

Cain's Religion

by Lewis Williams

The sermon explores the contrast between Cain's and Abel's offerings, emphasizing the necessity of genuine faith and repentance in approaching God.

Scripture: Genesis 4:3, Psalm 20:3, Matthew 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, Hebrews 9:22, James 1:19, 1 John 1:9, Revelation 13:8

Topics: "Sin And Repentance", "True Sanctification"

Description

Lewis Williams preaches on the story of Cain and Abel, emphasizing the importance of meeting God's conditions for acceptance. He highlights the need for a genuine confession of sin and a true acknowledgment of one's need for the cleansing blood of Jesus. Williams warns against a bloodless, thank-offering type of religion, urging believers to bring a broken, bleeding sacrifice that speaks of personal need and faith in God's promise. He challenges listeners to examine their hearts, confess their sins, and seek sanctification to avoid the destructive consequences of harboring anger and sin.

Transcript

"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And 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 slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." Gen. iv. 3-11.

No doubt there are a number present who have read these verses, the story of Cain and Abel, many times, and, like the speaker, asked themselves the question, "Why did God have respect unto one and not to the other? Did He show partiality by so doing?" and perhaps other questions of a like nature. But there came a time when it was made plain to our minds, any way to our own satisfaction, and if under the direction of the Holy Ghost, we can bring a better understanding of it to others hearts, this meeting will not have been held in vain.

If we chose a text from these verses, we would take a part of the fifth, all of the sixth and a part of the seventh verses, which read as follows: "And Cain was very wroth and his countenance fell, and the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth, and why hast thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and unto thee shall be his desire."

Now, before looking closely at the text, there are a few things we want to call your attention to, and they are first, that God looks first at the man, and if he pleases or comes up to the mark, then He will have respect unto his offering; hence we read that God had respect unto Abel, and then to his offering. But when God has not respect unto man He cares nothing about his offering, He will not accept it; hence we read that unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. 'Brother, you can pay \$500 per year for pew rent or give of your substance to build fine churches, or support them, but if you are not right in God's sight, He does not care a fig for your offering. When God gets a man, then He gets all the man has; but until He gets the man, He cares nothing for his offering.

Again, man has his way of doing things, but when God comes in He generally upsets men's ideas and notions and turns them around. Oh, what upsetting and changing around there would be if God could have His own way in the lives of all in this place tonight, and what a change there will be made when Jesus steps down from the clouds to take charge of things on this old globe on which we live. Suppose He came tonight to your home. Do you think He would change matters there, or would He be contented to leave them pretty much as they are? I tell you, brother, it will pay you throughout eternity not to have any unfinished business on hands when He comes, and if I were in your place, and there were some things that needed fixing up in my life, I would get at them, for He is liable to come most any time now. And if He does not, there may come a messenger from the other world before morning. Better have everything that is necessary attended to.

As we do things, we generally put the eldest son ahead and speak of him first; or, if there are any special rights for the children, they generally fall to the eldest. But when God chooses to bestow any special rights, He will go over any or all to reach the one that pleases Him, and then respect both him and his offering. Hence we read of Abel, the younger, first.

Again, we cannot say that either of the boys had ever committed any actual sin before this occurrence. Whatever you may think about it, the Book doesn't say that they had; but it does say that in process of time they both came before the Lord with their offering. So we have two believers (two church members). Is that what you do when you come up before the Lord, come to church? Do you not go to church for worship? Is that not supposed to be coming before the Lord? Well, that is just what these two men did. It was one hundred and twenty-nine years after God had peopled this old globe with its first inhabitants, Adam and Eve. They had disobeyed, eaten of that which was forbidden, sinned and died, that is, lost their Divine nature. Dead means void, and they became void of the Divine image or nature they had been created in, and after their fall these two boys were born unto them -- Cain the elder, Abel the younger, and they both inherited the fallen nature of their parents. Cain became a tiller of the soil, but Abel was a keeper of sheep. In process of time, they each bring of their substance before the Lord. God has respect unto Abel and his offering, and unto Cain He has not respect, and in many minds the question arises, "Why was it thus?"

