

Beacons of the Bible

Cain

By [Henry Law](#)

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"Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." Genesis 4:8

When evil fills the heart, evil *effects* will soon appear. From tainted sources tainted waters flow. The bramble must be clothed with thorns. The tree proclaims the qualities of its root. When poison permeates the veins, the whole frame sickens. The plague begun spreads an infecting course.

When Adam fell, the inner man became entirely corrupt. Now, corruption cannot but propagate corruption. The parent reproduces his own likeness. Hence every child is born in sin. No cradle holds an innocent one. Each offspring of the human family steps upon earth dead towards God--corrupt in inward bias--prone to iniquity. He brings no eye to see God's will--no ear to hear His voice--no feet to climb the heavenly hill. He is an alien from righteousness--a willing slave of Satan--blinded in intellect--a pilgrim towards a lost land--a vessel fitted for destruction--a current strongly rushing downwards. His heart has many tenants; but God is no longer there. The palace once so fair is now overrun with weeds. Like Babylon in ruins, wild beasts of the desert lie there, and the houses are full of doleful creatures--Isaiah 13:21.

Reader! such surely is your birth-state. Has your soul realized the dreadful truth? Do you abhor natural self? Has the life-giving Spirit quickened you with renovating might? Are you a new creation in Christ Jesus? If so, while in these pages you contemplate Cain, surely you will bless the rescuing grace. If otherwise, may his dark picture scare you from delusion's dream! Would you be saved! You must be born again. Would you see heaven? You must be translated into the second Adam's kingdom.

Let now man's first-born be surveyed. Ponder his course. His deeds will show the disposition of his mind. The story will endorse this view of human fall, and prove that no abyss can be more deep.

The early annals of the world feed not mere curiosity. Superfluous statement finds no place. Thus as to the first family we briefly read, that it commenced in Cain and was increased by Abel. The birth of the elder seemingly was hailed with

rapturous delight. The mother in her joy exclaimed, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Genesis 4:1. The younger received the name of *Abel*, which means *vanity*. Is not this token, that he was comparatively disesteemed? If so, the lesson meets us, how man miscalculates and human expectations err. Blessings reflect a sovereign will. True good descends in channels long since marked by wise decrees. The arrangements of heaven are deeper than earth's hopes or wishes. Not man's desire, but God's own purpose, rules events.

Of the childhood of these brothers we have no mention--a veil conceals their early training. The history only states, that their professions were the peaceful work of pastoral life. They lived in nature's field. They labored under heaven's own canopy. Abel kept sheep. Cain tilled the ground. One watched the flock. The other sowed the seed and reaped the grain.

But surely it is not a vain surmise, that alike they shared the same instructions from their parents' lips. Thought may go back and listen to the converse of the primal household. Doubtless these sons would often be riveted by rapturous recitals of the garden-home--the lovely beauty of each scene--the blessedness of God at all times near--heard in each sound--seen in each object--adored in every movement of the mind. Would they not hear, also, of the tempter's sly approach--his daring lie--the ear too easily beguiled--the lingering look--the rising doubt--the new-born lust--the fatal touch--the dreadful taste--the instant midnight of the soul--the wreck of godliness and peace--the downcast shame--the trembling fear--the inward horror--and all the terrible realities of a sinful state?

Would they not then be told, how *grace* illumined this dismal gloom--how mercy winged her way to promise recovery--and the woman's seed--and coming redemption--and purposed salvation--and One, whose death would utterly annihilate the devil's triumph, and whose life would bring in everlasting righteousness? Next they would see the right of *sacrifice*. Every bleeding victim would proclaim sin's dreadful penalty. This ordinance would portray atonement through another's blood. The skins, also, of these slaughtered beasts, supplying clothing for the body, would fitly show the obedience of the dying Savior as the soul's justifying robe.

These lessons are the full Gospel in microscopic form. All saving truth is here embodied. And who can doubt, that Cain and Abel were thus taught alike the outlines of salvation's scheme? They had their Bible in their parents' teaching. Human malady and heavenly cure--the peril and the refuge--the ruin and the rescue--their state, as Adam's sons--their hope through grace would be their earliest instruction.

