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THE WAY OF CAIN

by Zac Poonen

“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. 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.. Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:10-16).

The first epistle of John was written when John was about 95 years old. He was the only living apostle at that time. All the others had been killed. John had seen the day of Pentecost and the tremendous revival with which the Church of Jesus Christ had been born. He also saw towards the end of his life, the decline of many of the churches that had started in a great revival. Perhaps the other apostles who had died earlier had not seen this decline to the same extent as John did.

By the end of the first century, many churches that had begun with great power had lost their first love (as we read in Revelation 2 and 3). But the elders (messengers) of those backslidden churches were still sitting complacently on their thrones. One of the elders only had a name that he was alive, but was actually dead. Another was so lukewarm that the Lord told him that He was ready to spit him out of His mouth. Yet another was allowing the false prophetess Jezebel, to lead believers astray. Terrible things were happening in these churches and yet those elders did nothing about it. Both churches and elders had lost their zeal.

One can imagine how grieved John must have been to see all this. It was with such a burden in his heart that he wrote this first epistle. It is important to see what John emphasizes in this letter - because Christendom's condition today is very similar to what I have just described.

There have been great spiritual movements in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, in different parts of the world - mighty movements that God started through men who knew Him. These movements were born in revival, but they are all in a backslidden state today. Compromise and corruption are rampant among them. Elders have gone the way of Balaam - seeking after money like Balaam did and leading believers into worldliness, like Balaam led Israel to compromise with Moabite girls.

Bearing the burden of the backslidden churches on his heart, John writes much about loving one another. “By this, the children of God, and the children of the devil are obvious. Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God. Nor the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10).

John divides all people in the world into two categories here - “children of God” and “children of the devil”. And he says that the way to find out the difference is this: One who does not love his brother is not of God. He may perhaps have many reasons why he cannot love his brother, but he is not of God. If he belonged to God, he would love his brother

at any cost.

In verses 11 and 12, we read, “For this is the message, which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, and not be as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother Abel.”

When Jesus spoke about the righteous, he began with “righteous Abel” (Matt.23:35). But Cain, as we just read, belonged to the evil one. Therefore he killed his brother. 1 John 3:12 goes on to say, “And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brothers were righteous.”

Read that verse carefully. It does not say that Cain’s deeds were evil after he slew Abel. No. It says that his deeds were evil even before he slew Abel. Why did Cain slay his brother? Because Cain was an evil man. We have often heard it said that God accepted Abel because he offered a blood-sacrifice, and that God rejected Cain because he didn’t offer a blood-sacrifice. But there is more to it than that. See what it says here about Cain. “His deeds were evil; his brother’s deeds were righteous.”

And John goes on to say in verse 13, “Don’t marvel brethren if the world hates you.” He’s comparing this with Cain’s hatred of righteous Abel. Hatred is the mark of the sons of Cain, and of all who follow “the way of Cain” (as Jude calls it in verse 11 of his letter).

In verse 14 John says, “We know we have passed out of death into life” - not because we were baptized or because we partake of the bread and the wine, but “because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.”

We are to love everyone. It doesn’t matter which church they belong to. “He who hates his brother is a murderer - and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” (1 Jn.3:15).

Everyone who hates someone else is a murderer. In contrast, John says that the proof of love is that instead of slaying your brother, you slay yourself (v.16)! You lay down your life. “We know love by this, that He laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

Notice that in both cases there is a death - in one, we kill our brothers and in the other, we slay ourselves!!

Thus the children of God and the children of the devil are distinguished.

Cain killed his brother. The children of the devil manifest themselves by slaying their brothers and sisters. The children of God however put their own self-life to death.

Cain smashed Abel’s head in with a rock. But today people are gentler - they don’t use rocks, they use their tongues! When you tear down your brothers and sisters with your tongue, speaking evil of them and making them look bad and small in the eyes of others, you’re actually slaying them. In this the children of the devil are made manifest - because they are murderers like their father, the devil.

Revelation 12: 9, 10 says that the devil accuses God’s children day and night. He doesn’t tell God false things about the brothers and sisters, because God knows everything! He tells God only the truth about the faults and sins found in God’s people. Like Satan, an accuser may speak the absolute truth and still be an accuser. That’s the way of Cain - and “no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 Jn.3:15).

Do you slay your brothers and sisters? Then listen to what the Holy Spirit says: “No murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” Even if you claim to be born again and baptized in water and baptized in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues and breaking bread every week and have removed all your gold ornaments, and whatever else, if you speak evil of your brothers and sisters, you are a murderer and you do NOT have eternal life in you.

When Ham told his brothers that their father Noah was lying down drunk and naked, he did not tell a lie. What he said was the absolute truth. Yet God cursed him for saying that. Why did God curse him? For speaking the truth in the spirit of the accuser. And that curse comes today on all who accuse God’s children.

Satan accuses believers day and night. Jesus also does something day and night. He prays for us day and night (Heb. 7:25).

Most Christians accuse other believers for far lesser crimes than getting drunk and lying naked!! They accuse them even for small faults that they see in them. Those faults may be there. Jesus sees them, Satan sees them and we see them. But the reactions of each are different. Satan accuses. Jesus intercedes. What do we do?

Both Satan and Jesus are looking for co-workers. We can work together with either. When you see a weakness or a sin in a brother, in that moment, you come to a fork in the road. There are only two ways at that fork - the way of intercession and the way of accusation. Jesus intercedes and Satan accuses. And you have to decide which of these two roads you're going to take.

