

# The Way of Cain

by Steve Gallagher

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*The Way of Cain is a false religion that separates belief from full obedience and true submission to God, leading to a self-centered existence and a lack of true conversion.*

**Duration:** 40:28

**Scripture:** 2 Thessalonians 2:10

**Topics:** "Cain"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the attitudes and behaviors of people in the end times as described in the Bible. He highlights four phrases that describe these individuals: lovers of self, swept away with worldly influences, deceived and deceiving others, and holding to a form of godliness. The preacher emphasizes that the answer to overcoming these tendencies is not through personal effort, but through surrendering to God. He also emphasizes that these characteristics are found within the church, not just in the unbelieving world.

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## Transcript

The following message is provided by Eternal Weight of Glory. For other sermons, teachings, and articles, please visit [EternalWeight.com](http://EternalWeight.com). I'm going to continue on the theme that I've been preaching on, which is the apostasy. You know, I gave a message, Word to Apostates, which was the three signs of apostasy.

Lifelessness, lovelessness, and lawlessness. And then I gave a message on the false peace of apostasy. And today I want to talk about the false religion of the apostasy.

And I'm going to be sharing out a second Timothy. Here in a little while, I'll get to it. But actually, the title of my message comes from a phrase in the book of Jude.

The title of my message is, The Way of Cain. And the book of Jude is another one of those sections of Scripture that talks about the apostasy, the great falling away of the last days. And dear ones, we are in the throes of it right now.

And I hope that this message will make that a little more real to you today. Because you need to be aware of the spiritual atmosphere we are living in. The way of Cain, or I guess we could say, the way Cain did religion.

Maybe is another way of saying it. Let me just recap the story real briefly about Cain and Abel. You know the story.

Cain was a tiller of the soil, a farmer. And Abel was a keeper of the flocks. So he probably had a few cows and sheep and so on.

And Cain probably had a corn crop and maybe some wheat. You know, and maybe a nice vegetable garden. I don't know.

But anyway, he grew things. You know, even at that early stage, really ever since their parents sinned in the garden, God created a sacrificial system, even in those early days. And they were told how to do this.

How to bring sacrifices to God in order to atone for their sins. And so, you know, Abel brought a sacrifice. He brought one of his sheep probably.

He killed it and burned it on the altar. But Cain brought some of his vegetables or wheat. Maybe he brought a big bushel of wheat.

Or maybe he brought a whole bunch of corn. I don't know. But he brought something that he had grown.

And it probably did cost him something. And he put it on the altar as a sacrifice to God. And he lit it up and burned it up.

And God rejected it. Why did he reject it? You know, how ungrateful is that? I mean, this really cost him something. But God rejected it.

And, of course, we know the story that Cain got angry inside, morose, depressed. And instead of repenting and doing the right thing, he looked at his brother who was in the favor of God, receiving the blessings of God, and he murdered him. That was his response.

And, you know, maybe I'll do a message one day. Because that perfectly describes what's going to happen before the end comes. That the apostate church is going to turn on the remnant and do the same thing for the same reason.

But that's another message for another time. But anyway, I want to make a couple of observations real quick on this story. Number one is that Cain believed in God.

Cain believed in God. His parents walked with God in the garden. But even more than that, he had a conversation with God.

So I would say he believed in Him, wouldn't you? He believed in Him. And not only that, he did do what he was told to do, even though he did it in his own way. Cain went, you know, a certain length in obeying the Lord.

But the problem with Cain, and the reason his sacrifice was rejected by God, was because he did it his way. He wanted to create a religion of his own making. One that fit his lifestyle or whatever.

This is what I want to say about this story right here. This disassociation of belief from full obedience and true submission is the way of Cain. That's it right there.

That's the way of Cain. This separation of belief, believing in God, the separation of belief from full obedience and true submission is the way of Cain. That is the false religion of the great apostasy right there.

Now we see this tendency really all down through the ages. For instance, the children of Israel when they were out in the wilderness, and Korah and his followers, they believed in God. How could they not believe in God after what they had gone through being emancipated from Egypt? How could they not? Of course they believed in God.

And they obeyed God up to a point. Up to the point that he demanded that they trust him, even though their mouths were dry, their bellies were empty. He was looking for their trust and they weren't willing to give it, so they murmured against him.

And you know what happened? He destroyed them. But they believed in God. King Saul believed in God.

And maybe the example of the Amalekites, the way he handled them, would probably be a perfect example of what I'm talking about here because Saul believed in God. And he obeyed God up to a point. But not fully.

