



Devotional Thoughts :: The Way of Cain (Zac Poonen) - Murdering or Loving our brothers?

The Way of Cain (Zac Poonen) - Murdering or Loving our brothers?, on: 2016/8/26 8:40

Bearing the burden of the backslidden churches on his heart, John writes much in 1 John 3 about loving one another. "By this, the children of God, and the children of the devil are obvious." (1 John 3:10). John divides all people in the world into two categories here - "children of God" and "children of the devil". And he says that the way to find out the difference is this: "Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God. Nor the one who does not love his brother." This is a very clear distinction. One who does not love his brother is not of God. He may perhaps have many reasons why he cannot love his brother, but he is not of God.

In verses 11 and 12, we read, "For this is the message, which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. And not be as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother Abel."

When Jesus spoke about righteous people, he began with Abel. He said, "From the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of Zechariah..." (Matt.23:35).

So Abel was righteous. But Cain, as we saw, belonged to the evil one, because he killed his brother. 1 John 3:12 goes on to say, "And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brothers were righteous."

Now I want you to read that verse carefully. It does not say that Cain's deeds were evil after he slew Abel. No. It says that his deeds were evil even before he slew Abel.

Why did Cain slay his brother? Because he was an evil man. We have often heard it said that God accepted Abel because he offered a blood-sacrifice, and that God rejected Cain because he didn't offer a blood-sacrifice. But there is more to it than that. See what it says here about Cain. "His deeds were evil; his brother's deeds were righteous."

And John goes on to say in verse 13, "Don't marvel brethren if the world hates you." He's talking about Cain hating Abel. Don't marvel if the world hates you. Hatred is the mark of the sons of Cain, and all who follow "the way of Cain" (as Jude calls it in verse 11 of his letter).

In verse 14 John says, "We know we have passed out of death into life" - not because we were baptized and not because we partake of the bread and the wine, no, but "because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death." John is still thinking of Cain as he writes this.

We are to love everyone. It doesn't matter which church those others belong to. "He who hates his brother is a murderer." Everyone who hates someone else is a murderer. "And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." The way of Cain, is the way of hatred.

In contrast, in verse 16 John says that the proof of love is this that instead of slaying your brother, you slay yourself! You lay down your life. "We know love by this, that He laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Notice that in both cases there is a death. In one we kill our brothers and in the other, we die ourselves!!

Cain killed his brother. That's the way of evil. The children of the devil manifest themselves by slaying their brothers and sisters. The children of God are revealed by their putting their own self-life to death.

Cain smashed Abel's head in with a rock. But today people are gentler - they don't use rocks, they use their tongues! When you tear down your brothers and sisters with your tongue, speaking evil of them and making them look bad and small in the eyes of others, you're actually slaying them.

In this the children of the devil are made manifest - because the devil is a murderer.

Revelation 12, verses 9 and 10 say that the devil accuses the brothers day and night. And just as God looks for co-workers, the devil also looks for co-workers, all over the world. What does the devil do day and night? Revelation 12,

"He accuses the brethren, day and night."

And I want to remind you that the devil doesn't lie to God. He doesn't tell God false things about the brethren, because he knows that God knows everything! He tells God the truth. And the Devil is looking for co-workers across the world - who will speak the truth in the spirit of the accuser. An accuser need not tell false stories. The devil tells God the absolute truth, but he's still the accuser.

You too can speak the absolute truth, and still be an accuser of the brethren.

Hereby the children of the devil made manifest. That's the way of Cain - and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear this: "No murderer has eternal life abiding in him." Whatever doctrine you may believe, whichever way you were baptized, whether you speak in tongues or not, whether you break bread or not, however long your skirts may be, "no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

Do you slay your brother or sister?

When Ham told Shem and Japheth that their father Noah was lying down drunk and naked, he spoke the absolute truth. He never spoke one falsehood. He said "Dad is lying naked, after he got drunk."

And for saying that, God not only cursed Ham, but cursed his children too. For what did God curse Ham? For speaking the truth in the spirit of the accuser. And that curse remains on all who accuse their brethren today.

