

Series: God & Cain #1035

Title: Genesis 4.5

Cain is Angry (Part 3)

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. As you know if you have been with us, we are talking about Cain and his anger. Cain has an anger problem. The Bible is very clear about this at Genesis 4, verse 5, "**Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.**" And last time we talked about how angry Cain was. He was angry enough to murder his brother. And we spoke about this word countenance and what it means that Cain's countenance fell.

Cain had this passionate, inner resentment towards God and it found outward expression on his face. His face was on fire! He inhabits a burning, hot anger. Literally, his face fell. Robert Harbach says Cain walked around with his face to the ground like a moping animal. He is letting everyone know that he is really, very ticked off. He's furious. And he is not hiding how he feels. His anger consumes his whole face (his countenance).

Anger can definitely do this to a person. I shared my own experience with this yesterday. Maybe you could relate to me? Maybe not? As we continue to examine Cain's attitude I would like to set the remainder of what I want to say about this part of verse 5 into the following context. We will carry this over into Monday. Let me do this by posing a question: how should Cain have responded to God? He brings the Lord his offering, and the Lord rejects both Cain and his offering. Now, what should Cain's attitude towards God have been?

How could he have responded to God in a well pleasing and acceptable way such that the Lord would have received him and forgiven him?

I think the answer to this question is in the teaching our Lord Jesus gives in Luke's Gospel, chapter 18. So if you have your Bible with you turn (or scroll on your Bible app) to Luke 18. This is a dynamic parable told to highlight deep and penetrating spiritual truth. We do not have time for a full exposition of this text. I just want to highlight what Cain should have done after God's rejection.

OK, are you at Luke chapter 18? I will read verses 9-14. This is the Gospel According to Luke, chapter 18, verses 9-14. Hear now God's Word to you. **"⁹And [Jesus] also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:**

¹⁰'Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

¹³But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

These are the words of our Lord in Luke 18, verses 9-14. Cain's attitude should have been the attitude of the tax collector, not the attitude of the Pharisee. There is a significant difference between these two men. The Pharisee had a very high view of himself. The tax collector had a very low view of himself. The Pharisee trusted in himself, believing that he was righteous (and we talked about what being righteous means recently). The tax collector trusted in God, believing that apart from God's mercy he was *not* a righteous man and never would be a righteous man. The tax collector knew he needed God to make him righteous. The Pharisee thought he was righteous enough without God.

The Pharisee stood right up in the temple to boldly pray. The tax collector stood some distance away. He could hardly bring himself to the temple, and even then he was unwilling to lift up his eyes. And he was beating his breast. In the Jewish culture this expresses sorrow and anguish. And notice how Jesus said the Pharisee was praying to himself. But the tax collector was praying to God. He begins his prayer, "God..."

The differences continue...the Pharisee contrasted himself with others and thought of himself as being better than them. He obviously looks down on the swindlers, the unjust, and the adulterers. And then the Pharisee specifically mentions "even this tax collector." The Pharisee thinks of himself as spiritually far superior to the tax collector. And then, still praying *to himself* he talks of all the good works he is doing that should impress God. He fasts twice a week. He pays tithes of all that he gets. Wow. What a great guy!

Meanwhile, the tax collector prays a genuine prayer from his heart to God and says, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" This repentant tax collector does not compare or contrast himself to others. He knows who he is and how he has offended God. He sees himself as a sinner through and through desperately in need of the mercy that the Lord alone can provide to him. The Pharisee swelled with pride but the tax collector shrank pleading for the grace of holy God.

Verse 14 delivers Jesus' divine assessment of both men. Listen to Luke 18, verse 14 again, "**14 I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.**" Those are the words of Christ!

Jesus says the tax collector went to his house justified in the eyes of God *not* the Pharisee! Jesus praises the humility of the tax collector and judges the pride of the Pharisee!

Now let's apply this back to our man Cain in Genesis. How could Cain have responded to God in a well pleasing and acceptable way such that the Lord would have received him and forgiven him? The answer is found in the attitude of this tax collector. Cain should have immediately bowed before the Living God and said, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" This should have been his confession. But, I am afraid, that instead Cain was far more like the Pharisee.

Cain resented the divine disapproval. When God rejected Cain and his offering Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. His face went on fire, burning with rage. "How dare God treat me this way?" He thought he was righteous. He thought his offering should have put him in good standing with God. The Lord should have approved it, received it, and given Cain a commendation for it. Cain thought he was perfectly good enough for God. Why should Abel receive all the praise?

What a contrast between Cain and Abel and between the Pharisee and the tax collector. And a very good question to ask about now is this: which person are you? Which person am I? Are we like Cain and the Pharisee or are we like Abel and the tax collector? What about our worship before God? Our prayers? Is our worship pleasing and acceptable to Him, and if it is not, what will our attitude be?

The truth is there are plenty of Cain's and plenty of Pharisees around today. We've got men and women who think they're very righteous – a righteousness that emerges naturally out of themselves. They believe they have no need for God's mercy. They are already good enough for God. Frankly, this attitude is often found in the church! Even the act of going to church, and going regularly, and showing outward signs of inward belief (inward faith) can be, *can be* nothing more than a ruse. Other people are quite impressed by this, but God is not.

Remember, the Pharisee fasted twice a week and paid tithes and Jesus said that was not acceptable to God. The Pharisee was *not* justified because of this.

And remember, Cain did bring his offering. He brought of the fruit of the ground. But this was not acceptable to God. Cain was *not* justified because of this.

Abel and the tax collector were justified because they saw themselves as sinners in need of God's mercy. And they cried out to God for His mercy. Each of these men came to God – Cain at the appointed time and place for worship and offering and the tax collector at the temple – and their attitudes were pleasing and acceptable to God. We know that because God had regard for Abel and his offering and Jesus Christ (who is God in human form) says that the tax collector went home justified.

As we end and head into the weekend and perhaps have a little more time for reflection, let us ask ourselves: which are we? Cain and the Pharisee or Abel and the tax collector? Think about this. Pray about this. And might I add: monitor your attitude at church this weekend. Why do you go? What is your attitude like when you get there? What's going on in your inner person as you worship? How do you present yourself to holy God?

How should Cain have responded to God? We have answered that. And starting on Monday we will see that Cain did *not* do what he should have, and his relationship with God and his family rapidly deteriorated. Next week we will, Lord willing, continue with *God and Cain*.

Before I go, let me invite you again to write to me. mark@godisministry.org or God Is, PO Box 802, Winchester Massachusetts 01890. Drop me a note and tell me you listen and include anything you'd like. And then join me again on Monday for God Is.

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