We all come to this fork in the road often. Some believers imagine that they are spiritual because they stand at the fork and don't take either road - they don't accuse and they don't intercede. But that's not spirituality, because Jesus has taken one road, and if you don't intercede you are not following Jesus.

When we accuse, we get into fellowship with Satan. When we intercede, we enter into fellowship with Jesus. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are distinguished.

In Genesis 4:3 we read that "Cain brought an offering to the Lord and Abel also brought an offering to the Lord." Cain was not an atheist. Cain was a deeply religious man. The children of the devil are not all atheists. Most of them, like the Pharisees, are deeply religious. The way of Cain is not the way of atheism; it's the way of religion. It's also the way bringing offerings to God. Cain brought an offering. Abel also brought an offering.

But notice something here. We may have thought that it was Abel's offering that the Lord accepted first. But read carefully. It says in the last part of verse 4: "The Lord had regard for Abel, and (then) for his offering." It was Abel whom the Lord accepted first. That was why He accepted his offering. In Hebrews 11:4, we are told that by faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain, and that God testified about Abel's gifts. Why was Abel's sacrifice better and why did God testify about Abel's gifts? It must have been because of what God saw in Abel's heart - in the light of Genesis 4:4.

Genesis 4:4 is clear: "The Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering. But for Cain and His offering He had no regard." God didn't disregard Cain's offering first, but Cain himself. That was why He rejected Cain's offering.

How does this apply to us today? If we have a wrong attitude in our hearts towards even a single brother, God will not accept our offering, even if we bring the blood of Christ as our plea for forgiveness - just like God did not accept Cain's offering. When we come to God with our offering, and then remember that our brother has something against us, we must settle matters with that brother first, before God will accept our offering. Jesus said that if we don't forgive even a single man, we cannot be forgiven by our heavenly Father - even if God has already become our heavenly Father (Matt. 6:15). In the same way, if we have not asked for forgiveness from even a single brother (whom we have hurt), again we cannot be forgiven, because Jesus also said, "Go and settle things with your brother first. Then bring your offering to God." (Matt. 5:23,24).

So we must not only forgive ALL, but also ask for forgiveness from ALL whom we have hurt. It is thus that the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil.

Don't live under the deception that because you have trusted in the blood of Christ, you're all right. If you have slain your brother with your tongue, you must go and settle that matter with him first. Only then will the Lord have regard for you and therefore for your offerings. James 5:16 makes it very clear that only the prayer of a righteous man has any value before God.

We read in Genesis 4:5 that "Cain became very angry, and his countenance fell." One mark of those whose hearts are not right with God is that there is no cheerfulness in their lives or on their faces. Their faces are usually fallen. The psalmist said, "The Lord is my glory, and the lifter of my head." When the Lord is our glory He is also the lifter of our heads. So when our face is fallen, we can be sure that something is wrong.

The very first words that God ever asked a human being, outside the garden of Eden were, "Why is your face fallen? Why are you angry?" Cain had just come from a prayer-meeting where He had offered something to God! Should a man's face be downcast just after a prayer-meeting? Why then is your face fallen even though you go to prayer meetings every week! You are a deeply religious person. Then why is your countenance clouded?

I'm always suspicious of people who cannot look me straight in the eye. When a person cannot look you straight in the

he face and make eye contact with you, it invariably indicates that something is wrong with him. That's what the Lord was asking Cain, "Why can't you make eye contact with me, Cain? What's wrong? Why do you have such a long face?" The Lord asks you the same question.

Then the Lord told Cain (and let me paraphrase His words here), "If you intend well in your heart won't your face be lifted up? You will certainly be accepted! I have no partiality, Cain. All are the same to me."

If your heart is clean and the intention of your heart towards all your brothers and sisters is good, your face will always be lifted up! When your face is fallen, it usually indicates that you have something against someone. The way other people treat us can never affect the glory of God on our faces. It's only our attitude towards others that can make us gloomy and our faces dark.

"But if you don't intend well in your heart, then, (God said to Cain), sin is crouching at the door of your heart."

Don't ever think that sin is far away from any of us. Jesus taught us to pray saying, "Our Father who art in heaven, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil..." That means, "Oh God, please keep me far away from temptation. Don't allow me to go along that way. Deliver me from evil." But if you don't intend well, sin is not far away, but crouching at the door - like a lion waiting outside your door, waiting for the slightest opening so that he can get his foot inside. Very soon, sin will come right in and occupy your heart.

"Its desire is for you!" God warned Cain. Sin's desire, like a lion's, is to eat us up.

But God told Cain, "You must master it." (Gen.4:7). Notice that in the very first message that God ever gave man outside the garden of Eden He told him, "You must have victory over sin." That is God's message to man, not just under the new covenant in Romans 6:14, but at the very beginning of human history!

You must master sin!

The message of victory over sin was not an afterthought with God. On the contrary, it is there at the very beginning of the Bible, one of the very first things that God ever proclaimed to man.

Inside the garden of Eden, God killed an animal and shed its blood (symbolizing the death of Christ on Calvary), threw away the fig leaves Adam and Eve were wearing (which symbolized human righteousness and religious coverings) and clothed them with the animal's skin (symbolizing Christ's righteousness).

Fig leaves will wither up in time - and so will human righteousness and religious rituals. You can't wear fig leaves forever! That's why Jesus cursed the fig tree, when he saw only leaves on it, because it was a picture of human righteousness! Human righteousness has been cursed from the day of Adam. "All our righteous deeds are like a woman's menstrual cloth" in God's sight (Isa.64:6 - Literal translation) - fit only to be burnt or thrown away.

