

**TRUTH FOR TODAY**

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### **HATRED, VARIANCE, AND EMULATIONS #3**

We continue a study of three major heart problems listed by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21, commonly and Scripturally referred to as “works of the flesh.” We are specifically discussing the sins of “*hatred*,” “*variance*,” and “*emulations*,” and, at this juncture of our study, we are observing how all three dispositions combined influenced Cain to murder his brother Abel.

Cain’s sacrifice to God was unauthorized and thus not accepted; Abel’s sacrifice was both authorized and accepted. Cain, in a fit of jealous rage, killed his younger brother. Cain made the same mistake of which many today are guilty - that of attempting to worship God by the way of his own choosing, rather than by the Father’s revealed Will. What an excellent passage of Scripture to refute the false notion that “*God will accept one as long as he is sincere*”! This also disproves the view of God that some have as His being a gracious, easy-going, laid-back grandfatherly type with a long beard sitting in a rocking chair in heaven hoping people will come to Him the right way, and if not, He’ll overlook it. Indeed, God is a loving God, but He is also a just Father Who has spelled out in His Word how we are to approach Him both in worship and in life.

Cain’s stubborn and rebellious attitude would be but the beginning of a downward spiral spiritually for the young man; the seed is now planted and the stage is now set for the germination and growth of hatred, jealousy, and strife in his heart: “*And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell*” (*Genesis 4:5b*). Cain didn’t have to say a word - you could see the anger on his face! He knew what he was supposed to do, did not do it, did not get the respect of God, and became furious as a result. Out of loving concern, God then provided:

**A WARNING** (*Genesis 4:6 - 7*).

*“And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen?” (Genesis 4:6).* God was asking, not for information on His part, but for reflection on Cain’s: *“What has made you so mad? Why are you angry?”* Of course, part of Cain’s problem was that he was jealous; he was the older brother jealous of the younger brother. Perhaps there was some measure of competition between them, as is often true when there are two boys in the family. God has smiled on the younger brother, frowned on the older, and jealousy rears its ugly head.

Such happens in families all the time, right? One child gets one kind of toy, the other, one not so nice, and what is the result? Jealousy. Such happens at the workplace all the time, right? One fellow gets a raise while others don’t, and what is the result? One employee hasn’t been at the company nearly as long as you, but gets a promotion over you - what is the result? Jealousy! Before we’re quick to point an accusing finger at Cain, we might ought to examine our hearts first!

God continued admonishing the sulking Cain: *“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (Genesis 4:7).* If Cain had done right, he would have felt right, and would have been right! It was neither Abel’s nor God’s fault for his being wrong; Cain was responsible for his own sins. If, however, Cain continued his present course, *“sin lieth at the door.”* Sin, like a wild animal, was ready to pounce, overwhelm, and devour Cain. The beast was indeed on the prowl, but Cain could still *“rule over him”* or master it. *“You need to control it before it controls you!”*

Cain was now at the *“fork in the road;”* he had a choice to make. God’s warning was

given and was clear. Cain could turn back, obey God, and be accepted just as Abel had been, or he could continue the direction in which he was now headed, until jealousy turned to hate, hate turned to strife, and strife turned to murder. Unfortunately for both Cain and Abel, Cain chose the latter:

**THE MURDER** (*Genesis 4:8 - 10*).

*“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him”* (*Genesis 4:8*). Because he didn’t gain the mastery over sin, sin won out over Cain, and, in killing his brother physically, he drove a dagger through his own soul spiritually. One makes this interesting observation:

As an act of defiance against God, Cain twisted His requirements for an atoning blood sacrifice - shedding righteous Abel’s blood instead of a lamb’s. “You want a sacrifice, God? How’s this!” And Abel falls dead, becoming the first name on history’s shameful long list of murder victims.<sup>1</sup>

What a horrible act! How could anyone just rise up suddenly one day and murder his own sibling? As we’ve seen, this wasn’t a spur-of-the-moment decision, but one that had been brooding for some time in the hateful, jealous heart of a young man completely out of touch with all things good and holy and who had for some time been walking with Satan, who himself was a *“murderer from the beginning”* (*John 8:44*).

What awful silence there must have been immediately after the killing! A body that once breathed, talked, sang, laughed and lived is now forever mute. But, not even that humbles Cain, as he buries the body in the ground, covers the grave with dirt, foolishly thinking he could hide his sin from God. But, Cain soon found out otherwise.

*“And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper? (Genesis 4:9). The silence brought by sin is now broken by God’s penetrating question, “Where is your brother?” Not that God didn’t know what had happened; again, the question was not for God’s benefit, but Cain’s. “Why is your brother not here?”*

Sin often has a mushrooming, snowballing effect, as Cain - jealous, hater, fighter, and murderer - now becomes a liar as well: *“I do not know where my brother is.”* Having washed his brother’s blood off his hands, he had also erased the guilt from his conscience. No, every murderer does not have a conscience, and yes, some murderers will kill again and again!

Seeing no remorse whatever from Cain, God replies: *“What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10). “Secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven!”<sup>2</sup>*

With no confession of wrong, no admission of guilt, Cain left God with no choice but to punish - and to punish severely:

**THE PUNISHMENT (Genesis 4:11 - 15).**

*“And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth” (Genesis 4:11 - 12).*

Cain, who made his living from the ground, would lose his *“green thumb”* with this curse. *“Since Abel’s blood spilled on the ground, the ground - which was Cain’s source of life - would contain the punishment to fit the crime.”<sup>3</sup>* Cain would have great difficulty making a living now, perhaps going from job to job, being a *“vagabond”* or wanderer.

Next month, we'll note other consequences of Cain's punishment - all of which came about as a direct result of hatred, strife, and jealousy in his character.

[continued next month]

### ENDNOTES

1. Charles Swindoll, Memorable Scenes From Old Testament Homes Bible Study Guide (Anaheim, CA: Insight for Living, 1992), p. 14.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Wayne Cox

### AREA-WIDE YOUTH MEETING

The Verona congregation will host the area-wide youth meeting Sunday night, **September 8<sup>th</sup>**, starting at 5:00 (note the time change for the youth meeting this year - from 6:30 to 5:00.) This monthly gathering of young people throughout the area is rotated around various churches of Christ in Lee and surrounding counties, and is a great time for youth and their chaperones to worship together, and then fellowship together afterwards.

Our very own **Adam Cox**, recent graduate of Mississippi State University and current student at the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies near Pensacola, Florida, will be our speaker. Adam grew up in the Verona congregation and is doing a great work in his studies as well as in preaching for various congregations in the Florida area. We will be blessed immensely from his lesson on *“When the Priest and Levite Pass You By.”*

We look forward to singing songs of praise to God, engaging in fervent prayer, and studying together from Scripture. We will be providing a meal after the youth meeting, and

invite everyone to participate in that as well.

We welcome you to join us for an edifying evening together, September 8<sup>th</sup> at 5:00, all to the glory of God!

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**AREA-WIDE YOUTH MEETING**

**September 8, 2019**

**Speaker: Adam Cox**

**5:00 p.m.**

**VERONA CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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**GOSPEL MEETING**

**June 26 - 28, 2020**

**Speaker: Jameson Steward**

**VERONA CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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