

98-03-01a

This is the 1st of March, 1998. As we continue our worship this morning, turn with me to Proverbs chapter 15. Proverbs chapter 15.

Almost always when I'm in the Old Testament, I remember the old rule that if you crack your Bible in half, you usually end up in the Psalms, and then I go from there. It must work pretty well. I actually received a Bible at a church in Tulsa, winning a sword drill in vacation Bible school or something.

So it served me well. We're going to be in Proverbs chapter 15 this morning, and as we read this, we want to keep in mind the context of our study in Genesis. We're looking at Cain and Abel.

We know that the whole episode of the murder of Abel came about because Cain was unhappy. It says his confidence fell. And God asks him about this before the murder and says, if you do well, is there not forgiveness of sin? Is there not a lifting up from sin? But if you do not do well, the croucher is at the door, the one that dwells in the dust.

His desire is for you, but you must rule over him. And so God faces Cain with the issue of choice. Abel, when they first came to make the sacrifice, reflected the attitude in his heart, an attitude of faith.

We saw that documented for us in Hebrews chapter 11, where it says, by faith, Abel offered that acceptable sacrifice. And it was obviously a lack of something on the inside that caused God to not accept Cain's sacrifice and not to accept Cain. God says in his word that man looks on the outward appearance and the Lord looks on the heart.

It was not that Cain just refused to come offer a sacrifice. He went through all the motions, did the same thing that his brother did in terms of bringing the minkah, the voluntary offering. But something on the inside rendered that offering unacceptable.

Well, the truth that pertains to that is found here in Proverbs chapter 15. So watch for the contrast between those who have the attitude that Abel had and those that have the attitude that Cain had. Proverbs 15, a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

A fool despises his father's instruction, but he who receives correction is prudent. In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but in the revenue of the wicked is trouble. The lips of the wise disperse knowledge, but the heart of the fool does not do so.

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loves him who follows righteousness. Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way, and he who hates correction will die.

Hell and destruction are before the Lord, so how much more the hearts of the sons of men. A scoffer does not love one who corrects him, nor will he go to the wise. A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness. All the days of the afflicted are evil, but he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure with trouble.

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted calf with hatred. A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention. The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, but the way of the upright is a highway.

A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother. Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment, but a man of understanding walks uprightly. Without counsel plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

A man has joy by the answer of his mouth and a word spoken in due season, how good it is. The way of life winds upward for the wise, that he may turn away from hell below. The Lord will destroy the house of the proud, but he will establish the boundary of the widow.

The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but the words of the pure are pleasant. He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live. The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.

The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous. The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and a good report makes the bones healthy. The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise.

He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility. A wonderful chapter of contrasts of the eternal and abiding principles of orientation toward God as the first principle of life.

It makes a difference what we think far more than what we do. What we do flows out of what we think, and our life is thought. Yet it is easier to work on what we do rather than on what we think, because we can generally make changes in our pattern of behavior.

What's difficult is to make a change in our heart. In some areas it's impossible without

the power of God. It is impossible to control the impulses of the heart apart from the power of God.

This was demonstrated in the history of Israel, who as the people of God and yet apart from the power of God, tried to conform themselves to God's law and to God's standards. Standards of morality, standards of social justice, standards of behavior, of loving one's neighbor and treating each other rightly. Yet apart from the power of God, even though there was an outward show in those things, Jesus came and said, you've got whitewash on the outside, but you've got dead men's bones on the inside, and God looks on the heart.

Charles Stanley, a few years ago, was preaching and made a very powerful statement to his congregation and his church when he said the reason we like religion and the reason we like the righteousness by works that is often put forward as being Christianity, if you attend church, if you give some money, if you engage in some form of ministry, if you get out and try to evangelize, we like that because it's easy. We can pick certain times of the week, certain occasions, and do these things and convince ourselves that this is righteousness, this has satisfied God and has satisfied the need for righteousness, and it lets us off the hook. We let ourselves off the hook and think that the requirement on our lives as believers is satisfied.