The Apostle tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Heb. ix 22. From time immemorial we find the shedding of blood connected with forgiveness of sins. All the dying lambs around Jewish altars were a type of the "Lamb" which should come to "take away the sin of the world," hence they

were commanded to bring a lamb without blemish. All those groaning, bleating, dying victims were a type of that Lamb without blemish that should be the victim of the cross, and die to put away sin, once for all. That promise was made in the garden immediately after the great fall, but it had been arranged for long before, for Jesus is spoken of as a "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. xiii. 8.

There is no doubt but Cain and Abel knew of that promise made to their parents in the garden, and so when Abel comes up before God bringing the "firstlings of his flock," a bleeding, dying victim, a type of the one "which should come," in that dying, bleeding sacrifice he not only acknowledged his faith in the promise made, but also his need of the blood of the Lamb that cleanseth from all sin. He acknowledged, or in his sacrifice made confession of his condition and his need; hence we read, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained the witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gift." Bless God, I like the idea of obtaining the witness. I have no stock whatever in about ninety per cent of the stuff that is preached over the land saying, "Just take it by faith just claim it and you have it." I do not believe in such teaching, and believe that it has done and is doing untold injury to the cause of real Bible holiness. Souls are continually coming to the altar and telling us, "Why, I believed for this experience at such and such a time in so and so's meeting, but I have never been satisfied." Dear soul, if you have never been satisfied, you have never been cleansed from all sin and sanctified wholly, for the soul that has that experience is satisfied beyond the slightest shadow of a doubt. This thing of urging seekers to "believe," "only believe," "just believe," "just believe you have it, and you'll have it;" I repeat, and I wish I could say it so I could be heard from ocean to ocean, is wrong.

God bless your precious hearts, faith is something far beyond a forced up phantom of the brain. I have been in meetings where folks would get down before a seeker and try to get them to "believe," "only believe," "believe you are saved," and the poor soul could not believe. Why? Because nothing had been done for them. There are but two classes of seekers that we dare urge to believe. First, a fully penitent sinner who has abandoned everything that he knows to be wrong and is willing so far as he may be able to set right the wrongs in his life, and has fully surrendered himself to God. That soul can be told to believe. The second is the fully consecrated believer seeking the cleansing away of his inbred sin, the sanctifying of his soul.

The sinner gives up all his wrong doings and, throwing up his arms of rebellion, surrenders himself fully to God, and, until he does this, you may urge him to believe until doom's day, but he cannot exercise saving faith, because he has not "brought forth fruits meet for repentance." After nearly a score of years' work for God, I firmly believe that right here many souls are shipwrecked by unwise and unscriptural teaching. Repentance must come first before that soul can exercise faith. There must be a foundation for his faith, a consciousness that so far as he knows he has complied with the conditions that God requires, and when he is conscious of meeting those conditions, up to all the light he has, there will be but little difficulty in his believing. The believer seeking the sanctification of his soul must make his consecration complete, must realize that his all is on the altar, that it is there forever, and live or die, sink or swim, he will be all the Lord's, and the Lord's alone. Until he arrives at this point he cannot exercise the faith that will bring the cleansing blood to the soul. I believe that in either case the numbers are very few that have any difficulty in believing, exercising faith.

When the conditions of repentance or consecration are fully complied with, the witness will come. By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. With a firm belief in the promise, he came with a sacrifice that proved his belief in the promise; and in that bleeding, dying lamb, a type of the "Lamb" that should come, he acknowledged his own personal need of the blood to cleanse him from sin. He put his

belief into action, brought a sacrifice that reminded God of His promise. This is what every sinner must do before he can hear from Heaven, and what every believer seeking to be sanctified must do before the fire will fall. What does this Book say? It says, "God testified of his gifts." How? By giving him the witness. And He will do the same for you if you will bring the sacrifice. Glory to God! Our lesson says, "God had respect unto Abel and to his offering." "Had respect to" has also been translated kindled into a fire. Did you ever see a picture of Cain's and Abel's sacrifice? Go and look at it and you will see the fire and smoke going up from Abel's sacrifice. God testified of his gifts. I tell you when God testifies of a man's gifts something takes place. He put fire on Abel's sacrifice and Abel gained the witness.

