

(Beginning a New Year) True Faith Is Putting God First

by Zac Poonen

True faith is putting God first in our lives, not just on Sundays, but every day, and demonstrating our love for Him through our actions.

Duration: 57:14

Scripture: Isaiah 59:20-21, Malachi 2:2, Hebrews 11:6, James 4:10, Jude 1:11

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Prioritizing God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Cain and Abel from the Bible. He emphasizes the importance of giving God the best of what we have, rather than just offering something out of obligation. He contrasts the faith of Abel, who gave his best to God, with the lack of faith shown by those who give God the leftovers. The preacher also highlights the consequences of not putting God first in our lives, using the example of Cain and his descendants being cursed.

Transcript

I want to share something from Genesis 4. We've often looked at this. The first incident recorded in the Bible outside the Garden of Eden, after man was put out, it's a very instructive passage of Scripture. And it's very significant because we read here of the first man who was cursed by God.

You know, it's a pretty serious thing to be cursed by God, just like it's a very wonderful thing to be blessed by God. Some people are not blessed and not cursed. But at the extremes, you have those who are blessed and those who are cursed.

Small number. The great multitude are in between. But it's very significant that Adam was not cursed.

I hope you note that. If you don't know that, you turn to Genesis 3. When the Lord spoke to Adam, He said in verse 17, the middle, The ground is cursed. Earth was cursed.

And you see the result of that curse everywhere on the earth. But Adam was not cursed. But when it came to Cain, the Lord said in Genesis 4.11, You are cursed.

That's the first human being that God ever cursed. And if you've read the prophets in the Old Testament, there were different people who were cursed by God. In Galatians 1, it says, If anyone preaches another

gospel, let him be accursed.

And there it's speaking about legalism. That those who preach a legalistic gospel, among those who call themselves Christians, are accursed. That's pretty serious.

They may call themselves Christians, but they are legalists. I don't think many Christians have understood how serious legalism is. Jesus condemned the Pharisees more than He condemned the adulteresses.

Yet, I don't know if there are many Christians today who would condemn the Pharisees more than the adulteresses. My guess is 99.9% of believers would condemn adulteresses more than Pharisees because they don't have a clue how serious legalism is. Legalism began with Cain.

Cain was not an atheist who said, I don't care for God. We don't read about atheists being cursed, but we read of legalists being cursed. I never read of Jesus cursing an atheist.

The guy is ignorant. He's blind. He's deaf.

We don't curse blind and deaf people. But legalists are those who claim to know, who claim to be better than others because they know so much. You know who are in greatest danger of legalism in this country? The Christians who have understood the truth of God the most.

And many of them could be sitting right here. So let's look at Genesis 4. It speaks here about the time when Cain, verse 3, in the course of time, Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. And Abel, who was his younger brother, on his part, also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions.

And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering, for Cain and his offering, he had no regard. Notice, it is not that the Lord accepted the offering first. Now that's what many Christians have taught.

95% of believers teach this. Because they don't read the Bible carefully. They teach that God accepted Abel because of his offering.

He offered blood. Cain didn't offer blood. That's what I've heard all my life.

That's what I've heard in every Evangelical Christian book. But what does the Bible say? What does your Bible say? The Bible says that the Lord accepted Cain, therefore he accepted his offering. It's not the other way around.

Christians have a tendency to turn upside down what the Bible says. And it doesn't say God rejected Cain's offering. He rejected Cain.

And therefore he rejected his offering. It's very important to notice that. I want to tell you, don't believe everything that you read in Christian books.

Go and check it in the Bible. I have found a thousand and one things wrong in Christian books, which are not in the Bible. I found a thousand and one things wrong in Christian songs, which are not in the Bible.

Here is one example of that. Christians say the Lord had regard for Abel's offering, and therefore he accepted Abel. Do you know what that type of teaching produces? It produces people who think that if they offer the blood of Christ, we're accepted.

It doesn't matter how we live. It's not true. It's a heart that God sees.