Is the effect the same? Are their minds brought to the like holy faith? Far otherwise. The sun, which melts the snow, hardens the clay. While outward lessons are the same to both, only one heart is savingly impressed--the other becomes harder. Great difference would hence pervade their total character. But

it comes most vividly to view in their approach to God.

Behold the worshipers. First mark Cain. He feels that homage is the great Creator's due. Therefore he makes an offering. But he consults with 'blinded human reason'. He listens to his wayward will, and so infers, that the produce of *his own toil* is sacrifice most fit. He brings "of the fruit of the ground." In this at once the working of self-righteous pride appears. He worships as a vain free-thinker. Here is no confession of his guilty need. Here is no faith in the revealed atonement. Here is no acceptance of the way of grace. Here is no delight in reconciling blood. God's mode of access is rejected. Self-will rebelliously concludes, "I stand bold in uprightness--free to commune with God! Why should I humbly plead another's death? Why should I trust another's power to save? I pay the fruit of my own labor. Sufficient is this obligation to my Maker. This only I present." Such is the constant voice of nature. Such is the vanity of unregenerate man. Inflated by high thoughts of SELF, he tramples GRACE beneath contemning feet.

Now turn to Abel. He likewise comes to worship. But the contrast is great, as light from darkness. The firstlings of his flock are in his hand. He raises an altar. Thereon he lays a dying victim. The Spirit testifies of the principle, which moves this act. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Heb. 11:4. Expand this conduct. It sweetly shows soul-humbleness--consciousness of nature's ruin--confession of extremest need--acknowledgment of life's forfeiture--reliance only on the atoning Lamb. A voice from Abel's altar cries, "My eyes are to the coming Savior. I rejoice in Him, as all my hope--desire--pardon--life."

Reader! you see the amazing difference. How is it so? The answer is near and sure. Grace visited one--the other was passed by. To Cain all pious precepts were as water cast upon a rock. To Abel they came as good seed falling on good ground. It was so because some *mighty power* touched the younger--while the elder remained in nature's hardness--ignorance--conceit. This power was heavenly and from heaven.

Thus Adam's children show that grace alone can convert a soul. Parents--guardians--teachers--pastors--friends must use each effort and must strain each nerve. But vain is every zealous toil, except the Spirit fly to help. Without light from the Holy Spirit, sin never can be felt and Jesus never can be seen--sought--loved. Souls quickened from on high, and they alone, hasten to salvation's ark.

You, who, Abel-like, present a stricken Savior in your arms, be conscious, that you are *monuments of mercy*--own your vast debt--give thanks--adore. "By *grace* are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves--it is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8. You are followers of "righteous Abel." "Their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." Isa. 54:17.

Can faith thus worship and receive no smile? This story replies, that heaven rejoices, when gracious souls plead dying merit. God looks with favor upon Abel and testifies approval. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering."

Believer, take all the joy of this grand truth. If you glory in the cross, if your whole trust is in the God-man's work, your prayers are heard--your worship gladdens the bright courts above--God hearkens to your imploring soul, and tokens will descend to prove acceptance. It was so to Abel. It is so now. All who walk in the same faith find like approval.

How different is the case of unbelief! Formalists may present long trains of man-made observances. The service is self-will, not faith. It is a skeleton with no warm breath. It is but 'splendid sin'. There is no note to reach the ears of God. It is abomination in His sight. "Unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect."

Cain quickly felt, that Abel basked beneath approving smiles, while darkness was his doom. Abel's happiness, reflecting heavenly rays, pierces him to the quick. The scum of his iniquities soon rises to the surface. The fiend's internal broodings rush into action. "He was very angry, and his countenance fell." Envy--malice--rage fret as a swelling tide. They sweep all barriers away. God in forbearance checks and remonstrates. But divine patience only irritates him more. Sinful passion takes the helm. The presence of his righteous brother becomes a maddening goad. Earth is misery to him, while Abel treads it. Thus a murderous thought enters his breast--a murderous scheme is formed. For a while pretense hides it. The usual communion is maintained; and as in other days, they walk together to the fields.

But now what scene occurs! Surely the very earth will quake--the universe will groan--each leaf will hang its head in sorrow, and the sun hide its startled rays. Cain looks upon his mother's son. But no softenings stir. No pity spares. His arm is raised. The blow is aimed. The wound is given. Abel falls a murdered corpse.