Yet God's requirement and God's calling on us is minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, and it is in the heart. It is the thoughts and intents of our heart. Many people have a variety of reasons for giving to charity.

Almost all celebrities give to charity. Why? It's important for their image. Lots of sports figures involve themselves in charities and involve themselves in what we would call good and worthy works.

And a lot of good, from a human point of view, is accomplished. The question is, are those things good in the eyes of God? The extreme example that I am fond of giving you is Al Capone. He gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to charity.

Do you think that God was impressed? And God will sort of lighten the sentence a little bit or look a little less harshly on Al Capone for all of his many crimes and murders because he sort of balanced the scale with these good works. Well, the question is, what was in his heart when he gave to charity? And it isn't even a matter of was he compassionate. It's a matter of did he do these things because he recognized that this was something that pleased God.

We cannot serve two masters. We either serve God or we serve ourselves. And as altruistic and as wonderful as we may think some of our thoughts and motives are, if the root and the foundation is not recognition that God is the sovereign God, God is the righteous God, we as believers have been purchased with a price, the blood of Christ.

We belong to Him, and it is our calling and our opportunity to serve Him in every single thing we do, washing dishes. It makes a difference why we do it. Do we just do it out of rote duty? Do we do it grudgingly? Do we do it because somebody's got to do it and we sit there the whole time saying, why am I always stuck doing the dishes? There are other people in the house that ought to be helping out.

They dirty the dishes. Why am I always doing the dishes? Well, God doesn't look at did the dishes get washed. God looks at what was going on in our heart as we did these things.

And this clarifies for us the nature of our life. It's not just a matter of doing good things. It's a matter of thinking in a way that pleases God and that glorifies Him.

And it's a far greater challenge. It's a far more important function in life. This is the issue that's introduced in Genesis 4 and illustrated for us in the contrast between Cain and Abel.

If you'll turn with me now back to Genesis 4, we'll resume our study. We have already seen over the course of the last few weeks that Cain is the firstborn son. And the principle of the firstborn carries through the Bible all the way down to Christ who as God's only begotten is the heir of all things that belong to God.

The privileges that pertain to the firstborn in Israel are spelled out in the law. And they belong to Cain. He is the first child ever born in the human race.

He is heir to the covenant, heir to the blessings, heir to the family priesthood. Everything that belongs to Adam will be passed on to Cain. He's the seed.

He's the offspring. And Eve points this out in verse 1. She says, I have gotten a man. I have acquired an ish.

Ish meaning the word for a full grown man in Hebrew. She says this is the sign of Yahweh, the sign of the Lord. We discussed the translation there.

It doesn't mean I've gotten a man from the Lord or I have purchased a man from the Lord. This word is the word for sign. We're going to see that again this morning.

Why that is so important. Because throughout the scripture God marks important prophecies, important covenants with a sign. This shall be a sign to you.

This is a sign of the validity of a prophecy, for example. You see that in Isaiah. So Cain is the man of the sign.

He's the man of the mark of God. This is the mark of the fulfillment that what God said in the garden to Adam and Eve is true. As these two brothers grow up, Abel is born.

They grow into early manhood, no doubt. And in the meantime, by the way, other sons and daughters are going to be born to Adam and Eve. But these are the first two.

The process of time, it came to pass, or after a year. In verse 3, it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. Abel brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat.

The Lord respected Abel and his offering, but he did not respect Cain and his offering. It doesn't say that Cain violated some technicality here. It doesn't disqualify his offering because it is grain and not meat, because it's not a blood sacrifice.

This is a ninka, which in the law is not generally a blood sacrifice. It's a voluntary offering. It's a firstfruits type of offering.

It's perfectly legitimate to bring the firstfruits of the crop. Although it doesn't say that Cain specifically brought the firstfruits, like it does of Abel. Abel brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat.

