

# PARCHMENT

AND HE SAID UNTO ME, WRITE: FOR THESE WORDS ARE TRUE AND FAITHFUL.

REVELATION 21:5



*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*  
2 Corinthians 10:5

## THE INVALUABLE LESSON OF CAIN

In the battle against evil, there is one lesson which every victorious Christian must learn. It is this: the little victories are the big victories. The little sins are the big sins.

At times, you might be led to think that it's the large sacrifices and the great duties that constitute man's sanctification. By thinking thus, your mind is led to relax in the everyday moments. You aren't focused on guarding the avenues of the soul, and in an instant of powerful temptation, your mind slips away. Perhaps you indulge an envious thought; think romantically about your old life, or simply dwell more heavily upon earthly ambitions than spiritual goals. Then, as the moment passes, you fail to recognise your small thought as being a sin of much consequence, and you continue on with your day. Yet by night time when you're kneeling down to pray, you don't feel quite right. In the back of your mind lurks some remote feeling that today you have fallen short of God's ideal.

There has to be a solution to this problem. There has to be a key to breaking the spell of the 80% Christian.

When I first heard the story of Cain and Abel as a little girl, I was perplexed by the fact that Cain was evil for choosing a sacrifice of fruits and vegetables. To my young mind, these foods were healthier than meat, and therefore seemed to be an honourable offer-

ing. I soon learnt that God's requirements were given for a specific purpose. They were to demonstrate that "without shedding of blood [there] is no remission [of sin]". God's command for a perfect lamb was to remind Cain and Abel that Jesus was their lamb; their atonement was totally dependant upon Him. By choosing not to comply with God's requirements, Cain was allying himself with the arch rebel, and seeking to attain atonement by his own terms.

But God had not yet rejected Cain. As Sister White states, "He condescended to reason with the man who had shown himself so unreasonable". (PP 74) Abel also sought to reason with him, and "reason and conscience told [Cain] that Abel was in the right," but having chosen the path of partial obedience, Cain continued on to greater transgression, attacking the justice and goodness of God.

At the first, Cain did not wholly disobey God. Inspiration declares that "Cain obeyed in building an altar, obeyed in bringing a sacrifice; but he rendered only a partial obedience". (PP 72) Indeed, it was this partial obedience which led to the first murder of the human race.

You might think that if God required from you some kind of physical gesture, you would obey His command to the letter. But does not God require the perfect obedience of your



will? Does he not ask that you love the Lord your God "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind"? Matthew 22:37. The truth is, if your heart, and soul, and mind are not with Christ, you are rendering only a partial obedience.

Sister White plainly reveals that Cain and Abel had the same opportunities to become sons of God. Cain was not predestined to a life of rebellion. The sole difference between the two was that "Abel chose faith and obedience; Cain, unbelief and rebellion". (PP 72). Only through the power of choice were Cain and Abel's destinies fixed. As small as it may seem, it's the character of one's daily thoughts that ultimately lead to decisions for God or decisions for self. Could this be the key to breaking the spell over the Laodicean church? Through the prophet Isaiah, God declares:

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55:7

Isaiah's use of parallelism highlights what it means for the wicked, or even the common sinner, to forsake his way. It means to forsake his thoughts. This is how the sinner forsakes his way. The process begins not with outward acts, or even one's words, but in the mind. Once holy thoughts are assured, Isaiah confidently asserts that God "will have mercy upon him...and abundantly pardon" that wicked man.

This infers that until each and every thought is held in captivity to the obedience of Christ, we are falling short. Yet what does it mean to bring one's thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ?

In Philippians 2:5, we're instructed to "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus". By the power of God, each of us may possess the single-mindedness and focus of Christ towards the things of heaven. Each of us may possess the selfless, persevering willpower of Jesus. But like Cain and Abel, this mind is something that we are to choose. Sister White notes:

"God wishes us to have the mastery over ourselves. But He cannot help us without our consent and co-operation.... Of ourselves, we are not able to bring the purposes and desires and inclinations into harmony with the will of God; but if we are 'willing to

be made willing,' the Saviour will accomplish this for us, 'Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' 2 Corinthians 10:5." (AA 482)

Here, Sister White concludes that it's only when we choose to cast down our evil imaginations, forsake our selfish thoughts, and bring our every thought into the obedience of Christ, that the Saviour will help us gain the mastery over ourselves.

Remember, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh". Matthew 12:34. The thoughts unguarded will soon turn into our words and actions. This is the reason why "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matthew 12:36. All idle words have their origin in the thoughts. And it is here - in the mind - that they're to be forsaken.

Inspiration declares: "we cannot discern the character of God, or accept Christ by faith, unless we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. To all who do this the Holy Spirit is given without measure." (DA 181).

Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the earth till the close of time. One accepts the sacrifice of Christ and obeys His commandments, while the other depends upon his own merits. The latter class, like their father Cain, cherish a sense of self-security. This is the foundation of compromise. This is the cause for their sin; an attitude we must wholly forsake.

We cannot be safe for a moment without our Saviour. If our mind is left to relax, and our thoughts to run free, they are sure to fall away from the right. But if through Jesus, we choose to cast down our evil imaginations - however small they may seem - the God of Abel will help us to gain the mastery over our minds, and the victory over sin.

The little victories are the big victories. The little sins are the big sins. To feel self-secured is to be self-deceived. Your offering will not be accepted by God and eternal destruction will be the result.

"Almost but not wholly saved, means to be not almost but wholly lost." (COL 118)