It was partial obedience. And Samuel rebuked him and said, To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams, for rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. You know, Samuel saw what was in Saul's heart, that he would do the outward things, but he was holding back inside.

Judas is another example. His crime was not in his traitorous kiss. His crime was that he spent three and a half years in intimate fellowship with the God of love and human form.

He was with him day in and day out for three and a half years. But even though he had that kind of fellowship, he rejected the Savior. That was his crime.

Well, really, this goes down through church history. It's really nothing new. And it's what Jesus was referring to when he said, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, you know, not all those who believe in me will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father.

And then he goes on to talk about people who did all kinds of things, prophesying and casting out demons and performing miracles. These are believers. Christians.

Evangelicals. People sitting around you in the church out there. People you know.

But on that day of judgment, he's going to make a statement to them. I never knew you. Depart from me.

Something was missing. Well, how in the world can a person believe in God to the point of affecting her whole lifestyle and the way they do life and all the things they give up and sacrifice for the sake of Christianity? How can a person like that go to hell? How could God send someone like that to hell? I want to say a couple of things about the conversion experience because it begins with enlightenment. That's where all conversions begin.

We have to come into the light in some degree. Now, some people are raised in Christian homes and they've been in the light their entire lives. They've never known anything else.

But that doesn't mean they're converted because at some point it has to go beyond that. Other people grow up in an unbelieving home or whatever and God starts to move in their life. In other words, He is calling them.

He's inviting them into His kingdom. You know the verse where Jesus says, Many are called, but few are chosen. That's what we're talking about here.

The many and the few. There's been an invitation extended because God loves. He loves people.

He loves people. And He wants them for Himself. But not everyone will continue through that process because as you go through that process, yes, you become aware of the spiritual kingdom around you.

You become aware that there really is a God. There really was a Jesus Christ. There really was a Savior who died on the cross.

And you believe those things. You accept those things as truth. But that is meant to bring you to a point.

And that point is Calvary. There is no entering the kingdom of God outside of Calvary, dear ones. You can't make your own religion and get in.

Calvary means repentance. Calvary means denying self. Calvary means renouncing the right to control your own life.

It's self-renunciation. That's Calvary. It's repentance.

It's the transference of faith from yourself to Jesus Christ. That's more than head knowledge. It means something more than that.

This is what James was trying to explain. I mean, he had a different purpose in mind in his second chapter. But he said, you say you have faith for you believe that there is one God.

That's good. Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish.

Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless? There has to be more to the Christian faith than simply believing in God. There's got to be something more. You know, believing in God without submission is dead faith.

And that kind of faith is not saving faith because there's been no conversion. There's been an alteration of a person's life, but not a conversion. A conversion, dear ones, is something very dramatic.

Now, I'm not saying it necessarily has to happen in one big dramatic emotional experience. That's not what I'm talking about. But what I am saying is there is a dramatic change in the person's life, in the way they think, in the way they view life, and so on.

I'll tell you where you really see it is in the New Covenant. The Lord said it through Ezekiel. He said, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you.

I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. That's what it means to be born again.

In Jeremiah's version, the Lord said, I will write my laws on your heart. Let me put it to you this way. When you have repented of your sins and you've exchanged the self life for the Christ life, something dramatic happens, as I said, and the Holy Spirit indwells you.

And as part of that indwelling, he inscribes on your heart a spiritual DNA. If I could say it like that. In other words, just like DNA is the genetic instructions that determines what you turn out to be, well, it's the same thing with the new birth.

It's the Holy Spirit inscribes on your heart a genetic set of instructions that lays out your entire future for you. A good place to see it is Ephesians 2.10, for we are his workmanship. That's that creation of a new being.

We are his workmanship, Paul said, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. If you have been born again, God has a path already inscribed on your heart, and all you've got to do is follow through with what he has laid out for you. That is the born again experience, and that's what Pastor Jeff was referring to when he was talking about fruit will come forth from your life.

It has to. It has to, dear ones, because the spirit of the living God is indwelling you. I'm not mad.

You understand that, right? It's like the longer I go, your heads just get lower and lower. I don't mean to beat up on you. I'm just trying to explain something, and I get a little passionate about it.

But I want to tell you, man, I want it to be real to you, the difference between struggling along in the flesh, never being able to get the victory, never understanding, you know, where is the love? Where is the power? And some people go year after year after year living in the light and never experiencing the power or the love of God within them. It's because they haven't crossed that line. When God Himself indwells your heart, He begins changing your desires.

He begins influencing your thinking. He creates a new value system within you. He begins filling you with love for Himself and love for others.

It doesn't mean that you all of a sudden don't have struggles. It doesn't mean that you're no longer tempted. It doesn't mean that you don't fail.

