

Lecture 3 — Two Leaders with Many Followers.

Genesis 4.

Young Men of Scripture.

Nine addresses to young men.

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1911. Seventh Edition. Twenty-second Thousand.

Every young man in this meeting is following either one or other of the two young men that the 4th of Genesis brings before us. You have — so have I — gone in the way of Cain, and are in that way still, or you have followed Abel. They are the two leaders, I am bold to say, of the whole race of man; and every man in this audience, every man on the face of the earth at this moment, is either walking in "the way of Cain," or has followed the footsteps of Abel. But, to tell the truth, that cannot be a good way of which we are told, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain" (Jude 11). Are you yet in "the way of Cain," or have you found your path in the footsteps of Abel? What is the difference between these two men? One of them did not know the way to approach God, and the other did. Cain did not know the divinely appointed way into God's presence. Abel did know that way, and took it. God gives us, I doubt not, in the opening chapters of man's history upon earth a picture of what would mark him all along the line.

Cain was the eldest son of Adam, and Abel was the second. It has been thought that they were twin brothers, but whether that is so or not they came one close upon the heels of the other. They lived together, were brought up together, and had the same opportunities of learning God's thoughts — just as there may be in this audience tonight two brothers who have had the same privileges of knowing the Gospel, but one through the grace of God is God-fearing, and the other is not. Well, happy is the man who is God-fearing. Blessed is the man that is in the way of Abel. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain," says Scripture. And what was Cain's way? It was the way of nature, mere natural religion apart from faith in the revelation God had given.

Cain was by occupation a tiller of the ground. Abel was a shepherd. Cain was a husbandman, — a farmer, if you like, — and his heart was much engrossed with the ground that he was busy tilling. "In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord" (Gen. 4: 3). He began to think he must draw near to God. It was a good thought. What man would dare to say that it was not a good thing to draw near to God?

Cain was right in his thought, wrong in his way of so doing. He was going to draw near to God. Recollect you too will have to meet God. You must meet God. Every one, sooner or later, must meet Him, if not in time then in eternity. Every hearer of mine tonight must meet God. Whatever your age, whatever your class, whatever your rank in society, or level in this world, you must have to say to God, you must meet God, and have to do with God. The point is, What road will you take to Him in order to be accepted?

Now observe, Cain draws near to God with an offering of the fruit of the ground — the product of his own labour, and, on the other hand, we find that "Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering: but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect" (vers. 4, 5). There could be nothing more distinct and contrasted than this action of God with regard to these offerings, and the offerers who brought them. The one He accepts, the other He rejects. Cain is the rejected man, while Abel is the accepted man. Wherein lay the difference? They were both sons of the same parents. They were both the offspring of the same father and mother. They were both sinners. Their parents had sinned, and they too were sinners. God has declared in His Word that "all have sinned," and we too have sinned. Cain and Abel felt they were at a distance from God. but they would draw near to God, — in plain language, they would be worshippers.

I daresay a great many of you have taken the ground of being worshippers. Is it in Cain's way or Abel's? That is a serious, a most important question. I do not know any question more important. Observe that Cain draws near, but upon what ground? He brings to God the outcome of his own diligence — the fruit of the earth. And you may say, Was he not doing right? was he wrong in giving to God the fruit of the diligence of his life? But stop! Do you know what Cain really did? If you understand that, — and I think we have all gone in the "way of Cain" to begin with, — you will see he entirely overlooked the fact of the fall. It is the fashion now-a-days to overlook the fall. He overlooked the fact that he was outside God's presence, as a sinner, and because of sin. It pleased him to forget the fact that sin had come in between God and man, and that man was a sinner, away from God. It is sin that shuts man out from the presence of God, and Cain was outside God's presence. How then is he to draw near to God? He must draw near in the way that suits God, and that is in keeping with the character of God.

Abel, knowing that he is guilty, and unable to draw near to God as he is, sets the death of another between himself and God. He recognises the judgment of sin, and has faith in a sacrifice by which expiation of sin is effected. Cain has not the conscience of sin, for he brings as his offering the fruits which are a sign of the curse. His heart is blinded, and his conscience hardened. He takes for granted that all is well between him and God, and that he will be received. Why should he not be? The just sense of sin and ruin is completely wanting, as also any knowledge of the right way to draw near to God.

