

The Right Kind of Offering

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[0 : 0 0] Genesis chapter 4, thank you for that song and all that music, what a blessing. A week ago, a young athlete that just finished his first breakout season with an NFL team caused an automobile accident involving several people in downtown Dallas.

He had a new Corvette, in addition to that he had leased a \$240,000 Lamborghini SUV, and he and his friends were racing the two vehicles through downtown Dallas when they caused a huge crash.

Several people were injured, several cars were hit, and he was seen walking away from the scene, and the police looked for him for several days until he made his presence known through his attorney.

There's a great chance that this rookie stellar athlete has just ruined his career and possibly his freedom.

How in the world does that happen? Well, it wasn't the first time. It wasn't the first time because Adam and Eve had it all.

[1 : 1 9] They had it all. It was truly paradise. There was no sin there. There was perfect tranquility there. They had an unequalled relationship, walking in the cool of the day with the Father.

They had a wonderful relationship with each other. There was no shame there. But that was not enough. They still had to go a step beyond, and little did they know when they did that what it would cause, for the ramifications were huge.

They faced the consequences of the curses, and they threw their family into a pattern of sinfulness. And today we begin to see that ripple effect.

Now, I'll tell you as we continue through Genesis 1 through 11, we'll continue to see that ripple effect, but we're going to look at two of their sons and how the mess got bigger.

There are some things we can learn from, and we ought to learn from. Genesis chapter 4, beginning in verse 1, says this, Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.

[2 : 3 0] And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.

In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.

So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?

And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.

Cain spoke to Abel his brother, and when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother?

[3 : 4 2] And he said, I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper? And the Lord said, What have you done? Son, the voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.

When Eve had Cain, she knew it was a gift from God. His name means acquired. She knew God had given her him, and she credited the Lord.

She felt as if it was a partnership between her and God of sorts. And it's a great possibility that she even thought she may have bore the Savior.

And the reason why I say that is because of the way she named him, and because of that Hebrew structure of that sentence. That he may in fact be the one that in the curse mentions the crushing of the head of the serpent.

But if she thought that, she was wrong. And she soon knew that because when she had her second son, she named him Abel.

[4 : 52] Which in Hebrew meant vanity. Or vapor. Or in other words, not much hope. To me that sounds like a tired mom of a terrible two.

That has now had another child. Those two boys grew up on a farm, and they followed suit. Cain was a farmer. Abel a shepherd.

They were taught the right way, and they both brought an offering to the Lord. Cain brought from the produce that he raised, and Abel from his flock.

And Abel's was accepted, and Cain's was not. And so Cain killed Abel in a premeditated, first degree, ugly as it can be, murder.

He killed his own brother. What in the world went wrong? Well, I believe it is worth exploring this morning.

[5 : 54] And I think we can learn how to give the right kind of offering from this passage. Because the right kind of offering to give is to give your best.

It's to give your best. I'm just going to put this out there. Because it's commonly what's dealt with when this passage is dealt with. Because we really don't know why his offering was not accepted.

I've got my thoughts, and I'll share them. But some would argue, but it does not state plainly, that the problem was the offering itself. But if you'll look closer, you'll see a few possibilities.

Because in verse 3 and 4, it says, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock, and of their fat portions.

In other words, Abel brought the first and the fattest and the best. And Cain brought some of his produce. That's it.

[7 : 02] He just brought some of it. Now, I kind of know what that feels like, because I'm not a gardener, but many of you are. And it's always interesting to me, seldom does the pasture get the first fruits of the garden.

When those first tomatoes come in, you know, and they are so very precious. But I'm telling you, when you've eaten enough mater sandwiches, fried all the okra you can fry, got tired of the many things you can do with cucumbers, there'll always be a sack of half-rotten vegetables laying on the preacher's porch, you know.

When they're running out your ears and you don't want any more. Now, Scripture does not require that I get the first fruits, but I'm telling you, man, it's good, and I'll show you favor. I can tell you that. But listen, God, listen, forget me.

God's not to get our leftovers. God's not to get what may be left afterwards. You're not giving to God with faithfulness if you give when you happen to have something left over.

God's part is first. And what I mean by that is first priority. If all that I have is the Lord's, and it is, and if all that I have has been entrusted to me to take care of, the first thing that I'm to do with it is acknowledge him with my faithfulness.

[8 : 28] And he calls for at least the tithe. And the word tithe is a Hebrew word that literally means tenth. That is the first.

That is the fattest. That's the best. And God deserves our best. And I believe it's further than that. I believe what we do as a church, we ought to do our best at it.

I believe what we do in his name, we ought to do our best at it. How we carry out things, how we conduct ourselves, how we care about what we're doing as a body of believers, I believe it matters.

