

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS

by

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CHAPTER FOUR TO FIVE

As each section of the Book of Genesis opens before us, we are furnished with fresh evidence of the fact that we are traveling over, what a recent writer has well termed, “the seed-plot of the whole Bible;” and not only so, but the seed-plot of man’s entire history.

Thus, in the fourth chapter, we have, in the persons of Cain and Abel, the first examples of a religious man of the world, and of a genuine man of faith. Born, as they were, outside of Eden, and being the sons of fallen Adam, they could have nothing, natural, to distinguish them, one from the other. They were both sinners. Both had a fallen nature. Neither was innocent. It is well to be clear in reference to this, in order that the reality of divine grace, and the integrity of faith, may be fully and distinctly seen. If the distinction between Cain and Abel were founded in nature, then it follows, as an inevitable conclusion, that they were not the partakers of the fallen nature of their father, nor the participators in the circumstances of his fall; and, hence, there could be no room for the display of grace, and the exercise of faith.

Some would teach us that every man is born with qualities and capacities which, if rightly used, will enable him to work his way back to God. This is a plain denial of the fact so clearly set forth in the history now before us. Cain and Abel were born, not inside, but outside of Paradise. They were the sons, not of innocent, but of fallen Adam. They came into the world as the partakers of the nature of their father; and it mattered not in what phase that nature might display itself, it was nature still, —fallen, ruined, irremediable nature. “**That which is born of the flesh is** (not merely fleshly, but) **flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is,** (not merely spiritual, but) **spirits**” (John 3).

If ever there was a fair opportunity for the distinctive qualities, capacities, resources and tendencies of nature to manifest themselves, the lifetime of Cain and Abel furnished it. If there were aught in nature, whereby it could recover its lost innocence, and establish itself again within the bounds of Eden, this was the moment for its display. But there was nothing of the kind. They were both *lost*. They were “**flesh**.” They were not innocent. Adam lost his innocence and never regained it. He can only be looked at as the fallen head of a fallen race, who, by his “**disobedience**,” were made “**sinners**” (Romans 5:19). He became, so far as he was personally concerned, the corrupt source, from whence have emanated the corrupt streams of ruined and guilty humanity, —the dead trunk from which have shot forth the branches of a dead humanity, morally and spiritually dead.

True, as we have already remarked, he himself was made a subject of grace, and the possessor and exhibitor of a lively faith in a promised Saviour; but this was not anything natural, but something entirely divine. And, inasmuch as it was not natural, neither was it within the range of nature's capacity to communicate it. It was not, by any means, hereditary. Adam could not bequeath nor import his faith to Cain or Abel. His possession thereof was simply the fruit of love divine.

It was implanted in his soul by divine power; and he had not divine power to communicate it to another. Whatever was natural, Adam could, in the way of nature, communicate; but nothing more. And seeing that he, as a father, was in a condition of ruin, his son could only be in the same. As is the begetter, so are they also that are begotten of him. They must, of necessity, partake of the nature of him from whom they have sprung. **"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy"** (I Corinthians 15:48).

Nothing can be more important, in its way, than a correct understanding of the doctrine of federal headship. If my reader will turn, for a moment, to Romans 5:12-21, he will find that the inspired apostle looks at the whole human race as comprehended under two heads. I do not attempt to dwell on the passage; but merely refer to it, in connection with the subject in hand. The fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians will also furnish instruction of a similar character.

- In the first man, we have sin, disobedience and death.
- In the second man, we have righteousness, obedience and life.

As we derive a nature from the former, so do we also from the latter. No doubt, each nature will display, in each specific case, its own peculiar energies; it will manifest, in each individual possessor thereof, its own peculiar powers. Still, there is the absolute possession of a real, abstract, positive nature.

Now, as the mode in which we derive a nature from the first man is by birth, so the mode in which we derive a nature from the Second man is by a *new* birth. Being born, we partake of the nature of the former; being **"born again,"** we partake of the nature of the latter.

A newly-born infant, though entirely incapable of performing the act which reduced Adam to the condition of a fallen being, is, nevertheless, a partaker of his nature; and so, also, a newly-born child of God, —a newly-regenerated soul, though having nothing whatever to do with the working-out of the perfect obedience of **"the man Christ Jesus,"** is, nevertheless, a partaker of his nature.