You may turn to me and say, But how could Cain know the way that suited God? I reply, How did Abel learn it? That he learned it is certain. There are two men sitting side by side tonight in this room, and one has learned the way to God, and the other has not. Wherein lies the difference? Are not both sinners? Yes! Were not Cain and Abel equally sinners in the sight of God? They were. The Spirit of God reveals the secret of the difference in each case. "By *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he

was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh" (Heb. 11: 4). I wonder if you ever heard a dead man speak yet? You say, A dead man speak? That would be the last man I would expect to listen to. A dead man speaks to you tonight, and he plainly says, You will never get to God if you don't go in the way I went. What does Abel say? He tells you the truth in the simplest language possible: I put between my sinful soul and God the dead body of a sinless victim offered in sacrifice.

Abel teaches us the way to God most clearly, as he puts between his guilty soul and God the body of the victim offered in sacrifice. He had the knowledge that death was upon him, and that he was a sinner out of God's presence. Death was ahead of him, as well as judgment You may say, But how did he learn it? He had heard how God had dealt in righteous judgment with his parents in the moment of the fall. His parents had doubtless told him the sad tale of sin, and its judgment, which Genesis 3 records. You too have learned the truth from your parents. Whether it has yet brought forth fruit in your life is another question. God knows that, and you know too. Clearly the parents of these two young men had told them of how they had been driven out of the garden of Eden, and of the way in which God had clothed them with the skins of beasts. Abel had believed and deeply profited by this lesson, while Cain ignored it.

Abel, so to speak, is heard saying: — I am a sinner, I am under sentence of death, and I know the wages of sin is death; and the only way I can draw near to God is by putting between Him and me the dead body of a sinless victim; that sacrifice I will offer, and upon that ground I will draw near to Him. BY FAITH he offered unto God "a more excellent sacrifice." And he found he was accepted. You have the very kernel of Christianity foreshadowed in his action. You have the truth of the cross, and of the death of the Lord Jesus for poor sinners like you and me. Abel's action most simply points to the cross, and to the death of the Saviour in the room and stead of the guilty sinner. That is the lesson I learn from his action.

Now Cain's road, on the other hand, only ends in rejection, death, and judgment. It never leads to God. Abel's path leads certainly to the knowledge of acceptance with God, "BY FAITH Abel offered unto God a MORE EXCELLENT sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was RIGHTEOUS, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh." He is one of the wonderful cloud of witnesses to the value of faith, found in Hebrews 11, and if I put him in the witness-box, and inquire, Abel, what have you to say? he replies, I am accepted. By whom? By God. How were you accepted — on the ground of your works? I had none; I brought forth nothing but sin. I am accepted on this ground. By faith I put between my guilty soul and God the dead body of a spotless victim. I offered the firstling of the flock, and the fat, — the excellence thereof, — and God accounted me righteous. He accepted me in the value and excellence of my offering. That is a good testimony from a dead man.

Cain is dead also, but he does not speak. Ah! no, Cain has no helpful cheery voice from the dead. God gives you His commentary about him. The Holy Ghost says: — "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain." And yet Cain's way is the popular way, mark that! It is the way ninety-nine men out of every hundred go today. Go down the street and ask the first man you meet if he is sure that he is on his road to heaven. With complacent self-satisfaction his answer will be: "Nobody can know that with certainty, but I am doing my best. I am religious, and take the sacrament, and give of my substance for God's work. What more can I do?" Take

the second man, he will say: "I don't like that sort of question put to me. Of course I am not what I should be, but I am not so bad as many, and God is merciful." A third man will reject you and your query with scorn, and if you put the Gospel before him, will put it aside. It is a solemn day we live in.

Cain's way has great attractions for multitudes, for, mark you, he was religious! I don't think he was a sceptic — an infidel. I do not think he was a hypocrite. He was the man who inaugurated mere human religion, and became the leader of countless thousands of men, who start and continue their course in life by ignoring the fact of the gravity of sin, and of the reality of the breach that sin has brought in between God in His holiness, and man in his guilt. Cain ignored the truth of the fall. I can draw near to God — he practically said — on the ground of that which I can myself do, on the ground of that which I have produced, — and he digs and delves, labours and tills, toils and sweats; he reaps his corn, and presses his wine, and with a well-dressed sheaf, and a flagon of well-pressed wine, he draws near to God. And then what is the result? God does not accept his sacrifice nor him. Why? He was bringing the fruit of the ground, already cursed. The curse of God had fallen upon the earth previous to this, and that Cain ignored also. The ground came in for the curse by Adam's sin. Creation has shared in the fall of Adam. He was creation's lord — but he fell, and as a result vanity has come into the scene, and now the earth shares in the fortunes of her fallen lord.

