

TO THOSE WHO ARE ANGRY WITH THEIR GODLY FRIENDS

NO. 1929

A SERMON
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“And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 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 4:6-7.

SINNERS are not all of the laughing sort, Cain’s mind was angry, and his heart was heavy. The short life of the vicious is not always a merry one. See, here you have a man who is utterly without God, but he is not without sorrow. His countenance has fallen, his looks are sullen, he is a miserable man. There are many ungodly people still in the world who are not happy in the condition in which they find themselves. The present does not content them, and they have no future from which to borrow the light of hope. The service of sin is hard to them, and yet they do not quit it for the service of the Lord. They are in danger of having two hells—one in this life, and another in the world to come.

They have a religion of their own, even as Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, but it yields them no comfort, for God has no respect to their offering, and therefore they are displeased about it. The things of God bring an increase to their inward wretchedness, it was after a sacrifice that Cain’s countenance fell. Many unrenewed hearts quarrel with God at His own altar, quarrel by presenting what He never commanded, and then by growing angry because He rejects their will-worship.

They attend the means of grace, but they are not saved nor comforted, and they do not like it. They pray, after a fashion, and they are not heard, and they feel indignant at the slight. They read the Scriptures, but no cheering promise is ever applied to their hearts, and they grow fierce at their failure. They see another accepted, as Abel was, and this excites their jealousy, and envy gnaws at their heart. They are angry with God, with their fellow man, and with everything about them, their countenance falls, and they are in a morose mood, which fits them for any cruel word or deed. Can you not see their sullen looks?

They would like to have the enjoyments of religion very much, they would like to have peace of conscience, they would like to be uplifted beyond all fear of death, they would like to be as happy as Christian people are, but they do not want to pay the price, namely, obedience to God by faith in Jesus Christ. They would willingly bring an offering to God according to their own choice and taste, but they do not care to come with “the Lamb” as their sacrifice, they cannot accept the atonement made by our Lord’s laying down His life for us.

They wish to have the reward of obedient faith while yet they have their own way. They would reap the harvest without sowing the seed. They would gather clusters without planting vines. They would win the wages without serving the Master of the vineyard. But as this cannot be, and never will be, they are full of bitter feeling. Since sin and sorrow are sure to be, sooner or later, married together, and since only by walking in the ways of God can we hope to find peace and rest, they quarrel with the divine arrangement, grow inwardly miserable, and show it by their sullen looks and growling words.

They are in a bitter state of heart, and it is fair to ask each one of them, “Why art thou wroth?” Alas! they are not angry with themselves, as they ought to be, but angry with God, and often they are angry with God’s chosen, and envious of them, even as Cain was malicious and vindictive towards Abel. “Why should my neighbor be saved, and not I? Why should my brother rejoice because he has peace with God, while I cannot get it? Why should my own sister be converted and sing of heaven, and I, who

have gone to the same place of worship, and have joined in the same prayers and hymns, seem to be left out in the cold?" Such questions might be useful to them, but instead of looking into their own hearts to see what is wrong there, instead of judging themselves and trying to get right with God, they inwardly blame the Lord, or the persons whom they think to be more favored than themselves. The blessings of grace are to be had by them, but they refuse to take them, and yet quarrel with those who accept them. They play the part of the dog in the manger, who could not eat the hay himself, and would not let the horses do so. They will not accept Christ, and yet grumble because others have Him.

It is one of the sure signs of the seed of the serpent—that they will always be at enmity with the seed of the woman. This is one of the marks of distinction between those who walk after the flesh and those who walk after the spirit, for as Ishmael mocked Isaac, so the child of the flesh mocks the child of promise even to this day. As soon as the two sons born to Adam were grown up, the great division was seen, he who was of the wicked one slew the man who by faith offered a more acceptable sacrifice. This division has never ceased, and never will cease, while the race of man remains on earth under the reign of God's long-suffering. By this you shall know to which seed you belong, whether you are of those who hate the righteous, or of those who are hated for Christ's sake.