Instead, God gave Adam and Eve something that would last forever - animal skins. That is how He clothes us today - with the righteousness of Christ.

So, those are the very first things we need to do to find our way back to God: Accept the shed blood of our Substitute, throw away our own human righteousness and accept the righteousness of Christ to clothe us.

But after that, the next message we need to hear is this: You must have victory over sin.

It's there in Genesis 4: You must master sin! You must get rid of the wrong attitude towards your brother.

Do you have a right attitude towards all your brothers? If not, then sin is crouching at your door, and you must master it! God's voice of love pleads with you right now.

Why should God plead with man? He could very well have rejected Cain without giving him a second chance. But God pleaded with Cain and He pleads with us. The father of the prodigal son pleaded with his elder son saying, "Why do you have a wrong attitude towards your younger brother? Why are you jealous of my honoring him. You too can come and sit at the same table!" But the elder brother wouldn't listen to his father.

It was the same with Cain. He didn't listen to God, for he had no fear of God. Instead, he went from God's presence and killed his brother.

Then the Lord asked Cain, "Where is Abel, your brother?" Cain replied, "I don't know." When your conscience is hardened, you can tell lies even to God?

Cain asked God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" And God said to Cain, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand."

When Adam and Eve sinned, God never cursed them. He only cursed the ground. But here, we see for the first time God cursing a man. And it was when a man had hurt his brother.

Remember this : The first time God ever cursed a man was when a man harmed his brother.

Have you hurt your brother or your sister in any way? Then you are standing on dangerous ground. Repent before it is too late.

One result of God's curse is described in verse 12. God said to Cain, "When you cultivate the ground, it shall not yield its strength to you. You shall be a vagabond and a wanderer on the earth."

You will preach, but there will be no eternal fruit in your labors. You will try to build the church and gather people, but they will never be built up as the Body of Christ. You may make converts, but you won't be able to make disciples – because you are not a disciple yourself. Whatever you build will not last for eternity. You may preach the same messages that you read in our books that have produced fruit elsewhere. But those very same messages will not produce eternal fruit when you preach them. You will work hard and cultivate the ground, but there will still be no eternal fruit. You will be without true fellowship, and a vagabond and a wanderer all your days. You will wander from one church to another. You will try one church and find something wrong there. You'll go to another church and there will be something wrong there too. You'll be a wanderer, a vagabond and a beggar all your days, unable and unwilling to submit to anyone's authority! I have seen many people like that. They allowed the lion crouching at their door to enter in and swallow them up. And they imagined that they could still serve God. That's not just sad, it's tragic!

And all because they have a wrong attitude towards someone in their hearts. God spoke to them often, but they would not listen. They would not allow God to break them. They had plenty of knowledge. Their doctrines were all correct! But something was wrong in their hearts. So when they sowed, their labours did not yield any eternal fruit. Are you like that?

Jesus said, "I've chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain (for eternity). You prove to be My disciples by bearing much fruit." (John 15:16, 8).

It is impossible for any branch to remain in Jesus the Vine and to be fruitless. When the sap (the Holy Spirit) flows into the branches, it is impossible for it to be fruitless! You will bear eternal fruit. But if you're a wanderer like Cain, then of course you will be fruitless.

To be a wanderer does not necessarily mean being without a church-fellowship. I've seen many people who have come to our conferences, who think that the secret of God's blessing upon our work is found in the doctrines we preach. So they get our books and our tapes and preach the same messages to their groups. But nothing happens, because the anointing of God is missing. Others think that the secret of blessing is in the pattern of our meetings. So they duplicate that pattern in their meetings. But there is still spiritual death in their midst. Why? Because the secret is not in any of these things.

The secret of fruitfulness still lies, as Jesus said, in falling into the ground, and dying to our self-life (John 12:24). The secret is not in a doctrine, it's not in a pattern; it's in a life - the life of Jesus that God gives us through His Holy Spirit, as we choose the way of the cross.

Cain then told the Lord, "My punishment is too great to bear. Thou hast driven me from the face of the ground and I shall be a vagrant and wanderer." I'm amazed at the Lord's tremendous compassion, even toward someone like Cain. He told Cain, "I won't allow anybody to kill you." Then the Lord appointed a sign for Cain so that no-one could slay him (verse 15).

Cain could have repented and cried out saying, "Oh God, be merciful to me." But he didn't. He went out from the presence of the Lord and built a city for his family to live in comfortably (verse 17). And his descendants began to produce musical instruments for their own entertainment (verse 21). Comfort and entertainment became their gods thereafter – like they are for many today.

A lot of evil things begin to happen if you go away from the presence of the Lord. You lose your sense of direction and you become a wanderer; and comfort and entertainment become your gods. You live thereafter by your human sense of what is right and wrong.

But where did all this drift begin? It began with jealousy. When the fire of God fell on Abel's offering, and no fire fell on Cain's offering, Cain became jealous. Everything started there.

If Abel had been an older brother, Cain could have possibly borne it. But Abel was younger! He thought, "How can God anoint someone younger than me? How can God put a fire on someone younger than me?" That bothered him. And ever after, he was determined to harm Abel.

That was how King Saul reacted too when he heard the women of Israel praise young David more than him (1 Sam. 18:7). He became jealous of David and very soon an evil spirit possessed him and he became mad. This is how it will end up for all who like Saul, choose the way of Cain. Evil spirits will possess them sooner or later.