From Genesis 9 onwards, all the way to Revelation 12, we read about many accusers who spoke only the truth. So remember that we don't escape by saying that we only spoke the truth about someone. Ham spoke the truth too. The devil also tells God, "I'm only speaking the truth..." . But he is still the accuser.

But Jesus also does something for us day and night. It says in Hebrews 7:25, "He ever liveth to make intercession for them...."

Consider a brother or a sister here who has some fault. Maybe he's drunk, maybe he's naked. But he's still our brother.

Most Christians begin their accusations long before they see what Ham saw. Drunkenness and nakedness are serious matters. But long before a brother goes that far, we may see some small fault in him - something that irritates us. Jesus sees it. Satan sees it. And we see it. Satan is quick to accuse. Jesus is quick to intercede. What do we do?

Both Satan and Jesus are looking for co-workers. We can take our pick as to which of the two we want to work with. Whenever you see a weakness or a sin in a brother, in that moment, you come to a fork in the road. There are only two ways at that fork - the way of intercession and the way of accusation. Jesus goes one way and Satan takes the other road. Now you have to decide which of these two ways you are going to take.

We all come to this fork often. And we don't usually stand there. We move forward. Some people think they're spiritual because they stand there without either accusing or interceding. They don't take either road. But that's not spirituality because Jesus has taken one road and He's not standing still.

When we accuse, we get into fellowship with Satan. But when we intercede, we enter into fellowship with Jesus.

By this the children of God, and the children of the devil are made obvious. The distinction between them is made crystal clear. There is no hiding it.

Why did Cain slay his brother? Let's turn to Genesis 4. Verse 3 says, "Cain brought an offering to the Lord. Abel also brought an offering to the Lord." Cain was not an atheist. Cain was a deeply religious man. The children of the devil are not all atheists. Most of them, like the Pharisees, are deeply religious. The way of Cain is not the way of atheism; it's the way of religion. It's also the way bringing offerings to God. Cain brought an offering. Abel also brought an offering. But notice something here. We may have thought that it was Abel's offering that the Lord accepted first. But read carefully. It says in the last part of verse 4: "The Lord had regard for Abel, and for his offering." It was Abel whom the

Lord accepted first, and that was why He accepted Abel's offering.

Don't read it the other way around — that the Lord accepted Abel's offering first and therefore accepted Abel. That's how you may have been taught, but that's not what the Bible says. We can believe many false teachings if we are careless in reading Scripture.

"The Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering. But for Cain and His offering He had no regard."

It was the same with Cain. God didn't disregard his offering but him. Therefore He rejected Cain's offering.

We may think, "If I bring the blood of Christ before God, I'll be all right". No, you won't, if your heart is not right with your brother. When you come to God's altar with the blood of Jesus, and there remember that your brother has something against you, your offering will not be accepted. "Leave your offering there," Jesus said, "Go and settle things with your brother first. Then come and bring your offering to God." (Matt.5:23,24).

Don't live under the deception that because you have trusted in the blood of Christ, you're all right. If you have slain your brother with your tongue, you must go and settle that matter with him first. Only then will the Lord have regard for you and therefore for your offerings. It is only the prayer of a righteous man that has great effect (James 5:16). If your heart is not right, God will not accept your prayers or your offerings.

Re: The Way of Cain (Zac Poonen) - Murdering or Loving our brothers? - posted by StirltUp (), on: 2016/8/26 10:04

Amen brother.

Let our words and deeds even on this forum also always be unto edification.

God bless,

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2016/8/26 10:27

Quote: "You too can speak the absolute truth, and still be an accuser of the brethren."

That is a deceptively deep statement that requires much consideration.

Re: - posted by JFW (), on: 2016/8/26 11:16

Brother Todd,

Yup, that one got me too!

Still chewing on it and boy is it a meaty word!

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2016/8/26 11:28

Quote:

-----Do you slay your brother or sister?