Now, I want to call attention to a very gracious fact connected with this text, and that is, that although Cain was in such a bad temper that he was very angry, and his countenance fell, yet God, the infinitely gracious One, came and spoke with him, and reasoned with him patiently. It is wonderful that God should speak with man at all, considering man's insignificance. Did not the Psalmist say, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

But for the Lord to speak with sinful man is a far greater marvel, and for Him to reason with such a man as Cain, a murderer in heart, and soon to be a murderer in deed, impenitent, implacable, presumptuous, blasphemous, this is a miracle of mercy! Shall the pure and holy God speak with such a wretch as Cain, who was angry with his brother without just cause? Why does He not at once cut him off while yet his hate has not issued in murder, and thus at the very beginning show His detestation of envy and malice? Truly His mercy endures forever. Behold, the Lord comes to Cain with a question, gives him an opportunity of speaking for himself, and defending, if he can, his state of mind. "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door."

Yet this is no solitary instance of the condescension of God, it is the way of our God to expostulate with sinners, and to let them produce their strong reasons, and justify themselves if they can. It is His fashion to say, "Turn ye: turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" for He wills not the death of any, but that they should turn unto Him and live. He is greatly patient and waits to be gracious. God gives none up until they fatally resolve to give themselves up, and even then His good Spirit strives with them as long as it is possible to do so, consistently with His holiness.

Often to the very gates of death, and up to the very edge of the bottomless pit, His pity follows obstinate sinners, crying still, "Turn ye! Turn ye! Turn ye! Why will ye die?" Ay, the angry sinner—the Cain-ite sinner—the sinner whose face betrays the anger of his soul, whose heart is hot with enmity against God and against His Christ, even he is not left to die without divine pleadings which may show him his fault and folly. Still does the Lord handle conscience with skill, and arouse thought with fit inquiries, "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?"

I pray God that He may speak to any among my congregation who may be in this sad and evil condition. I have felt lately that I may have but few more opportunities of preaching the Gospel, and therefore I would try and speak more solemnly every time I preach, and endeavor to strike right home at the heart and conscience, if by any means I may save some. Oh how I long to bring men to Jesus! I could gladly lay down my life to save my hearers. May the Holy Spirit make my words to be full of force and holy fire, and may they meet the case of some here present whom I have never seen before,

but whose thoughts are as well known to God as if they were printed in a book and laid open before His eyes!

Oh that I may be moved to speak a word which shall fit the case as a glove fits the hand which wears it! May it not merely be the voice of man that speaks to you, but may it be clear that God has commissioned His servant to speak to your hearts, and that by my sermon God Himself expostulates with you even as He expostulated with Cain in those ancient times!

Recollect that the case is that of a man who is angry, angry mainly because he cannot get the comforts of religion. He sees his brother enjoying them, and he grows angry with him for that reason. With him, and all like him, I would reason with kind words.

I. I shall take the last sentence of the text first, "*Unto thee shall be his desire and thou shall rule over him.*" In these words God argues with Cain, and answers the charge of favoritism which was lurking in his mind. He tells him, in effect, that **NO DIFFERENCE IS MADE IN THE ARRANGEMENT OF SOCIAL LIFE BECAUSE OF THE ARRANGEMENTS OF GRACE.**

Notice that He says to him, "Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him"—which I understand to mean just this, "Why are you so angry against Abel? It is true that I have accepted his offering, it is true that he is a righteous man, and you are not, but for all that, you are his elder brother, and he looks up to you, his desire is toward you, and you shall rule over him. He has not acted otherwise than as a younger brother should act towards an elder brother, but he has admitted your seniority and priority. He has not revolted from you, you rule over him, you are his master. Why, then, are you so angry?"

Observe this, then—that if a man shall be angry with his wife because she is a Christian, we may well argue with him—Why are you thus provoked? Is she not a loving and obedient wife to you in all things, except in this matter touching her God? Is she not all the better for her religion? I have known a husband meet his wife at the Tabernacle door and call her foul names all the way home for no other reason than because she joined in the worship of God. Yet she was all the more loving, diligent, and patient because of that worship.

Here is your child converted, and you are angry. Are you not unreasonable in this? You are his father, and he yields obedience to you. God has not caused religion to alter the natural position of things, your child, your servant, your wife, all recognize this, and remain in due subservience to you. For what cause are you thus sullen and angry? Good sir, this is not like a reasonable man. Be persuaded to let better feelings sway you.