Have you seen God bless someone's family or his ministry? And are you jealous? Since you can't bear to see that brother so blessed, you determine to find some fault with him. But if the anointing of God is upon that brother, you should be humble enough to acknowledge it. You may not approve of him, but God does. God has blessed him and accepted his offerings. And your opinion of him is unimportant! Humble yourself!

The anointing and support of God is everything. I have told my fellow-elders that even if they have understood every doctrine correctly and are eloquent speakers, they must still check and see whether the anointing of God is upon their lives or not. If God doesn't send His fire from heaven upon their ministry, it would indicate that He sees something in their hidden lives that hinders Him from supporting them. If God supports them, He will bear witness to their life, their family life and their ministry. Then I would gladly back them - even if I don't agree with them in many things!! But if God doesn't bear witness to their life, their family life and their ministry, then I will not support them. I want to approve of those whom God approves of. And I will not approve of those whom God does not approve of. I don't want to know any man after the flesh. I want to see if God bears witness to a man. I want to go behind God, not ahead of Him. It's not enough that our doctrines and our pattern are Scriptural. We need the fire and the anointing of God more than anything else.

To tell you quite honestly, many doctrines are, in a sense, secondary to me. I don't care whether a man believes in the baptism in the Spirit the way I do, or not, whether he speaks in tongues or not, whether he has the gift of healing or not, or whether he belongs to this denomination or that. Some doctrinal disagreements, I've discovered, are because our minds are limited in understanding the truth of God. We are often unable to express matters of the Spirit in human words. But if the anointing of God is there, God is there! And if the fire of God is not there, then God is not there – whatever else a man may claim to have and however much noise he may make in his meetings. If an elder of a church has not been able to build a brotherhood and a fellowship in his local church even after ten years, then God is obviously not with him and he is a wanderer.

You can be a wanderer, even while sitting in a large church, because you may not have any fellowship with those around you. A thousand people may sit in a cinema-theatre, but they don't have fellowship with each other. One person doesn't know anything about the person sitting next to him. In the same way, even 1,000 people sitting together in a church-building may not be the Body of Christ. They may be just a congregation of lonely people.

A husband and wife living under the same roof, but not having fellowship with each other, are lonely too. There are parents and children, living under the same roof, who have no fellowship with each other. Such people are lonely people, even though they live together day after day. All such people are vagabonds and wanderers. You can sit in the best church in the world and be a vagabond and a wanderer.

The first sin of man described in detail, after he was expelled from Eden, is Cain's sin – jealousy that led to murder. And it is significant that the apostle John wrote about this sin of Cain when writing to the brothers and sisters in the churches in his time (1 John 3:12). Jude also mentions "the way of Cain" in his letter (Jude 11).. Cain is mentioned both at

the beginning of the Bible and at its end. So there must be a warning that Holy Spirit wants to give us about the way Cain lived.

What is "the way of Cain"?

It is the way of jealousy, and it leads to loneliness and wandering. It destroys fellowship. The way of Cain is a way in which you cannot bear to see God blessing someone else – especially if he is equal to you or younger than you. It is a way in which you cannot humble yourself and say, "Lord, I acknowledge that You have borne witness to this brother. I have a wrong attitude towards him. Please forgive me, Lord. Help me to love him and respect him."

Is there some brother or sister whom you cannot get along with, but whom God still seems to anoint and bless? If God can get along well with him/her, but you can't, who then is likely to be at fault – you or God?? Whose opinion of him is likely to be more correct – yours or God's? Be honest!

Wherever there is jealousy in a person's heart, it certainly proves one thing clearly : That he hasn't seen the body of Jesus Christ yet.

Why do I say that? Think of this physical body. There is no jealousy among its members. My left hand is never jealous that all the checks are signed by my right hand. It is not jealous that it doesn't get a single chance to sign a check! It doesn't say, "It's always the right hand! Always the right hand! He's always doing the important ministries and getting the honor!" No. Suppose my right hand gets hurt one day. Does my left hand then rejoice and say, "Ah! Now at last I'll get a chance to sign some checks"? No. If my left hand did sign a check, the bank wouldn't accept it, because the bank wouldn't recognize the signature!! There is no jealousy in the body! The left hand rejoices when the right hand signs the check and even when the right hand collects the money from the bank. What the left hand says is, "That's my money too, for we are all part of one body." When we have "seen" the body of Christ, that will be our attitude to the more prominent ministry of another brother.

The foot could easily complain and say, "I never get a chance to be seen publicly. I'm always at the lowest end of the body, and hardly ever noticed by anyone. I wish I could get a promotion and move higher up in the body and become like the hand or the tongue some day!" But no foot ever thinks like that! On the contrary, it says, "If God has decided to keep me down here at the bottom of the body forever, that's perfectly all right with me. I'm perfectly happy. I rejoice with the other members of the body in their ministry and carry them where they want to go! My joy is to do the task God appointed for me!" That is also the language of one who has "seen" the Body of Christ.

If a soul is saved through another brother's ministry, praise the Lord, for we are all part of the same Body. When we see God's blessing upon another brother's ministry somewhere, and churches being established through his labors, we can rejoice and say, "Praise the Lord! That's for my Lord's kingdom! I'm excited! I had nothing to do with it, but praise God that another part of the Body went there and established the church." Can you rejoice like that? If you're humble, you will be able to.

