

**Peace** be with you, listening friends. We greet you in the name of God, the Lord of peace, who wants everyone to understand and submit to the way of righteousness that He has established, and have true peace with Him forever. We are happy to be able to return today to present your program *The Way of Righteousness*.

In our last program we learned about the first two sons of Adam and Eve, **Cain and Abel**. We saw how each of them wanted to worship God and present to Him a sacrifice. Cain took some crops that he had cultivated and offered them to God. But Abel offered God a lamb without blemish and slaughtered it as a sacrifice that covers sin. And the Scripture declares: *"The Lord accepted Abel but He did not accept Cain,"*

Why did God accept Abel but not Cain? Because God's way of righteousness demanded a **blood sacrifice**. God judged Abel as righteous because he believed the Word of God and brought the offering that God required. As for Cain, he attempted to approach God through his own efforts, which is why God did not accept him.

Today we plan to **conclude our study about Cain and Abel**. Do you know what happened after God refused Cain's sacrifice? In the book of Genesis, chapter four, verse five, the Scripture says: *"So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast."* Why was Cain angry? That is not difficult to understand. To illustrate, if I do something bad and someone says to me, "You have done wrong! Change your ways, and do what is right!" how might I respond to the one who rebuked me? Either I will humbly receive his words and **change my ways** or I will get angry with him and **continue in my error**.

God rebuked Cain so that he might realize that the works of his hands, which he had presented as a sacrifice, were worthless before God. **God wanted Cain to repent** and to bring the sacrifice of a lamb without blemish, as Abel had done. God wanted to lead Cain in the right way, the way of forgiveness. However Cain, in his pride, refused to admit his transgression before God. Instead, he became angry and despondent.

Thus, *"the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.'"* Why did God question Cain in this way? He questioned him because He did not want Cain to perish. God wanted Cain to repent of his sins, and follow the right way. God was warning Cain about a terrible enemy, which threatened to destroy him and his descendants. That enemy is called *Sin!*

**What is sin?** Sin is **the problem of the world**. It is our worst enemy. Sin is like a snake, full of deadly poison. It is like a little spark that can burn up a great forest. Sin is a torch with which Satan is burning up the world! The Word of God says, *"Anyone ...who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."* *"Sin is lawlessness.... He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning."* Sin is the force that moves in the members of our bodies and fights against what is true and good. Sin is anything that does not agree with the will of God. Sin is refusing to believe and obey the Word of God. **To go my own way is sin.**

What will be the end of those who go their own way and refuse to believe God and obey Him? The Scriptures say, *"They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power."* Those who come by the way of salvation that God has decreed will be granted eternal life. But those who harden their hearts against the truth will face God's wrath and judgment. However, the Scriptures say that God does not want *"anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance!"* **God did not want Cain to perish in his sin.** What He wanted was for Cain to repent, forsake the way of unrighteousness that he had chosen, and choose the way of righteousness.

As we saw in the last program, the Lord God had revealed a plan by which sinners could be made righteous before Him. **Abel believed in God's plan**, and slaughtered a spotless lamb as a sacrifice that covers sin. Abel believed what God said, *"The [penalty for] sin is*

*death," and "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin!"* Because of the shed blood of the lamb, Abel had a clear conscience before God. Abel knew that he was a guilty sinner deserving God's punishment, but he knew also that he had offered an innocent lamb just as God required. The lamb which Abel sacrificed was an illustration of the Saviour who was to come into the world to offer up His life as a sacrifice that would cancel man's debt of sin forever. As for Cain, he pretended to believe God, but his deeds denied it. **Cain honoured God with his mouth, but his heart was far from Him.** The blood of a lamb is what God demanded, but Cain offered Him the works of his hands. Cain's worship was absolutely worthless before God, because he did not accept God's way.

Let us now read the next verse to see what Cain did after God rebuked him for his worthless sacrifice. The Scripture says, *"Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him."*

What did Cain do? Did he repent? Did he believe God and bring to Him the blood of a lamb as a sacrifice for sin? No! **Cain added sin to sin by attacking his brother Abel and killing him.**

Incredible! Cain, who refused to shed the blood of a lamb so that God could forgive him his sins, now shed the blood of his righteous brother! What do you think about this? Who placed within the mind of Cain the idea to kill his brother? To whom was Cain listening? Cain was listening to Satan. The Scriptures say that he killed his brother because Cain *"belonged to the evil one."* We have already seen how God announced that there would be two lines (groups) of people in the world, the people of God and the people of Satan. **Abel belonged to God** because he believed the Word of God enough to obey it. **Cain belonged to Satan** because he did not believe the Word of God.