True it is that, attached to the former nature, there is sin; and attached to the latter, there is righteousness, —man's sin, in the former case; God's righteousness in the latter: yet, all the while, there is the actual *bona fide* participation of a real nature, let the adjuncts be what they may. The child of Adam partakes of the human nature and its adjuncts. The former nature is according to **"the will of man"** (John 1), the latter is according to **"the will of God"**; as James, by the Holy Ghost teaches us, **"of his own will begat he us by the word of truth"** (James 1:18).

From all that has been said, it follows, that Abel was not distinguished from his brother Cain by anything natural. The distinction between them was not grounded upon aught in their nature or circumstances, for, as to these, **“there was no difference.”**

What, therefore, made the vast difference? The answer is as simple as the gospel of the grace of God can make it. The difference was not in themselves, in their nature, or their circumstances; it lay, *entirely*, in their *sacrifices*. This makes the matter most simple, for any truly convicted sinner, —for anyone who truly feels that he not only partakes of a fallen nature, but is himself, also a sinner.

The history of Abel opens, to such an one, the only true ground of his approach to, his standing before, and his relationship with, God. It teaches him, distinctly, that he cannot come to God on the ground of anything in, of or pertaining to, nature; and he must seek, *outside himself*, and in the person and work of another, the true and everlasting basis of his connection with the Holy, the Just, and only True God.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews sets the whole subject before us, in the most distinct and comprehensive way. **“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God bearing witness to his gifts; and by it he being dead, yet speaketh.”**

Here we are taught that it was, in nowise, a question as to the men, but only as to their “sacrifice,” —it was not a question as to the offerer, but as to his offering. Here lay the grand distinction between Cain and Abel. My reader cannot be too simple in his apprehension of this point, for therein lies involved the truth as to any sinner’s standing before God.

And now, let us inquire what the offerings were.

“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering, he had not respect” (Genesis 4:3-5).

This passage sets the difference clearly before us: Cain offered to the Lord the fruit of a cursed earth, and that, moreover, without any blood to remove the curse. He presented “*an unbloody sacrifice*,” simply because he had no faith. Had he possessed that divine principle, it would have taught him, even at this early moment, that **“without shedding of blood there is no remission”** (Hebrews 9).

This is a great cardinal truth. The penalty of sin is death. Cain was a sinner, and, as such, death stood between him and the Lord. But, in his offering, there was no recognition whatever of this fact. There was no presentation of a sacrificed life, to meet the claims of divine holiness, or to answer to his own true condition as a sinner. He treated the Lord as though he were, altogether, such an one as himself, who could accept the sin-stained fruit of a cursed earth.

All this, and much more, lay involved in Cain’s “*unbloody sacrifice*.”

He displayed entire ignorance in reference to divine requirements, in reference to his own character and condition as a lost and guilty sinner, and in reference to the true state of that ground, the fruit of which he presumed to offer. No doubt, reason might say, “what more acceptable offering could a man present, than that which he had produced by the labor of his hands, and the sweat of his brow?” Reason, and even man’s religious mind, may think thus; but God thinks quite differently; and faith is always sure to agree with God’s thoughts. God teaches, and faith believes, that there must be a sacrificed life, else there can be no approach to God.

Thus, when we look at the ministry of the Lord Jesus, we see, at once, that, had he not died upon the cross, all his services would have proved utterly unavailing as regards the establishment of our relationship with God. True, **“he went about doing good”** all his life; but it was his death that rent the veil (Matthew 27:51). Naught but his death could have done so. Had he continued, to the present moment, *“going about doing good,”* the veil would have remained entire, to bar the worshipper’s approach into **“the holiest of all.”**

Hence we can see the false ground on which Cain stood as an offerer and a worshipper. An unpardoned sinner coming into the presence of the Lord to present *“an unbloody sacrifice,”* could only be regarded as guilty of the highest degree of presumption. True, he had toiled to produce this offering; but what of that?

- Could a sinner’s toil remove the curse and stain of sin?
- Could it satisfy the claims of an infinitely holy God?
- Could it furnish a proper ground of acceptance for a sinner?
- Could it set aside the penalty which was due to sin?
- Could it do any or all of these things?