Jealousy comes in only when we haven't seen that it was God Who gave each of us a particular ministry in Christ's Body. 1 Corinthians 12:18 says, "God has placed the members, each one of them in the body, just as He desired." That is what many Christians have not seen.

God chose the right place for you in Christ's Body! And God chose the right place for me. So if you have a complaint about that, your complaints are actually against God.

Don't ever say, "That brother does not give me a chance to preach." That's a lot of nonsense! How can any brother hinder you from fulfilling the ministry God has appointed for you in Christ's Body. If Almighty God Himself has decided to give you a particular task in the Body, who can ever hinder you? No-one.

In my younger days, I was in an assembly where it was plain to me (and to others) that the elders were jealous of my ministry. They wouldn't let me preach in the church-meetings. So I preached on the streets. Nobody could stop me there! And that's where I learned to preach - on the streets. I stood in almost every street corner of the town where I lived, and preached the gospel. None of the elders were interested in preaching on the streets. And when I came to the church-meetings, the Lord would tell me to humble myself, submit to the elders, love them, keep a good relationship with them and keep my mouth shut!! And that's what I did. Even today, after nearly forty years, when I see any of those men, I have a good relationship with them. God broke me and crushed me through such experiences.

Those elders made me sit in the back of the assembly because they were jealous. But it was obviously not God's time for me to have a ministry then. So they just fulfilled God's will for my life by what they did! And I waited.

I have often thought of Jesus sitting in the synagogue in Nazareth, listening to all the boring sermons that the Pharisees preached there, year after year. He knew the Scriptures and He knew His Father when He was 12! Yet He sat in the synagogue, listening to the rubbish preached every Saturday!! He kept quiet for 30 long years. Can you imagine all the boring sermons that Jesus heard there? He went to the synagogue regularly - 52 Saturdays every year - from childhood to the age of 30. So He must have listened to more than 1000 boring sermons in His life! Yet He sat through them all, waiting silently - because He knew that His hour had not yet come. The Father's time for Him to preach had not yet come.

But today I see young people who are impatient. They think they're ready to preach, but they are not! They haven't been broken! They're seeking honour. They've never submitted to authority. They are jealous! And God can never be a witness to them.

God allowed such experiences to happen to me not just once, but again and again - first in one assembly, then in another and many years later, in yet another. And He always told me to keep my mouth shut and to wait for His time. So I kept my mouth shut. He always told me to keep a good relationship with the elders in those churches and to submit to them. And I did that. Thus God crushed my self-life again and again - and set me free from myself!

God cannot commit spiritual authority to a man who has not been broken. That would be dangerous. It would be like having un-insulated electric wires running through the house. That would kill us. Electricity is a very useful thing, but every wire must be insulated. It's not enough to have power; we must have insulation too.

It's not enough to have the power of the Holy Spirit, we need brokenness too. Then we won't kill anyone through our ministry. Brokenness is the insulation. And that can come only as we allow God to crush us and humble us through the different situations He arranges for us.

God has a plan for you, my brother, my sister! Not a single human being in the world can frustrate that plan - no matter how hard they try to push you down. People may have tried to keep Jesus down for many years. But one day, when His Father told Him to GO, He went. And then the Father said, "I am well pleased with my Son!" The Father was well pleased with Jesus' humility, seeing Him sit quietly for 30 years in the synagogue! There is a time and a season for everything in God's plans and purposes. And no-one can hinder God's plan.

And in the next 3½ years, Jesus had such an anointed ministry, as the world has never seen. In those 3½ years, He did what others could not do in 4000 years. Let us learn humility then from Jesus. He would not move until His Father told him to. He submitted to imperfect Joseph and Mary at home. He submitted to listening to boring sermons in the synagogue.

It says about Jesus in Isaiah 53:10, "It pleased the Lord to crush Him." Have you allowed the Lord to crush you? That's how we get spiritual authority. God cannot use a man or a woman who has not been crushed and broken.

Sisters, God may use a difficult husband to crush you. But perhaps, you rebel and fight back. You may not have joined the "Women's Liberation" movement. But if people saw your behaviour at home, they'd think you have! What is the result of that attitude? You haven't changed your husband. And you yourself are a wanderer, without any fellowship and without any spiritual authority. You could have probably become a woman of God by now, if you had learned submission to authority.

I see many young people today - even in the church - who think they know more than their parents, and who will not submit to the authority of their parents. But what is their spiritual condition? They are vagabonds and wanderers.

Young people, don't waste your life. Learn to submit to authority. Don't expose the nakedness of your parents, like Ham did. That will bring a curse upon you. Maybe your parents are naked, maybe they're drunk! Let God deal with them. You cover them. Love covers a multitude of sins. Be like Shem and Japheth who walked backwards and covered the nakedness of their parents. That is submission to authority.

But unfortunately, we have a "smart" young generation today, who are proud of their "knowledge". They think they're better people, just because they're smart and educated, unlike their less-educated parents. But what's the use

of all that smartness and knowledge, if God doesn't bear witness to you? Where is the fire? It was the fire of God that distinguished Abel's sacrifice from Cain's - and that has always been the distinctive mark of God's presence - with a man, or in a church.

The Old Testament tabernacle was something that even the Philistines could easily construct - because its pattern was given in detail in the book of Exodus. But there was one thing that they would not have been able to produce - the fire of God that rested upon the tabernacle. That fire was what distinguished the tent of the tabernacle from all the other tents in Israel and in the whole world! No-one could produce that.