That's not what I'm saying. But something is dramatically different. There is a power there within you that wasn't there before.

There is a desire to obey God. There is a passion for holiness within you that wasn't there before. Maybe before you had certain reasons that you wanted to obey the Lord.

Maybe you felt pressure from those around you to conform yourself to the way everyone else looks. Maybe you felt a pressure on you to get rid of sin out of your life or something. But that's not what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about something that wells up from within you like a fountain. Something that is from outside of you, and yet it's within you. I'm talking about what it means to be born again.

For that to happen, the old system must be overthrown and a new system installed. Just keep all that in mind, because now I want to focus on the great apostasy. If you want to open up to 2 Timothy.

But I wanted to lay that groundwork for you, and I'll explain it here in a little bit. Because I want to take that spiritual dynamic of what a true conversion looks like, and I want to apply it to the end times. And what Paul called the great apostasy.

In this passage of Scripture here, in 2 Timothy 3, is one of those passages where he describes characteristics of the apostate church. Mostly I'm referring to verses 1-7 and verse 13. But I'm not going to read it.

Most of you are familiar with this. I just want to point out some things here real briefly, and then I want to touch on some things. If you look at these different things that are expressed about these people, you will notice that nearly every one of these characteristics is a heart attitude.

In other words, it's not what people are actually doing so much as it is what they are inside. That's important. And secondly, these are church people.

In other words, you wouldn't say that unchurched people are holding to a form of godliness. You wouldn't say unchurched people are always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. You wouldn't say that about unchurched people.

These are people in Christian churches that he's describing. And, of course, it says it right there. This is what's going on in the last days.

This is the corporate mentality of much of the church in the end times. And I think that what this is, is God gave Paul a snapshot to see inside of people, the majority of the church of the end times, to get a sight of the attitudes going on within them. All right, so anyway, I want to touch on four phrases here briefly that describe what these people are in.

And the first you see right off the bat in verse 2, Now that, you know, just on a superficial level, that just sounds like, oh yeah, people are selfish or people are self-centered. And that, of course, is true, but it's something more than that. Because when you really start studying what the conversion is in the New Testament, you can't get away from this whole concept of the self-life.

When Jesus laid it out, what it means, the word of the cross, the first thing he said is, if you want to follow me, you must deny self. You must. You must say no to self.

In other words, self is asking for something from you, and you have to say no to it and yes to God. There is a definite contrast there. You can't have both.

You can't have two masters on your throne. You can't serve God and mammon. It's not possible.

Something has to happen. And these people that he's describing here, the self-life is fully intact. It hasn't been dealt with.

You know, and the bottom line with them is that they are devoted to self first and God and others second. I'm going to just read something here real quick. The fundamental difference between a true and false believer lies in the question of loyalty.

Is he devoted to Christ or to himself? When it comes right down to it, is he going to look out for number one, or will his primary loyalties be to Christ? Will he do his own will or that of God? Will he love self or will he love the Lord? Being born again means the person is converted from a self-centered existence to one

which is becoming increasingly Christ-centered. That is the message of the cross right there. And that's the difference between those who have transferred their faith from self to Christ and those who haven't.

Those who have become enlightened but have never made that transference of faith. All right, and the second phrase I want to just touch on here is in verse 5, holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power. This is a dictionary definition.

Form means an external appearance of a clearly defined area as distinguished from color or material. So if I could just put it in my words, a form would be like an ink drawing, where let's say I drew a building with pen and ink, but I didn't fill the color in. I didn't fill in the details.

You get a sense of what it looks like. It's a semblance of a building, but you don't have the interior of it. Or maybe even it could be, remember those old erector sets.

You build an erector set, but there's nothing inside of it. It's empty. That is a form of godliness.

The semblance of godliness is there. This person looks like these people, these godly people. He does kind of the same things, the same outward actions.

He says praise the Lord. He sings praise as we heard earlier, but there's something different. He's empty inside.

So, you know, a form of godliness is kind of the semblance of it without the reality of it. I'm just going to, again, read something very briefly out of my book, *Standing Firm Through the Great Apostasy*. In its barest sense, this must mean these people would have the outward trappings of a walk with God but lack the inward reality.

One of the terrifying realities of Christianity is that it is possible for people to live with an outward semblance of faith while at the same time they are resisting the inward work of the Holy Spirit. People with a form of godliness have opted for a Christian existence where they convey to others that they have a viable spiritual life which they don't really possess. That's a form of godliness.

That is the way of Cain. It's the same thing. You know, it's doing it your own way.

