

Introduction: God never forces anyone to do anything, but everyone is responsible for his or her actions. A stark example of this truth is the story of Cain and Abel. *** All people need to listen to and obey God with faith and hope and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). If we know The Truth, Jesus (John 14:6), then we know that we deserve to be judged and spend eternity separated from God. But, we also know, as a gift of God's grace, that we may live our lives with the assurance our sins are forgiven through Jesus. This knowledge, empowered by the love of The Holy Spirit, enables us to testify to the love of Jesus in words and actions. As we live more and more for Jesus, and share Him with others, we get to enjoy God's love. *** When people experience God in this way, it is natural to be upset by the notion that anyone could be condemned to hell for eternity. The one who helped me the most to accept this harsh reality is C S Lewis. He said that sin is when people refuse to listen to The Spirit of God and they say: leave me alone God! All who continue to ask Him to leave them alone and never accept Him as King over their lives are taking a big risk. At some time, known only to God, He will say: all right, this breaks My heart, but I will give you what you want, I will leave you alone – forever! *** Most of us live somewhere in the gray area between Cain and Abel. *** I will never forget an observation a work friend made about me over forty years ago. There was always a lunchtime backgammon game in our department. I loved to observe, but only played reluctantly. One time, after I made the best move I could see, Stan said: Gary always makes the second best move; I've never seen him make a bad move, some of his moves are creative and interesting, but there is always a better move. I said nothing because I knew Stan had just identified me as a sinner, always 'falling short' (Romans 3:22-24). Needless to say, my prayer that night was long. *** Let's look at the negative story of Cain and Abel, and the positive story of two and a half faithful tribes.

I. Eve's two sons are different, when Yahweh favors the second born, the first born is angered; Yahweh says he may master sin, but he fails, slays his brother and is sentenced. (Genesis 4:1-16)

- A. Eve has two sons who are different; Yahweh is pleased with the second born son and the first born son is offended; Yahweh says he may master his anger, yet he slays his brother. (Verses 1-8)
1. And Adam knew Eve, his woman, then she conceived, then she bore Cain and said: I have gotten man from Yahweh. (Verse 1)
Cain: Cain sounds like the word for getting. Does Eve believe God is doing His word to the serpent 'I will put enmity between ... your offspring and hers; he will crush your head' (Genesis 3:15)?
 2. Then she bore his brother Abel; then Abel was keeping a flock of sheep and Cain was tilling the ground. (Verse 2)
Abel: Abel means 'breath', and is related to the word for vanity in Ecclesiastes. It is one of the few names in Genesis where Yahweh did not direct Moses to define it.
Contrast: Abel watched over a flock of animals. But Cain worked the soil to grow fruit and vegetables. Until after the flood people only ate green plants, not animals (Genesis 9:1-4).
 3. Then it was, after a span of time, Cain brought the fruit of the ground: offering to Yahweh. (Verse 3)
Fruit of ground: It was natural for Cain to offer God out of what was important to him.
 4. Then, Abel brought, also he, from the firstborn of his flock and from the (best) fat; then Yahweh regarded (with favor) Abel and his offering. (Verse 4)
Flock of sheep: Abel offered from the best of the sheep he was keeping. In the Bible, when it comes to food, 'fat' is a good thing.
Yahweh's regard: Yahweh regarded with favor both Abel and his (sacrificial?) offering. This would indicate that there is nothing 'vain' about Abel. Is his offering a result of Yahweh covering his parents with animal skins (Genesis 3:21)?
 5. And with Cain and his offering, He had no regard; then Cain was very angry and his countenance fell; then Yahweh said to Cain: Why have thou become angry and thy countenance fell; not, if thou will do well to be lifted up? And, if not thou will do well: at the door sin is stretching out and to thee its desire; but, thou may master it. (Verses 5-7)
Yahweh NO regard: Yahweh-God had no regard for either Cain or his offering.
Cain angry: This resulted in Cain becoming angry. Was his anger directed at God, or his brother?
Yahweh: Yahweh-God questions Cain about his response to Him.
Choice: He strongly implies if Cain does well, according to His standards, then he will be lifted up.
Thou 'may' master: There are three ways to interpret the sense of the verb (*timshal*) and Cain's mastering. The least likely is that it is future tense, or a prediction, because he did not master sin. It is grammatically unlikely to be a command. So, it is likely Yahweh-God is telling Cain he may master sin by obedient faith to Him and His ways. This is grace.

Sins against brothers may be overcome by obedient faith

6. Then Cain spoke to Abel his brother, then they were in the field, then Cain rose up against Abel his brother, then he slew him. (Verse 8)
Cain slays brother: This is the first instance of gross sin in the Bible: fratricide!
- B. Yahweh confronts Cain and condemns him to a life of wandering, Cain accuses Him of being too harsh and fears death; Yahweh graciously protects his life, but he still must wander. (Verses 9-16)
 1. Then Yahweh said to Cain: Where (is) Abel thy brother? He said: not I know; keeper of my brother (am) I? Then He said: What have thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. (Verses 9-10)
Yahweh and Cain: Yahweh confronts Cain concerning what happened to his brother, concluding that He knows Abel's blood (life) is in the ground.
Accusatory questions: He has two accusatory questions: where is Abel? and what has Cain done?
 2. And now, being cursed thou from the ground which has opened its mouth to receive the blood of thy brother from thy hand; when thou till the ground not it will increase to give its strength to thee; moving and wandering thou will be on the earth. (Verses 11-12)
Curse: Yahweh tells Cain he is cursed because the land from which people are formed (Genesis 2:7; 3:19) has taken back the body of his murdered brother.
Wander: Cain is sentenced to wander the earth it will no longer yield food for him to strengthen him.