You think about this, the firstborn has just been mentioned in this chapter, hasn't it? Who is the firstborn? It's Cain. And yet, who recognizes the principle of the firstborn and brings the firstborn of the flock to the Lord? It's Abel, the younger brother. He understands the principle.

And this is an act of faith. It doesn't say that Abel had faith here and Cain didn't. How do we know that? Well, think about this.

If you are a shepherd or you're a goat herd and you're wanting to build stock, you're wanting to grow your herd and your flocks, what do ranchers, whether they're sheep ranchers or cattle ranchers, what is the principle? How do you increase your herd and make it the highest quality that you can? Well, you take the best bulls and the best heifers or you take the best rams and the best ewes and you breed them to increase the finest qualities of those finest animals. And then the finest and the best of the offspring are the ones that you cultivate. And if you're going to keep some for breeding stock, which ones do you think you're going to keep for breeding stock and which ones are you going to slaughter for food or for other purposes? Well, the ones that are not so good are the ones you would kill.

You want to keep the best and the fruit of all this labor of breeding and tending and caring for and helping them birth and so on. And yet God, both in the earliest days of sacrifice and explicitly down in the Law of Moses says, the firstborn of the flock, bring to me and sacrifice. Well, now think about this.

You've worked, you've slaved, you've carefully bred these things and you get these wonderful offspring and now God says, well, take the one that doesn't have any flaw, no spot, no blemish, the perfect one, the best one that you get that year and bring it down

and sacrifice it to me, kill it. It's not going to have any offspring. This requires some faith.

This requires some trust that God is going to prosper you in spite of the fact that you're taking the cream of the crop and sacrificing it to God. It is inherently an act of faith to bring the firstborn, to bring the best, the lamb without spot and without blemish. The Passover lamb was the best of the flock.

And this defies all the laws of selective breeding, doesn't it? People that believe in evolution say, you know, it's survival of the fittest. That's what you want to perpetuate. Well, this is what Abel does.

He brings the firstborn of the flock, the very best. When it says of their fat, it doesn't mean the fat of the animal. It means the fat of the flock.

The cream of the crop is what he brought. So inherent in this is an illustration of faith. He trusts that God is going to honor his efforts in tending the flock.

It's also a wonderful foreshadowing of the role that the shepherd and the sheep will play in later biblical communication. Abel, in a sense, has chosen a symbolic vocation as a shepherd tending sheep. This will be David's vocation.

Jesus Christ will call himself the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep. But Cain, bringing of the labor of his hands, an offering from his vegetable garden, his fields, is not respected and is not accepted. He's very angry and his countenance falls.

Now, anger is a sin. Cain apparently did not bring his offering in faith and is therefore unacceptable to God. His reaction is not one of contrition.

It's not one of questioning. Lord, what have I done? If I've messed up, I didn't mean to. Show me what I have done and let me correct it.

His pride is offended here, isn't it? He says, my younger brother is accepted. I'm the older, I'm the firstborn, and I'm not. What's the matter with God that he doesn't accept me? And he becomes angry and his countenance falls.

Cain does not go to God, does he? He doesn't seek out the Lord and say, Lord, what have I done? Where did I misstep? How can I have done this correctly? God comes to Cain in verse 6. The Lord says to Cain, why are you angry? Why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, is there not forgiveness of sin? We saw last time we had to delve down into the Hebrew a little bit and correct a textual problem here, looking at the gender of nouns and so forth. But we have seen that it is highly likely that the word sin has fallen from the first line to the second and belongs in the first. And we find that out by the gender agreement of verbs and nouns here.

If you do well, is there not a lifting up or a forgiveness of sin? And if you do not do well,

God repeats that verb from which we get the noun tov, which is good in Hebrew. Yatov means to do the good, to produce the good, to be associated with the good. If you do the good, if you do the acceptable, is there not a lifting up of sin? If you do not do well, if you do not yatov, the croucher is at the door.

His desire, and the agreement there is between that verb for desire and the croucher. They're both masculine. The word for sin is feminine.