To accept a burnt sacrifice is, in Hebrew, to turn to ashes. Turn to Psalm xx. 3 and read the margin: "Remember all thy offerings and turn to ashes." God saw Abel's faith and kindled a fire on his sacrifice, turning it to ashes. Don't you suppose Abel knew when God answered? Was there any need of some one to urge him to believe? To claim the blessing? I think not. He had the evidence, the witness, and if you will meet the conditions, bring the right kind of a sacrifice, you can also gain the witness. God will send the fire as He did on the disciples at Pentecost, and something will take place. You will not only move, but you'll move folks about you. The disciples moved; they could no longer remain in the upper room, but out and down on the streets they went and moved the city by nine o'clock in the morning. They not only moved, but also moved others. We have a sickly, silly, sentimental, so-called holiness these days that does nothing but stay in the house and pray for and pat itself. To get out on the street corners, go down into the byways and hedges after the helpless, lost, sunken, depraved mass sweeping on to a devil's Hell, its professors cannot do. The invitation to an open-air meeting out on the street corner, to mount a chair and tell a lost and dying crowd about Jesus' mighty power to save from sin, nearly frightens them to death.

For years while engaged in the work of going after the helpless and hopeless, we did not want many of the "holiness people"(?) to come to our meeting; did not care for their presence. They could take up much time in testifying and telling us all about how they got "the blessing," but when it came to going out on the street corner to carry the "old, old story" to the lost who would not come inside; no, sir, they were not on hand. They loved to talk about their "Pentecost" and their "upper room experience," but it was a different matter to get them to rush out on the streets and publish the glad tidings there. We have had them say, "Oh, Jesus does not call me to the street." They would want to know if we had kept the command and had been baptized with water according to their ideas of how it should be administered, but the direct command to go to the highways and by-ways, streets and lanes for the outcasts, oh, no, they had not been called to that. I say, to the pit with such a sham, spurious holiness as that. The holiness that does not make you like the Master, make you Christlike, is not the holiness taught in the Bible. Jesus went to the streets many times; His disciples went to the streets, and if there is anything in your heart that refuses, you ought to go forward for prayer and get sanctified wholly, and get the "fire" on your soul, or stop professing to have an experience that you do not possess. You get the real thing out of Heaven and you will find there is fire in it, and it will not only move you, but cause others to move also.

At Pentecost the blessing made some glad and others sad. The humble and lowly heard with joy and divided their substance with those who had not, and they "ate their meat with gladness." But the rulers and those in authority were stirred up to anger. It was so when Jesus Himself preached His great truths. The common people heard Him gladly, but the rulers and chief priests took counsel how they might put Him to death. It was so when John Wesley and his associates would preach this wonderful salvation, and the Church of England denied him her pulpits. We are told he mounted his father's tombstone and told of a Savior who would redeem from all sin. I wonder how many of his sons would be as daring today? It was

thus when William and Catherine Booth had this holy fire burning in their souls. Refusing longer to be lied to and tied down, they stepped out to spread the fire, and the Church shut up her pulpits to them, but God gave them the wide world for a parish, and they not only moved themselves, but they moved others also, and while some were glad, others were mad. And thus it has been since the days of Abel; not only did he know when God answered, but Cain knew it also, and while it moved Abel to joy unspeakable, it moved Cain to envy and anger uncontrollable. History has repeated it o'er and o'er since then, and it is being repeated today, and the Book says "it will wax worse and worse." Oh, these are indeed "perilous days."