All this Cain forgot, as well as that he was a lost man, a ruined sinner, and at a distance from God. And, my friends, it is a very easy thing to forget that; it is very easy for you and me to ignore it. Man needs to wake up to the fact that he is a sinner. You say, Whom do you mean? I mean you, myself, and every man. God has left no man out. Man as man has sinned, and between your soul and God there is at this moment — if you have not yet been born of God, and brought to Him through the blood of Jesus — a distance, a terrible distance, and it is a good thing when a man feels it. Cain ignored the distance. In calm indifference of soul he chose to draw near to God. And people today walk in "the way of Cain," and think that by their own doings, their prayers, their religious exercises, and by a meritorious life, they may draw near to God.

Such cases abound. I saw a lady, a few days ago, who said, "I wish I could die." "I hope you will not," I replied, for I don't think you are ready." "But I think I am ready," she rejoined, "for I say my prayers regularly. Will not my prayers avail?" "No, your prayers will not avail. Man does not get to God and receive forgiveness of sins by his prayers. Scripture says, that 'without shedding of blood is no remission' (Heb. 9: 22). And again it says, 'To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness'" (Rom. 4: 5).

The man who verily thinks that by his prayers his sins can be washed away, is truly in "the way of Cain." He thought that the activity of his life, and the fruits gathered from it, could fit him — a sinner — to stand before God! What folly! If you are in "the way of Cain," may God arrest you tonight. That road ends in eternal ruin, depend upon it. "WOE UNTO THEM! for they have gone in the way of Cain," says the Holy Ghost. You had better get into the way of Abel. What did Abel do? He presented the firstling of his flock. He learned by faith that there must be between him and God the spotless victim, that tells of death undergone. That victim he offered, and God accepted him.

Now, how can you and I get salvation? Only by faith in God's blessed Son. The lamb offered by Abel was a striking type of the Lamb of God. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world," said the Baptist (John 1: 29). As I look back at the cross, I see the wonderful truth that between two malefactors there died the sinless, spotless Man — the Lamb of God — for hell-deserving sinners. What then shall I do? Shall I endeavour to put myself right with God by my own endeavours, or shall I put between my soul and the holiness of God the wonderful truth that Jesus died, and died for me? I will follow Abel. I was in "the way of Cain" for a good many years, until I found that the way of Abel was the best, — that it was the way of salvation, — for it is God's way, being of faith.

What is faith? Faith is the principle that links the soul with God. Cain is the leader and first exponent of what I may term natural religion, for spite of his sin — yea, because of it — man is a religious being. He has the sense that there is a supreme Being, and knows he must appear before that Being sooner or later, and he gets filled with the thought that he must propitiate Him, and do something that will fit him for God's presence. Hence he often strives in order to do that something. Many a young man has done that, when he has found out through practical failure that he is a faulty creature. Many a young fellow sets out from his father's house with his pockets well lined. He finds the world a fine place as long as he has plenty of money. While you have plenty of money, you will be asked out, and much made of. But let the resources dry up, and you are not able to do as you formerly did. How short-sighted will your friends become! When the nap of your coats, and the silk on your hats have become worn, and you are a little shabby, it is strange how suddenly your old chums fail actually to know you. The world seeks you when you are a pigeon to be plucked, and whenever that is done it throws you over. The world wants you as long as you can be of use to it, and no longer. When that day arrives, it bids you good-bye. That is the world. There is many a man who has experienced that, and has learned what a disappointing thing it is. Then it often is that a man, weary of the world, seeks rest in natural religion. He tries "the way of Cain." A round of religious exercises is commenced, in the hope that these may expiate his sins. "I will appease Him with a present," is man's thought of God. But this is fatal folly, for "without shedding of blood is no remission" is God's irrevocable dictum. Works never saved a man yet, nor ever will