I believe God deserves our best. And Abel gave his best. And God blessed it. And Cain gave some. And God didn't bless it.

It was not a right kind of offering. But another way to give a right kind of offering is to give God's way. Just give the way God tells you to.

[9 : 31] It is naturally assumed often that the problem with Cain's offering was that it was not a blood sacrifice. And sin can only be forgiven based upon a death.

And God had already shown them in a foreshadowing of the cross itself. God had already shown them when he covered Adam and Eve with the skins of animals.

So if God required a sacrifice here, then Cain did not provide the right thing. And there's a great chance that that at least is part of his problem.

If so, instead of following the instruction of the Lord, he decided to provide something from his own hand. And the only problem that I have with that often referred to matter in this passage is that nowhere do we get a clue that this is supposed to be a sin offering.

They don't say that. What it says is that they gave an offering. And there are multiple offerings in Scripture. I'm reading through Leviticus now.

[10 : 38] Some of you have already read through Leviticus in your Bible reading. And if you have, congratulations, you made it out. But if you've read through that and paid attention to it, you can name off offerings.

All kinds of offerings that they were to give. There were all kinds of offerings to give. This is what we do know. We know that he did not give God's way.

2 Corinthians 9, verse 7 says, God loves a cheerful giver. And I will tell you, this was not cheerful for Cain.

He wasn't happy about it. It was selfish giving. It was meeting an obligation. Now, I know something about that. I do. I went to pick up my tax return the other day.

And I found out that Uncle Sam is greedier than he needs to be. And he's taking me to the cleaners. And while I was paying the fee for them to process my taxes, I heard a secretary on the phone overheard her tell somebody they were getting back twice the amount that I was paying.

[11 : 57] I was not cheerful about it. Now, I'm going to tell you something. I'm going to pay it. But I'm not cheerful about it. And it ain't going to be the first fruits either.

It's going to be the leftovers. I can promise you that. I'm just not giving them what I, I'm just giving it to them because I have to. I'm not giving it cheerfully.

I'm not giving the first fruits. They're not getting the Lord's money. That's his. Render to Caesar what's Caesar's and the Lord's what's the Lord's.

But Cain gave to God like I'm going to give to the government without a whole lot of happiness. And another matter is he got mad at his brother for an accepted gift.

Scripture says he had sinful rage crouching at his door. This man wasn't just upset about it. He was fuming. He wasn't cheerful at all.

[13 : 00] I don't believe he wanted to do it to start with. And I believe that's part of his problem. And he was envious. Envious enough to kill. 1 John chapter 3 verse 12 says that he murdered his brother because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.

Jude accuses people of walking in the way of Cain when they abandoned themselves for the sake of gain. He gave but he did not give it God's way.

And sacrifices or offerings to the Lord ought to be from a heart of faith. And it ought to be done obediently toward the Lord. God does not want a half-hearted gift.

He wants us to give what we give with all of our hearts. There's a passage in Acts chapter 4. It talks about a great revival was taking place in the church.

And people were giving to the Lord and they were excited about what God was doing and they wanted to give more. And they were selling property and they would sell that property and they would bring the proceeds and they would give it to the church.

[14 : 10] And there was a man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira who sold a piece of property and gave a portion of it. Of what they sold.

But they lied about it. And they said they gave all that they made off the property. And it wasn't the truth. She knew he had held some back for himself.

And Peter confronted him about it. I don't believe because of the gift. I believe it's because he misrepresented his gift. And when Ananias heard what he said, Scripture says he dropped dead.

And that got the attention of the congregation. It scared everybody to death. That's what it says. It scared them. Three hours later his wife came in. And Peter confronts her.

Is this what the land sold for? And she lied too. Not knowing that her husband had just died. They had carried him out. And when she lied, she died too.

[15 : 17] Right there. Both fell down. They breathed their last. It don't say God killed them. It don't say God knocked them down. It's interesting how people add stuff that when Saul was on the road to Damascus, God knocked him down.

That's not what Scripture said. I don't know exactly what happened there, but I know they died. Now look, we have already taken our offering, but we're going to take another one now.

No. No, if you feel bad, there's offering boxes at every door. So you feel free. We're going to give God's way.

We're going to give God's way. What is God's way? Well, Malachi chapter 3 verse 10 says, Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.

What's the storehouse? Where you get fed, folks. That's what it did. Give cheerfully.

[16 : 29] Give generously. Give God's way. Just give God's way. Give God's way. Give God's way. The right kind of offering is when we acknowledge our Savior with our gift.

I don't know what kind of offering was attempted to be given here, but I do know that by Abel bringing a blood sacrifice, he had acknowledged his sins and need for God.

And since God replaced Adam and Eve's self-made fig leaf drawls with a loincloth made from the sacrifice of an animal, there had to be an awareness within them of the need of redemption.