The glory of God is the mark of His presence - not the pattern. When Israel backslid, the pattern remained but the glory of God departed. Don't ever imagine that the pattern is the main thing in a church. I've seen men and churches who don't follow the New Testament pattern for ministry (as I understand it) but who still have the fire of God upon them - and so I respect them. Other things are secondary to me.

I don't go checking for the pattern - whether the ram's skin coverings are dyed the right colour of red! I look for the fire - not the fire of human emotion but the fire of the Holy Spirit. If that is present, then God is there, even if the pattern is slightly faulty.

Is the fire of God present in your church and your ministry? Does God bear witness to you? That's the most important thing you need to ask yourself. That's what made Abel's sacrifice stand apart from Cain's.

Perhaps you see God's anointing on the ministry of another brother who has his pattern wrong in some area. And you wonder, "How can God bear witness to that?" Perhaps God doesn't consider that doctrine as important as you do. God values humility and sincerity far more.

I've had to learn many lessons in my life. A lot of things that I once thought were important, I now realize God doesn't consider so important. And a lot of other things, that I considered unimportant, I see that God considers as important.

God considers humility to be of fundamental importance. He also considers freedom from the love of money as very important. These are some of the important doctrines of the Christian faith. But have you ever seen any church's doctrinal statement having, "Humility" and "Freedom from the love of money" included in it? It's easy for believers to glory in their being correct on Biblical facts and ignore more important issues related to their character.

We see another example of jealousy in Numbers 16. Notice that four people are mentioned here in verse 1 - Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On - who rose up against Moses, because they were jealous of his ministry. They couldn't bear to see that Moses always had an anointed word from God, each time He spoke! And so they chose to walk "the way of Cain". That's why Jude combines "the rebellion of Korah" with "the way of Cain" in his letter (Jude 11).

These men told Moses, "You've gone too far. Everyone is holy. The Lord is with all of us! Why do you exalt yourself?"

In actual fact, Moses had never exalted himself. God had called him out of the wilderness when he was keeping sheep. And even then Moses had asked the Lord to send somebody else, saying he felt himself unfit for the task. He didn't exalt himself. It was God Who had seen Moses' faithfulness and exalted him!

What did Moses do when they rebelled? Number 16:4 says he fell on his face. That's the best thing to do when people accuse us. Fall on your face and let God defend you. When people question your authority, fall on your face. If God doesn't defend you, it's no use your trying to defend yourself. God can deal with all the Korahs, the Dathans and the Abiram better than you can.

Many years ago, God said to me, "When people accuse you or question your ministry, fall on your face." And that's what I've always sought to do. I know that God can do a better job of defending me than I can - and He has - all these 35 and more years.

Moses told the rebels that the Lord would show everyone the next morning who was really accepted by Him. So all the Israelites assembled the next morning. But notice that out of the four men who had rebelled against Moses the previous day - Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On - the Lord said that He was going to judge only three of them. The Lord warned the congregation to "get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram." (verse 24)

What about On? He obviously became sensible the previous night, and repented. He must have gone to Korah and said, "Brother, I'm not joining you in this. Count me out." Thus On saved his life and saved his family as well - because he pulled away from the rebels.

On, the son of Peleth, was a sensible man!

What about you? Are you sensible? Do you join with others who have a spirit of rebellion? Are you jealous of someone whom God has anointed? I warn you: "Pull Back! Pull back before it is too late. Save yourself and your children." Learn a lesson from On.

The other Israelites also repented of joining Korah, Dathan and Abiram in their rebellious spirit and pulled back from their tents. And the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed up these three rebels and their households (verse 32). The rebels were judged and their families were judged too. How sad it is when a father's rebellious attitude affects his children too! The father rebels and his children suffer!

We read of Heaven opening twice and God taking two people alive into Heaven - Enoch and Elijah. But this is the only place in the Bible where we read that Hell opened up and that people "went alive into Hell" (verse 33). Remember that the only time when God sent people alive into hell was when He saw them being jealous of a ministry that He had endorsed! That should put a fear into all of us.

When the fire fell on Abel's sacrifice, Cain was jealous. So God cursed him. When God's anointing was on Moses, three rebellious men were jealous. So God commanded Hell to swallow them up alive.

But there is one interesting part of this story that is not mentioned in Numbers 16. It is mentioned later in Numbers 26: 10,11. There we're told that "the sons of Korah, however, did not die."

How did that happen? The sons of Korah were also standing there with their father outside their tent that morning. But at the last minute they repented and ran away from their father saying, "Dad, we're pulling out of this", and ran and stood with Moses. They escaped God's judgment at the last minute! And so the sons of Korah did not die. Praise the Lord!

The sons of Korah then wrote a number of psalms. Look at Psalm 46. It says at the top of this psalm that this is "A psalm of the sons of Korah". They sing about their deliverance here. What did they write?

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the earth should open up and the mountains slip right in!" (v.1).

"Come behold the works of the Lord. What desolations he has wrought in the earth." (v.8).

"Be still, (let go, cease striving, relax) and know that I am God." (v.10).

The sons of Korah wrote some other wonderful psalms too - Psalm 42, Psalm 44, Psalm 45 (the marriage psalm of Jesus and His bride), Psalm 47, Psalm 48 and Psalm 49. We can find more meaning in these psalms when we know the background of the men who wrote them.

(If these psalms were written by later descendants of the original sons of Korah, then they too must have been grateful that their fathers pulled out of the rebellion against Moses, or else, they would never have been born!)

