

“Why Has Your Countenance Fallen”?

Primary Text: Genesis 4:1-24

Preliminary Points:

- From v.1, after expulsion from Eden and with it the provision and pleasure of fellowship with God, perhaps Eve’s words are an expression of having experienced the full-force of the second consequence of her sin, cp.3:16;
- Adam and Eve’s first two sons chose very different “career paths,” v.2;
- At first glance, it appears that Cain’s “*offering to the Lord*” was logical, being simply a sacrifice of what *he* produced and had- “*of the fruit of the ground,*” v.3;
- And that Abel had done likewise, v.4a;
- Which makes the Lord seem at least overly critical, if not harshly and unfairly judgmental, in His *acceptance* of Abel and his offering, and the subsequent *disregard* and *rejection* of Cain’s sacrifice, vv.4b-5a;
- But please consider some additional *light* on the subject from a couple of N.T. passages...
 - Heb.11:4 states that Abel’s sacrifice was “*By faith*”...
 - Rom.10:17 makes it clear that the only way this could be true was (and is) that God had previously instructed them regarding proper sacrifices;
 - Thus, **Abel faithfully obeyed** God’s instructions, while **Cain faithlessly disobeyed** (whatever his motivation may have been).
- From v.5b, note that Cain had two reactions to God’s rejection of his offering:
 - He became *very* (exceedingly) *angry* (vexed/irritated); and,
 - His *countenance* (visage/face) *fell* (to collapse; from erect to prostrate).

Primary Points of Consideration (at least for this lesson):

1. **Just because it’s what *we want to give* doesn’t mean that it’s “worship,” or what *God wants/expects*, v.5a; cf. Rom.10:17; 14:23; 10:17;**
2. **Like Cain, we often *get angry* and let our *countenance fall* when told we’re wrong- especially when we realize the truthfulness of the charge, v.5b; cp Jonah 3:10 – 4:9;**
3. **When we’re *angry* and *unhappy*, it’s usually because we’re not living *by faith*- and though such is not always the case, we usually know it, v.6; cf. Ps.4;**
4. **When we’ve failed to live (or worship) *by faith*, we need to just go back and do the *right* thing, v.7a; cf. Acts 3:19-21;**
5. **The key to happiness is *pleasing God*, not *pleasing self*, v.7b; cf. Eph.5:7-15;**
6. **If we refuse and fail to *master sin*, it will make us its *servant*, v.7b; cf. Rom.6:15-23;**

7. Misplaced (unrighteous) anger winds up hurting both the guilty and the innocent, v.8; cf. Gal.5:13-15;
8. “Yes,” we are our *brother’s keepers*, v.9; cf. Heb.12:14-17;
9. We *may* hide our sin from others, but we can *never* hide it from God, v.10; cf. Ps.139:1-11;
10. Sin *always* has consequences that are both *spiritual* and *physical*, vv.11-12; Gen.2:17; Ezk.18:20; Gal.6:7-8;
11. We may not take our sin seriously until its consequences are brought to bear and it’s too late, v.13; Heb.12:15-16.
12. Though we can be forgiven the *spiritual consequence* of our sin (there is no evidence of Cain’s repentance or forgiveness), the *physical consequences* may follow us for the rest of our lives, vv.14-15; 1Cor.15:9; 1Tim.1:15-16; and,
13. When we refuse to *repent* (and go back and do the right thing, v.7), a lasting legacy of sin and consequence can be passed on to subsequent generations, vv.16-24; Luke 11:45-54.

Concluding Points:

I used to think the book of Genesis was about “our” *origins*- and it certainly is that;

But it is also about “my” *present*, and “my” *future... with or without God*.

The same is true for you. Will you be a *faithful* “Abel”- pleasing God regardless of the cost and creating a lasting legacy that “*still speaks*” of spiritual fidelity, Heb.11:4? Or, will you be a *faithless* “Cain”- do that which pleases you and helping to lead future generations to lives of sin, anger, violence, and condemnation, 1John 3:12; Jude 11?