Impossible! **“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”** Cain’s *“unbloody sacrifices,”* like every other unbloody sacrifice, was not only worthless, but actually abominable, in the divine estimation. It not only demonstrated his entire ignorance of his own condition, but also of the divine character, **“God is not worshipped with men’s hands as though he needed any thing.”** And yet Cain thought he could be thus approached. And every mere religionist thinks the same. Cain has had many millions of followers, from age to age. Cain-worship has abounded all over the world. It is the worship of every unconverted soul, and is maintained by every false system of religion under the sun.

Man would fain make God a receiver instead of a giver; but this cannot be; for, **“it is more blessed to give than to receive,”** and, assuredly, God must have the more blessed place. **“Without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better.”** **“Who hath first given to him?”** God can accept the smallest gift from a heart which has learnt the deep truth contained in these words, **“of thine own have we give thee”;** for **“he is not worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needeth any thing, seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things.”**

The great Giver of **“all things”** cannot possibly **“need any thing.”** Praise is all that we can offer to God; but this can only be offered in the full and clear intelligence that our sins are all put away; and this again can only be known by faith in the virtue of an accomplished atonement.

My readers may pause, here, and read prayerfully the following scriptures, namely Psalm 1; Isaiah 1:11-18; and Acts 17:22-34, in all of which we will find distinctly laid down the truth as to man's true position before God, as also the proper ground of worship.

Let us now consider Abel's sacrifice. "**And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof.**" In other words, he entered, by faith, into the glorious truth, that God could be approached by sacrifice; that there was such a thing as a sinner's placing the death of another between himself and the consequence of his sin, that the claims of God's nature and the attributes of his character could be met by the blood of a spotless victim, —a victim offered to meet God's demands, and the sinner's deep necessities. This is, in short, the doctrine of the cross, in which alone the conscience of a sinner can find repost, because, therein, God is fully glorified.

Every divinely-convicted sinner must feel that death and judgment are before him, as "*the due reward of his deeds*," nor can he, by aught that he can accomplish, after that destiny. He may toil and labor; he may, by the sweat of his brow, produce an offering; he may make vows and resolutions; he may alter his way of life; he may reform his outward character; he may be temperate, moral, upright and, in the human acceptance of the word, religious; he may, though entirely destitute of faith, read, pray and hear sermons.

In short, he may do anything, or everything which lies within the range of human competency; but, notwithstanding all, "**death and judgment**" are before him. He has not been able to disperse those two heavy clouds which have gathered upon the horizon. There they stand; and, so far from being able to remove them by all his doings, he can only live in the gloomy anticipation of the moment when they shall burst upon his guilty head. It is impossible for a sinner, by his own works, to place himself in life and triumph, at the other side of "**death and judgment**," —yea, his very works are only performed for the purpose of preparing him, if possible, for those dreaded realities.

Here, however, is exactly where the cross comes in. In that cross, the convicted sinner can behold a divine provision for all his guilt and all his need. There, too, he can see death and judgment entirely removed from the scene, and life and glory set in their stead. Christ has cleared the prospect of death and judgment, so far as the true believer is concerned, and filled it with life, righteousness and glory. "**He hath abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light, through the gospel**" (II Timothy 1:10).

He has glorified God in the putting away of that which would have separated us, forever, from his holy and blissful presence. "**He has put away sin**," and hence it is gone (Hebrews 9:26). All this is, in type, set forth in Abel's "**more excellent sacrifice**." There was no attempt, on Abel's part, to set aside the truth as to his own condition, and proper place as a guilty sinner, —no attempt to turn aside the edge of the flaming sword, and force his way back to the tree of life, —no presumptuous offering of an "unbloody sacrifice," —no presentation of the fruit of a cursed earth to the Lord, —he took the real ground of a sinner, and, as such, set the death of a victim between him and his sins, and between his sins and the holiness of a sin-hating God. This was most simple. Abel deserved death and judgment, but he found a substitute.