There is nothing too vicious for sin to do. There are no depths of crime, from which it shrinks. It trembles not to break a parent's heart, or take a brother's life. It scoffs at fear of man. It braves the vengeance of the Lord. If its impious hands could scale the heaven of heavens, it would do violence to all within those blest abodes. All this is sounded in those fearful words, "Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him."

The annals of ensuing crime show not iniquity more vile. There have been dreadful deeds, enough to startle hell, but where a deed like this! Thus Adam's firstborn exhibits evil in its largest stature. Let us not dream, that sin came upon earth a little seed, and rose by gradual growth into its full enormities. Here it stands at once gigantic in every proportion. It needs not a long course of time to ripen or mature it. Behold again that bleeding one. It is the "righteous Abel." The first who lived by faith first dies a martyr's death.

Let then none fondly dream, that piety wins love, or faith conciliates the world's favor. If now there be no open outrage, it is because restraint confine the arm. Earth would be drunk with gore, if hatred to Christ could work its will. Brother, also, is slain by brother. Earth's closest bonds are weak to hold back unbelieving enmity.

Behold once more. The deed is done. Blood stains Cain's hands. Ocean, now, with all its waves, cannot wash out that die. Rolling ages cannot sweep it away. Agonies of remorse cannot recall it. No angel's efforts can remove the weight of guilt. The sin is sinned. Account must now be given. The murderer hears the searching question--for God will speak--"Where is Abel, your brother?" "What have you done?" But the hardened heart breaks not. The sullen lips pour forth no cry for pardon. No contrition asks for mercy. He stands an icy pillar of despair. Hope tenders no support. No prospect brings a ray to cheer. He knows not how to bear his being. But forth he must go to reap the harvest sown by sin.

Here the curtain falls. But Cain still lives, and must forever live. But where? What is his present state? What will be his everlasting doom? He was of the "wicked one," and with the wicked one must pass to his own place. The race of Cain, also, still pollutes our earth. It is a faithful admonition--"Woe unto them, they have gone in the way of Cain." Jude 11. That way is still a common by-path. The sons of nature crowd it. Grace only can call from it.

In this history some of its downward stages are depicted. Pride takes the first step. The sinner, satisfied with self, sneers at the thought of being fallen--vile--lost. His blinded solace is, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Rev. 3:17. Self-righteous, he perceives no beauty in the glorious cross. Unconscious of filth, he seeks no cleansing. Ignorant of guilt, he laughs at pardon. Christ is despised. The Gospel is rejected, as an old wives' tale. No grace bars the heart's door. Therefore the whole legion of hell's passions find admission. They enter and fix their foul abode. Outward warnings are not heard. Frightful lusts are wantonly indulged. A mad career is madly run. Human laws may check overt acts. Cain's enormity may not in very deed be perpetrated--but Cain's depravity dwells within. Then comes the end, which has no end--no peace to soothe a dying bed--the dread account before the great white throne--the sure rejection--the dreadful "Depart from Me"--and lastly, the never-ending prison of anguish and despair.

Reader! let not Cain thus warn in vain. May good to you spring from this dreadful life! Let his example search your inmost soul. Is there one particle of self-justifying pride within? If so, spare it not. Drag it to the cross and slay it there. Open your eyes to solemn truth. In you, that is in your flesh, there dwells no good thing--Rom. 7:18. Your best deserves hell's depths. There is no moment of your life unstained by sin. No thought of your mind could reach the Law's high standard. Away then with all self-confidence. You have no penitence--no tears--

no prayers--no services, which need not Christ's atoning blood. Flee then from self to Christ. No pardon--cleansing--righteousness are found apart from Him. Listen to Cain's wail--escape the wrath to come. Rush not to a place of torment. You yet live. Christ is near with open arms. Hasten as the neediest of sinners to Him the sinners' friend. You will find Him willing--able to give uttermost salvation. None perish with their face towards Jesus.

"Spirit of the living God! You who visited Abel, in mercy visit all who read these pages! Call many from Cain's graceless course to Abel's faith and heaven's eternal glory!"

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