But now let us take a look at Cain and his offering. He brought the fruits of the ground, what theologians would call a thank-offering. But God had not respect unto the offering, because he had no respect unto the one who offered it.

This world is full of Cain's religion these days, namely, a bloodless religion. There are thousands of people who say they love Jesus, but it is a cold, bloodless affair; they love Him about the way they love George Washington, the savior of his country. It is simply a cold, historical fact. 'They believe that Jesus came, suffered and died for the world, in about the same way they believe Washington fought for his country. They would join in giving of their means to put up a monument in memory of Washington, and they give of their substance to put up church spires, and in about the same manner, or with the same feeling about it. They believe. Oh, yes; so did Cain, and he proved his belief by bringing a thank-offering, but it had no blood in it. There was nothing in it that spoke of that suffering, dying Lamb of God, who was slain from the foundation of this world.

Cain brought an offering, but no sacrifice. Alas, there are countless numbers doing the same. They, too, are called believers, but alas, their offering, like Cain's, bears no resemblance to Him who died for them, and like Cain's again, there is no confession of their need of the blood to cleanse their guilty, sin-stained souls. Cain's dry, cold, bloodless offering bore no acknowledgment of his own personal need of the blood of Him who should come to take away the sin of the world. Thousands upon thousands today are traveling in Cain's footsteps. They bring their thank-offering, and give of their means to support the cause, but never do they come with a broken, bleeding sacrifice that speaks of their own confessed, personal needs; hence no fire falls. The Book says, "But unto Cain and his offering God had not respect." The passage where it speaks of God not having respect, has also been translated, "Look into with a piercing eye." God looked away beyond the offering into the heart of the man who was making the offering. He looked down underneath, to the actual condition of the offering, and saw his heart; saw the absence of a confession of his own personal need, the absence of a confession of his true condition. What crowds of people come and kneel at the altar as seekers and go away as dead and dry as when they came. God looks into the heart with a piercing eye and sees beyond the outer action, to the real condition, and sees the absence of a real, open-hearted, up-and-above-board confession of the actual condition, a true honest confession of the sin that is there. No fire falls, and they go away as dead and juiceless and as useless as they were when they came; and if one should tell them that it was because they did not meet the conditions, they would strongly maintain that they did: but the very reason that they failed to get the fire is positive proof that God's conditions are not met. I know there was some waiting before Pentecost, but I do not believe that God keeps a soul waiting after His conditions are met. I believe God is too good, just and kind, and is too anxious to deliver souls from sin, to keep an honest soul waiting, after His conditions are met; and because those conditions are not met, many come and go away with no answer from above.

"And Cain was very wroth and his countenance fell." I presume when the fire fell on Abel's sacrifice, that Abel demonstrated his joy. I don't believe that I could have remained still. Whenever fire fell from Heaven it

raised a demonstration. On Mt. Carmel they had a demonstration that caused a nation to cry out, "The Lord, he is God," and it went on until the four hundred false prophets of Baal were slain, and rain from Heaven fell to moisten the dry and parched land. Quite a demonstration! And Elijah could go on foot as fast as Ahab in his chariot. I repeat, there was some demonstration of the fact that fire had fallen. At Pentecost when God poured it out of the sky, things did not remain nice and quiet and so decorous, but a holy hub-bub set in and the poor ignorant Galileans began to speak as they had never spoken before, and consternation was let loose and the demonstration went on until by nine o'clock that morning the multitude came together and was confounded. How does that line up alongside of the cold, starchy, stiff, lifeless, dead formality of today?

Even in many holiness camps and conventions a check is put on, and the meeting is held by iron reins, and the cry is made, "We are afraid of fanaticism." True, fanaticism is not dead but it strikes me that we are in far more danger of cold, dead, juiceless, fireless formality, even among professors of holiness, than we are of fanaticism. How easy to get into a rut, even of clapping, or holding up our hands, or walking about, and even get tied up to a certain kind of demonstration, and think if we are not doing so and so we are off the lines. Oh God, cut us loose from all the silly notions and free us from so much starch, and caring what people will say or call us, and let us be free in the Holy Ghost.