Then he accepts our offering. That's very important. And, you know, in the New Testament, in Hebrews 11, it says it's by faith that Abel... Let me show you that verse, and then we'll come back here.

In Hebrews chapter 11, it says, By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain. So, what is it? Nowhere in the Bible does it say God accepted Abel's offering because he brought blood. I'll tell you what he brought.

He brought faith. It doesn't matter how many times you quote the blood of Christ. If you don't have faith, it's not going to accept you.

Without faith, verse 6, it is impossible to please God. And now we want to understand what faith really means by looking at the first example of faith in Hebrews 11, which is Abel. I hope you know that.

The first example of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 in the Old Testament is Abel. The first person about whom it's written in the history of the human race who had faith is Abel. We can learn something from him about true faith because it's that faith that made his sacrifice better.

So now we turn back, keeping that in mind and getting rid of all these wrong concepts that we have heard and read for so many years from people who don't study their Bibles carefully. Turn back to Genesis 4. Do you notice a difference between the two offerings that Cain and Abel brought? And there you will see what faith really means. Remember, Abel was the first human being who exercised faith.

The first, not Abraham, Abel. Abel's name comes long before Abraham's in Hebrews 11. What is it that made his offering an offering of faith? And what is it that made Cain's offering not an offering of faith? How does that apply to us? All of us bring some offering to God.

I don't mean money or anything, I mean a life. What is it that makes God accept one person and not accept another person? That's important to understand. I want God to accept me.

Don't you want God to accept you? Well, then we must know what is it that makes God accept a person and what is it that makes God reject a person. And it's not a lot of religious ritual or going to a church or a temple or a mosque, no. It's something much more important than that.

And if you look carefully, you notice the difference. Cain brought an offering. The world is full of people who bring an offering to God.

Put a little bit of money in the offering box. Give a little bit of time to God on Sunday or Friday or Tuesday or Sunday. And give a little money to the poor.

This is all an offering to God. Cain did it, and he was not accepted. He was not an atheist.

He was a very religious man. Religious people may not be accepted by God. It's very, very important.

The first two human beings, after Adam and Eve, we learned something from them. The first two human beings that were born into the world, Cain and Abel, produced two streams of humanity. A few men and women of faith following Abel and a multitude following Cain.

But both bring offerings. Both are religious people. But there's a world of difference between the two.

What did Abel bring? Notice the word first. Abel, verse 4, brought the first of his flock. The best.

There is a difference between giving God an offering and giving God the best that you have. There's a difference between giving your life to God when you're 70 years old with one foot in the grave and giving your life to God when you're 17 years old with your whole life ahead of you. That's the difference.

Giving the best to God and giving the dregs to God. There's a lot of difference between giving the best of your time to God and giving five minutes to God and five hours to movies and television. A lot of difference.

Yeah, you can say the man who gave five minutes to God gave an offering to God. He read his Bible. Do you know what faith means? Why did Abel have faith? Because he gave God his best.

Many of us think we have faith. Today you will discover whether you have faith or not. If you're honest, you can ignore all that and say, No, no, no, that's not it.

Okay. Don't get a surprise when you stand before God one day in the day of judgment. I would rather believe what the Bible says, what God's Word says so plainly right from beginning till end.

The true men and women of God are the ones who gave God their best, not the dregs. If you turn to the last book of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi, let me read something to you from Malachi. In Malachi chapter one, it's the last book of the Old Testament, we read the Lord's complaint against his people.

Do you think the Lord could possibly have a complaint against you, my brother, sister? Why not? If he had a complaint against his people in the days of Malachi. But it needed a prophet like Malachi to explain that God had a complaint against people. And if you don't have a prophet to tell you what God thinks, you won't know what God thinks about you.

Israel was blessed when they had a prophet. And one mark that God had forsaken his people was that he never sent them a prophet. If they had a prophet, there was hope.