Now, this is an important thing to note, because *first of all it takes away from governments their excuse for persecution.* In the early days of Christianity, multitudes of Christians were tormented to death because of their faith in Jesus. There was no excuse for it, for they had done no harm to the State. Christianity does not come into a nation to break up its arrangements, or to break down its fabric. All that is good in human society it preserves and establishes. It snaps no ties of the family, it dislocates no bonds of the body politic.

There are theories of socialism and the like which lead to anarchy and riot, but it is not so with the mild and gentle teaching of Jesus Christ, whose every word is love and patience. He says, "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." His apostle says—"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands: husbands, love your wives...children, obey your parents in all things...servants, obey in all things your masters, not with eyeservice as menpleasers...masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."

Such precepts as these are no injury to government. Paul was no leader of sedition, no destroyer of the rights of property. Caesar needed not to fear Christ. Jesus did not covet Caesar's purple or Caesar's throne. Even Herod needed not to tremble for his principedom, for the child that was born at Bethlehem would not have hunted that fox or disturbed his den. "My kingdom is not of this world," said our Lord Jesus, "else would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews."

Now, inasmuch as the religion of Jesus Christ does no hurt to social order, teaches no one to be rebellious, takes away from no man his rights, but guards the rights of all from the lowest to the greatest, all excuse is taken away from any government that dares to put out its hand to touch the church of God. As to each disciple of Jesus, the government may be satisfied that he is loyal. "Thou shalt rule over him" is certainly true. Christians will cheerfully submit to all lawful rule and righteous authority. To them it is a matter of joy if they are enabled to lead peaceable lives because the magistrate is a terror to evildoers.

They are a non-resistant, peaceable, quiet people, who have from the beginning of the world until now borne burdens and suffered and been content to suffer, so that they might but be true to their Master. They hate tyranny, but they love order, they protest against oppression, but they uphold law and justice. Why, then, should they be persecuted? They ask nothing from the State by way of pay or patronage, they only ask to be left alone, and to be subject to no disability on account of their religion. Let all who are in authority, whether as kings or petty magistrates, beware of wantonly molesting a people who cause them no trouble, lest they be found in this matter to be fighting against God.

That being so in the broad field of national life, *it is just the same if you bring it down to the little sphere of home*. There is no reason why Cain should be so angry with Abel because God loves him, for the love of God to Abel does not take away from Cain his right as an elder brother. It does not teach Abel to refuse to Cain the rights of his position, nor lead him to act rudely and wrongfully toward him. No, Abel's desire is unto Cain, and Cain rules over him as his elder brother. Why, then, should Cain be angry, and his countenance fall?

My dear friend, if you are angry tonight about the sovereignty of the grace of God, as seen in the conversion of another, let me ask you what hurt has the grace of God in the heart of the person you envy done to you? Is your eye evil because God's eye is good? Have you suffered in any sense because that other one is saved? You cannot have your way if you wish to coerce the envied one into giving up his faith, but have you a right to your own way? Is it not the privilege of every man to have his conscience left free to serve God alone?

What right do you have as an Englishman to take away liberty from another? You say, "Why, I think him very stupid to believe as he does." Very likely you may think so, but then your judgment is given you for yourself, not for another, and you must not become a tyrant and domineer over others. I thought you were a stickler for liberty. And yet you sneer at others because they think for themselves, or at least do not think as you do! If religion made men false in their dealings with others—if it made the servant careless and indifferent—if it made the husband a tyrant—if it made the wife a tattler and slovenly—if it turned all relationships upside-down—then there would be some little reasonableness in the opposition which you offer to it. But if it does nothing of the kind, why are you angry? and why is your countenance fallen?

Why, to me it seems to be a great blessing to a man to have his friends converted—a blessing to be desired and prized. Their conversion may do you good, even if you are not converted yourself. Laban learned by experience that the Lord blessed him for Jacob's sake. Look at Joseph. The Lord was with him, and we find that wherever Joseph went others were the better, because God blessed them through Joseph. A good man in a house is good store to the family. A converted daughter, a praying son, a holy husband, a gracious wife—why, these are the pillars, the ornaments, the buttresses of the house. Godly people roof in the mansion with their prayers.