Quote:

-----Don't live under the deception that because you have trusted in the blood of Christ, you're all right. If you have slain your brother with your tongue, you must go and settle that matter with him first. Only then will the Lord have regard for you and therefore for your offerings. It is only the prayer of a righteous man that has great effect (James 5:16). If your heart is not right, God will not accept your prayers or your offerings.

A strong word and needed to be heard in our day.

Re: , on: 2016/8/26 11:50

Part of the context brother Zac spoke of is regarding Noah's son, Ham. Instead of being grieved and weeping over his father's failing, he was almost gleeful and perhaps coming across with a sense of "haha what a hypocrite". The scriptures are not that detailed about Ham's attitude but I think we can see that this lad had heart issues. Perhaps he was the kid who inwardly despised Noah's righteous preaching and was in a sense dragged kicking and screaming onto the ark? And then along comes the failing of his father and all of a sudden Ham feels justified in heaping scorn on his dad.

I may never have gone that far outwardly but inwardly I think I have had that same heart issue, for which I am ashamed and thankful for the Lord's mercy and forgiveness towards me.

I think if we were all honest we would admit that we have struggled, maybe just a little bit in this area? Especially with preachers and other believers who do not have much light or are struggling in areas where we have overcome?

Anyway, this was an important word for me to heed. God bless you all!

Re: , on: 2016/8/26 12:34

As long as we are in the flesh, we will struggle with wanting to retaliate.

Jesus was reviled by the religious community of His time. Even when He was on the cross they reviled Him wagging their heads in condescension.

Matt 27:39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

This wasn't just anyone that did this.

Mar 15:31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

How we treat others reveals our heart. Even those we consider enemies we are to love and not ridicule or revile or mock. In fact, we are to do just the opposite and bless.

Peter shows us the heart of Jesus regarding the mocking and reviling of Him.

1Pet 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, HE THREATENED NOT; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

Often, there is an opportunity to make your enemy your friend and most importantly a friend of God, by extending redemptive grace to them through love, by blessing and forgiving them in return. We see this in one of the biggest persecutors of the Christian Church.

Act 8:3 As for Saul, HE MADE HAVOCK OF THE CHURCH, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Act 9:1 And Saul, yet BREATHING OUT THREATENINGS AND SLAUGHTER against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

What was the Lord's response to Saul? Did He mock him, ridicule him, revile him, destroy him? No, He actually entered into conversation with Paul and communicated to Paul that Paul was persecuting Himself when he persecuted His people. Thus, Christ blessed Paul by not holding anything against him (forgave him). And we must do the same.

Act 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME?

Act 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

The Lord told Paul that he was "kicking against the pricks". Paul, very astute and learned in the scriptures may have thought of several things at this point.

Perhaps Paul reflected on Psa 2:12.

Psa 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Undoubtedly, he knew the story of Theudas or Judas of Galilee.

Act 5:36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

Act 5:37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

Perhaps he had heard about what Gamaliel pronounced.

Act 5:38 And now I say unto you, REFRAIN FROM THESE MEN AND LET THEM ALONE: for IF THIS COUNSEL OR THIS WORK BE OF MEN, IT WILL COME TO NOUGHT:

Act 5:39 BUT IF IT BE OF GOD YE CANNOT OVERTHROW IT;

.
. .
LEST HAPLY YE BE FOUND EVEN TO FIGHT AGAINST GOD.

We can take security in the fact that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church and that Christ is in control. We don't have to revert to weapons of the flesh to defend the kingdom of God. We can maintain our peace in God and not let anything to steal it away from us.

The kingdom of God is defended by walking as Jesus walked, being willing to suffer and be reviled, blessing and forgiving in return. These are the weapons of our warfare.

This way you save your soul, and may even save the souls of others.

Notice that Paul shows us all the things that cannot separate us from the love of God, except he doesn't mention self. Ourselves! Only I can separate myself from the love of God.