When they had no prophet, there was no hope. I believe it's been like that for the church in 2000 years in different parts of the world. Wherever there's been a prophet, there's been hope that church.

Usually, 90% of people don't respond to the message of the prophet. That's been true throughout history. But there is a 10%, a remnant that responds.

And in Malachi's time, he was the last prophet. to Israel before John the Baptist. And he says in Malachi 1.6, A son honors his father, and a servant his master.

And God says, if I am a father, do you honor me? God is saying, a son honors his father. And if I am a father, where is my honor? Do you give me your best? A servant honors his master. If I am a master, do you honor me? Don't servants, should not servants do their best for their master? And if God is our master, he says, where is my honor? And they say, Lord, what do you mean? We have despised you.

We have, of course, we have honored you. And the Lord says, I'll tell you how you didn't honor me. When you bring an offering to the Lord, you know, in the Old Testament, they had laws saying, you have to bring an animal sacrifice and things like that, which is all finished in Christ.

But in those days, it was a picture of Christ being crucified on the cross. But when they had to bring an offering to God, it says here, you know what they would do? Verse 8, they would bring the blind. That means they say, oh, I have to offer a sheep to God.

Let me look around in my flock and see the blind one. It's a bit of a nuisance to me in any case, let's offer that to God. Or, the lame and the sick.

Now, when a man is going, he's not an atheist. No, no, no. He brings an offering to God.

But the offering is not the best. It's the blind, the sick, the lame. The dregs of our flock.

Today, the dregs of our time. The dregs of our money. The dregs of our energy.

What we do not need. What we can afford to do without. When you give to God, what you can afford to do without, you don't put God first.

And you don't honor God. Then, you don't have the faith of Abel. That's what made the difference.

And way back there in Genesis 4, you find these two streams of humanity. Those who bring an offering and those who give their best. And so, what was it that God looked at? Many Christians will say the blood.

No. It was the heart of Abel. Abel was a keeper of the flock.

Naturally, he had to bring flock. Cain was a tiller of the ground. He didn't have any flock.

What could he bring? He had to bring it from the ground. But did he bring the best of his crops? No. The best of his crops was reserved for his family.

What he could do without, because he had a lot of crops, might as well give something to God. I want to ask all of you sitting here. Ask yourself whether you have that attitude.

And you will discover why your experience with God is so shallow. Why is it somebody else experiences the blessing of God upon his life and upon his family and you don't? Does God have partiality? Does He like some of His creation and not like some of His creation? No. It's because of laws.

God makes a difference among His children, between those who put Him first and those who don't put Him first. And I believe as He looks at all of us, and I'll tell you there's no difference between me and you. We are all creatures of God.

But He makes a difference among us between those who put Him first and those who don't. And that's something we cannot detect by looking at people's faces. When we come to church, we all look so holy, so pure, and so wonderfully spiritual.

But it's in our daily life, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, that God sees whether we put Him first or not. Somebody asked me once, Brother Zach, what's the difference between your church and other churches? I said, I'm not here to compare our church with any other church. But in terms of our emphasis, I would say, for many churches, Sunday and their meeting is the most important thing.

They must have a good meeting. They must go away from the Sunday morning meeting saying, we had a wonderful time of singing today. We had to listen to a wonderful message.

Isn't that what you hear many Christians say? I said, for us, the important day is Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. That's the difference. How we live at home, how we do our work, how we behave when we travel in the bus, how we behave when we're driving on the roads and people in front of us violate the traffic rules, that's important for me and for us.

Sunday, it doesn't matter if the music wasn't so good. It doesn't even matter if the sermon wasn't so good. If it challenged us to live well on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, we are okay.

That's the thing. And I want to ask all of you, which is the important day for you? Do you like to have a good Sunday meeting? Are you excited when you have a wonderful time of singing? Yeah, praise God for that. But I say, that won't excite me if I behave badly on Monday and Tuesday.

Not at all. It won't excite me if I give God the best of my singing voice on Sunday and don't give Him the best of my life and time and energy on Monday and Tuesday and the rest of the days of the week. That's hypocrisy.