And so it doesn't say that sin crouches at the door that the noun and verb do not agree. But the lifting up of sin makes perfect sense in the first line. If you do not do well, the croucher is at the door.

Who is the croucher? That's what we studied last week. Who is it that dwells in the dust? Who is it that crawls on his belly and eats dust all the days of his life? Where is the enmity, where is the strife and enmieship going to be in the human race? It's between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. If you do not do well, the one who dwells in the dust, the one who has not lifted up from sin, you're going to be down with Satan.

You're going to be down with the serpents. You're going to be in that realm. You're going to be in his area, the arena of the cursed earth.

His desire is for you, but you must rule over him. And this is the conflict, the enemyship that God spelled out and introduced in the curses in the garden, back in Genesis chapter 3. I will put enemyship between you, serpent, and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. Well, does Satan have some sort of an angelic wife and he's bearing offspring and these are his seed? Who are the seed of the serpent? Well, back in chapter 3, we studied that.

And it is our choice whether we are the seed of the serpent or the seed of the woman. And the important thing to remember is this is not our salvation choice. It doesn't mean that if we're unsaved and lost and hellbound, lake of fire types, that we're the seed of the serpent.

This is a choice we make in lifestyle. It is possible to be saved and be seed of the serpent. Peter was a believer.

Peter became an apostle. Peter was a disciple of Christ and had been for several years when Jesus said, Get thee behind me, Satan. You are thinking the thoughts of men and not the thoughts of God.

We can, for all intents and purposes, be the seed of the serpent, even as believers, if we think his thoughts, if we look at life from a man-centered perspective instead of a God-centered perspective. If you do well, is there not forgiveness of sin? Even though your offering has not been accepted and now you've committed the sin of anger, there is a

remedy. We're going to see that remedy again spelled out this morning in a couple of passages we're going to.

This remedy is available. This is the remedy that Adam and Eve availed themselves of in the garden. When God said, What is this you have done? Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it? And they acknowledged that sin.

They confessed that sin before God. And this was the basis of God being able, even in the midst of a terrible situation, to turn cursing to blessing. Yes, you have the fall.

Yes, you have the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. But there's hope. There's promise.

There's provision. There is blessing, even outside the Garden of Eden, in the fallen world, even with a fallen nature, because there is an acknowledgment of God. There is humility before God.

And there is acknowledgment of sin. Adam acknowledges his sin. Eve acknowledges her sin.

The serpent does not, of course, acknowledge his sin. And Cain here does not acknowledge his error, does he? He says nothing. He doesn't even answer God's question.

Why are you angry? Why has your countenance fallen? Cain doesn't answer. God asks him another question. If you do well, is there not forgiveness of sin? No answer.

Unresponsiveness. God asks Cain question after question, and Cain does not respond. Who is initiating here? It's God.

Who is rejecting? Who is stonewalling? Who is refusing to humble themselves, refusing to acknowledge error? It's Cain. And the consequences are going to be dire. So, in verse 8, Cain said to Abel, his brother, and then in the Masoretic text, the text that most English versions rely on, there's a gap.

There's a loss in the text. We can fill that in from the Samaritan Pentateuch, from the Septuagint, from the Syriac, from almost all of the early versions, have what's missing in the Hebrew text here. Cain said to his brother Abel, let us go out to the field.

This word, field, is very interesting. The three consonants here are S-D-H. Sada or Shada.

And this is not the word for earth, and it's not the word for ground. We have Eretz for the land. We have Adama for the ground.

But this word specifically is the uncultivated wilderness, the field. This is not the corn field. It's not the wheat field.

These are not Cain's cultivated crop fields. Cain said, let's go out to the wilderness. Now, what do you think is going on out in the wilderness? This is the place where Abel pastures his flocks out in the uncultivated land.

He doesn't go in there and feed them Cain's grain crops. So, they've gone out to the field. So, he's accompanying his brother out to where the sheep are.