How absolutely in contrast with this is God's way of dealing with needy man. He loves to bless him, and his need only becomes the occasion for the display of God's grace. This is displayed in the cross of Jesus, which is the perfect answer to all our need as guilty sinners before God. What you could not do, Christ has done. There has been laid down before God the spotless life of Jesus, in order to our redemption, and to bring to God the guilty sons of men, who simply believe in Him, and trust in Him, and who, like Abel, put Him as the sacrifice between their guilty souls and God. If you have not believed in Jesus, turn to Him now. Come to the Saviour now, yield your heart to Him. His blood cleanses from all sin. Truly, "it speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Observe that God accepts Abel on the ground of his sacrifice, and does not accept Cain on the ground of his works. What was the next thing? "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." Is not that strange? I have known people get terribly angry when they have heard a simple Christian say he knew he was saved. You may ask me, Are you saved? Thank God, yes; saved for time and eternity. Christ has died for me, given Himself for me, and it is alone through Him

that I am saved. Ah! says one, I don't believe that. Don't you? But, my friend, I do. I know it certainly, on the same authority as Abel. Had you met Abel coming away with a beaming face, and said, You look happy, Abel! would he not have replied, "I have a good right to be so; I am accepted by God, and know it"? But what have you done to ensure this? Nothing. I have brought to God nothing that I did. God has accepted me on the ground of the death of another, and He has told me so.

It was this assurance of acceptance by God which Abel possessed that so provoked his elder brother. "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth?" If a man says, I don't believe that any one can know he is forgiven, then I know he is not forgiven himself. If you were forgiven, you would know what I know, viz., the joy of a present salvation through faith in a glorified Saviour, and the precious privilege of serving Him. Acknowledge that you are in "the way of Cain," and you may get out of that way. That is what I am here for tonight. I want to get you out of "the way of Cain," and into the way of Abel. I want to get you to know and to enjoy the truth of God's salvation. But how is that obtained? By the acceptance first of the fact that you are ruined, and then by the acceptance of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. If there has never sprung up in your heart trust in the Lord Jesus, and if you have not yet found salvation, then I beseech you to listen to the voice of Abel, that dead man who yet speaks. What does he say? "Trust the sacrifice, sinner; put between your guilty soul and God the body of the spotless victim. Between my soul and God I put one that was the type of Him who is to be placed between your soul and God, and I am accepted." Truly "he being dead, yet speaketh."

Cain's voice, we have seen, is silent. Cain had the same opportunity of securing acceptance and blessing as Abel, but he missed it. Mark that! "And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen. If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin (or, a sin-offering) lieth at the door." The Lord says in effect to Cain: You can go and do as Abel did. Follow your brother. Why don't you take his road? Alas! Cain did not like it; and a little while after, he "talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him."

Do you know why he slew him? Four thousand years after this terrible murder, God gives the reason for it In 1 John 3: 11 and 12, He says, "This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And *wherefore slew he him?* because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." God tells us here that the way of Cain was evil, — his "works," supposed to be suited to God, were evil. Unsaved sinner, although religious, your works are evil. It is no good to deny it. We would like to credit ourselves with good; but when the Holy Ghost draws down the veil four thousand years after, He lets us have a good look into Cain's heart His works were evil, and therefore his wrath appeared, and he slew his brother. Only think, he was guilty of committing murder because he was angry that his brother was accepted, and he himself was not; and so has it been in the world since.

Who slew the Saviour? Who caused Christ to be crucified? The world. You and I, in our own way, were morally in the crowd that said, "Away with him." Indeed we were. But what is it that breaks the heart and wins the soul? It is the discovery that Jesus stooped from Godhead

glory, and became a man in this scene, and suffered Himself to be led to the cross, that He might save us, and bring us to God in righteousness. Ah! may you learn this night that Christ loved you. From this night forth may you take God's salvation. My friend, get out of Cain's road, get clear of that path! What is the first step in that path? Cain drew near to God on wrong ground, and then was angry because he was not accepted; whereas his brother drew near by faith, and on right ground, and was accepted. Thereon Cain's wrath makes him imbrue his hands in the blood of his brother.

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?" Look how he faces up to God. Cain gets bold in his sin, and he says, when God asks him, "Where is Abel thy brother?" "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" Then God says, "What hast thou done?" That is a grave question for God to put to a man. God knows what you have done. God knows the whole history of your life, and He puts this query to you tonight, "What hast thou done?" You may say, I have not slain my brother. Possibly not, but have you not been angry with your brother? Have you never said in wrath, God damn you? Aye! and had you the power to do it, you would have done it. I am only speaking the truth. I know what man can say in his heart.

"What hast thou done?" we hear then is God's solemn query to Cain; and thereafter He says, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." The righteous martyr has been slain as a witness for the truth, and what follows? God says to Cain, "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." And Cain departs from God, and proves that he is one. He does not like to be called a vagabond, but that is really what man is by nature. Do you know what vagabond means? It means a man who is always on the move — a man that is never settled — never at rest. That is a vagabond, according to Scripture.

