

The Big Cat

In the late 1980s, a church member gave me a copy of a computer Bible program. It was on 14 floppy disks. The opening statement was to make copies of the program and pass it on. Also, on the opening page was "If you find any mistakes, please let me know." So, over the years, as I found mistakes, I let Larry know. We became good friends over the web, and this last summer we were able to visit him and his wife in Canada. While we were there, he told me that he was working on an interlinear Bible, and hopes to have it finished within the next year.

Then, several weeks ago Larry asked me if I would read over the interlinear he is preparing, and he sent me the book of Genesis. The interlinear brought out a point that I had never considered in the past.

Our text is,

KJV Genesis 4:3 *And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had 1) respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had 2) no respect. And Cain was 3) very wroth, and his 4) countenance fell. 6 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. 8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*

Let us look at some words:

- 1) **had respect:** To look at with approval.
- 2) **no respect:** God looked on Cain's offering with **disgust**. God paid no attention to Cain's offering, and turned his back on Cain.
- 3) **wroth:** Because God looked on Abel's offering with respect while rejecting his, Cain **was consumed with great anger**.
- 4) **countenance:** The face identifies the person and reflects the inner attitude and sentiments of the person.

According to the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament:

"In the Bible the 'face' (along with the other parts of the body) is described not merely as an exterior instrument in one's physiology, but rather as being engaged in some form of behavioral pattern, and is thus characterized by some personal quality. It is only natural that the face was

considered to be extraordinarily revealing vis-a-vis a man's emotions, moods, and dispositions.” (TWOT)

In other words, the countenance of the face reveals the inner soul of a person.

Here are a few of the several descriptions of the **countenance of the face** in scripture:

Hard face: Defiance, **Jeremiah 5:33** *O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.* (This countenance is particularly easy to see in children.)

Impudent face, forward or bold: **Proverbs 7:13** *So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him,*

Shamed face: defeat, frustration, humiliation, **2 Samuel 19:5** *And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines;*

Shining face: Joy and peace with God, **Psalms 104:15** *And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.* **Job 29:24** *If I laughed on them, they believed it not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down.*

I met a young nurse at the VA hospital the other day. When we were finished, she walked me out to the waiting room, and I asked her if she was a Christian. She said, Why do you ask? And then she said, Yes, I am. How did you know? I told her that it was the countenance of her face. I asked her why she was not married, and if she wanted to marry. She answered yes, and said there are no men worth marrying.

Flaming face: Overcome with terror to where one shakes uncontrollably, **Isaiah 13:8** *And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames.*, **Daniel 5:6** *Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.*

Fallen face: Very strong anger or displeasure, **Genesis 4:6** *And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?*

V. 7, **If thou doest well**, or if one please God. **Our attitude toward God will show in our countenance and actions.** It is quite easy to see into the heart of an individual according to the countenance of their face. Many times, their countenance will show us what kind of prayer they need.

I know a pastor who is very proud of his position, yet his countenance is the darkest I have seen even on unsaved men.

Now, to our text,

God is speaking to Cain in **Genesis 4:7** as found in the interlinear. The context is wrath, or intense anger, and clarified for me the meaning of God's words to Cain:

If <0518> %you do well <03190> (8686), **are %you not** <03808> accepted <07613>? **And if** <0518> %you do not do <03808> well <03190> (8686), sin <02403> **is lying** <07257> (8802) **at &the door** <06607>. **And its desire** <08669> **is for %you** <0413>, **but %you** <0859> — **%you must rule** <04910> (8799) **over it.**"

(Sin is treated as an "it," or something that has being in itself.)

God told Cain: Sin lies at your door and it desires to rule over you, but you must rule over that sin in order to be accepted by Jehovah God.

Genesis 4:3-8 is the best and only true and trustable commentary on the New Testament as God's statement to Cain is explained in the **New Testament. The New Testament authors develop** the doctrine of sin as stated v. 7; they continually warn that sin lies at the door of every man, and waits to pounce on and rule over man, including professed Christians. The power of Christ did not stop sin's **desire to rule**; rather, Christ's power provides the strength for his people to rule over sin.

Cats:

Bettie's youngest daughter's family has a cabin rental business in Hocking Hills, Ohio. The office/house is located at the bottom of the good size hill where the cabins are located that look out over the valley. The cabins are hidden in the woods where they cannot be seen. It is not unusual for stray cats to show up at the door of the house. As they have kittens, guests take the kittens home. Every time the door is opened just a little, the cats try to get in. Sometimes, no matter how hard one tries, some do get in. And then one must hurry to get them out as they try to hide.

One stray that showed up was a large un-neutered tabby tomcat. He was extremely friendly and, evidently, he had lived in someone's home. He was more than a nuisance to Bettie's daughter as he insisted on coming into the house every time the door was opened. We like to have cats around our house for basic rodent control, but not in the house. We put a cat door in our garage door so they can come in and out of the attached garage. We have had several cats, and evidently coyotes have eaten them. We wanted an un-neutered tomcat who still had his claws, hoping he would be able to defend himself. So, we brought him home.

He lies just outside our kitchen door to the garage, and when he sees us going toward that door from the garage, he makes a dash for the door. Or he sits just outside of that door, and at the slightest crack he tries to force himself in. We have to fight to keep him out. Sometimes he gets in and certainly does not want to be put out. He has sharp claws, and he is willing to use them to be able to stay inside. Then we must pick him up by the scruff of the neck, and carry him out.

