May the Lord increase your faith.

*Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.*

 Deuteronomy 29:4

Moses spoke to the Israelites shortly before they were to enter the Promised Land. The entire generation of adults whom God had rescued from Egypt has perished in the wilderness. This generation has witnessed this and was about to receive the promised inheritance. They had been under the guidance of Moses who spoke the words of God. And yet, still their hearts were hard.

This doesn’t mean that every single one of them had no faith in God. But as a nation they didn’t fully trust Him. As we read the rest of the Old Testament, it becomes apparent that this didn’t change.

How blessed we are who have become followers of Jesus. The Lord has given us the Holy Spirit who has given us a heart to understand, opened our eyes, cleared our ears, and even given us the faith necessary for salvation. All we have to do is say “Yes”. God has provided us with so much that we can’t even take credit for saying yes; He receives all the glory for our acceptance of Christ.

Praise Him for this wonderful gift. Israel is still His chosen people and one day He will open their eyes and ears; but it will be through great trouble and suffering. We have been offered a free gift. Accept it with gratitude.

Love in Christ

John

 3-27-22

Genesis 4:9-15

In our study of chapter 4 last week, we began looking at Cain. His heart was not turned to God; he had no faith in God and his attitude toward Him was one of rebellion. Even though he had offered a faithless sacrifice, Cain was still angry with God for not accepting it. In this, we see the attitude of much of humanity today. They want God to work out everything to their own benefit without having to do anything for God in return.

This is an evil belief: That everything should work out for us and everyone should cater to us because somehow, we deserve special treatment; somehow the universe was created to please us. Paul speaks of this in 2 Timothy 3 when he says that men will become lovers of self. He is referring to selfishness here. We are to love ourselves in that we care for our physical health and well-being since our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit; and for our souls through salvation in Jesus Christ. But we can see the prevalence of selfishness in society today. And it all started with a simple act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden.

God spoke with Cain and gave him, and us, good advice. He gave us a picture of sin as a horrible beast waiting to pounce on us and kill us. This is exactly what sin will do and has been doing throughout time. Cain chose to ignore the advice and allowed himself to go deeper into his rejection of God. This account is recorded for us in God’s word in hopes that we will heed the advice and turn to God in faith and obedience.

Verse 8 tells us that Cain spoke with Abel. We are not told what he talked to him about. But some time afterword, they ended up out in the field together. They were away from their mom and dad; they were away from any brothers or sisters they may have had. Taking the opportunity, Cain murdered his brother Abel.

How quickly sin and evil multiplied. In one generation it was disobedience through selfish desire to be like God. In the second generation it became murder stemming from hatred for God. We can understand several reasons for this murder taking place. Cain was angry for being rejected so he took it out on Abel. He hated Abel because God accepted his offering. Abel made Cain look bad simply because his light shone on Cain’s darkness. Cain hated God for not accepting his sacrifice; he couldn’t do anything to God directly so he did indirectly.

The apostle John gives us a simple explanation in 1 John 3:11-12, “*For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous.*”

There is a lot here to consider, but first, why did Cain kill Abel? Because Cain did what was evil and Abel did what was righteous. That’s all the reason someone who does evil needs to hate someone who is righteous. Do you ever wonder why someone doesn’t like you when you’ve done nothing to them? Do you ever wonder why a complete stranger treats you in a hostile manner? It’s because you are covered in the righteousness of Jesus Christ and they are led by satan. They may not even know that you are a Christian; but satan does. And he will attack you through them.

Part of the cost of being a followed of Christ is that we don’t get to act like the rest of the world. We forgive those who wrong us, we love our enemies, we pray for those who persecute us. We come under persecution for being associated with the name of Jesus. This is being a child of God; this is having righteous deeds.

John refers to Cain as being of the evil one. Again, we must make sure we understand that this does not mean he was the physical offspring of satan. Cain was the physical offspring of Adam and Eve. But spiritually speaking, he was the offspring of satan; he was the seed of the serpent. This idea comes up several times in the Bible. At one point, Jesus tells the religious leaders that they are of their father, the devil. Not that satan is their physical father; but they follow him and do his will; they are spiritually seed of the serpent.

Notice a huge difference here. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, we become children of God. In Galatians 4:4-5, Paul tells us, “*But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*” This is legal language, but it is also supernatural. We become sons and daughters of Almighty God. We become heirs to all His blessings right along with His only begotten Son, Jesus. God loves us eternally and we will live with Him forever.

On the other hand, those who chose satan as their father find that they are completely illegitimate. There is no formal adoption and while there may be the illusion of worldly gain, it turns out to be counterfeit and temporary. Satan mercilessly uses his followers for his own plans, then leaves them stranded without hope. Their only eternity spent with satan will be sharing the same lake of fire.

John warns us against being part of the spiritual line of Cain; of being of the seed of the serpent. This is the power and love of God. We can’t help but to be born into the line of Cain; but through Jesus Christ, we can be spiritually reborn into the seed of the woman; into the family of God.

Ultimately, Cain killing Abel, is the satanic attempt to stop God’s promise through the seed of the woman. As always, satan failed to thwart God’s plan. God brought about His plan through the line of Seth. Keep in mind that God didn’t have to start over with Seth because Abel was killed. The line of Seth was God’s plan all along. And we can see how God kept and protected that line throughout the Bible.

God knew that Abel would be murdered and allowed it for the benefit of future generations who learn from what happened. That’s us; we need to learn from all that took place here. As for Abel; he only had a short life here on earth, but ever since, his soul has happily been at peace in the comfort of God.