Thus is it with every poor, helpless, self-condemned, conscience-stricken sinner. Christ is his substitute, his ransom, his most excellent sacrifice, his ALL. Such an one will feel, like Abel, that the fruit of the ground could never avail for him; that were he to present to God the fairest fruits of earth, he would still have a sin-stained conscience, inasmuch as **“without shedding of blood is no remission.”**

The richest fruits, and the most fragrant flowers, in the greatest profusion, could not remove a single stain from the conscience. Nothing but the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God can give ease to the heart and conscience. All who by faith lay hold of that divine reality, will enjoy a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. It is faith which puts the soul in present possession of this peace. **“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Romans 5:1). **“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”**

It is not a question of feeling, as so many would make it. It is entirely a question of faith, in an accomplished fact, —faith wrought in the soul of a sinner, by the power of the Holy Ghost. This faith is something quite different from a mere feeling of the heart, or an assent of the intellect. Feeling is not faith. Intellectual assent is not faith. Some would make faith to be the mere assent of the intellect to a certain proposition. This is fearfully false. It makes the question of faith human, whereas it is really divine. It reduces it to the level of man, whereas it really comes from God. Faith is not a thing of to-day or to-morrow. It is an imperishable principle, emanating from an eternal source, even God himself: it lays hold of God’s truth, and sets the soul in God’s presence.

Mere feeling and sentimentality can never rise above the source from whence they emanate; and that source is self; but faith has to do with God and his eternal word, and is a living link, connecting the heart that possesses it with God who gives it, human feelings, however intense, —human sentiments, however refined, —could not connect the soul with God. They are neither divine nor eternal, but are human and evanescent. They are like Jonah’s gourd, which sprang up in a night, and perished in a night.

Not so faith. That precious principle partakes of all the value, all the power, and all the reality of the source from whence it emanates, and the object with which it has to do.

- It justifies the soul (Romans 5:1);
- It purifies the heart (Acts 15:9);
- It works by love (Galatians 5:6);
- It overcomes the world (I John 5:4).

Feeling and sentiment never could accomplish such results; they belong to nature and to earth, —faith belongs to God and to heaven; they are occupied with self, —faith is occupied with Christ; they look inward and downward, —faith looks outward and upward; they leave the soul in darkness and doubt, —faith leads it into light and peace; they have to do with one’s own fluctuating condition, —faith has to do with God’s immutable truth, and Christ’s eternally-enduring sacrifice.

No doubt, faith will produce feelings and sentiments—spiritual feelings and truthful sentiments,—but the fruits of faith must never be confounded with faith itself. I am not justified by feelings, nor yet by faith and feelings, but simply by faith. And why? Because faith believes God when he speaks; it takes him at his word; it apprehends him as he has revealed himself in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is life, righteousness and peace. To apprehend God as he is, is the sum of all present and eternal blessedness. When the soul finds out God, it has found out all it can possibly need, here or hereafter; but he can only be known by his own revelation, and by the faith which he himself imparts, and which, moreover, always seeks divine revelation as its proper object.

Thus, then, we can in some measure enter into the meaning and power of the statement, **“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”** Can had no faith, and therefore he offered an unbloody sacrifice. Abel had faith, and therefore he offered both **“blood and fat,”** which in type, set forth the presentation of the life, and also the inherent excellency of the Person of Christ. **“The blood”** set forth the former; **“the fat”** shadowed forth the latter. Both blood and fat were forbidden to be eaten under the Mosaic economy. The blood is the life; and man, under law, had no title to life. But, in the sixth of John we are taught that unless we eat blood we have no life in us. Christ is *the life*. There is not a spark of life outside of him. All out of Christ is death. **“In him was life,”** and in none else.

Now, he gave up his life on the cross; and, to that life, sin was by imputation attached, when the blessed One was nailed to the cursed tree. Hence, in giving up his life, he gave up also the sin attached thereto, so that it is effectually put away, having been left in his grave from which he rose triumphant, in the power of a new life, to which righteousness as distinctly attaches itself as did sin to that life which he gave up on the cross.

This will help us to an understanding of an expression used by our blessed Lord after his resurrection, **“A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”** He did not say, “flesh and blood;” because, in resurrection, he had not assumed into his sacred person the blood which he had shed out upon the cross as an atonement for sin. **“The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood which maketh an atonement for the soul”** (Leviticus 17:11).