And we often see the same angry spirit of Cain manifested today by those called believers. Somebody brings a sacrifice of a broken, bleeding, yielding heart and, laying it all on the altar, presses his way up through a bank of fog and uncertainty, until the heavens open, the fire falls, and the joy bells ring and, as at Jerusalem, confusion sets in, and then anger is seen on the faces of Cain's followers; they become disgusted and wroth, and their countenance falls. Oh, yes, it shows on their faces very plainly, but God speaks to Cain and says, "Why art thou wroth, why hast thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." I want you to hear God preaching His first holiness sermon to the first man born with a carnal mind. If thou doest well. If is a small word, but how much hangs upon it! If we confess our sins, He is willing to forgive us; but it hinges on our confessing. If thou doest well. How could the man do well with murder in his heart? What, murder? He had not committed murder yet. True, but he had that damning thing in him that would make him do the awful deed, and he made no confession of it whatever. And I am talking to those tonight in the same condition. Oh, if you would but come confessing your real condition, what might take place before the service is over.

But listen to God talk to Cain. "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." Sin, not sins, that devilish carnality inherited from his fallen parents, always spoken of in the Scriptures in the singular number. The inherited sin is the thing which causes you to commit the sins. If thou doest not well, sin -- that inborn thing -- lieth at the door. That word lieth is the same word translated to portray the attitude of a wild animal crouching, just ready to spring upon its prey. Oh, how plainly God was pointing out to Cain the cause of his not being accepted. It would seem that with God dealing with him so plainly he would have bowed in deep sorrow and contrition, and made a clean, clear breast of the whole situation and his condition. But he did not, and up and down this fair land of ours are people, church members and preachers, almost innumerable, with that dark, black beast crouching in their hearts. God said it lieth at the door. Where is the door to man's life except his heart? You can only get into this life through the door of his heart. How plainly God points out the difficulty, tells what it is, and its nature, and where its hiding place is.

Sin, the wild beast, is crouching right there in your heart and ready to spring upon you and make you do the awful work. "And unto thee shall be his desire." He will drive you out and on until thy hands are streaming with thy brother's blood. Oh, if Cain will but listen! But did he? No, he did not; but went away in a

rage. Have we not seen it again and again? Professors of religion come in and hear and see the truth concerning themselves, and go away in a rage, their true condition pointed out, their own heart held up before their eyes, but how angry they go away. Oh, friends, I plead with you for your own sake, for Jesus' sake, for the sake of others about you, do not act thus, but make a full confession to Him of your true condition and your need. Jesus came to take away the sin of the world; to cleanse from all unrighteousness; and He'll do the same for you, if you will but confess and meet the conditions.

One thought more and I am done. Cain and Abel walked together in the field, and Cain talked with Abel his brother. You can hear them talking over the occurrence of the morning. "Why did God send the fire for you, and not for me also? He is not fair. I did as much as you; I brought the products of my toil! I did as much as you. I tell you, it is not right." And I fancy I can hear truthful Abel reply, "But, brother, you did not meet the conditions; you made no confession of either your true condition or your need of the blood, and you did not bring a sacrifice. There was nothing in your offering that spoke of the the Blood; God could not put the fire on such an offering; there was nothing in it to remind Him of the promise.

When you tell a man who is acting wrongfully and knows it, and is yet trying to make others believe he is honest and sincere, free from lies, hypocrisy and sham, about it, it will generally stir him up; it stirred Cain. See the angry flush on his face, see his hands as they nervously clutch themselves until, no longer able to control the tempest in his breast, he raises his closed fist and with a "curse you" strikes his brother and fells him to the ground. Springing upon the prostrate form, his long fingers close about the neck of his brother until the blood gushes from the nostrils of the choking, gasping, struggling form. But the blood only serves to madden the dogs of Hell raging in his bosom, and gathering a stone, with an oath he crushes it down upon the head of his senseless brother, until the blood and brains are scattered about. And God said, "Thy brother's blood crieth upon the ground."