And when they are in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him, killed him. Cain still is not interested in coming to God. He commits this heinous act, and you can see a progression.

He begins with faithlessness. He doesn't come to God offering a sacrifice in faith, a voluntary sacrifice. A minkah is not a requirement.

It wasn't a command from God. This is a voluntary. But in bringing his voluntary sacrifice, he isn't doing it to please God.

He's doing it for some other reason, something other than faith. And Paul says, whatever is not of faith is sin. So, his first error is in coming before God with a sacrifice when his heart is not right.

Then he becomes angry, and that's his second sin. His third sin is in rejecting the counsel of God, rejecting the word of God. And when God comes to him and faces him with the issue in verses 6 and 7, he doesn't respond.

He isn't interested in taking advantage of the remedy. So now, one thing leads to another. And it's like it says elsewhere in Scripture, if you take fire into your bosom, can you avoid being burned? He's got this sin inflammation that he's not diagnosing and that he's not treating with the remedy from God.

And it's going to infect his entire life. And it culminates in the murder of his brother, Abel. So, God comes once again to Cain.

In verse 9, the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel your brother? Does God know the answer to this question? Yes, he does. So, why does he ask it? He's expecting an answer, isn't he? What are Cain's options to answer this question, where is Abel your brother? If he answers it truthfully, what will that constitute? Confession, acknowledgement of sin. My brother no longer walks the earth.

He's no longer in the fields because I have killed him, Cain could have said. That would be acknowledgement. That would be confession.

That would open the door for forgiveness. That would open the door for the remedy. But Cain once again, this fourth time, refuses to avail himself of the grace of God.

God initiates, Cain refuses to respond. And he lies. Lies in the face of God.

I do not know, he says. He knows very well where his brother is. His dead body is laying out in the field.

I do not know. So, am I my brother's keeper? Why are you asking me this question? Am I responsible for my brother? Am I supposed to know his whereabouts? This is a sort of a sassy attitude manifested here. God says in verse 10, what have you done? Another question that Cain never answers.

Cain never acknowledges. The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now, obviously, this is poetic language.

Blood does not make a noise, does it? When it hits the ground. What is God saying here? The fact of the murder of your brother is in front of my eyes. I know what you have done, God says.

There is an uncorrected, grievous wrong. And it's an issue. God says, it's hard for me to even hear you, Cain, because there's this other voice crying out.

There is this grievous breach that has not been corrected. After all of these opportunities to confess and the refusal to confess, God does the same thing here with Cain that he did with the serpent in the garden. He says, now you are cursed.

This is the first time since the serpent was cursed that an individual is directly cursed by God. Adam is never cursed. Eve is never cursed.

The ground is cursed. The serpent is cursed. But here, Cain himself is the object of a curse from God.

I cannot think of a worse position to be in. Now you are cursed from the earth which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. Because Cain will not acknowledge his sin, God spells it out for him.

When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth. Cain said to the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear.

Surely you have driven me out. What a whining response. This isn't as bad as what Abel has suffered, is it? At least he's alive.

But he's still operating in this self-centered, what does this do to me? He was worried about his prestige, probably, when his sacrifice was not accepted. He was worried about having to go to his brother to obtain a sacrificial lamb to offer the sin offering. When God said, if you do well, there is a remedy.

There is forgiveness of sin. It's time for Cain to bring an animal sacrifice at the point that he acknowledges sin before God. Now this is not the voluntary offering of the minkah.

Now he needs to bring a blood sacrifice, as we know from Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He fails to do so. And here still, he's all concerned with himself and the impact on himself, not the breach of the justice of God, not the murder of his brother.

My punishment is greater than I can bear. Notice how many times you see the first personal pronoun, I and me, in these verses. My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Surely you have driven me out this day from the face of the ground. I shall be hidden from your face. I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth.

And it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me. This is something we can watch for in our thinking and in our conversation. If we find a preponderance of that first person pronoun in our thinking and in our conversation, this is a red flag.