Close attention to this point will have the effect of deepening in our souls the sense of the completeness of the putting away of sin by the death of Christ; and we know that whatever tends to deepen our sense of that glorious reality, must necessarily tend to the fuller establishment of our peace, and to the more effectual promotion of the glory of Christ as connected with our testimony and service.

We have already referred to a point of much interest and value in the history of Cain and Abel, and that is, the entire identification of each with the offering which he presented. My reader cannot possibly bestow too much attention upon this. The question, in each case, was not as to the person of the offerer; but entirely as to the character of his offering. Hence, of Abel we read that **“God testified of his gifts.”** He did not bear witness to Abel, but to Abel’s sacrifice; and this fixes distinctly the proper ground of a believer’s peace and acceptance before God.

There is a constant tendency in the heart to ground our peace and acceptance upon something in or about ourselves, even though we admit that that something is wrought by the Holy Ghost. Hence arises the constant looking *in*, when the Holy Ghost would ever have us looking *out*. The question for every believer is not, “what am I?” but, “what is Christ?” Having come to God “**in the name of Jesus**,” he is wholly identified with him, and accepted in his name, and, moreover, can no more be rejected than the One in whose name he has come. Before ever a question can be raised as to the feeblest believer, it must be raised as to Christ himself. But this latter is clearly impossible, and thus the security of the believer is established upon a foundation which nothing can possibly move. Being in himself a poor worthless sinner, he has come in the name of Christ, he is identified with Christ, accepted in and as Christ, bound up in the same bundle of life with Christ. God testifies, not of him, but of his gift, and his gift is Christ. All this is most tranquilizing and consolatory. It is our happy privilege to be able, in the confidence of faith, to refer every objection and every objector to Christ and his finished atonement. All our springs are in him. In him we boast all the day long. Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in him who hath wrought everything for us. We hang on his name, trust in his work, gaze on his person, and wait for his coming.

But the carnal mind at once displays its enmity against all this truth which so gladdens and satisfies the heart of a believer. Thus it was with Cain, “**He was very wroth, and his countenance fell.**” That which filled Abel with peace, filled Cain with wrath. Cain in unbelief despised the only way in which a sinner could come to God. He refused to offer blood, with which there can be no remission; and then, because *he* was not received, *in his sins*, and because Abel was accepted, *in his gift*, “**he was wroth and his countenance fell.**” And yet, how else could it be? He should either be received with his sins, or without them; but God could not receive him with them, and he would not bring the blood which alone maketh atonement; and, therefore, he was rejected, and, being rejected, he manifests in his ways the fruits of corrupt religion. He persecutes and murders the true witness, —the accepted, justified man, —the man of faith; and, in so doing, he stands as the model and forerunner of all false religionists in every age.

At all times, and in all places, men have shown themselves more ready to persecute on religious grounds than on any other. This is Cain-like. Justification—full, perfect, unqualified justification by faith only, makes God everything, and man nothing; and man does not like this; it causes his countenance to fall, and draws out his anger. Not that he can give any reason for his anger; for it is not, as we have seen, a question of man at all, but only of the ground on which he appears before God. Had Abel been accepted on the ground of aught in himself, then, indeed, Cain’s wrath and his fallen countenance would have had some just foundation; but, inasmuch as he was accepted, exclusively on the ground of his offering; and, inasmuch as it was not to him, but to his gift, that the Lord bore testimony, his wrath was entirely without any proper basis.

This is brought out in the Lord’s word to Cain: “**If thou doest well**, (or, as the LXX reads it, if thou offer correctly) **shalt thou not be accepted?**” The well-doing had reference to the offering. Abel did well by hiding himself behind an acceptable sacrifice. Cain did badly by bringing an offering without blood; and all his after-conduct was but the legitimate result of his false worship.

“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.” Thus has it ever been; the Cains have persecuted and murdered the Abels. At all times, man and his religion are the same; faith and its religion are the same: and wherever they have met, there has been conflict.

