

"The Influence of Unresolved Problem"

Two weeks ago we learned about the first people, Adam and Eve. They lived in the perfect environment where God provided for them. However they made a major mistake. They had eaten from the tree that God had forbidden. This proves that even in a perfect environment, people can make mistakes.

Adam and Eve blamed it on everything but themselves. They both blamed God, Adam pointed the blame to Eve and Eve turned it to the snake, but they were all wrong. The cause of the trouble was to be found in their hearts. Unfortunately they weren't aware of the truth, and were exiled from the Garden of Eden with a feeling of "shame" and "fear".

The bible said that since they ate the forbidden fruit, women will suffer from labor pains, humans will have to struggle to put food on their plate, and that sometimes this struggle will be for nothing. The bible also says that from then on we all share the fate of death. Needless to say these things are what we all are experiencing to this day.

Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden bearing these fates just as the bible says. I'd like to take a look at what happened to them after this.

Adam^[a] made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.^[b] She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth^[c] a man."² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."^[d] While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"¹⁰ The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

¹²When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." (Genesis 4:1~12)

Adam and Eve were the first man and woman of mankind. They were also the first father and mother of two sons by God's grace. In Genesis it is the origin of the human world. From these beginnings humans created families, relatives, and also built nations which have become today's countries. From here the bible, throughout Genesis, continues to tell us about the origin of our world.

Our problems are so diverse in the human world. You may hear things like this, "It sounds like somebody else's businesses," but in truth these problems are nearer to us than you think. Often these problems arise from within people's relationships. Two weeks ago I discussed that if we wanted to solve the problems that we have; first we must determine what the factors of the problems are. Something that can help with this is to look into how and why the original humans produced and dealt with their problems, and through this we can find common ground and find the cause of our problems.

In these passages the bible talks about the first children who were born from the first parents. **Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man."** From this passage, we can tell that Eve received this child with God's help. The baby was named Cain. The origin of this name is "a man"; this word was also in Eve's quote. "Adam's" name also has a meaning of "a man" and "earth" in Hebrew.

We can look beyond Eve's words; I have brought forth a man by God's grace. Her thoughts may have been like this, I received a man by God grace and this boy will replace my husband "Adam", who blamed me for all the wrong doings that had occurred.

Two weeks ago, I talked about how Adam protested his innocence to God and blamed all of the problems on his wife Eve. He said to God "the reason why I ate the forbidden fruit was because Eve, who you provided to me (I didn't ask for her), gave it to me. I wonder how Eve felt when she heard her husband's words. If you were Eve how would you feel? I assume this event damaged the trust in their relationship.

Adam and Eve both had the same characteristics, which was not to take responsibility for their own mistakes and to blame others for them. If they continued to live as partners without realizing their faults and fixing them, they must have had many

troubles between them. Soon after this event their first child Cain was given to Eve, she might have thought this Cain was a replacement of Adam who had lost her trust by blaming his faults on her.

The bible doesn't tell how Cain was raised. We only know from the bible that there was no word from Eve and Adam when they received the second baby. In Genesis it only mentions it like this "Later she gave birth to his brother Abel". The origin of the word Abel is "breath" and "vanity".

You don't often hear of parents who name their own children "Vanity". However they decided to give this name to their second child. I wonder what happened in this family after Cain was born. Eve might have doted on her first son instead of giving her love to her husband, because she had lost trust in him. I can only assume that this couple's relationship only got worse thereafter, and that this second child did not get enough attention from his parents?

Let me talk about a fundamental rule of married couples from the bible. This rule is very old. It was given to the first married couple, Adam and Eve. We can read about this in Genesis, before they took a bite of the forbidden fruit, and right after God provided a wife to Adam. **"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." (Genesis 2: 24)**

When I give marriage counseling to couples who are about to get married, I always introduce this verse and explain. I'll tell them that once you become husband and wife; you must become as independent from your parents as you can, otherwise your parents may get involved in your marriage life. You leave your father and mother and you become united with your spouse as one flesh. Therefore you can't let your parents get between your relationships. Just as importantly, even your children shouldn't come before your relationship with your spouse. The words "you are united to each other and become one flesh." is addressed to only the married couples in the bible. If Eve had the wrong impression that her first child was given to her as Adam's replacement, and that the boy was placed before her husband, then they have already broken this given rule. I'm not telling you to neglect your children, or to disregard your parents. I'm telling you that only after husband and wife become one body can you then create a healthy relationship with your children and parents.

Let us assume that Adam and Eve neglected this principal rule. Once this base collapsed, problems started to occur. Soon after this they had a second child, Abel. This

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gives us a hint as to why they gave such a name "breathe and vanity" to their own child.

The beginning of all these problems started with a sense of the distrust, which arose between Adam and Eve, for example "My husband laid the blame on me." If Adam had realized that the cause of the problem was not Eve, and that he was the one who was responsible, and then try to mend their relationship, it might have prevented the next tragedy. Just like the title of this sermon I want to talk more about the impact of unresolved problems and the effect they bring in the future.