It's hypocrisy to pretend to be spiritual on Sunday and to live for myself six days a week. But do you know that's what most Christians are doing? You know that through the years, our ministry in this church has been primarily to Christians. And I'll tell you why.

Because I believe that the name of Jesus has been tremendously dishonored in India by the way many Christians have lived. I don't say they. I say we.

I don't say they. We, who claim to be Christians, have not lived in a way that glorifies the name of Christ. It's brought a lot of dishonor to the name of Christ.

And that's brought a lot of sorrow to my heart. And it's often complacently that Jesus taught us to pray, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Number one, Lord, let your name be recognized as set apart.

Let the name of Jesus be recognized as hallowed, set apart, sacred, compared to all the other names in the world. And that responsibility falls on us. The way we behave.

The way our neighbors see and hear. How we behave with our wives and husbands. How we bring up our children.

That's what sets apart the name of Jesus from every other name on the earth. But it's not true. Many Christians are crooks.

They cheat others. They live selfishly. They are proud.

They are arrogant. And so, that's why many years ago, the Lord told me, you've got to speak to the Christians in India. When they change their behavior, my name will be honored.

That's why I've spent my life concentrating on trying to improve the quality of Christianity. Dear brothers and sisters, I learned that from here. When we have Christians who learn to put God first, and not themselves first, or their families first, the name of Jesus will be honored in this land.

That is the faith of Abel. He went and looked in his flock, and he said, I've got to give the best lot. And he looked at the fat lambs and goats, and said, that's for God.

And what about the skinny ones? That's for me. That's faith. Abel went out to his field, his barns, and looked around for, oh, I've got to give some offering to God.

Looked around for some of the things which are not so fresh, and which are a bit dry, and said, okay, looks okay. Gave that to God. And the Lord had regard for Abel, and therefore his offering.

And the Lord did not have regard for Cain, and therefore not his offering. When we come to God, and we offer anything, whether it's a prayer, for example, we spent half an hour this morning in worshiping God. It was an offering.

How many people's worship do you think God accepted this morning? It's not those who sang loudly, and waved their hands a lot. No, no, no, no. The Lord sees the heart.

Man looks on the outward appearance. So we see here something that we can learn, first of all, in our attitude towards God. When God has done so much for us, isn't it right that we express our gratitude to Him by saying, Lord, I want to show you my gratitude by giving you part of that which you've given me.

There's a very lovely verse in Deuteronomy chapter 14. Let me read that to you. Deuteronomy chapter 14, verse 23.

He's speaking here about, this was an Old Testament law. In the New Testament, this law of giving 10% of our fields, what we get from our fields, is not there. But the principle is there.

You shall tithe. Tithe means give 10% of your grain, your wine. You know, they had vineyards.

What the Lord was saying is from your wheat and your rice and your vineyards and all the oil that you produce through your nuts that you crush, When you collect all that, give 10% to God. This is an Old Testament law. And what is the purpose? So that, the Living Bible says, the purpose of giving 10% is to teach you to put God first in everything.

That's the meaning of, you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. The purpose of tithing is to teach you to put God first always. Unfortunately, today, many preachers and pastors tell people, give 10%, give 10%, give 10% to God.

And people give, you think all those people who give 10% have put God first in their life? No! We've never taught in this church, give 10%, but we have taught the principle, put God first. That's why Jesus never taught giving 10%. He said, you must give everything to God.

Your life belongs to God. Your time belongs to Him. Put Him first.

The purpose of tithing in the Old Testament was to teach you to put God first in everything. How many Christians have understood that? I would say the multitudes of people who tithe today, 99% of people haven't learned it. What about us, who glory in the fact that we don't tithe? We're probably worse than those people who tithe.

When Jesus abolished the tithe, was He teaching us, oh, you don't have to give anything to God now. You know, when Jesus abolished the tithe, the 10%, He did it to test people. And I believe many of us have been tested for 20, 30 years to see what is your attitude when you hear that the tithe is abolished.