Rom 8:33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

Rom 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Rom 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Rom 8:36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Rom 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Rom 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Re: , on: 2016/8/26 14:56

Thanks Julius, timely message. I also had similar thoughts. Thanks op too.

In our church when I was a baby Christian the pastor used to say: Here is one more reason for you not to hate your brother. He is a Christian, God accepts him, and when he goes to heaven and you hate him you might find yourself in the situation that you don't want to go to heaven because he is there...

Re: , on: 2016/8/27 2:49

Hi Tozsu,

I also think of David and his general, Joab.

Joab was always ready to slay David's enemies, even though David was not. In the end, Joab's passion and hot temper, cost him dearly. David would never raise a finger against God's anointed (Saul), choosing rather to suffer, living in the wilderness with his band of men, always on the run from Saul's men.

One day, Joab kills David's son, Absalom.

Despite Absalom's sins against David, David loved him and gave strict orders to all, not to harm Absalom.

2Sa_18:12 And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom.

But Joab did not hearken to David who he always appeared to loyally serve.

2Sam 18:14 Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.

Joab did a lot of dirty work for David such as putting Uriah on the front lines where he would die. Perhaps this is what he remembers when he decided to kill Absalom. He saw Absalom as an enemy of David's kingdom.

2Sam 19:1 And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

It's sad when the Christian sees other Christians as enemies since the only enemies we really have are the powers of darkness. Men, who are our enemies we are to try to win to the Lord. We are to love our enemies and bless them and do good to them. Just as Jesus did.

Rom 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Re: , on: 2016/8/27 22:06

Julius,

Did you notice that when you pray about a situation where someone offended you, you may at the beginning worry about yourself and how to stop the offender, but as you pray, your thoughts are changing, what you ask from God is gradually changing and you end up worrying about yourself not doing the same to others, as well as the spiritual wellbeing of the offender. You end up praying for his salvation! I think that's what prayer is for: to align our thoughts with God's. If you have time listen to this teaching. You probably know all this but still can be an encouragement to you.
mp3 sermon message: goo.gl/aih5A3

God bless you,

Edit:

message is found here:

<http://theos.org/media/category/83/>

Title : Refuse to be offended

Re: , on: 2016/8/28 0:11

Dear Zsuzsanna,

It is an incredible and timely encouragement to me. Thank you! Your post reminds me that Jesus is really the Pray-er in and through us and that is why our thoughts will gradually change as our prayer becomes the will of God through the Spirit that helpeth our infirmities (because we do not know how to pray as we ought). When I turn to Him in prayer and pray in the Holy Spirit, He prompts me to only pray according to the will of God, asking Him to forgive and bless others while also confessing my own sins.

God always wants to apply the life of Jesus Christ in our particular circumstances and this is no less important in prayer.

Like everything in the Christian life, prayer that is not Christ-centered is not effective prayer.

Jesus derived all that he did from His Father and that also included His prayer life. "I do nothing of My own initiative" (John 5:30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10), Jesus said, "the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." (John 14:10).

As Jesus lived in faith and prayed in faith, He expressed the very character of God in all that He did and we can do no less if we live and pray in faith, vitally connected to Christ. In so doing, Jesus was "obedient unto death" (Phil 2:8). How will we be "obedient unto death", doing things on our own initiative and not having Jesus abiding in us and doing the works, which include prayer?

Have you ever noticed when you pray and are really in the Spirit, that Christ is praying in and through you? The Christian life is not what we do, but what He does in and through us. Everything in the Christian life is Jesus Christ in action as we depend upon Him in all that we are and do in Christ by His Spirit. Jesus is functioning in our prayers, also and this is the product of being united with Him.

While it is we who pray, we pray not in our own name but in the name of Christ, and yet it is not we but He who prays in us, so that the prayer which we pray in the flesh we pray in the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20)."

When Jesus Christ serves as the Pray-er of Christian prayer, we allow Him to express adoration and praise to God the Father through us. We have "been filled with the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:11) "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15).