Who can tell what blessings God gives to unconverted men because of their converted relatives? I do not doubt that, as sometimes the chaff is spared for the sake of the grain which it covers and protects, so, often, the lives of ungodly men are spared for the sake of the children whom they have to bring up—for the sake of those who have to be cherished by them for a while. Had it not been for the grief it would cause the mother whom you mock, the Lord might have cut you down, young man, long ago. Pity for holy relatives may be the motive for the Lord's long-suffering to many rebels. Wherefore be not angry with the righteous.

I could hope, my angry friend, that God means to give a greater blessing still to you—that He means to entice you to heaven by showing your wife the way, or He means to lead you to Christ by that dear child of yours. I have known parents brought to repentance by the deaths of daughters or of sons who have died in the faith. I hope you will not have to lose those you love that you may be brought to Jesus by their dying words. But it may be so, it may be so. It will be better for you to yield to their gentle example while yet they are spared to you, than for you to be smitten to the heart by their sickness and death.

Oh that the persecuted one may live to have the great joy of going to the house of God with father, or walking with brother in the ways of godliness, or bringing the thoughtless sister to seek and find the Savior! Why should it not be so? Let us hope for it. At any rate, I do not see any cause to be angry because grace has visited your family.

To say the very least about it, a man who is angry with another for enjoying a religion which he himself does not care for is a poor specimen of good nature. Surely he may allow others to enjoy what he does not himself desire. If you do not wish for salvation, why worry yourself because others possess it? If you do not mean to serve Christ, at least stand out of the road and let other people serve Him. There cannot be any gain to you in kicking against the pricks, by resisting the power of divine grace.

You will find it hard work in the long run, for the Lord has said that if any shall offend one of the least of His little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the midst of the sea. For prudence's sake, for your own sake, for reason's sake, for freedom's sake, I pray you be no longer angry, and let not your countenance fall. If we cannot agree in matters of religion, let us not persecute or think contemptuously of one another.

II. Now let us advance farther into the text. There is no room for being angry, for **THOUGH THE DIFFERENCE LIES FIRST WITH THE GRACE OF GOD, YET IT LIES ALSO WITH THE MAN'S OWN SELF.** "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door."

First, then, if you are not accepted, and you are angry because you are not accepted, is there not a just cause for it? If you do not enjoy the comforts of religion, and you grow envious because you do not, you should cool your wrathfulness by considering this question—"*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?*" That is to say, will you not be accepted on the same terms as Abel? You will be accepted in the same way as your brother, your sister, your child.

How is it that the one you envy is full of peace? It is because he has come to Jesus and confessed his sin, and trusted his Redeemer. If you do this, shall not you also be accepted? Has not the Lord said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"? If you, too, come and confess your sin, and trust the Savior, you are as certain to be accepted as your friend.

You are envious because another is full of joy. Where did that joy come from but from this—that he came according to the divine command, and rested himself upon the finished work of Christ, and gave himself up to be Christ's servant, and asked for the Holy Spirit to renew him and lead him into the way of righteousness? That has been done according to the faithful promise of God, which is sure to all who obey the Gospel command.

If you come in the same way, and rest on the same Savior, and yield yourself up to be renewed by the same Spirit, the Lord will not refuse you. Put it to the test and see. Try Him. Try Him, and if He refuses you, let me know it, for I am telling everybody that Jesus never casts out any that come to Him, and I must not do so any more if I find out that He does reject you or any one else.

Come to Jesus confessing your sin and trusting in Him, and if He does not save you, let me know it, and I will publish it to the four winds of heaven. We shall be bound to make it known that Christ has broken His word, and that His Gospel has become of none effect, for we must on no account cry up a falsehood and lead our fellow men to believe that which is not true. Try the Lord Jesus, I do beseech you, and I know what the result will be. You shall find that the gate of mercy stands wide open for you,

and that you will be received as well as others. There is no difference in this matter, whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, whosoever will may take of the water of life freely.

Now, is it not much wiser for a man, instead of being angry with another's enjoying the comforts of religion, to seek to enjoy them himself? Am I hungry and angry with another because he has eaten a good meal when the same bread stands before me? Then I am foolish and cross-grained. Do I see another refreshed at the fountain, and do I stand at the freely flowing stream and complain? Do I bitterly demand why his lips are moistened while my mouth is dried up like an oven? What is the use of being angry with the neighbor who has quenched his thirst when the same fountain is free to me? O murmuring friend, why do you not yourself believe? Stoop and drink as your friend has done, and you shall be refreshed as he has been.