You say, ah, that's great. Now I can spend it all on myself. That was a test.

And you fail the test. There are others who say, why was the tithe abolished? Because Jesus wanted to establish the principle and not the ritual. The principle is put God first always.

And those who have understood that, ah, tithing is abolished because the ritual is no longer important to God, but the reality, which is to put God first in everything. In my time, my energy, my money, everything, to put God first. Let me show you an example in Genesis, in chapter 22.

Genesis 22. Genesis 22 was the place where God once told Abraham, I want you to take your son and sacrifice him to me on the altar. Does God want human sacrifice? Not at all.

You know that he never allowed Abraham to kill his son. But he was testing him. God sometimes tests us.

It says here in Genesis 22.1, God tested Abraham. We can put that as the subject of that chapter. Not God wanted human sacrifice.

That's not the subject of that chapter. The subject of the chapter is God tested Abraham. And that is 50 years after Abraham was first tested when he was told to leave his family and relatives and his homeland to go somewhere where God called him.

He passed that test. He passed many other tests in these 50 years. Now there was one more final test.

You know, it's like the final examination before you are given that important post in a company. Abraham had to go through one more test. 50 years after he passed his first test.

And I want to say to you, even if you are born again for 50 years, God will test you after 50 years. And what is He going to test you? What did He test Abraham with 50 years earlier? Am I first? Or is your family first? Am I first? Or is your homeland first? Am I first or is your home first? He said, Lord, you are first. 50 years later, he comes into a situation which is not true 50 years earlier.

50 years earlier, he didn't have any children. His wife was barren. Now he had a son.

A son born when he was 100 years old. I'll tell you something. If you have waited to be 100 years old before you get a son, boy, that son will be an idol of your heart, without a doubt.

And Abraham, his son was his idol. He literally worshipped him. He loved his son more than he loved his wife.

He loved his son more than all his 10,000 sheep and cattle and servants. His son was his idol. Till he had a son, God was first in everything.

But now he got a son. And the son gradually replaced God as first in Abraham's life. Then he could not have faith.

You can't have faith when God is not first. And so God wanted to make Abraham a man of faith. So He said, Get rid of your son, Abraham.

Offer him to Me. There is only a test. You see, what will Abraham do? Will Abraham say, Lord, anything but my son.

I'll give you anything else. Then he would have failed the test. But it says, He took his son and laid him on the altar.

Took the knife and said, Lord, here I am to prove to you that you are first in my life. And as soon as God saw that, God said, put away the knife. I don't want human sacrifice.

I was only testing you. Take your son back. You can have him in your home from today.

Because from today onwards, I know that he is going to be second in your life. Something happened on the mountain that day. Isaac was still alive.

But Isaac was second. God was first. See what a wonderful thing God did.

He said, Abraham, I can't bless you till I am first in your life. And the Lord says here to Abraham, in Genesis, in chapter 22, verse 15 to 18, again in the Living Bible, it says, because you have put God first, verse 12, and it says, now that I know that you fear God. The Living Bible puts that whole section, verse 12 to 18, as because you have put God first.

I really like that translation. Because you have put God first, verse 16, I swear, says the Lord, you will be greatly blessed. I will multiply your children.

Your children will be blessed. And through your children, verse 18, the earth will be blessed. Oh, what a lot of things happen when you put God first in your life.

It's not only you that are blessed. Your children get blessed. And through your children, other people get blessed.

Because you put God first in your life. That's what he told Abraham. Because you put me first in your life, because you put God first, I will bless your children.

And through your children, I will bless other families. Is there anybody here who doesn't want that? That applies not only to Abraham. It applies to all of God's children.

But the condition is, you must be a man or a woman of faith. And that means you put God first in every area of your life. Let me tell you what the Lord told Isaiah.

In the book of Isaiah, we read in Isaiah chapter 8 that Isaiah's wife was a prophetess. Isaiah 8 verse 3, I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. I don't know how many other children Isaiah had.

