

Your Brothers Blood • Genesis 4:1-24

Ryan Perz • October 22, 2023

We are very often motivated by the examples of others.

This is why good leaders are always told to “lead by example”.

--The examples can be good and have positive traits. Integrity, discipline, humility.

--Or the examples can be bad, and you say, “I don’t want to look like that”.

When I was a very new pastor, I was invited to join a monthly ministry gathering of pastors for lunch.

After attending for a few months, I was discouraged.

These men who had several decades of ministry....had some really bad attitudes.

I said: By God’s grace, I don’t want to ever become like some of these men—unhappy, jaded, cynical...no real joy for Jesus.

- The NT tells us that a *legitimate way* to read to the OT is by looking at the example laid down.

Speaking of rebellious generation:

1 Corinthians 10:11 ESV

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

This is a good reminder every time we crack an OT book to study.

- This is a very familiar story in the Bible (yet rarely if ever makes it into Children’s Bibles for some reason).

Now this is one of those stories that people can get sidetracked with the minors, and miss the major:

—Where did his wife come from?

—Where is Nod?

—What was the mark placed on Cain?

Those are legit questions, but they miss the overall main point.

Sin dominates and escalates.

It dominates one man.

It escalates in society.

1. The dominating and escalating nature of sin

We need more hamartiologists in today's world. (Hamartiology is the study sin).

Hamartia-Gk. for sin.

Hematologist is a specialized doctor who studies blood and its disorders.

Hamartiologists: one specialized in the study of sin.

You used to be able to find them among the Puritans (like John Own); they are in short supply today.

Plot has 4 parts:

-The setting

-The struggle

-The slaying

-The spread

Setting (1-4a)

- The setting of the story begins with grace. Adam and Eve respond to God's grace—the promised children will come.

The setting (v2): Two brothers and their work and worship.

Struggle (4b-7)

- It's clear that something is wrong with Cain's offering.

What was that?

- I don't think it had anything to do with the offering of crops instead of sheep.

It can boil down to one word: tokenism.

A token gift is one given in a formal way, but no heart behind it.

Your friend asks you to support some charitable cause. You don't feel moved or concerned, but because your friend asks, you give \$20. It's not enough that you will miss.

Or... you have not put God first in anything all week.

No Bible or prayer. No real intent to live holy and consecrated in thoughts and actions. But...you know if you miss church, people may ask. So you show up. You know if you don't sing, the choir will see. So you go through the motions. You give a tithe because you think something bad may happen if you don't.

Token worship.

Jesus described token worship:

Matthew 15:8–9 (ESV)

“ This people honors me with their lips,

but their heart is far from me;

in vain do they worship me,

Here we get a vital lesson: You can't separate the worshipper and his offering.

- › The issue is the heart, not the gift...

Proverbs 21:27 ESV

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination;
how much more when he brings it with evil intent.

- We also have additional clarity.
- Abel brought the best—(4:4); Cain just brought.
- The tension grows quickly when Cain does not get what he wants (v5).

This is strong anger—fury. It describes the way Jacob's sons react in Gen. 34:7 when they hear their sister was abused.

Anger is one of the emotions that reveals our attitude.

It's actually a mix of anger and sadness —

In the study of how sin works (hamartiology): *How do we react when we don't get what we want from God?*

- V6-7 are vital: Listen to the LORD's words: a question and warning. The warning of how sin wants to dominate is powerful (v7).
 - Sin is like a vicious animal ready to attack—even a demonic attack.
- › This is a vital part of the narrative: There is a way out. You don't have to keep going down this path.

Same words in the NT--

1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

- › A good hamartiologist will tell you: there is always a way of escape.

Especially for you, Christian friend: You have the Word, Spirit, power of the Risen Christ!

Slaying (v8)

- Everything about this is ruthless and cold-blooded.
- This slaying is so personal; its based on personal envy.

Here is another lesson: we see how a man acts when he is passed over, and someone close to him is blessed.

“Anytime a person is filled with envy and anger of God’s blessing on others, there will be disaster if that anger is allowed to run its course.” (Allan Ross)

- This also sets a narrative in motion. Throughout Genesis there is strife between brothers that continues.