We see no sign that Cain ever really acknowledged his need of a Savior. He put something in the plate, but not the best, and it was not with a sacrifice.

It was just some of what he had. And what he gave was of his own hand as if his works were enough. And the key part of giving a sacrifice or an offering to the Lord is to acknowledge that our ways are not good enough.

[17 : 53] That we need to do things God's way, and God's way is that we acknowledge him and we live in the right relationship with him. Throwing money at God does not do that.

Psalms 50, verse 10, 11 says, For every beast of the forest is mine. This is the Lord talking. The cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine.

In other words, he owns all that we have. And our giving is when we acknowledge and surrender. Not bargain with him. Not try to pay him off.

Not simply satisfy, but acknowledge and surrender to him. As a matter of fact, 1 Samuel 15, verse 22 says, Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.

Which means God wants our life, not just our gift. We give to be obedient, recognizing him as Lord, and to acknowledge that all that we have is his, and we lay that at his feet.

[18 : 55] And that's not giving God our leftovers. It's giving him what's first. God doesn't need to eat off our plate. He's not hungry. We give a right kind of offering.

We acknowledge him for who he is. We acknowledge our Savior. And really, the way to do it, to give the right kind of offering, is we offer our lives.

We offer our lives. I want you to listen to what God really wants. Romans chapter 12, beginning in verse 1 says, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Real worship is about being a living sacrifice for God. It's not about dying for him.

It's about living for him. And those who live for him are willing to die for him if that day comes. But our priority, my friend, ought to be to live for him.

[20 : 13] The sacrifice of a lamb as prescribed later in the law, but appears to somewhat be acknowledged by Abel here, was ultimately fulfilled by the death of Christ, thank God, once and for all our sacrificial lamb.

And he gave the ultimate sacrifice in his death. And now we give the ultimate sacrifice in our lives. Thanking him for what he's done.

Acknowledging him for what he's done. When we surrender our lives to the Lord and commit ourselves to Christ, we, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are set aside to live for his purpose.

And may we never let our purposes come in the way. Let me tell you what I know to be Cain's problem.

And the reason why his offering was not accepted. His heart wasn't right.

[21 : 17] His heart wasn't right. John tells us his deeds were evil. And I want you to listen to how Hebrews chapter 11 verse 4 explains this circumstance.

It says, By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous. God commended him by accepting his gifts.

And listen, And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. What made Abel's offering right was that he was a godly, righteous man.

That's what made the difference. What made Cain's wrong is that he was not. He was not godly. It's not about the gift.

It's about the person. But if the person is not right, the gift won't be right. I'm not saying he gave the way he should have given. I'm saying he didn't give the way he should have given. Because he was not who he needed to be.

[22 : 19] You got to get the person right. But if we're not right, God wants us to be right.

Because when we're not right, our giving's not right. Our living's not right. Our thinking's not right. Our speaking's not right. Our action's not right.

We're not right. Period. And the right kind of offering is to give ourselves. And to give all that we are without letting up.

I don't know about you, but I want to strive to give the right kind of offering. To the Lord. Me. All of me.

To him. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I ask you this morning. Has there ever been a time in your life when you've asked the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sins, to come into your life and save you?

[23 : 38] That is the top priority. That is the surrender. That is the greatest gift. It's to give your life to the Lord Jesus.

And if you've never done that, that's the starting point. That's where it all starts. Dear Lord, I know that I've sinned. I know that I've done wrong.

And I need you to forgive me. I need you to cleanse me. I need you to save me. I come as I am and I ask you to make me who I need to be. Maybe you're here and you have done that, but you've never acknowledged that publicly.

It's a private decision you made within your life, but you've never made it public. I encourage you today to follow the Lord by His example and by His commission and acknowledge that publicly.

Follow that up with baptism. Maybe you're here and God's drawing you to this church. You know this is where you are to be and you know this is where God would have you to serve.

[24 : 49] I encourage you to just be obedient to follow Him. And maybe you're here this morning and there's just something not right and it needs to be right.

Let's give the right kind of offering. Let's be living sacrifices for the Lord. Acknowledging Him in every way. There's a hindrance in your life today.

I encourage you to lay that down. Get that out of the way so you can live for the Lord Jesus. from this day forward. Heavenly Father, I love you and I thank you for the lessons you give us in Scripture.

You allow us to learn from other people's experiences so we don't have to deal with the same thing and so that we can learn from it and we can be better for it. God, I ask that we won't just hear it but God will heed it and we'll respond to it in obedience as you speak to our hearts and lives.

Help us, Lord, to do nothing less and nothing more than exactly what you'd have us to do. Just simply to be obedient right now, Father, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.