However, it is well to see that Cain’s act of murder was the true consequence—the proper fruit—of his false worship. His foundation was bad, and the superstructure erected thereon was also bad. Nor did he stop at the act of murder; but having heard the judgment of God thereon, despairing of forgiveness through ignorance of God, he went forth from his blessed presence, and built a city, and had in his family the cultivators of the useful and ornamental sciences,—agriculturalists, musicians and workers in metals. Through ignorance of the divine character he pronounced his sin too great to be pardoned. *

* The word used by Cain, which occurs in Psalm 32:1, **“whose transgression is forgiven.”** The LXX renders it *“to be remitted.”*

It was not that he really knew his sin, but that he knew not God. He fully exhibited the terrible fruit of the fall in the very thought of God to which he gave utterance. He did not want pardon, because he did not want God. He had no true sense of his own condition; no aspirations after God; no intelligence as to the ground of a sinner’s approach to God. He was radically corrupt, — fundamentally wrong; and all he wanted was to get out of the presence of God, and lose himself in the world and its pursuits. He thought he could live very well without God, and he therefore set about decorating the world as well as he could, for the purpose of making it a respectable place, and himself a respectable man therein, though in God’s view it was under the curse, and he was a fugitive and a vagabond.

Such was **“the way of Cain,”** in which way millions are at this moment rushing on. Such persons are not by any means divested of the religious element in their character. They would like to offer something to God; to do something for him. They deem it right to present to him the results of their own toil. They are ignorant of themselves, ignorant of God; but with all this there is the diligent effort to improve the world; to make life agreeable in various ways; to deck the scene with the fairest colors. God’s remedy to *cleanse* is rejected, and man’s effort to *improve* is put in its place. This is **“the way of Cain”** (Jude 11).

And, my reader, you have only to look around you to see how this **“way”** prevails at the present moment. Though the world is stained with the blood of **“a greater than”** Abel, even with the blood of Christ, yet see what an agreeable place man seeks to make of it. As in Cain’s day, the grateful sounds of **“the harp and organ,”** no doubt, completely drowned, to man’s ear, the cry of Abel’s blood; so now, man’s ear is filled with other sounds than those which issue from Calvary, and his eye filled with other objects than a crucified Christ. The resources of his genius, too, are put forth to render this world a hot-house, in which are produced, in their rarest form, all the fruits for which nature so eagerly longs. And not merely are the real wants of man, as a creature, supplied, but the inventive genius of the human mind has been set to work for the purpose of devising things, which, the moment the eye sees, the heart desires, and not only desires, but imagines that life would be intolerable without them.

Thus, for instance, some years ago, people were content to devote three or four days to the accomplishing of a journey of one hundred miles; but now they can accomplish it in three or four hours; and not only so, but they will complain sadly if they happen to be five or ten minutes late.

In fact, man must be saved the trouble of living. He must travel without fatigue and he must bear news without having to exercise patience for it. He will lay iron rails across the earth and electric wires beneath the sea, as if to anticipate, in his own way, that bright and blissful age when **“there shall be no more sea.”** *

* True, the Lord is using all those things for the furtherance of his own gracious ends; and the Lord’s servant can freely use them also; but this does not hinder our seeing the spirit which originates and characterizes them.

In addition to all this, there is abundance of religion, so called; but, alas! Charity itself is compelled to harbor the apprehension, that very much of what passes for religion is but a screw in the vast machine, which has been constructed for man’s convenience, and man’s exaltation. Man would not be without religion. It would not be respectable; and, therefore, he is content to devote one-seventh of his time to religion; or, as he thinks and professes, to his eternal interests, but whether he works for time or eternity, it is for *himself*, in reality. Such is **“the way of Cain.”** Let my reader ponder it well. Let him see where this way begins, whither it tends and where it terminates.

How different the way of the man of faith! Abel felt and owned the curse; he saw the stain of sin, in the holy energy of faith, offered that which met it, and met it thorough, —met it divinely. He sought and found a refuge in God himself; and instead of building a city on the earth, he found but a grave in its bosom. The earth, which on its surface displayed the genius and energy of Cain and his family, was stained underneath with the blood of a righteous man.