After Cain’s deed, he has another interaction with God. God asked him, “*Where is Abel your brother?*” Obviously, God knew perfectly well where Abel was. Cain and Abel may have been in the field out of sight of all other people, but they were not out of sight of God. Notice that God didn’t simply ask “Where is Abel?”, but “*Where is Abel your brother?*” This brings out the truly heinous nature of this sin. Abel was not some stranger or random person, but his own brother; the child of his own parents.

Also, by asking this question, God was giving Cain a chance to repent. Recall that God gave this same chance to Adam and Eve in the Garden. This is God’s nature; He gives people a chance to repent, He wants them to turn to Him and be saved. Ezekiel 18:32, ‘*For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” declares the Lord God. “Therefore, repent and live.”*’

Like his parents, Cain did not accept this opportunity. But whereas Adam and Eve just tried to get out of it by shifting blame; Cain first lied, then shot back a nasty and accusatory question to God. “*Am I my brother’s keeper?*” is so appalling to our ears that we may wonder why God didn’t simply do away with him right then. A primary message of the Bible and specifically of Jesus’ teaching is that yes, we are our brothers’ keepers. But again, God displays His mercy along with His justice.

Verse 10 displays the deep evil of Cain’s action. *He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground.*” The question is an exclamation; it expresses shock and dismay. The Bible tells us that the life is in the blood. While this is spiritual, it shows that God hears that spilled life calling to Him for vengeance. And God is the One who claims the right to all vengeance.

God pronounces the consequence of Cain’s action: He is cursed from the ground. The ground is where he had made his living; now it will not produce for him. He will be forced to wander the land that provides him with nothing.

In the garden, God cursed the serpent (or satan) for what he did and the ground because of what Adam did. He did not curse the people. Now, Cain himself is cursed. Even the cursed ground will not produce for him. Cain has chosen to be among the seed of the serpent who God cursed; so, he too is cursed. Such are all the seed of the devil. As we will see, God may still grant them mercies in this life, but their eternity will reveal their accursedness.

Cain’s response further reveals his heart: *Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”* Cain displays absolutely no sorrow for what he did; there is no repentance. Once again, his concern is only for himself. Once again, this is exactly the kind of selfishness seen in society and even vigorously promoted by the world.

He is distraught over his punishment, never mind that he just robbed an innocent man of his life. He tells God that He has driven him from the face of the ground. He won’t recognize that it was his own actions that brought this about. In the same way, we must recognize that if we end up in hell, it is our own doing by rejecting Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Cain has a further concern: He is afraid that anyone who finds him will kill him. Who might this be that would kill him? We don’t know how much time has elapsed at this point. Genesis 5:3-4 tells us that Adam lived 930 years, and that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters. These would all be blood relatives of Abel and their natural tendency would be to avenge their brother’s blood. Additionally, there would be a vast multitude of nieces and nephews who could also decide to be avengers.

But God had other ideas. He protected Cain from being killed by declaring that whoever did so would have vengeance taken on them sevenfold. Sevenfold gives the idea of perfection so whoever killed Cain would also be killed themselves. This is God’s great mercy. As long as Cain lived, he could always turn back to God. The sad news is that the Bible gives no indication that he did so; in fact, his line carries on in the seed of the serpent.

God appointed some sort of sign for Cain so that nobody would kill him. There has been a lot of speculation and writing about what this sign may have been. All of it has been a waste of time. The Bible gives us no indication of what the sign was. So, God doesn’t want us to know because we don’t need to know. Our time needs to be spent learning what God has revealed.

Still, God appointed a sign so that Cain would live out his life. While this may not seem fair, we must remember Hebrews 9:27, “*[I]t is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment*.” Cain lived out his life under the punishment God ordained; but then he had to face judgement.

The account of Cain should be a powerful one for us. His life is a demonstration of life under the control of satan. It is a demonstration of the life of those who are of the seed of the serpent. It is a demonstration of what we see all around us currently. Although Cain, in effect, chose to be a child of the devil; he didn’t just one day decide to follow satan. He simply chose to reject God. Either you are with God or you are with satan, there is no other way.

In Cain’s life, we clearly see the mercy of God. We see how freely He offers salvation. We Christians need to be tremendously grateful for this; because our natural inclination is to be like Cain. If we look back over our lives, we can wonder why God didn’t just do away with us. Perhaps we haven’t killed anybody, but we’ve probably been angry enough to. Jesus lets us know that we are held as accountable for our thoughts as if we physically committed them.

No one can stand before God innocent; Except in Christ. This is why we worship and praise God; this is why we seek to please Him and be used to build His Kingdom.

Prayer

Merciful Lord God, we are conceived in iniquity and born in sin. Our hearts turn to evil from our youngest days. There is no righteousness in us. Even our good deeds are as filthy rags before You. We follow the way of Cain; we participate in the rebellion of Korah. We deserve no good thing from You and we are wretched in Your sight.

How we lift up grateful hands of praise to You. Your great love for us has reached beyond our hopelessness. In Jesus, You made a way for us to be cleansed of sin and guilt. We have been given clean clothes. We have been given the true and complete righteousness of Jesus. You have made the way for us to stand before You; innocent and acceptable. You have made it so that our good works can be used to build Your Kingdom.

It is now in peace and confidence that we can look forward to the coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, to establish His earthly Kingdom. We can look forward to becoming His subjects instead of the objects of His wrath. And You, Lord, have made all this possible because of Your great love and mercy. How blessed we are to be Your people. How blessed we are that You are our God.

In Jesus’ name we pray

Amen