But I see there that he and his wife were prophets and prophetess, and they put God first in their life. And they had at least one son, perhaps more children. Turn to Isaiah 59 verse 19.

He's talking about a day when they will fear the name of the Lord. And I told you how in Genesis 22, fearing God is paraphrased as putting God first in the living Bible. So they will put God first from the west and from the east.

And He will arrive like a river whipped to a torrent by the wind of God. That means the Holy Spirit will come like a river through them. And a Redeemer will come to Zion to those who turn from transgression in Jacob.

Those who put God first and those who turn from all known sin in their life. What is the promise for such people? For those who put God first and those who turn from all known sin in their life. And I tell you that

applies to you.

This is my covenant. My spirit which is upon you, my words which I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth. God will be with us.

He will be with our mouth. Every time you open your mouth to speak, blessing of God will flow out through your mouth to people all around you. And not only that, it will be in the mouth of your children and your grandchildren.

Oh boy! I'd give anything in the world to experience that. I hope that's your desire too. What are the petty honors and riches of this world compared to this? To those who put God first and turn from sin.

This is the result. We don't put God first, the opposite happens. I want you to turn back to Genesis 4. I don't know whether you know that there is no descendant of Cain living on the earth today.

There is not one descendant of Cain on the earth today. They were all wiped out. It's not only Cain that was cursed.

His children were cursed. We read in Genesis 4 that five, six generations after Cain, one of his children, one of his seed, great, great, great, great, great grandson was a person called Jubal. Genesis 4.23. He was the one who invented musical instruments.

The lyre and the pipe. That's where rock music began. Do you think Jubal was praising God with all that music? No.

Music is a wonderful gift of God. But most musicians in the world worship themselves, not God. Many Christian musicians, when they play their instrument, it applies to those who play instruments here too.

I don't know how it is. They are more conscious of how well they play more than Jesus is here. He must be worshipped.

A lot of Christian song leaders are more conscious of how well they sing more than Jesus is here. He must be glorified. It's very difficult.

The followers of Jubal are in the millions. Music made them drift away from God. The world is full of Christian churches where people spend more hours in choir practice than in prayer.

What does it prove? Is it good to sing well? Sure. But not to such a point. It's like saying, is it good to have good sheep? Yeah, sure.

Provided you give the best to God. I'm not saying we should have skinny sheep. I'm not saying we should have bad music or bad preaching.

I mean, I've been preaching for 42 years and I have sought with all of my heart God as my witness to preach the best possible way. And I put all my energy and mind and I said God gave me a good mind. I said I'm not going to use it for the world.

I'm going to use it for God. So I believe that if God's given people the ability to play music or sing, they must use it 100% for God. But not to glorify themselves like all the people in the world.

Not to make money like a lot of Christian musicians do. If we make money through our preaching or our music, that is a way of worshipping ourselves. Yeah.

That's why in this church those who preach don't get one rupee. Not me, not anybody else. Because we seek to worship God, not ourselves.

We're different. We don't do anything for money. Money is the great alternative master to God.

I want to ask you. Would you do things for money that you wouldn't do for God? Ask yourself. Would you do something more wholeheartedly if you were paid for it? Would you serve in the church more wholeheartedly at conference time or some other time? Would you volunteer for some jobs in the church if you were paid for it? But you don't volunteer for it because you are not paid for it.

When will you have faith? Not in a hundred years. You can sit here like a religious cane for years. I think we need to get a little light on ourselves.

God is my witness. I'll never do anything for money that I wouldn't do for God. Freely.

God is first in my life. I know I'm not ashamed to say it. He's been first in my life for many years.

And He'll always be. Even my wife knows that. That she's second.

And that's why our relationship is so happy. Because she's second. I don't want to be first in my wife's life.

We'll have a miserable marriage then. Because God is first and I'm second. We'll have a happy marriage.

It's the secret of everything. Teach your children to put God first. Not anything.