He is "the High Priest of our confession" (Heb. 3:1), He serves as the Confessor who prompts my confession in prayer. As He is one with the Father He agrees and concurs with God to "say the same thing" about my sin and His sufficiency. "Through Him...our lips are confessing to His name" (Heb. 13:15).

The Spirit of Christ expresses thanksgiving to God in my prayers. I "thank God through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:8; 7:25), recognizing the "good grace" of God in all that He does.

And Jesus also helps us in intercession for others. He is THE INTERCESSOR operating in me and my prayers. My prayers are His prayers. "The Spirit helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26,27).

The Lord Jesus who indwells us and is the basis and foundation and the root of the Christian life is also the Pray-er of Christian prayer. We don't initiate prayer by human effort, it is prompted by the One who is our Life as the Holy Spirit is always giving us personal invitations to turn to God and draw from His grace.

Having a Christ-centered understanding of everything we do and are, helps me to understand what true Christian prayer is. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7). As

we settle into the reality of Christ being our life and remain in Him and His love (John 15:9) then our supplications will be His supplications and our intercession will be His intercession. To me this is the best interpretation of "praying in the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20), for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and in Christian prayer we are praying by means of the Spirit of Christ operating within us. James says to pray "according to His will" (James 5:14), and when we are praying in the Holy Spirit we can be assured that Jesus Christ in us will always prompt us to pray according to the will of God.

By remaining in Christ's love in all that we do, we are able to say, "the Devil has nothing in me". Jesus, our Confessor (High Priest of our confession) also leads us to confess our sins.

May the Lord continue to bless you. Your thoughtful and kind posts are always an encouragement to me.

Re: , on: 2016/8/28 21:59

Thanks Julius, it's hard to explain our unity with Christ through the Holy Spirit, but we experience it many times when we pray. I think that's what was meant by "Praying according to His will"

You said in the previous post:

Quote:

It's sad when the Christian sees other Christians as enemies since the only enemies we really have are the powers of darkness. Men, who are our enemies we are to try to win to the Lord. We are to love our enemies and bless them and do good to them. Just as Jesus did.

This is true.
However what would you do if you perceived that the other Christian really is a wolf? How would you treat that person? And what if your perception is wrong and he is not a wolf but only a weak christian?
I think it's safe not to attack the person but expose his deeds such as lying etc.
So here I answered my own question: We still are to love them. Even the wolves, but not their deeds...

Re: , on: 2016/8/28 22:33

I agree.

Interesting that Paul is actually calling people, "Darkness".

First he says that we (men) were sometimes darkness. But now are we light.
Eph 5:8 For YE WERE SOMETIMES DARKNESS, BUT NOW ARE YE LIGHT in the Lord: walk as children of light:

Then he says, have no fellowship with...DARKNESS, but rather reprove THEM. Not reprove works, but reprove the men that he is calling "darkness"
Eph 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

So, we are not to have fellowship with THEM and we are to REPROVE them. How can one have fellowship with darkness unless they leave the light, first? So, we are to continue in the light and avoid the darkness. Avoid the wolves.

Paul did mention "enemies", but said they were "enemies of the cross of Christ."

Php 3:18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

We also were once enemies to God.
Col 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

But, does the Christian have an enemy that must be burned at the stake or beheaded or is the wolves that call for men t

o be burned and beheaded?

Let the scriptures answer that:

Rom 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

The Lord warned us that He was sending us forth among wolves.

Luke 10:3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

And I never see Him telling us to slay the wolves but rather to flee them, avoid them and learn how to discern them.

True representatives of Jesus Christ only POINT others to Jesus Christ and not to themselves. True representatives of Jesus Christ do not seek personal followers, nor are they obsessed with your pocketbook, nor do they control your life, or pretend that they have "authority" over you as if they are your Lord and Master. There is ONLY ONE MASTER--JESUS CHRIST (Matthew 23:8-10), and any human leader who proclaims that they are your "head or master or spiritual father" is a liar and a wolf--1 Corinthians 11:3 "But I would have you know, that THE HEAD OF EVERY MAN IS CHRIST... ."