If you do well—that is, if you are obedient to the precious word of the Gospel—shall you not be accepted? “No,” says one, “I am afraid that I shall not be.” Who told you so? Your fear is without scriptural foundation. “But perhaps my name is not written in the Book of Life.” Who told you so? Who has climbed up to the secret chamber of God to read the mystic roll? Who dares to tell you that your name is not there? Who knows anything about the secret purposes of God? I venture to tell you this—that if you believe in Jesus Christ, be you who you may, your name *is* written in the Lamb's book of life.

“Him that cometh to me,” says He, “I will in no wise cast out.” Any “him” that comes in all the world, while time shall last, if he does but come to Christ, Christ has said that He cannot and will not cast him out. Therefore, come, and you shall find grace in His sight. Instead of being angry with another for believing and rejoicing, taste for yourself the joys which faith secures. May infinite grace lead you to do so now!

God's second word with Cain was, however, “*If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.*” That is to say, “If religion does not yield you joy as it does your brother, what is the reason? Surely sin stops the entrance, *as a stone blocking the doorway.* If you cannot gain an entrance to mercy, it is because sin, like a huge stone, has been rolled against it, and remains there. If the way to God and salvation is, indeed, blocked up, it is only blocked up by your own sin.

The door is not locked by a divine decree, nor nailed up by any necessity of circumstances, nor barred by any peculiarity of your case. No, there is neither block, nor bar, nor lock except your sin. Your sin lies at the door, and makes you a prisoner, where else you might be free as air. I desire to press this point home upon any unconverted persons who are somewhat anxious, but yet cannot get peace. A secret something is keeping you from being accepted as Abel was accepted. I am sure it is sin in one shape or another. I entreat you to see what that sin is!

Is it unbelief? In most cases unbelief is the damning sin. You will not believe God's Word. You reject the testimony of God concerning His Son Jesus, and thus you put away from you eternal life. You say, “I cannot believe.” But that will not do, for you know that God is true, and if God be true how dare you say that you cannot believe Him?

If, when I stated solemnly a fact, you told me, “I cannot believe you,” I should understand you to mean that I am a liar. And when you say, “I cannot believe God,” do you not know that the English of such an expression is this—you make God a liar by refusing to believe on His Son? This unbelief is sin enough—sin enough to destroy you forever. What higher offense can there be against any man, much more against God, than to accuse Him of a lie?

But every person here who does not now believe in Jesus Christ is guilty of the high profanity and infinite blasphemy of making the Almighty God a liar. This is the huge stone which lies at the door. May God help you to roll it away, by saying, “I will believe, I must believe. God must be true, the blood of His dear Son must be able to wash away sin. I will trust in it now!”

Possibly, however, another form of the same stone of sin lies at your door and keeps you back. *Is it impenitence?* Are you hardened about your sin? Do you refuse to quit it? Is there no sorrow in your heart to think that you have broken the divine law, and have lived forgetful of your God? A hard heart is

a great stone to lie in a man's way, for he who will not own his sin and forsake it is wedded to his own destruction. May God soften your heart, and help you at once to repent of sin!

Or, *is it pride?* Are you too big a man to become a Christian? Are you too respectable, too wealthy, too polite? Are you too deep a thinker? Do you know too much? You could not go and sit down with the humble people who, like little children, believe what God tells them. No, no, you have too much brain for that, have you? Now be honest, and own it! You read the reviews, and you like a little dash of skepticism in your literature. You could not possibly listen to Jesus when He says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." You do not care for such old-fashioned doctrine, for you are too much of a philosopher.

Well, I have heard of a Spanish monarch who perished through etiquette, there was too much fire in the grate, and it was not according to state for His majesty to put his chair back from the fire, and so he became over-heated, and died in consequence. I would not care to lose my soul to gratify my loftiness. Would you? One's pride may carry him far if he is a great fool, but let him not suffer his pride to carry him into hell, for it certainly will never carry him out again.

Alas! there are some who have another sin, *a hidden sin*. I cannot mention it, it is a shame even to speak of the things which are done of them in secret. I have been frequently puzzled to know why certain persons cannot attain peace. Do what we may with them they appear to have a tide of disquiet forever ebbing and flowing and casting up mire and dirt. They have seemed to be in a fair way to salvation, and yet they have never reached it, they have been one day near and the next far off.