Not their job. Not their money. Nothing.

Don't rejoice if your children have got good jobs. Rejoice if they put God first in their life. Then everything will go well.

Otherwise, it will go well in terms of the world. They may be religious. They bring an offering to God every Sunday, like Cain.

Cain also brought an offering to God. If Cain were living today, he'd be here Sunday morning. Sure.

He wouldn't be like the atheists who don't pay any attention to God. Cain and Abel both sit in the church Sunday morning. The difference is one gives his best, the other gives an offering.

Do you give an offering or do you give the best? That's the test. When we think of how much the Lord has done for us, what is it that makes people give their best? It's gratitude. What would you do if you went to a doctor and he diagnosed you and said, your case is so bad with cancer or AIDS or whatever it is that there's no hope for you.

You may live six weeks. That's it. And then you go to another doctor.

He says, I can treat you and you can be totally cured. And he cures you totally that the trace of that disease is gone. What would you do to that doctor? I've seen people who appreciate those doctors so much they would give them gifts and every time they see them they would value them, respect them.

How many people treat God like that? How many of you feel that God has done for you more than any doctor could ever do for you? Cured you from a disease worse than leprosy or AIDS or cancer? I'll tell you, that's what made me give my life to the Lord. I was so grateful, more grateful than any human being can ever be to a doctor that He did so much for me. And I've thought, if people can be so grateful to a human doctor, how much more grateful I should be to Almighty God who did so much for me.

Do you have that sense of gratitude to God? You know, that's the first lesson we need to learn. Abel was grateful. Oh God, the very fact that You allowed me to even be born on this earth and to live, I'm grateful.

I mean, my flocks prospered because of You. My flocks got sick and died. How can I ever think that my cleverness made my sheep and my goats so healthy? It was You, God.

I give it to You. Whereas Cain felt, well, I worked hard and I got a good crop. Just like some of you say, I work hard and I earn so much money.

Uh-huh. It's your hard work that got you a raise in your salary, is it? Well, that's why you're like Cain. How many of you, when you get a raise in your salary and you get a large salary, acknowledge, Oh God, that's not me.

That's not my cleverness. I'm a nobody. I don't deserve one-tenth of what I earn.

It's You. It's You, Lord. Every bit of money I've ever earned in my life through the work I do, I say, Lord, it's You.

It's not me. I deserve to be a pauper, but it's You. And I'll prove that, that I believe that by giving You the best.

Do you give the best of the way of what God has blessed you with to Him, or do you put an offering to God? You talk about faith. You don't understand the first thing about faith. And you probably never will because you worship yourself so much.

You are so clever. You are so smart. And that's why you earn so much.

You worked hard, and you got some degree. And you are capable, and you are smart, and you can speak English so well, and so many things. God have mercy on you.

You're no better than any heathen, except that you name the name of Christ. I want to tell you, you're a follower of Cain who brings an offering to God. Don't think you'll be listed in Hebrews 11 men of faith like Abel who gave their best to God.

You know what happens? It's not just our attitude to God. When we don't put God first, it affects our attitude to others. Cain's attitude to Abel was one of anger.

Why does God bless him and not me? And by the way, I'm not talking about money as a mark of God's blessing. No, spiritual blessing. How can God bless him? He's younger to me.

How can God bless somebody younger to me? Do you ever feel like that? I'll tell you, the Christian world is full of people who cannot bear to see somebody younger than them blessed by God or anointed by God. See, Cain offered an offering. Abel offered an offering.

And Cain watched the fire of God fall upon Abel's offering. And he's waiting for the fire to fall and he's offering nothing. And instead of judging himself, he gets upset with Abel.

Why should he get upset with Abel? It says here, when God... Just read this. Verse 5. For Cain and for his offering, God had no regard, so Cain became angry. You know who he became angry with? He became angry with God.