They may have done a lot of buck-passing at the beginning and they probably did similar mistakes repeatedly. With the coming of children they gained more chances to repeat these problems. This buck-passing that might have been happening between Adam and Eve continuously throughout their marriage life must have severely impacted their family. The biggest impact was to their children who were watching their parents.

Brothers and sisters, during the making of this message, my conscience started to prick at me, because this story is so realistic and ordinary. This problem is not someone else's problem but it is one that we all could possibly have. However we should not look away from this, instead to solve these issues we must start looking into them.

As Cain and Abel grew up, and began working on their assigned duties. Cain worked on the field and Abel took care of the sheep. I believe that these two learned about the history of their parents and the experiences they had, for example, how their parents met, the eating of the forbidden fruit, the imposed labor for survival, and so on. In growing up these children also learned of God's existence in them.

They must have observed their parents offering products to God in their daily life. Soon they both also learned to make offerings to God regularly. It is a good thing to do things on a continuous basis, but there are somethings that you should pay attention to, and be careful of. Doing something on a regular bases, even if you are doing something meaningful, could become a formal and meaningless chore in the long run with your heart no longer in it.

As I mentioned before the first son, Cain, was working on the fields and he offered the fruits of his labor that were produced from the earth. The second son was Abel, who

was a shepherd, offered products from his sheep. Genesis says this:

In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, (Genesis 4:3~4)

Here it says "The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering". However with Cain it is said like this **but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. (Genesis 4:5)**

Why did such a thing happen? If we don't pay closer attention to the text we could just read through this without noticing the details. The bible depicts Abel's offering like this "fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock." Whereas while Abel's offering was the best of all his products, Cain's offerings, I assume, were the products from the soil that were not the best of his labor. We sometime see that stores sell old and ill shaped vegetables at discount prices. Cain probably didn't offer his best fruits to God and kept them for himself.

The bible said here "**The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,**" and "**but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.**" God looked not only to their offerings, but he took notice of Abel's and Cain's heart and spirit.

Brothers and sisters, God created and nurtured both of Abel's sheep and Cain's fruits to grow. So any offering from them were still God's, even if the offering was the best, worst, or anything in between, it doesn't affect God. However, the most important thing was their hearts.

As I said, these offering were becoming more and more practical for them, who watched and learned these things, from their parents. The longer they did this the more practical it became for Cain and sooner or later the idea of keeping the better products for himself started to spring up in Cain's mind. However it is impossible to hide his mind from God, for He looked upon the hearts of the two boys. Then came an unavoidable distinction of a "person who was looked with favor by God" and a "person who was not looked with favor".

With what attitude did Cain take, at this time? **So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. (5)** In other words he got very mad and he averted his face from God because God didn't favor him. He sulked in front of God. To this God asked Cain and

instructed. **"Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."**(6,7)

Cain didn't answer God's words. And Cain did not show any signs of regret or reflection of what he had done. Instead Cain took action.

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."^[d] While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. (8) In order to kill Abel, Cain asked him out to the field. Cain who was angry and averted his face from God couldn't control his rage, but it was impossible to defy God. So he planned and killed Abel

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"¹⁰ The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. ¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." (Genesis 4:1~12)

When God asked Cain where Abel was, he became defiant and declared. "I don't know, am I my brother's keeper?" (With an attitude)

Brothers and sisters what is the cause of this tragedy? Is it because Abel offered the best product in his flock? No it wasn't. The cause was Cain's mind and heart, what became an ordinary thing to do, he did without gratitude and respect to God. Is this familiar to you? This problem reminds me of what their parents did. But why them? The mistake Cain made was the same mistake that Adam and Eve made. In Cain's case the blame was his, but he blamed all of it on his younger brother, Abel. His parent's mistake of blaming each other might have cost their relationship of trust, but Cain's mistake cost them Abel's life.

Perhaps Eve doted on her son Cain in place of her husband Adam. Children are so dearly precious to their parents. Children are always immature to us and there is much for them to learn. They make many mistakes throughout their youth. Cain might have never asked to take responsibility for his mistakes because of his mother's blind love.

You can see a glimpse of evidence in this. When God confronted Cain with his wrong doings, Cain gave an attitude to God by looking away from Him. This attitude may give us a hint of how he was raised. Maybe he was never scolded or disciplined by his

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parents, which may have led to his attitude. Cain might have inherited his parent's buck-passing attitude, and thus leading to these horrible results. Everyone, this is a part of our beginnings, this first and second generation, and we have inherited all that they had.

Since I began preparing for this message, and for the one before, I have become more and more solemn. It is very tough to see the true faces of the human figures. However without paying attention to these problems we might lead ourselves to more tragedies. I wanted to share these thoughts with you. To solve these problems we have to begin to diagnose the cause.

I have to stop this message here today. I know it doesn't feel very good to finish it here like this. But this story is not finished yet. The bible speaks of hope for these realities, and of the human sin. I will share these with you next week. Please don't miss our next message because you need to hear what the bible is trying to teach us. I pray to God that we can all reflect on our conduct once more before God, and let His light reflect on our hearts. I look forward to seeing you all next week. Let us pray.

The Team Lascaris