God endorsed Moses' ministry publicly in such a way that all could see it. Today, God's endorsement of a man's ministry is not seen in the large number of people he can gather together. No. False cults and false religions all have large numbers. Statistics are deceptive in spiritual matters. Jesus had only eleven disciples. God's endorsement is seen in the quality of a man's work - and not its quantity. We will know whether the anointing of God is on our life, not by the number of people who join our churches, but by the quality of those who join it.

Show me the private lives of a Christian leader's closest co-workers and I will tell you whether that leader is a spiritual man or not.

I have felt that if I could produce just eleven selfless disciples in India, of the quality of those first apostles, in my lifetime, I could say like Simeon, "Lord, Thy servant can now depart in peace". But I've discovered that it's not easy to produce even 11 men like those apostles. Even among the best of believers, most people seek their own in one way or the other.

Perhaps you are a sister who has to spend most of your time at home. But God can make disciples even through you. He can use you to lead other sisters to a godly life. But you'll never lead anyone to godliness, if you spend your time gossiping and backbiting when you are with other sisters.

We see yet another example of jealousy in 2 Samuel 15. There we read of Absalom, David's son. David had been very good to Absalom, forgiving him for murdering his brother Amnon and recalling him from exile. In 2 Samuel 14:33 we read that "the king kissed Absalom." David obviously loved Absalom very much.

But in the next chapter, we read of how Absalom took advantage of David's goodness. Absalom rose up early each morning and stood near the gate of Jerusalem, and looked out for those who came with complaints and lawsuits. Absalom would then call them, put his arms around them and tell them that although their claims were legitimate, King David had not appointed anyone to settle such matters. And then he would go on to tell them, "I wish somebody would appoint me as the judge. I would sort out these problems in no time at all. If anyone had a problem, I would ensure that he gets justice quickly."

And if anyone tried to bow down to him, Absalom would lift him up and tell him, "Don't do that! I am only your brother! Don't humble yourself before me!" And then Absalom would kiss him. Thus Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel, from the man whom God had anointed (verse 6).

That story has been repeated many times in these 3,000 years since then. Evil men have frequently stolen the hearts of God's people away from God's anointed leaders.

Absalom couldn't bear to see God's blessing upon his father. Imagine a son being jealous of his own father! But I have seen this happen in my lifetime too. I have seen godly men, as spiritual fathers, nurturing and bringing up young men and leading them into a ministry. But after those young men, who were once nobodies, grew up and received a ministry, I have seen them despise and ignore their spiritual fathers and stealing the hearts of people away from their spiritual fathers.

In a little while, Absalom had such a following that his father David had to flee for his life! And the usurper Absalom sat on the throne. But what's the use of sitting on a throne if God doesn't back you up? It was just a matter of time, before God destroyed him. I've seen that happen too - time and again.

The apostle Paul told the elders in Ephesus, in Acts 20:29, 30: "I know what's going to happen here after I leave. From among yourselves, men will arise, who (like Absalom) will draw away disciples after themselves - men who speak perverse things."

What were those perverse things Paul referred to? Those perverse things were not wrong doctrines. No. They were the words by which some of those elders would later draw people to themselves. They would have a private agenda in the church - to promote themselves. They would quickly forget the example of Paul from whom they received everything they knew of the Christian faith.

I've seen many such people - who easily forget the goodness they have received from godly, older brothers. They even forget how they received their ministry. Now they are jealous of their spiritual fathers and seek to exalt themselves in the eyes of their congregations.

How soon Absalom forgot his father's goodness to him. But what was the final end of Absalom? His head got caught in the branches of an oak tree while he was riding on a mule, and he was stabbed to death while he was hanging there. How terrible.

The Scriptures record many stories like that of people who were jealous of men whom God had endorsed.

In Matthew 27, we read of Jesus standing before Pilate. Pilate was a heathen man who didn't know anything about the Bible or about the true God. But when Jesus stood before him, he could see clearly that Jesus was an innocent man a

and that “it was because of jealousy, that the Pharisees had delivered Jesus up.” (v.18).

The Pharisees were jealous because the people appreciated Jesus more than them. Annas and Caiaphas were both more than 60 years old, but Jesus was only 33. And the people were admiring and following this young man! The fire of God was upon someone half their age. They couldn’t bear to see that - and they were jealous! And so they decided to get Jesus killed! That plan didn’t originate with atheists, but with the most religious people of that time – the Pharisees. They too walked the way of Cain!

But the atheist Pilate could see through the whole thing! Even atheists are often able to see through the jealousy that Christians have of each other today?

Let us look at one more example of those who were jealous of someone whom God had blessed with material riches.

Job was the most godly man who lived on earth in his time. God Himself certified to that fact. He was also a very rich man. His children were also good-looking (Job 42:15) and probably spiritually-minded like their father. Job would pray with and for His children regularly and they were consecrated to the Lord (Job 1:5).

Job had three preacher friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, who were jealous of him, because, they couldn’t stand the fact that Job was spiritual, wealthy and had a good family! If Job had been poor and spiritual, they could have accepted him. Or if he had been rich, but not spiritual, that too would have been all right with them. Or at least if his children were wayward that would have been some comfort for these 3 men! But what they couldn’t stand was the fact that Job had everything going well for him - he was spiritual, wealthy and had a godly, good-looking family! These things bothered those 3 preachers continuously. And they burned with jealousy. They had visited Job many a time, but their jealousy was not exposed until calamity hit Job’s home.