In one or two instances I have not discovered the reason why the Gospel never succeeded with them, till they were dead. When they were gone the sad truth was revealed which accounted for all their uneasiness, but I will not tell you what it was. There was a secret which, if it had been known, would have made their character abhorrent to those who in ignorance respected them.

Does any man here carry about with him a guilty secret? Does he persevere in shameful acts which he labors to conceal? How can a man hope for peace while he wars with the laws of morality? What rest can there be while solemn vows are broken, and the purest of relationships are treated with despite? Nay, while there is any uncleanness about a man, or about a woman, there cannot be peace with God, such sins must be given up, or there cannot be acceptance with the Most High. Would you for a moment insinuate that the Lord Jesus died to allow you to sin and yet escape its penalty?

We have known persons practice *dishonesty in business*, and this has shut them out from acceptance. Not that they actually pilfer, but they have ways and means of calling things by wrong names, and taking fraudulent advantage. Cheating is called "custom of trade," and so on. I could not tell why the Lord did not accept certain people when they appeared to be seeking mercy. I understand it now. How can the Lord be gracious to one who continues in dishonesty? Will He choose thieves to be His friends? He will take thieves and make them honest, and so they shall enter His kingdom, but if we abide in transgression of any sort, when it is known to us, we cannot expect to be accepted. My brethren, to be very plain with you, an honest heart and an honest hand must be found in every man who is to be justified at the last great day.

Some cannot get peace because they *neglect prayer*. They do not ask, or seek, or knock, and so they do not receive, they cannot find, and the door of grace is not opened to them. Oh, how can you think that God accepts you when you live day after day without prayer?

Not a few harbor *enmity* in their hearts towards their brother or neighbor. O angry hearer, God cannot accept your sacrifice until you are at peace with your brother. It cannot be. He might as well have pressed Cain to His bosom as you, for he that hates his brother abides in death. "Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Go home and be reconciled. Go home, and forgive your fellow servant, for if you do not so forgive your little debts, the great Lord will not forgive you all your great debt. Before you can hope to have peace with God, you must be at peace with those who have offended you.

Then there are some who *keep evil company*. They like to come to the Tabernacle, or to some other place where the Gospel is preached, and they hope that they may find Christ, but then they also like a lascivious song. They relish those silly, coarse, loathsome ditties which have a touch of “smut” about them. These are disgraceful things, and yet certain people roll them out as choice morsels. While that is the case, can a man hope that God will accept him? No, it is of no use pretending anything of the kind. You and your sins must part, or God and you cannot be friends. God will accept us and receive us as penitent sinners, but not so long as we open the back door for the devil, and enthrone him in our heart of hearts. If you are not accepted, sin lies at the door, and shuts you out of present rest and peace, even as it will ultimately shut you out of heaven.

I think this word of divine expostulation bears another meaning. “If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” That is to say, not only as a stone to block your way, but *as a lion to pounce upon you*. It is true that sin is hindering you from peace, but it is also true that a greater sin is lurking at the door ready to spring upon you. What a warning this word ought to have been to Cain! If you are doing ill and God is not accepting you, and that fact is making you angry, there is a worse sin lying like a couchant lion ready to devour you. It was so with Cain. Perhaps at that moment he had not seriously thought of killing his brother. He was angry, but he was not yet implacable and malicious. But God said, “There is a sin lying at your door that will come upon you to your destruction.”

May it not be the same with you, my hearer? What if I were to look steadily in the face of some undecided person here tonight and say, “Friend, are you not accepted by God, and are you angry? A sin is lying at your door which will be your ruin. You will go on from being a sinner to become a criminal”? Is Hazeel here? Shall I, like the prophet, look you in the face till my tears begin to flow at the sight of you, and say, “I know what thou wilt do. Thou wilt be a terror to all around thee.” You would probably answer me as Hazeel did, “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” Many a man would be horrified to be told what yet will be the fact in his case.

Dreadful to tell, men that have been melted by a sermon have afterwards grown hard enough to perpetrate crimes that have brought them before the bar of their country. Almost converted, almost persuaded, it looked as if a vista opened up before them leading to endless glory and happiness, but in one sad hour they turned the other way. Like Felix, they waited for a more convenient season, and their life was henceforth down, down, deeper and deeper and deeper, till it ended in the lowest hell.