Let us now listen to what God said to Cain after he killed his younger brother.

*"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' 'I don't know,' he replied. 'Am*

*I my brother's keeper?' The Lord said, 'What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.'*"

Thus, God punished Cain, saying, *"When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you."* African wisdom says, "The cow kicks its calf but does not hate it." Similarly, God did not punish Cain to condemn him, but to lead him to repent of his sin, believe the truth, and be saved. Yet what did Cain do? Did he repent? No, he did not. The Scriptures say, *"So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod."* Cain, who ignored the word of God, turned his back on God, shutting Him out of his life. **It was not God who distanced Himself from Cain, but Cain who distanced himself from God.**

Today, most of Adam's descendants resemble Cain, continuing in their own way and closing their hearts to God's voice. With their lips they say, "God is great!" but in their hearts they think, "God is far away! No one can know Him!" However, the Word of God shows us that **God is not far from any one of us**, because He is the One who gives to everyone life and breath and everything else. He is closer to us than our own heartbeat. God knows you personally, and He wants you to know Him personally too!

Why is it then that most people do not come to know God (personally)? The Word of God answers this question. God says, *"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."*

People do not know God, because like Cain, **they have turned their backs on His Word.** God's prophet David wrote: *"[God's] word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."* If you turn your back on the light of the Word of God, you will remain in the darkness of sin

and you will never come to know God. God will seem far from you. And yet, God wants you to know that He is not far away. He is behind you. He is at your side. He is right in front of you. God loves you and wants to have a close relationship with you. But you must not be like Cain, who hardened his heart and refused to accept God's way of righteousness. **God wanted Cain to repent.** To this very day, God is commanding every person to repent, turn to Him, and believe His Word.

Do you know what it means **to repent**? It means *to change your thoughts and your actions*. To repent is **to confess before God**, "I have been wrong in my thinking concerning the way of salvation that you have established!" To repent is **to agree with God** that you have no possible way of saving yourself from His righteous judgment, and then to turn to Him and submit to His way of salvation.

A person who truly repents is like a traveller who wants to take the train from Johannesburg to Cape Town. He buys a ticket and climbs aboard. Later, as he is traveling along, he discovers that he is on the train going to Durban! What must he do if he is ever to get to Cape Town? He must "repent"--that is, he must **admit** that he is heading in the wrong direction, **get off** the train at the next stop, and **get on** the train that goes to Cape Town. Thus, we see that genuine repentance has two sides: rejecting the wrong and accepting the right. **True repentance involves two actions.** First, you must **turn from** yourself, your sins, your idols and your self-efforts to gain God's favour. Then you must **turn to** God and His Word which tells you how to be saved. That is true repentance.

As for Cain, he never repented. Cain chose to continue in **his own way**. He refused to submit to **the way of salvation** established by God. That is why the Scriptures say: "**Cain perished on the way of unrighteousness, which caused God to reserve for him the blackest darkness forever!**"

Oh dear friends, **may we not be like Cain!** Let us pay attention to the solemn warning from God which says, "**Unless you repent, you too will all perish!**" God's judgment is sure

and will fall upon all those who have never been cleansed from their sins.

Let there be no mistake about this: you will never become righteous before God based on your own good works. Like Cain, many people believe that they will escape God's judgment by attempting to follow the rules and regulations of their religion. But being religious does not make one righteous. God's Word says:

*"No one will be declared righteous in [God's] sight by observing the law.... All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.... For it is by grace you [are] saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast!"*

Thank you for listening. God willing, in the next program, we will study about some of Adam's descendants, including the Prophet of God, Enoch....

God bless you as you thoughtfully consider what you have heard today. The Scriptures say:

*"God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.... [But if you do not] repent, you will perish!"*

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On this website, you can find *The Way of Righteousness* and other books by author P.D. Bramsen who wrote *The Way of Righteousness*.

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