

How Angry Was Cain?

by Wayne Goff

“Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.” (Genesis 4:4–5)

Cain Was Very Angry!

Naturally we know that Cain was angry enough to kill his brother! He was angry enough to kill his brother even *after* the Lord warned him of the powerful effects of sin! God told Cain, “...*Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it*” (Gen. 4:7). Our prisons are full of men like Cain who let sin get the best of them. It rules over them and consequently they wind up behind bars, secluded from the rest of society. As John wrote of Cain, he was “*of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous*” (1 Jn. 3:2). Read also Jude 11.

As the Keil & Delitzsch commentary on the Old Testament said, “...sin is personified as a wild beast, lurking at the door of the human heart, and eagerly desiring to devour his soul (1 Pet. 5:8)...” Cain allowed the wild beast of anger and resentment to destroy his brother and permanently destroy his own life. Don’t think that Satan cares.

The Hebrew word translated “**angry**” (Gen. 4:5) means “to be warm, to fume; to be greatly angered with resentment, indignation” [Wilson’s OT Word Studies]. Cain wasn’t just mad — he was **fuming mad!** In spite of God’s counsel, Cain could not let his anger go. He was mad at God, I suppose, but he took it out on his brother Abel.

Has Anything Changed?

Here we are today, perhaps 6,000 years removed from Cain’s murder, and human nature is still the same. God’s counsel is still the same — **sin’s desire is for you, but you must rule over it**. That is why the Bible is such a valuable book. It contains inspired wisdom from the Creator of mankind, Who knows us best. You cannot find greater counsel than that.

In the New Testament, Jesus deals with our “**anger issues**” by warning us to *avoid murdering* our brother by first *removing the hatred* in our hearts for him. “...*I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment*” (Matt. 5:22). Is that any different than God’s counsel to Cain?

Have you ever hated someone so much that you wanted to kill them? Or have you ever hated someone so much that you would like to see them dead? Resentment can build up in the heart to the point that such thoughts can exist, even among us. Jesus teaches us to squelch these thoughts lest we find ourselves in danger of the judgment. It’s not good enough to observe the command “*You shall not murder*” (Matt. 5:21). You must go one step further and not be “*angry with your brother without a cause*.” Oh I know, I know, you think you have a **cause**. Cain thought he had a cause too and he acted on it, but he was wrong! Before you allow hatred and resentment to find safe harbor in your heart, stop and think: “Can I forgive my brother or sister just because God forgave me?” That’s what the New Testament teaches. “*Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do*” (Col. 3:13). Notice the little word “**must**” in that verse. It’s a command, not a request. If you truly wish to be a follower of Christ, then you must forgive others *unconditionally* so that hatred and resentment do not ruin your heart. God will forgive those who sin against you when they repent. Your job is to forgive them in your heart right now!

“*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us...*” Eph. 5:1-2.

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