One day they heard that Job’s children had died and that his business had suffered a grievous loss. And they must have all felt a secret joy in their hearts at this news. Even though they said to each other, “Let’s go and comfort him”, they didn’t really go to comfort him. They went to preach to him. Initially, they pretended to share his sorrow and threw mud on their heads and wept as if to show their grief. But then they started preaching to him and kept on telling him that there must be some secret sin in his life for God to judge him so severely.

But what did God think of these men and their preaching? In Job 42:7, we read that God told them, “My wrath is kindled against the three of you. And I’ll destroy you unless Job prays for you.” And Job, good man that he was, must have prayed for them saying: “Forgive them Lord, for they didn’t know what they were saying.” Those three preachers too were walking the way of Cain.

They never said one wrong thing about God. But jealousy burned in their hearts against Job - and because of that jealousy, despite all their doctrinal correctness, God was ready to destroy them.

When God blesses another brother materially and blesses his children as well, can you rejoice in it? Or do such things bother you?

If it bothers you that a spiritual brother is also financially well-off, it would be a good thing to ask yourself why you are bothered? It must be because money means so much to you! You must be considering money to be a big thing! That’s why! Otherwise, it wouldn’t bother you at all. You would be happy that your brother is prospering! You’d be happy even if he has a house ten times as big as yours! And you would be happy to see that he’s got a car, when you’ve got only a scooter or a cycle.

When you get to heaven, you will discover that money has no value at all. Godliness with contentment, you will discover, was the greatest thing of all - not godliness with prosperity, but godliness with contentment.

The only way to be perfectly happy and content with our financial circumstances, is by seeing that God is the One Who determines our financial boundaries. He determines how much each of us should earn. That is not determined by man or by circumstances, but by God.

Why are you jealous then of someone who has more wealth than you? Why can’t you be happy when someone prospers both spiritually and materially? Do you have godliness with contentment?

Can you rejoice when another brother's children are spiritual, even if your own children are carnal? Or do you have some jealousy there too, and secretly wish that his children will fall in some way?

The green thread of jealousy runs all the way through the Bible, in the lives of many religious people. It started with Cain. Job's 3 friends had it. It was found in Korah, in King Saul, in Absalom, in the Pharisees (in Jesus' time) and also in the Jewish leaders (of Paul's time) who were constantly jealous of the apostle Paul's influence over the other Jews. Unfortunately this evil continues to run in the lives of many believers today as well.

Is there jealousy in your heart today? Are you trying to show people that you are better than others? Are you waiting for some calamity to hit that some brother or his family? Then, like Job's preacher friends, you may look happy externally, but you know you're not! You're jealous. You're walking the way of Cain.

Are you jealous because somebody else's ministry prospers, his church prospers and you don't think it should be that way, because he's wrong in this thing and that thing and the other thing? But God is blessing him and so God obviously, doesn't share your opinion about him! What should you do, when you find that God disagrees with your opinion of a brother! You should humble yourself, acknowledge your error and agree with God. Let God be true, and every man a liar.

Sister, are you jealous of some other sister whom seems to have everything going smoothly for her, whereas you face pressure upon pressure daily? Do you find yourself hoping that some misfortune will befall that sister?

It is in our hidden attitudes that we can discover whether we are in fellowship with God or the Devil.

God exposes your heart to you in love today, just like he exposed Cain's heart to him. And He tells you also: "If you intend well, your face will be lifted up! You will also be accepted! My fire can come upon your life too!"

We are called to lay down our lives for our brothers. How far Christians have drifted from the Spirit of Christ when they imagine that God is with them, just because their doctrines are right, or because they speak in tongues, or because their praise and worship is so melodious. These are not the marks of God's presence.

Did Jesus say, "All men will know you are my disciples, when your doctrines are right"? Did He say, "All men will know you are my disciples, when you break bread every week" or "...when you speak in tongues" or "...when your praise and worship is melodious"? No.

He said, "All men will know you are my disciples when you love one another".

If God has shown you something in your heart of the spirit of Cain or of the spirit of Korah or of the spirit of Absalom repent!

If you find that you have the spirit of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, or of the Phariseesrepent!

There is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared.

God is Almighty and we are all nobodies. Let us humble ourselves then under His mighty hand.

He who has ears to hear let him hear. Amen

Re: THE WAY OF CAIN by Zac Poonen (text version) - posted by myfirstLove (), on: 2010/4/7 21:31

Thanks for the encouraging article, Greg.

Something came to mind as I was reading toward the end of this article.

I think another one to add to "the way of Cain"

Speaking of the jealousy of Cain who is the "older" brother and Abel the younger. What I have seen in most churches is many elders, pastors being jealous of the younger that they see has fire from God, outstanding in wisdom that of course belongs to God. Instead of wanting to raise such brethren up, and get himself out of a job, the pastor becomes scared and fearful of losing his position, so he never helps build the younger up more for leadership instead he talks down and s

ays things like your too young in age, who do you think you are, ect.... In the bible its clear that God uses the young like David and Timothy whom Paul raised up for apostlship. But Today it seems like the older are jelouse of the younger brethren who God is using. Instead of helping the younger be built up in leadership and has a mind to desire for the young to become leaders and tries to get himself out of the job so others may take his place, Many pastors get jelouse and star ts speaking down to the young so his position will be protected (not that the young wants the pastor's position, but the p astors has that fear). This also is the way of Cain- Jealousy of the younger brethren, like Abel who is showing forth true lif e in Christ.

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2010/4/10 21:58

I am bringing this forward for those that have not seen this. Currently this message is the featured audio sermon on SI.