Brother, did it ever dawn upon you that the ground belongs to God, that the Book says that "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof?" This old earth has borne the footprints of God's only Son and drunk of His blood as it trickled down from the cross, and it is dear to Him, and if there was no other witness of thy sins and wrong doings, the very ground you stand on will testify to its Maker against you. "Thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

From that day anger in God's sight has been a murderous sin. Do you have anger in your breast? How long since you have been angry? Do you not know that when you gave way to anger against some of God's creatures, you were committing murder in His sight? and that, unless you confess the sin and get to God with it, it will damn your poor soul in a devil's Hell forever? And you who are unsanctified and feel that rising passion in your hearts, don't you know that it comes from the wild beast, the "carnal mind" that lies embedded deep down in your very nature, and that God could not allow you to enter Heaven with that in you? Do you not know that His Word declares that only the pure in heart shall see the Lord? I ask, "Where art thou?"

How often parents when angry punish their children far too severely, until their little, tender bodies carry the bruises for days. It is no wonder that God, in His goodness, interposes and takes them off to Heaven in their childish innocence. I wonder how many He has had to take out of your home, and where they are gone? You miss the pattering of their little feet and the chattering of their little voices, and go to the bureau drawer and get out a little blue shoe, or something that belonged to them. How the devil does like to carry the mind back to those hours when under anger you punished the child so severely. Oh, friends, the devil is cunning and mighty, but my Savior, the Lamb of God, came to destroy the works of the devil. He

succeeded in getting his own mean, low-down, sensual, rebellious, devilish nature into our hearts, away back there in the garden. But Jesus, the Lamb of God, came to destroy his works, to take away that sin, so that "we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life."

Brother, sister, you need this salvation ; you cannot afford to go farther without it; you need it in your daily life; you need it in your home. What would Cain have said if some one had told him the day previous that in twenty-four hours he would be the murderer of his brother? And if some one should step to your side and tell you that in a short time you would in anger do something that would place a stone of sorrow forever in your soul, you would not believe it. Yet with that inbred sin, the wild beast in your heart, you are not safe; you don't know what moment he will make you do an awful work.

Recently I heard Dr. Hills, of Texas, relate the following: "A man had gone to town to purchase some farming implements, and he took his little boy with him. While in town the child wanted the father to purchase him a toy, but for some reason the father did not do so. On the way home the child was crying; the father asked why he was crying, and the child replied that he wanted the toy. The father back-handed slapped the child, who, losing his balance on the seat, fell over and struck his little head against the corner of one of the implements in the wagon. He soon ceased crying, and they continued the journey home. They ate supper and all retired as usual. Along in the night the mother's ear caught the sound of moans coming from the boy, and going to his little bed, found him with a raging fever. Quickly the father was called and soon sped after the doctor, who on his arrival examined the suffering child. 'What is this red spot I see on his cheek?' he inquired. 'Why,' replied the father, 'he was crying on the way home, and I slapped him and made him stop.' 'I see,' calmly replied the physician, 'but I find a lump on the side of his head; what made it; has he had a fall?' 'Why,' continued the father, 'when I slapped him he fell and struck that side of his head against the machinery that was in the wagon.' 'Just so,' replied the doctor, 'and I have to inform you that your child has concussion of the brain and will not live but a few hours.'"

Can you imagine the feelings of that father? Oh, no, ten thousand times no; he did not mean to harm his little darling; but under the control of that hellish thing, that wild beast, that carnal mind, which God says is not subject to the law of God, he struck the boy too hard and killed him. Oh, say, you parents, are you going to leave this meeting tonight with that wild beast in your heart? Oh, I plead with you, come to the cleansing fountain; come to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Let Him cleanse and sanctify you, body, soul and spirit. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it"

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