The next thing we read of Cain is that he "went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod." Do you know what "Nod" means? It means "wandering." The land was named Nod, and men have since then been wandering truly. And Cain "builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch." He builds a city. He as it were says, I have gone out from the presence of God, but I will try to make myself as happy and as comfortable as possible; I will build a city, and will forget that I am a vagabond, and I will forget that I am a sinner. Thus Cain started what you and I now call the world.

It is very instructive to see what follows. One of his descendants, Lamech, has two wives, and has children. You observe the names of his children, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain. Sometimes people say what is the use of recording all these names. Why are Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain mentioned? The reason is that God wishes to give us the story of Cain's "way" and Cain's "world." The meaning of Jabal is "moving." He was a true son of Cain, always on the move — always wanting something new. That is the spirit of the world. You must have everything new. You must have a new opera — a new song — a new book, or a new novel. You must have something new. Everything is new, in order to allure and entrap man. Jabal's name is characteristic of the world, it moving." "He was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle." He was the example in the East of what you would call well-to-do people. He was in that sense the starter of commerce. Jubal, whose name means "playing," was "the father

of all such as handle the harp and organ." There comes in pleasure; and the next is Tubal-cain, "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron," — the scientific man. I believe that in the names of these three men you will find the three-fold cord that really binds up society at present.

"Jabal was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle." He was the man that started commerce. He was the inaugurator of the commercial world. Jubal, did not care for moneymaking. His name — "playing" — bespoke his character, and he says, I will go in for pleasure. Jabal, you may get money, if you like, but I am going in for pleasure; and "he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ." Jabal, went in for money, and Jubal, for music; while Tubal-cain was "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron," — in other words, science and art; that is, I doubt not, the scientific world. Take out of the world the man of commerce, the man of pleasure, and the man of science, and you will find the world empty — cleaned out. Money, music, and science formed Cain's world at the start, and by them Satan holds the world in his hand now more than ever.

What a world to be part and parcel of! What a miserable start, and what will its end be? Cain does not find acceptance with his offering, so he turns round with murderous anger upon the man who is accepted, and then he goes out into the world determined to make himself as happy as possible without God. How many men in this audience tonight are exactly in the same position? Follower of Jabal, do you say, I am going to add bank-note to bank-note. My friend, you brought nothing into the world, and it is certain you will take nothing out of it. It is better to lay up heavenly riches. How many here are among the Jubalites, seeking pleasure only? But how long will your pleasure last? You will have "the pleasures of sin for a season." That is not good enough for me. I want something for eternity, and, thank God, I have got it. Faith can say, "At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." I must have something both for time and eternity. Are you a votary of Tubal-cain, a devotee of the scientific world, with its ever-increasing stores of knowledge? It is a very interesting world, Tubal-cain's; but it is not after all a satisfactory world; and if you go into eternity without the knowledge of Christ, your life will be a dead failure. If, on the other hand, you are a Christian, truly and simply, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will have the knowledge of eternal life now, and you will have the sense of the favour of God. You will furthermore be the servant of Christ — the servant of God; and if so you will look back, — whether your life be long or short, — when you are passing away, and will thank God that you were led to decide for Christ when you were young.

I never knew a man who repented that he was converted. I have known many men repent on their death-bed that they were unconverted. Let me tell you, that if you tonight, through grace, get into the way of Abel, and trust in the Lord, you will bless God for ever for moving your feet out of "the way of Cain." In the way of Abel you will find the pathway to God. He was the leader to glory. He leads you to glory — to God; but Cain has only led men to the lower depths of eternal damnation. "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain," is an awful imprecation. Avoid its application to your own soul, I beseech you.

Now let me ask, Whose leadership are you following? Is it Cain's or Abel's? Do not hesitate to answer. Eternal issues hang on your reply. Doubtless, Cain's road is the more pleasant to nature. Natural religion, with its routine of religious services, aided by what pleases the senses of man, has an undoubted charm. But, alas! it is not divine, and the end of that way is woe —

eternal woe. The pathway of Abel is purely one of faith, but it leads to God, although martyrdom be met on the road. If you simply believe in Jesus, you will find that you are "accepted in the Beloved." Your sins are all washed away in the precious blood of the Son of God, and you are the possessor of eternal life. You are a glory-bound soul, with a flawless title to that glory — viz., the blood — and a prospect that has not a cloud in it, nor ever can have, for Christ is your Life, your portion, and your hope. Happy is the man whose feet go not in "the way of Cain," but who follows the example of Abel.