

Shepherd to Sheep
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The Lesson of Cain's Life: Look away from ourselves, to God!

Genesis 3 and 4 sum up the human predicament. And with it, they sum up mankind's dilemma. Sin not only blinds us and leaves the good beyond our grasp, but sin also twists our will, moving us to desire and to choose what we know is wrong. Lost in impotence, men do not even desire to be truly free!

How is this revelation of sin a word of hope? In this: by sketching for us how complete our ruin is, God calls us to look away from ourselves, to Him.

Have you ever thought how striking the portrait of Cainitic culture is? (4:19-22) This is no subsistence-level economy, struggling in primitive poverty to scratch a meager living from the earth. The text portrays division of labor and the taming of animals to man's use. We see culture. There is time for leisure, music, and the arts. There is a technical competence that involves the smelting of ores and the development of metallurgy in bronze and iron. There is no suggestion here that the Fall limited the ability of man to function effectively in his world.

Instead, what we see is that no matter what progress man makes technologically, the underlying moral fault is unrepaired! Men can master the environment. But men cannot master themselves. We are competent to deal with our physical needs, but not to deal with the deepest needs of the human heart. Sin has warped the moral fabric of our universe, and only by looking to God to cover and transform can man be saved.

It's good to trace the story of sin through Scripture because in so doing we find the Ultimate Solution. For acts of willful sin, Christ's blood has won forgiveness. For our impotence, the Holy Spirit's presence brings wisdom and new power. For our final destiny, resurrection promises removal of the last vestiges of sin. Even the earth, which shares the curse (3:17), will know renewal. In Romans 8:19-21, the groaning world itself will know a liberation day when you and I are at last freed by God's great sacrifice from all that death and sin involve.

This is our destiny, and this is our hope. One day the fullness of the image of God will be restored. ~ The Teacher's Commentary