

TRUTH FOR TODAY

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HATRED, VARIANCE, AND EMULATIONS #4

This month, we both continue and conclude 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 have observed how all three dispositions combined influenced Cain to murder his brother Abel. Having noted the warning God gave and the murder Cain committed, let’s close by considering the punishment God leveled as a result:

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. He would have great difficulty making a living now, perhaps going from job to job, being a *“vagabond”* or wanderer.

At long last, Cain shows some emotion, but even then, it’s selfish in nature:

“And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me” (*Genesis 4:13 - 14*).

Cain in essence is saying, *“God, how can I go on?”* He fears that now the hunter will

become the hunted, that what *"goes around comes around"* and someday somebody will stick a knife in his back! He is afraid that he will be treated as he has treated Abel, with such coming from his own family!¹

Had we been in charge, we might have said something like, *"You deserve it"* or *"You should have thought about that before."* But, even in dealing with this murderer, God gave His amazing grace: *"And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him"* (Genesis 4:15). Much speculation has been made about the mark or sign God placed upon Cain, but whatever it was, it was not for punishment, but for protection to keep him from being killed.

The account of Cain's life is fact, not fiction, and what a heartrending story his is. The attitudes and actions of his life well illustrate these works of the flesh Paul would mention to the Galatians centuries later – hatred, jealousy, and strife, not to mention murder. Would that Cain had a monopoly on these evils – that all such began and ended with him! However, such is not the case, which brings us to:

AN APPLICATION FOR TODAY

We have a tendency to categorize sins, don't we? Some sins are big, others small; some are black, some are grey; some are bad, some aren't quite so bad. We tend to compartmentalize these works of the flesh too, right? While we would never dream of committing Cain's crime of murder, since God condemns such not only in Galatians but throughout both Old and New Testaments, we do allow ourselves (like Cain) to entertain evil thoughts of others that promote jealousy. Instead of *"bringing into captivity"* those thoughts *"to the obedience of Christ"* (2

Corinthians 10:5), we allow them to fester, to grow, and to turn into hatred. Given enough time and development, hatred eventually explodes in abusive speech and/or physical assaults.

Still think that a little jealousy, hatred, and strife are not all that bad? Go back to Abel, and ask him. In the end, he died because of such. Ask brother Cain. He killed because of such. Ask Dad and Mom – Adam and Eve – who in essence lost two sons because of such. Today, ask families torn apart by the ravages of spouse abuse, drug abuse, drunkenness, separation and divorce – rampant evils of our time finding their root in the disposition of hate. Ask victims of assault, battery, knives, bullets, and bombs – those who know firsthand – of the end results of hatred, jealousy, and strife.

And, while we're asking, let's ask the church. Ever wonder what causes congregations to split? No, not murder usually, but thoughts just as vicious as the actual act! Churches don't divide because of love, joy, peace, and longsuffering! The body of Christ is rent asunder by immature, selfish disciples who think more of themselves than the overall good of the church. Elders become jealous of other elders, preachers of other preachers, song leaders of other song leaders, and members of other members. Jealousy turns to hatred, hatred to strife, and strife to separation. The fruit of the Spirit calls for unity, while Satan's fruit – the works of the flesh – calls for division.

We hear much about restoring the church of the first century as she followed God, and rightly so. Great strides have been made in restoring the organization of the church, the pattern of the church, and the worship of the church. We laud those accomplishments, and are indebted greatly to many who have paved the way for such restoration. But what about the attitude of love that characterized the first century church? Have we truly restored the church in that area?

No, this is not a blanket condemnation of everybody or of every congregation, but just a question for each of us individually to consider – some food for thought. In a day when brother bashing, sister smashing, and church crushing are in vogue with some, we truly are made to wonder if we've even gotten to first base when it comes to removing hate and restoring love in our hearts.

CONCLUSION

We end as we began, talking about the heart. Yes, the physical heart is important – no doubt about it. When it hurts, we're in serious trouble; when it fails, we die. Thousands die every day of heart disease. However, through medical advances, some have overcome heart problems to lead normal lives.

Philip Blaiberg was one of Christian Barnard's first heart-transplant patients. When asked by the famous surgeon if he would like to see his old heart, Blaiberg said yes. The doctor handed him a glass container.

A few moments of silence followed as for the first time in history a man actually gazed at his own heart. Then the two men talked about it. Finally Philip Blaiberg said, *"So that is the old heart that caused me so much trouble,"* and he handed it back, turned away, and left it forever.²

Spiritual heart disease has also reached epidemic proportions across our land. These works of the flesh – hatred, jealousy, strife, and others – have clogged many arteries, have weakened many pulses, and have hardened many hearts. The good news is that for those with spiritual coronary problems, a cure is available, and a new lease on life can be given. God can replace that old heart with a new one. He is a skilled surgeon Who can operate on the inner man; with the scalpel of His Word He can excise works of the flesh and can transplant in their

place the wonderful fruit of the Spirit.

ENDNOTES

1. Those from whom Cain feared retribution would be his other siblings: *"He who turned on one of his relatives now must watch out for any of his relatives."* Victor P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1 - 17, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), p. 233.
2. As told by Ian Barclay in Living and Enjoying the Fruit of the Spirit (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), p. 55.

Wayne Cox

NEW TELEVISION PROGRAM

A new television program is slated to begin the first Sunday in October on WCBI out of Columbus, MS, and will air each Sunday morning at 7:00. The program is called, ***"Have a Bible Question"*** and is a work of the ***Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies*** located near Pensacola, Florida. The Verona congregation and area sister congregations are helping to support this evangelistic effort, with a potential of reaching 168,210 households in the viewing area. The program air time is approximately 30 minutes, will be close captioned, and will offer supporting congregations a 30 second advertisement for each congregation each week.

We are excited about the possibilities of this new outreach effort, and wanted to inform all readers in the viewing area of the launch date, which by the time you are reading this, will have already passed. But be sure and tune in each Sunday morning at 7:00 on WCBI, and in all things, give God the glory!

AREA-WIDE YOUTH MEETING

October 13, 2019

5:00 p.m.

ANTIOCH CHURCH OF CHRIST

GOSPEL MEETING

June 12 - 14, 2020

Speaker: Jameson Steward

VERONA CHURCH OF CHRIST

WEBSITE

Be sure to check out our presence on the Internet at **www.veronacoc.com**. On our site you will find information about the Verona congregation, as well as past issues of Truth for Today available for viewing and/or download in PDF format.