....And its not till the end when Joseph treats his betraying brothers with grace, do we see something different.

Spread (v9-24)

- The last shows how sin escalates and spreads.

—Confrontation, charges, and the curse (9-12)

- First, look at the question and response (v9).

Keeper = responsibility (Adam was called to be a keeper/guardian of Eden)

**Cain basically says, “I’m only responsible for myself.”

That is not the way the Lord made humanity to work...especially in the family, and the church.

“To each his own”

“You do you”

Cain was the first “radical individualist”.

Sin multiplies - murder and lying.

Lying —so far from the image of God, which is truth.

*When we lie, we are imaging the devil, not God (John 8:44)

- (v11) The Lord justly curses Cain—the first pronouncement of a curse on a human being.

Cain makes an appeal that to work land that is cursed will be too much, so he appeals.

Notice at this point, he is still only concerned with himself.

There is no indication that he is grieved that his sin was against God, or cares about his innocent brother, or how it effects his parents.

Just self. Self-pity.

A good hamartiologist will also distinguish between different kinds of sorrow over sin.

Just because someone is sad and broken, does not mean they are really sorry for their sin in a God-directed way.

2 Corinthians 7:10 ESV

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Worldly grief = I'm sad because of what I lose in the world.

Godly grief = I'm sad because of what I did before God and how it effects his glory, and hurts others.

- So God responds to the appeal, and shows grace (v15-16).

This is common grace; not redemptive grace.

- I can't tell you where Nod is...other than East of Eden. But I know what it represents: lostness.

Cain is alienated from God; lost.

So here we have a picture of the first truly lost human being.

- The common grace continues to Cain having his children and the ability to build a city and create culture (v17ff).

But the narrative ends on a disturbing note—the sin has spread, it's escalated. (V24)—It's heard in Lamech's song.

*As we listen in, we hear the progressive hardening; being desensitized.

-One wife was not good enough for Lamech—so he grabs two.

He also acts out of personal revenge and murders...and takes God's protective grace for granted.

- There is a mixed feeling.

There is a civilization built, cities, music, art...but no God.

Cities and civilizations can survive and do well under God's common grace.

But even when cities are built that have great music, art - or Amazon drones that drop prescription meds at your front door - these are signs of common grace.

But when absent of God...they offer zero hope of redemption.

- › Society under common grace does absolutely nothing to deal with the problem of dominating and escalating sin.

For that we need a better word...

2. A better word

- This has all the marks of a senseless act of violence.

Think of Adam and Eve. They essentially lost two sons on this dark day. One is dead, the other is driven away.

- Abel: His name means vapor, fleeting.

The NT does not see Abel's life as a waste, for two reasons:

His faith (Heb. 11:4)

His blood (Heb. 12:24)

Hebrews 12:24 ESV

and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

- The shed blood of slain Abel - sin is out of control. Anger turns to murder. Wicked seems to triumph. Sin is dominating and escalating.

This blood can never bring anyone into the presence of God.

- The sprinkled blood of Jesus - God is in control. Evil will not triumph. Sin, death, Satan is defeated!

—The two bloods shed in the Bible speak two different words.

Abel's blood cries: God, show your justice.

Jesus's blood cries: God, show your grace and salvation. Shield sinners from judgment.

Do you want God to show judgment or grace?

If you want God to show you grace...you need to come under the sprinkled blood of Jesus.

We have a better hope... a better word!

On Wednesday at prayer meeting, Pastor Dennis told a story of a former TRB pastor who did not like the phrase "where Jesus' blood was spilt" in a particular hymn.

So he told people to take a pencil and strike out "spilt" and the church started to sing "shed" instead.

A better Word was needed!

--"Spilt" seems like an accident, or waste.

Shed is with intention.

Sprinkled: atones, forgives, mediates, restores.

Heb. 12:4...the new covenant blood was sprinkled. Blood that atones, forgives, sets free.

Friends, we have hope today that God will eradicate all the dominating and escalating effects of sin.

Because we have a better word.