Sin: As with the determined cats that seem to have no concept of the word NO when they see the chance to invade a home, **sin lies at the door.** Sin is always ready to invade at the slightest opportunity. **It** will claw against any effort to expose and remove **it.** One must fight to keep **it** from gaining entrance, and when **it** does get in, one must search everywhere with the light of God's word to find **it**, so it can be cast out.

V. 7, Cain **burned with violent anger:**

First, anger at God because God accepted Abel's offering and not his, Cain's anger toward God was so strong that he took that anger out on his brother, and killed him.

Second, his anger could have been motivated by envy toward his brother because Abel succeeded where he had failed. **Envy is connected with many evils**, including strife, hatred, and murder: Acts 7:9, Romans 1:29, 9, 1 Timothy 6: 4, Titus 3:3, &c.

The entire New Testament develops the theology of what God said in v. 7. The New Testament explains the proper blood sacrifice needed to please God, the utter worthlessness of any works one might do to please God for remission of sin. It warns of the danger of and the tenacity of sin. It defines how sin can be and must be ruled if one will have the **respect** or the approval of God.

Galatians 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

The **context** of God's words to Cain is Cain's uncontrolled anger. Did Cain blame Abel for his rejection by God, and kill him?

One of God's New Testament explanations of Genesis 4:7 is

Ephesians 4:26 *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil. 28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye*

kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

All of us have been **angry**, sometimes angry enough to wish or even work harm on the object of our anger. We have seen how fits of anger can control a person enough to do bodily harm.

However, there are many things we are commanded to be angry about: ***Be ye angry, and sin not.*** That is, be angry enough to take **godly** action, but that anger must not control us.

4:7, God made it very clear to Cain that from the time of the Fall, sin is as a lion, prowling the premises looking for the slightest opportunity to pounce and devour its victim. It is looking for every opportunity to rule over its victim.

1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

Sin is exceedingly deceitful. It can creep in, and hide itself even behind good works:

Hebrews 3:13 *But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

We must continually examine ourselves in the light of the word of God for any spirit of anger that may be hiding there.

Romans 6:12 *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

From the cradle to the grave, sin desires to reign over us. There is no rest in this warfare against sin that seeks to take control of our spirit. And it will come out in our countenance and in our words. Therefore, God requires that we continually compare ourselves with the Word of God:

1 Corinthians 11:28 *But let a man examine himself,*

And even pray that God will reveal that hidden sin, so it might be cast out:

Philippians 3:15 *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*

The means of purification is provided in

Titus 2:14 *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

A Christian must not be like other men, but must always be watchful for even little sins:

1 Thessalonians 5:6ff. *Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*

The context of Genesis 4:7 is the anger, bitterness and wrath that Cain had in his heart. Rather than controlling that anger, he allowed it to control him.

1 Corinthians 10:11 tell us that *all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

Lessons for us

- 1) We must understand that all anger and rebellion is against God. We may take our anger out on our brother, sister, parents or anyone around us, but it is against God. David said, *Against thee, and thee only have I sinned.*
- 2) The ungodly are so angry at God and his law-word that they must take that anger out on the innocent, particularly on God's faithful people.
- 3) Cain gave place to the devil, allowed his anger to take over, and he killed his own brother.
- 4) Paul made it very clear that anger is a primary way sin gains control. In Cain's situation, he was told that if he did not control the spirit of anger and wrath, that spirit would control him, and it did as he killed his brother
- 5) The power of Christ does not stop that desire of sin to rule over us, but the power of the resurrected Christ breaks the power of sin, and allows his people to rule over sin.
- 6) By force of will, we might be able to control our spirit and put on a good outward appearance, but the countenance or look, on our face and many times the spirit in our words will betray the attitude of the heart.
- 7) How many times have we caused frustration on the face of others? They may not say anything to us, but it is in their face. My mother used to say to me, "Ovid, you exasperate me to no end."
- 8) Sin cannot be controlled by the law, but only by the grace of God working in the heart of the individual. It is the Spirit of Christ who will change the countenance of a person by changing the attitude of the heart.

9) Victimization. Cain was convinced that he was a victim of God. Cain knew better, yet he was angry because God refused to accept the works of his hands as an offering for sin.

Everyone desires to paint themselves a victim rather than take personal responsibility, e.g., the so-called opioid crisis is not the fault of the drug manufacturers, but is the fault of the users; the mass shootings are not the fault of the gun manufacturers, but is the fault of those holding the gun. There are multitudes of people killed in car wrecks, but there is no public outcry for the car manufacturers to stop making cars.

10) Cain denied responsibility as he said, *Am I my brother's keeper?* But he could not hide from God, nor can we. God held him responsible as he placed his curse upon him and his **seed**. No one is held responsible for anything, which is a message all in itself.

Remember Frank Sinatra and "**I Did it my Way**?" When we do it our way and fail, rather than take responsibility, we blame God or others.

11) I have noticed that as we get older it is much easier for various distresses to control us.

John 8:36 *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

Ephesians 5:1 ¶ *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*

We live in a sin cursed world, and we should not be surprised when sinners act like sinners. We must rule over that sin in order to please God or to be accepted by Jehovah God. We as Christians have the power and authority to take control of that anger and rebellion against God.

How many times have we refused to take responsibility, particularly before God? *Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, i.e., "Show yourselves strong, put forth all your strength and courage, and once for all act like brave and valiant men,"* or you will be servants unto sin. (Poole, 1 Sam 4:9)

2020 needs to be a year for taking responsibility as required by the Word of God. Determine that the upcoming year will be a year of serious study of Scripture of seeking out hidden sins, so the Spirit can clean house of any spirit of anger. (Matt 12:44)

Psalms 119:135 *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.*