Let this man of the world remember this; let the man of God remember it; let the worldly-minded Christian remember it. The earth which we tread upon is stained by the blood of the Son of God. The very blood which justifies the Church condemns the world. The dark shadow of the cross of Jesus may be seen by the eye of faith, looming over all the glitter and glare of this evanescent world, **“the fashion of this world passeth away.”** It will soon all be over, so far as the present scene is concerned. **“The way of Cain”** will be followed by **“the error of Balaam,”** in its consummated form; and then will come **“the gainsaying of Core;”** and what then? **“The pit”** will open its mouth to receive the wicked, and close it again, to shut them up in **“blackness of darkness forever”** (Jude 13).

In full confirmation of the forgoing lines, we may run the eye over the contents of Chapter V, and find therein the humiliating record of man’s weakness, and subjection to the rule of death. He might live for hundreds of years, and **“beget sons and daughters;”** but, at last, it must be recorded that **“he died,”** **“Death reigned from Adam to Moses.”** And again, **“It is appointed unto men once to die.”** Man cannot get over this. He cannot by steam, or electricity, or anything else within the range of his genius, disarm death of its terrible sting. He cannot, by his energy, set aside the sentence of *death*, although he may produce the comforts and luxuries of *life*.

But whence came this strange and dreaded thing, death? Paul gives us the answer: **“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin”** (Romans 5:12). Here we have the origin of death. It came by sin. Sin snapped asunder the link which bound the creature to the living God; and, that being done, he was handed over to the dominion of death, which dominion he had no power whatever to shake off. And this, be it observed, is one of the many proofs of the fact of man’s total inability to meet God. There can be no fellowship between God and man, save in the power of life; but man is under the power of death; hence, on natural grounds, there can be no fellowship.

Life can have no fellowship with death, no more than light with darkness, or holiness with sin. Man must meet God on an entirely new ground, and on a new principle, even faith; and this faith enables him to recognize his own position, as **“sold under sin,”** and, therefore, subject to death; while, at the same time, it enables him to apprehend God’s character, as the dispenser of a new life, —life beyond the power of death. —a life which can never be touched by the enemy, not forfeited by us.

This it is which marks the security of the believer’s life. Christ is his life,—a risen, glorified Christ, —a Christ victorious over everything that could be against us. Adam’s life was founded upon his own obedience; and, therefore, when he disobeyed, life was forfeited. But Christ, having life in himself, came down into this world, and fully met all the circumstances of man’s sin, in every possible form; and, by submitting to death, destroyed him who had the power thereof, and, in resurrection, becomes the Life and Righteousness of all who believe in his most excellent name.

Now, it is impossible that Satan can touch this life, either in its source, its channel, its power, its sphere, or its duration. God is its source; a risen Christ, its channel; the Holy Ghost, its power; heaven, its sphere; and eternity, its duration. Hence, therefore, as might be expected, to one possessing this wondrous life, the whole scene is changed; and while, in one sense, it must be said, “in the midst of life we are in death,” yet, in another sense, it can be said, “in the midst of death, we are in life.” There is no death in the sphere into which a risen Christ introduces his people. How could there be? Has not he abolished it? It cannot be an abolished and an existing thing at the same time and to the same people; but God’s Word tells us it is abolished. Christ emptied the scene of death, and filled it with life; and, therefore, it is not death, but glory that lies before the believer. Death is behind him, and behind him forever. As to the future, it is all glory, —cloudless glory. True, it may be his lot to **“fall asleep”**—to **“sleep in Jesus,”**—but that is not death, but “life in earnest.” There mere matter of departing to be with Christ cannot alter the specific hope of the believer, which is to meet Christ in the air, to be with him, and like him, forever.

Of this we have a very beautiful exemplification in Enoch, who forms the only exception to the rule of Chapter V. The rule is, **“he died;”** the exception is, **“he should not see death.”**

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5).

Enoch was “**the seventh from Adam;**” and it is deeply interesting to find, that death was not suffered to triumph over “**the seventh;**” but that, in his case, God interfered and made him a trophy of his own glorious victory over all the power of death. The heart rejoices, after reading, six times, the sad record, “**He died,**” to find, that the seventh did not die; and when we ask, How was this? The answer is, “**by faith.**” Enoch lived in the faith of his translation, and walked with God three hundred years. This separated him, practically, from all around.