It's being in control of your own life. It's being the master of your own ship and yet at the same time attempting to fit in with others. All right, number three is found in verse four.

These people are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. And again, I want to get past the superficial understanding. The superficial understanding was, okay, they just totally love pleasure.

These are sex addicts they're talking about. These are alcoholics or drug addicts they're talking about. They really love to snort coke.

Well, you know, that's true, maybe. I don't know. But it's something deeper than that.

Come on, this is deeper. Paul was seeing inside the depths of people's hearts, living in the church of the end times. What he was seeing is deep-seated attitudes.

Let me put it this way. This is what I believe it means, is that there's a choice between two paths, and it's very clear-cut. Am I going to please self or am I going to please God? That's what that means.

Lovers of pleasure, meaning that they live their lives to please their self-life. That is the momentum of their heart, if I could put it that way. Whereas a true believer also likes pleasure.

I like pleasure. You know, there's pleasurable things I enjoy. I like a good meal and stuff.

But it isn't the flow of my heart. It isn't the foundation of what drives me in life. You know, my number one priority is to please God, to do what's going to be pleasing to Him.

To obey Him, not just outwardly, but from my heart. To live my life in such a way that He is going to be pleased with my life, with my thought life, with the way I speak and treat people, with the way I do everything in life. The Apostle John said, you know, I'd never thought of it this way, but I just happened to cross this verse and I thought, wow, I never saw it like this before.

I'll just read it. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Now think about that.

That bare statement by itself. If anyone loves the world, if his devotion, never mind the outward religious facade. Just get past that.

What's the devotion of his heart? What is it that excites his heart? Is it the things of this world? If that's true, this God of love is not in him. I think I can say that. I think that's right.

But it's still, whether that's what John meant or not, it's still true. You know, because you can't have a holy, loving God indwelling you, filling you, and be in love with the things of the world. Have your primary devotion to stuff that pleases your senses.

Jesus said, where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be. And it's just another way of saying exactly what I'm trying to explain. I guess I could just put it to you that way.

What is the treasure of your heart? What is it that your mind constantly drifts towards? What is it that you think about throughout the day? You know, what's the predominant thought of your day? Are you drawn towards the things of God? Or are you more likely to be drawn towards just all that the world has to offer? Now, please understand, even when you're converted, there's still an attraction, okay? So don't misread what I'm saying or exaggerate it in your mind. That's something that takes years to really become full of a love for God. But still, when you have been converted, something's different.

The primary foundational momentum of your life is towards God and the things of God. That's where you get the joy and the thrill and all of that. Okay, number four, deception.

And we see it in two verses here at verse 13. Evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. These two terms, evil men and impostors, really incorporate the whole unsaved world.

I mean, these are the people who will inhabit hell forever. Evil men represents the unbelieving world out there. People who make no pretense about Christianity.

They don't go to church. You don't see them in church today. Impostors, that's just referring to what we're talking about here.

Impostors are hypocrites. Impostors are people who are play-acting Christianity, but they're holding back their heart from God. Let me just push out the evil men here for a minute and just look at what it says.

Take out those first four words, and here's what it says. Impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. What is the deception? Well, we'll get to that in a minute.

And look at verse 7. Always learning, always learning, learning, learning. Reading books, listening to sermons, reading articles on the Internet or whatever. Just learning, learning, filling their minds with more and more and more information about the Bible, about the kingdom of God, about spiritual things.

Learning, learning, always learning. Some of the greatest teachers end up in hell. Why? Because they just have a knack for teaching.

They enjoy learning about stuff. Whatever. I don't know what the reason is.

But I do know that this is one of the characteristics of the apostate church, that these people are very much concerned about learning. And yet, they never cross the line into arriving at that knowledge of the truth. You know, you can only go so far in this thing.

You can learn stuff in your head. But until you have made that full consecration to God, you can't have that connection of the Holy Spirit inside you. There's a whole level of enlightenment that occurs when you have truly been converted and given your heart to God.

It's a whole different thing. That's the knowledge of the truth. The knowledge of the truth really is Calvary.

The knowledge of the truth is that I am an utterly sinful person, and I deserve hell, but God is merciful, and he showed his mercy to me and many millions of others on the cross. 2 Thessalonians 2 is another one of the key passages about the great apostasy. And let me just read a couple of verses.

Paul said that apostate Christians are on the way to perdition because they did not welcome into their hearts the love of the truth so that they might be saved. Another translation said that they are doomed to destruction because they did not open their minds to love the truth so as to find salvation. And for this cause, God will give them up to the power of deceit, and they will put their faith in what is false.