3. Then Cain said to Yahweh: Greater (is) my punishment than (I can) bear; behold! Thou drove me this day from the face of the ground, and from Thy face I will be hidden; and I have been moving and wandering on the earth, and all finding me will slay me. (*Verses 13-14*)

Too harsh: Cain complains that his punishment for not mastering his anger, by receiving obedient faith from God, is unbearable!

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Fear of death: He fears all finding him wandering alone will kill him (as he killed his brother).

4. Then Yahweh said to him: therefore any slaying Cain, sevenfold he will be avenged; then Yahweh put on Cain a mark, lest to kill him any finding him. (*Verse 15*)

Gracious mark: Yahweh graciously put a mark on Cain to prevent anyone from killing him.

5. Then Cain went out from the presence of Yahweh; then, he dwelt in the land of Nod (wander), east of Eden. (*Verse 16*)

Lived as wanderer: Cain lived as a wanderer in a land named 'wander'.

Application: Let us thank God that if we surrender to the love of Jesus showed on The Cross we can overcome sin and anger to obey God IN Him due to His faithfulness.

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II. After two and a half tribes of Israel help their brothers of nine and a half tribes, Joshua sends them to their land with an exhortation and a blessing, urging them to share with those who stayed behind. (*Joshua 22:1-8*)

- A. Two and a half tribes helped their brothers to win the land Yahweh said would be theirs, then Joshua sends them back to their land with an exhortation. (*Verses 1-5*)

1. Then Joshua called the Reubenites, Gadites and half tribe of Manasseh; then he said to them: Y'all indeed have kept all Moses, the servant of Yahweh, commanded y'all; and y'all have heard my voice in all that I commanded y'all. (*Verses 1-2*)

Kept and heard: Joshua commends the two and a half tribes who received land east of the Jordan River for obeying all Yahweh commanded them through Moses, and hearing all he commanded them,

2. Y'all have not forsaken your brothers these many days until this day, and y'all have kept the charge of the commandment of Yahweh your God. (*Verse 3*)

Brothers: Unlike Cain, these brothers have faithfully obeyed all Yahweh their God commanded them to do for their brothers!

3. Now, Yahweh your God has caused rest to your brothers as He spoke to them; and now y'all must turn and y'all must go to your tents in the land of your possession, which Moses, the servant of Yahweh, gave on the other side of the Jordan. (*Verse 4*)

Rest: Nine and a half tribes of Israel have received rest in the land Yahweh said He would give them.

4. Only, y'all must watch much to do the commands of the Torah which Moses, the servant of Yahweh, commanded y'all: to love Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, and to keep close to Him to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul. (*Verse 5*)

Keep and do: Joshua commands them to keep and do the commands of instruction that Yahweh-God gave to them through Moses.

Walk: The result of such obedient faith will be to walk close to God to serve Him with all they are.

- B. Joshua then gives them a blessing and urges them to share the spoils of victory with those who stayed behind. (*Verses 6-8*)

1. Then Joshua blessed them, then he sent them away, then they went to their tents. (*Verse 6*)

Blessing: Because all the descendants of the sons of Israel loved each other. Joshua blessed them.

When brothers love each other they are blessed

2. To the half tribe of Manasseh Moses had given Bashan (east of the river), and to the (other) half Joshua had given to their brothers on the other, west, side of Jordan; also when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them. (*Verse 7*)

Two sides of Jordan: The single tribe of Manasseh had land of both sides of the Jordan, but next to each other (across the river). The Author reminds us Joshua blessed them.

When brothers love each other they are blessed. (#2)

3. Then he said to them: with much wealth y'all must return to your tents, and with very much cattle; with silver, gold, bronze and iron; and with much clothing – thou must divide the spoil (of victorious warfare) from your enemies with your brothers. (*Verse 8*)

Share: They were to divide the great spoil from the victory Yahweh, their God, gave them, in His battle against idol worshippers, with all those left behind during the five year war (Joshua 14:6-10).

Application: The descendants of Israel's twelve sons prove that brothers can cooperate with and love each other by obedient faith IN Yahweh: The Father, Jesus His Son, and The Holy Spirit.

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Conclusion: Eve's first two sons are very different. When Yahweh favors the second born, the first born becomes angry at his brother. Yahweh tells the angry brother that he may master sin, but he does not and slays his brother. He is then sentenced to always wander, but is spared from immediate death. In contrast, two and a half tribes from the sons of Israel helped their brothers to win their land. After five years they were sent home by Joshua with an exhortation and a blessing. And, they were urged to share what they won with those who stayed behind.

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