Have you ever been angry with God? Because He didn't do something for you that you felt He should do? And you've been jealous of somebody else who's one-third your age, whom God blesses? Aha! You can see Cain in yourself. If Abel was his older brother, he'd say, oh, that's okay. He's older than me.

If you will examine your heart, you will discover that you don't mind God blessing somebody older than you, but you do mind God blessing somebody younger than you. And if you have eyes to see, you'll see the spirit of Cain in yourself. If David was older than King Saul, Saul would have been happy, but David was half his age.

Oh! Somebody half my age? Killing Goliath? Anointed by God? How can that be? I must throw a spear at him and kill him. The spirit of Cain was in King Saul. Years later, in the Pharisees.

Sixty-year-old, seventy-year-old Pharisees with their long beards. See Jesus, thirty-year-old. Oh, what an anointing! How can that be? We've been in God's service for fifty years.

How can this young carpenter come and do this? And they were jealous. It says even Pilate recognized that the Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus only because they were jealous of Him. The spirit of Cain flowed all the way through King Saul, Pharisees, down to this generation.

Paul says in Philippians 1, when I'm in jail, some of the other preachers are very happy because now they listen to them. They didn't get a chance to speak when Paul was around. See, these two streams.

And somebody can play a musical instrument better than you. Somebody can speak better than you. Somebody can do better than you.

And the worst part is he's only half your age. Boy! God tests people then to see who has the spirit of Cain. Do you know that God tests you through a lot of blessings He gives other people? Do you know that God tests you when He anoints other people? You see, what is the reaction of this guy who thinks he's ephirgeal, who's been sitting in CFC for 25 years? You discover something in yourself.

And when you discover it, if you admit it, instead of getting upset like Cain was with God and with others, you can become a better person. You can become like Abel. If you say, Lord, I want you to be first in my life.

That's the secret, brothers. Otherwise, you'll have a problem in your relationship with God and you'll have a problem in your relationship with other human beings. A man like Abel can rejoice.

You know, like Peter, one of the wonderful things I see about Peter, it says in Galatians chapter 1 that Peter, who was at least 10-15 years older than Paul, recognized the grace God had given to Paul who was 15 years his junior. Boy. Peter looked at Paul and said, Boy, that guy seems to be able to do things I can't do.

Even though I walked with Jesus and he never even met Jesus. But boy, what an anointing upon him. That's where I see Peter's greatness.

You read that in Galatians chapter 2. How he recognized, and you've heard Brother Ian mention that so many times, to recognize the grace that is on other people. People with the spirit of Abel can do that. People with the spirit of Cain can't.

You know why? The problem doesn't lie in the horizontal level. The problem lies in their vertical relationship. God is not first in their life.

It is from this that the horizontal problems flow. When our relationship with God is right, our attitude to one another becomes one of love, goodness, and joy. Oh, praise the Lord.

God is glorified. I mean, if you were in a football team and you've been in that team for ten years. You're the great player, but you're a sort of halfback or a fullback who never scores a goal.

And some young fellow half your age is the center forward and he scores a goal. Would you rejoice or not? Would you say, praise God! That's our team that won. Oh, he's that fellow.

He joined the team just yesterday and he scored a goal and I've been here 20 years and never scored a goal. I tell you, these football players have more understanding of working for the team than many who call themselves Christians. The spirit of Cain is rampant.

Jude warns in his book to Christians, he says, be careful that you don't walk the way of Cain. Brothers and sisters, let's humble ourselves. Say, Lord, teach me the meaning of faith.

I want to put you first in my life. Many of my problems with my fellow believers don't relate to them. It relates to the fact that I don't have a right relationship with you.

Let's pray. Let's bow our heads before God. Dear brothers and sisters, let's bow our heads and close our eyes and ask the Lord to impress upon our heart in a permanent way some of the lessons we learned this morning.

And the first step to that will be to acknowledge your sin. There's great hope for those who turn from their transgressions. The Lord says, I will put my spirit upon them and my words into their mouth.

Heavenly Father, help us to honor you by putting you first in every area of our life. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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