That is the way of Cain. That's it. That's the way of Cain, and it's going to be unfolded in a greater intensity and a greater way in the days ahead.

But what is the deception? You see it all through these different things. The truth is that they are devoted to themselves and their own cause rather than to Christ. The truth is that their relationship with God is a mere pretense of outward religious activity.

The truth is that in their hearts, they are only looking to please themselves. The deception is that in spite of all of this, they still think they're saved. All right.

Now, what does all this have to do with the great falling away? And this is what I believe. Let me put it in terms of the conversion experience. If you could think of it as going up a stairway.

You start off by being enlightened, and then the Holy Spirit begins to convict you of sin, and then He begins to deal with you. And at some point, you have to cross that line where you make that full surrender, and you repent of your sins, and you renounce the self-life, and you allow Jesus Christ to take control of your life in a real way. But before you get to that point, and this is what happens is many people live their lives right there, right before they never cross over because they don't want to.

That's the truth of the matter. They just don't want to give up their lives. They don't mind being religious, but they don't want to cross that line.

And so what's going to happen in the end times is, and if I do another message on this series, I'll be able to explain this better, but there's going to be a great pressure from the world system that's going to turn on the church, the false church and the remnant. And that pressure is going to force people to go one way or the other. They are either going to give their hearts and lives over to God once and for all in a real way, or they're going to fall down that stairway.

They're going to fall away and just throw themselves into the world system, take the mark of the beast and everything else involved. That's the falling away. They get up to a certain point, but because they never pulled the trigger, they never really crossed the line, when the pressure comes, they're not going to be able to stand.

They're going to be swept away with all the other millions. All right, now to apply this message to our own situation, what's the answer? Is the answer to try harder? No, you can't try harder. You can't do it in your own efforts.

You can't muster up something inside you to make it, you know, or whatever. The answer is surrender. And just to wrap things up, I want to read this little portion out of Intoxicated with Babylon.

Let me just read this because this really describes what true surrender is. And I'm cutting right into a paragraph where I'm talking about something in the Old Testament as an illustration. When Ben-Hadad, the powerful king of Syria, decided he was going to attack the northern kingdom of Israel, he sent the following message to King Ahab.

Your silver and gold are mine, and the best of your wives and children are mine. The king of Israel answered, Just as you say, my lord the king, I and all I have are yours. When one king surrendered to another, he understood what it meant.

I and all I have are yours. It would be an unconditional surrender. This is what the Christian conversion should resemble.

The person's kingdom has been overthrown by a new king. He doesn't come out to face the new master with a list of conditions. He's in trouble, and he knows it.

The enormity of his sin overwhelms him. The magnitude of his crimes against God staggers him. The reality of his unworthy condition is too great to bear.

The knowledge of his utterly lost condition terrifies him. He has nothing to offer God. He realizes there isn't a thing he can do to save himself.

It is in this condition that he comes to the king and says, I and all I have are yours. There, lying utterly prostrate before God, he is hoping for one thing and one thing only. Mercy.

I've done my best to try to share with you all what I see going on and why we are in the condition we're in today, why many of you have never gotten the victory over sin and so on, because I believe that something was missing in your lives. Something never happened. You went a certain distance spiritually, but you didn't complete the job.

Now, I know that many, if not most of you guys, since you've been here, you have made that consecration, and you're going on with God. It's happened for you inside. What needed to happen has happened for you, and you will continue on with God.

You'll have your struggles, I'm sure, when you get out of here and get thrown back into the world out there. You'll have some struggles, but if that true conversion has really happened, I believe you will go on with God, and I will see you one day in glory. Others, you're still in the process of deciding.

You haven't yet really made that full consecration. You haven't really made the decision. And we always want to give you the opportunity here.

Every meeting is an opportunity. Just another invitation from the Lord. Come to me.

Lay it down. Surrender. Put up the white flag.

Cease all your resistance. Let me come in and take control. There's always that invitation here.

And I do want to have an altar call. It may only be because one guy needs it or something. That's okay.

I'm not looking for some big emotional thing today. But I do want to have an altar call. Pastor Jeff, could you lead us in that song? I think that would be good.

We're going to sing, I Surrender All, if you guys could find that. If you've already had that experience I'm describing, this altar call is not for you. But if you're unsure, if you don't know that you have really made that consecration to God, then this would be a good opportunity for you to come down here just quietly by yourself with the Lord, you and the Lord, and just give your will to God once and for all.

Just make that decision. I'm saying yes to you today, Lord. I am saying yes to you.

Let's all stand up. If you feel like you should be down here to say that prayer, then just come on down right now.

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