To walk with God must, necessarily, put one outside the sphere of this world’s thoughts. Enoch realized this; for, in his day, the spirit of the world was manifested; and then, too, as now, it was opposed to all that was of God. The man of faith felt he had naught to do with the world save to be a patient witness therein of the grace of God and of coming judgment. The sons of Cain might spend their energies in the vain attempt to improve a curse world, but Enoch found a better world, and lived in the power of it. * His faith was not given him to improve the world, but to walk with God.

* It is very evident that Enoch knew nothing whatever about the words of “making the best of both world.” To him there was but one world. Thus it should be with us.

And oh, how much is involved in these three words, “**walked with God!**” What separation and self-denial! What holiness and moral purity! What grace and gentleness! What humility and tenderness! And yet, what zeal and energy! What patience and longsuffering! And yet what faithfulness and uncompromising decision! To walk with God comprehends everything within the range of the divine life, whether active or passive. It involves the knowledge of God’s character as he has revealed it. It involves, too, the intelligence of the relationship in which we stand to him. It is not a mere living by rules and regulations; nor laying down plans of action; nor in resolutions to go higher and thither, to do this or that.

To walk with God is far more than any of these three things. Moreover, it will sometimes carry us right athwart the thoughts of men, and even of our brethren, if they are not themselves walking with God. It may, sometimes, bring against us the charge of doing too much: at other times, of doing too little; but the faith that enables one to “**walk with God**” takes in all the details of actual life which lie between these two points.

“**The Lord will give grace and glory;**” and between the grace that has been, and the glory that is to be revealed, there is the happy assurance, that “**no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly**” (Psalm 84:11).

It has been remarked that “the cross and the coming of the Lord from the termini of the Church’s existence,” and these termini are prefigured in the sacrifice of Abel and the translation of Enoch. The Church knows her entire justification through the death and resurrection of Christ, and she waits for the day when he shall come and receive her to himself, she, “**through the Spirit, waits for the hope of righteousness by faith**” (Galatians 5:5).

She does not wait for righteousness, inasmuch as she, by grace, has that already; but she waits for the hope which properly belongs to the condition into which she has been introduced.

My reader should seek to be clear as to this. Some expositors of prophetic truth, from not seeing the Church's specific place, portion and hope, have made sad mistakes. They have, in effect, cast so many dark clouds and thick mists around "**the bright and morning star**," which is the proper hope for the Church, that many saints, at the present moment, seem unable to rise above the hope of the God-fearing remnant of Israel, which is to see "**the Son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings**" (Malachi 4). Nor is this all; very many have been deprived of the moral power of the hope of Christ's Appearing, by being taught to look for various events and circumstances previous to the moment of his manifestation to the Church. The restoration of the Jews, the development of Nebuchadnezzar's image, the revelation of the man of sin, all these things, it is maintained, must take place ere Christ comes. That this is not true, might be proved from numerous passages of New Testament Scripture, were this the fitting place to adduce them.

The Church, like Enoch, will be taken away from the evil around, and the evil to come. Enoch was not left to see the world's evil rise to a head, and the judgment of God poured forth upon it. He saw not "**the fountains of the great deep broken up**," nor "**the windows of heaven opened**." He was taken away before any of these things occurred; and he stands before the eye of faith, as a beautiful figure of those, "**who shall not all sleep, but shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye**" (I Corinthians 15:51, 52).

Translation, not death, was the hope of Enoch; and as to the Church's hope, it is thus briefly expressed by the apostle, "**To wait for the Son from heaven**" (I Thessalonians 1:10). This, the simplest and most unlettered Christian can understand and enjoy. Its power too, he can, in some measure, experience and manifest. He may not be able to study prophecy very deeply, but he can, blessed be God, taste the blessedness, the reality, the comfort, the power, the elevating and separating virtue of that celestial hope which properly belongs to him as a member of that heavenly body, the Church; which hope is not merely to see "**the Sun of righteousness**," how blessed soever that may be in its place, but to see "**the bright and morning star**" (Revelation 2:28).

And as, in the natural world, the morning star is seen, by those who watch for it, before the sun rises, so Christ, as the morning star, will be seen by the Church, before the remnant of Israel can behold the beams of the Sun.

~ end of chapter 4-5 ~

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