Oh, my dear hearers, I am always fearful about those who are so near salvation and yet are not decided. Judas who can preach the Gospel, Judas who is an apostle, Judas who can say, “Lord, is it I?”—he is the man that at the last sells his Master, for though an apostle in appearance he was in heart a traitor, and a son of perdition. The raw material for a devil is an angel. The raw material for the son of perdition was an apostle, and the raw material for the most horrible of apostates is one who is almost a saint.

I say no more than I mean, and than history can prove. There have usually been splendid traits of character about men who have been unfit to live. The question has been in their minds, “Which shall have the mastery?” and for a while the result has trembled in the balance, but when they have decided for evil it has been decision with a vengeance. God gave Cain the clearest warning. He did as good as say—“Why art thou angry? and why is thy countenance fallen? There is an opportunity for you. If you do well shall not you, even you, O Cain, be accepted? And if you do ill, sin lies at the door to spring upon you and drag you down.” Oh that he had been capable of taking the caution, and escaping the evil! Be you warned, O man, to whom these words shall come, lest your last end be worse than the first.

But there is yet another meaning which I must bring out here, and that is one which is held by many critics, though it is questioned by others. I am content to go with a considerable following, especially of the old divines, who say that the word here used may be rendered, “If thou doest ill, *a sin offering lieth at the door*.” And what a sweet meaning this gives us! God graciously declares to angry Cain, “You can bring a sin offering, as Abel has done, and all will be well. You can present a bleeding sacrifice, typical of the great atonement; a sin offering lies at the door.” This should be an encouraging assurance to

anyone who is anxious, and at the same time greatly afraid that pardon is not possible. My dear friend, why need you grow despondent because another enters heaven? A sin offering lies at your door also. You can have *your* sin forgiven even as his has been forgiven, come and try for yourself.

“Where can I find Christ?” asks one. He stands at the door, He waits for you. The offering is not far to seek. You have not to climb to heaven to bring Him down. He has descended. You have not to dive into the depths to fetch Him up. He has risen from the dead. “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth.” So Paul says. What then? If you would have it for your own, and know its virtue, receive it into your soul. “Alas!” cries one, “I am dying, where is the elixir which will restore me?” In your mouth. Swallow it. You have not even to open the box to get out the pill. It is in your mouth. Receive it into your inward parts. Jesus crucified is freely presented to you. All the merit of His death is here at this moment. Accept it. It is yours.

A sin offering lies at the door, that is to say, the sufferings of Christ, the atonement of Christ, and the righteousness of Christ, are available at this moment. You may have all that Jesus has purchased—have it for nothing, the free gift of God. Repenting of sin and believing in Jesus, you have it all. Eternal salvation is yours if the Holy Spirit has made you willing to have it. “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” Only trust Him, and the death of Christ is death for you, and the righteousness of Christ is your righteousness. A sin offering lies at the door. God does, as it were, say, “Bring it, I will receive it, and I will receive you, for its sake.”

Do but take Christ by faith, and bring Him before God. Say unto God, “My Father, I have no good works to trust in, but I trust Your Son. I desire to be rid of my sin, and I trust in You to purify me. I pine to become a new creature, and I trust in Your Spirit to new-create me. Behold the bloody sacrifice offered upon Calvary. I present it to You. For Jesus’ sake accept me.” He will do it, dear friend, He will do it.

I do not know that I can say any more, I wish that I could have said it better. I would speak right into your heart. May the Spirit of God so speak! Do not be angry because another is saved, but turn your anger on yourself because you have not accepted salvation. Recollect, if you do what other sinners have done, namely, simply come to Christ, you shall be accepted as they have been, and if you are not accepted, it is your sin that is preventing it. A sin offering is waiting to take away that sin. Oh, reject not the priceless boon! Trifle not with your soul and with your Savior. Do not incur an eternity of misery! Do not lose an eternity of bliss! “Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?” If I never should occupy this pulpit again, what should I wish to have preached? Nothing but the Gospel which I have now preached for so many years. I wish I had spoken better, but I do not know that I could have said more. If these kind pleadings do not touch angry hearts, neither would they be affected though martyrs rose from the dead.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 4:1-15, 1 JOHN 3

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—103 (FIRST VERSION), 641, 293

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