of Cain.

by Horatius Bonar

The sermon explores the destructive path of Cain as a warning against unbelief and worldliness in our lives.

Topics: "Consequences of Sin", "Unbelief"

Description

Horatius Bonar explores 'The Way of Cain,' emphasizing Cain's journey as a representation of unbelief, apostasy, worldliness, hatred, and defiance against God. Despite being raised in a godly environment, Cain chooses to reject God's grace and embrace a self-made religion, leading to envy and ultimately the murder of his brother Abel. Bonar warns that Cain's path is marked by despair, banishment from God's presence, and a life of disappointment and fruitlessness. The sermon serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of turning away from God and the consequences of a heart filled with hatred and worldliness. Bonar calls for reflection on our own lives to avoid falling into the same destructive patterns as Cain.

Transcript

"And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord." - Genesis 4:16

"Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And why slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." - I John 3:12

"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."- Jude 11

As "the way of Cain" is spoken of by the apostle Jude, as specially the way of the last days, let us inquire what it was. It was evil, not good. He is an open and defiant sinner; and in him sin takes its full swing. He is the first child of the fall, and the offspring of the fallen; he is no common transgressor; he runs no ordinary career of wickedness; he rushes to the extremity of evil. He is given as a beacon, yet as a true specimen of man, of the human heart even in the most favorable circumstances. He came into the world, not like Adam, full-grown, but a child, and therefore with the least possible amount of evil. He is the child of believing parents; for Adam showed his faith by calling his wife, and Eve showed hers by the way in which she received her first-born. He had a most godly brother, and was one of a pious household; brought up within sight of Paradise, and from childhood taught the knowledge of the true God, and the woman's seed.

He was exposed to no outward temptation; he had no companion in sin; he walked the broad way alone. He was warned, no doubt, against the serpent and his seed. He was more than once spoken to directly by

God. He had every possible advantage, in the absence of evil and the presence of good. Much might have been expected from him; yet he turns his back on God, on Paradise, on the altar, on the sacrifice, on all that is good and blessed. But let us see more specially what the apostle calls "the way of Cain."

I. It is the way of UNBELIEF. Cain is the first specimen of an unbelieving man. His parents were sinners, but they believed. His brother was a sinner, but he believed. Cain is not an atheist, nor an altogether irreligious man. He owns a God, and brings his fruits to the altar. But he brings no lamb, no blood, nothing that speaks of death. He comes with no confession, no cry for mercy. He sees no need of the woman's seed, no danger from the serpent; no preciousness, and perhaps no truth, in the promise of the 28 serpent's crushed head or Messiah's bruised heel. He takes Satan's side against God, not God's against Satan; for all unbelief is a siding with Satan against God. God is not to him the God of grace, nor the woman's seed the Savior of the lost. He has a religion, but it is self-made, a human religion, something of his own; without Christ, or blood, or pardon. The love of God is to him mere indifference to sin. Rejection of God's religion, and of His Messiah- this is "the way of Cain."

II. It is the way of APOSTASY. He turns his back on God, and will have none of Him. He is not like one of our dark heathen, ignorant of the true God. He knows Jehovah, and has heard His voice; but he turns away. He is an apostate (the first apostate) from the religion of his father; a scorner of the Messiah; he needs a Messiah of his own- "a Christ that is to be"; not God's Christ, but man's. From what small beginnings apostasy springs.

III. It is the way of WORLDLINESS. Having forsaken his father's God, he makes a god to himself; that god is the world. He goes far from Paradise, builds a city, becomes a thorough man of the world; becomes the father of the inventors of all curious instruments, leads the ever-swelling crowd in its race of worldliness and vanity- with the cry, Onward, onward; progress, progress. They eat and drink, marry, and are given in marriage. All about Cain is of this present evil world. In our age what a spirit of worldliness is abroad; often not open wickedness, but simply worldliness, so absorbing the soul as to draw it quite down from the region of "the world to come."

IV. It is the way of HATRED. He begins with envy of his brother; goes on to hatred; ends in murder. He is specially jealous of his brother's having found favor with God. Yes, strange, though he would have none of God for himself, he cannot bear that his brother should have it. Not the love of man or woman, but of God is the cause of the first jealousy and the first murder. He hates God, and all the more for loving his brother. He hates Abel, and all the more for being loved of God. He cannot lay hands on God, as he sincerely would do, but he lays hands on His favorite, and so takes his revenge. Yes, the way of Cain is the way of envy, jealousy, hatred, murder!

V. The way of GOD-DEFIANCE. He dissembles; he wipes his bloody weapon and his bloody hands, saying, What have I done? He lies; he pretends; he would hide his doings from God. He has beguiled his brother into a lonely field and slain him, thinking that none would rescue, and none see. He acts as the liar and the hypocrite in the very presence of God. The way of Cain is the way of hypocrisy, falsehood, and defiance of God. God asks him of his brother; his answer is not only a lie, but a brazen-faced piece of impiety: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Thus he mocks God; utters the language of irreverence and defiance:- "He is your favorite, why do you not keep him? I never pretended to keep him." Here mingled fear, shame, audacity, defiance are manifested. He would sincerely deny the deed, but dares not. He trembles, and would sincerely conceal it. He puts on a defiant air and attitude, as if to brave it out before the all-seeing One! Such is the way of Cain!

MARK HIS DOOM.

1. **DESPAIR.** No cry for mercy, but merely, My punishment is greater than I can bear. So is it in other ages. The sinner's despair of mercy, or complaint against God for making his punishment so heavy, is the repetition of Cain's offence and his doom. Why should a sinner despair on this side of hell? There is forgiveness to the uttermost; grace reaching far beyond the extremity of human guilt.

2. **BANISHMENT FROM GOD.** He goes out from the presence of God, as if he could no longer bear that. He must away from Paradise, the birthplace of the race, the old seat of worship. But what is this to the eternal banishment? Cain has no rest, moving to and fro without hope or aim, a fugitive and vagabond, seeking rest, finding none. Sad curse! yet nothing to the eternal wandering!

3. **DISAPPOINTMENT.** He himself was his mother's disappointment, for she thought she had gotten the man-child. So is he a disappointment to himself. From first to last we see in him a disappointed man, trying everything, succeeding in nothing; building cities, roaming from place to place, to soothe his conscience, and fill up his heart's void. But in vain!

4. **FRUITLESS WORLDLINESS.** He is the heir of a barren world; for the whole world is his. He is possessor of a soil made unfruitful by a brother's blood; tilling and sowing, yet not reaping. A weary man, toiling for that which is not bread; trying to wring water out of the world's dry sands and broken cisterns. Such is the career of thousands. Fruitless worldliness. A life of vanity; a soul utterly void; a being wholly wasted.

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