Wait, wait a minute. Why am I suddenly putting myself at the center of the universe? I like to call that the pre-Copernican universe. You remember Copernicus? He was reviled and expelled from the scientific community because he dared to suggest that the universe did not revolve around the earth.

For hundreds of years, people had believed that the earth was at the center, and all of the stars and all of the planets and the sun and everything else all went around the earth. And Copernicus looked up in the sky and made his charts and his observations. He said, you know, really the only way I can explain the motion of the planets in particular is to see that there's a solar system, and the sun is at the center of the solar system, and all of the planets, including the earth, revolve around the sun.

Well, this religious people attacked him. You mean God doesn't have the earth at the center, and scientists attacked him because they had already published their works and put themselves on the line? And so Copernicus was reviled, and yet later on he was proven correct. Well, we often live in a pre-Copernican universe.

We think everything revolves around us, and everything ought to, and that the celestial bodies all have their orbits and their paths through the sky because of us. And we need to remember that there is a center of the universe, and as much as I hate to admit it, it's not me and it's not you. It's God.

Everything revolves around God. Like it or not, admit it or not, confess it or not, believe it or not, God is truly at the center of the universe, and everything depends on what he thinks, what his policies are, satisfaction of his righteousness, his justice. Life with him for eternity is the only thing that counts.

Cain is very far from that. Everything revolves around him. His fate is greater than he can bear.

He's going to have problems. He can't till the ground anymore. He's not going to have

any fun.

But God makes a promise to Cain. God makes a covenant promise to Cain. In verse 15, the Lord said to him, Whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.

You want to remember that sevenfold. The Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. And here is that ironic parenthesis.

The opening verse of this chapter, chapter 1, Eve says, I have acquired a man, the ot, the sign of Yahweh. And here at the end, in verse 15, the Lord set a mark, an ot, on Cain. He's the man of the mark.

He could have been the fulfillment of the seed of the woman. Eve says, here's the seed of the woman. Here's the next man in the human race.

This is the sign of God. He could have been a marked man for good, for the fulfillment of the covenant promise. Instead, he's a man of the ot, all right.

He's the man of the mark, but it's a mark because he's under a curse. It's a mark because he is the sevenfold curse. And so, in verse 16, Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.

Very significant. This isn't just a geographical reference here. Cain went out.

It doesn't say that God departed from Cain, does it? Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. Well, we need to understand very clearly what the issue is here. Because God puts it at the beginning of the Bible because this is the issue.

This conditions everything else in the Bible. It conditions everything else in human history. What is the problem that has resulted in this terrible fate for Cain? God talks about unacceptable sacrifices.

And it is a terrible thing that today in Christian circles, in Christianity, Christian literature, Christian media, Christian TV, Christian radio, Christian churches, and most importantly in Christian lives, we are making the same mistake that Cain made. I believe that Cain is going to be resurrected with believers. I think he is a believer.

Why else is he bothering to bring a sacrifice to God? Why else does God make him a promise? And I'll show you some additional reasons for that this morning. But he is a picture of those for whom the issue is not eternal salvation, it's obedience. That's why God says, if you do well, is there not forgiveness of sin? If you are obedient, in other words.

This is not an issue of faith per se, faith for salvation, belief in God, and acknowledgement of Him as the supreme being of the universe. This is an issue after

salvation of obedience. How do you bring your sacrifices? Well, who else do we know that had this problem? How about the nation of Israel, for whom God spelled out in great detail the way to offer sacrifices, who in many cases came and offered those sacrifices, and yet they were not accepted.

God had to discipline the nation of Israel. God had to drive them out of the land of promise after delivering them from Egypt, under the blood of the Passover lamb. The picture of salvation.

You have Israel, delivered, redeemed, bought out of slavery, given the promise of the land, the promise of prosperity, and life with God, the presence of God in their very midst. And they go through the motions of the Mosaic law, the Levitical offerings and the feasts and so forth, and yet God rejects them, just the way He rejects Cain. And as a result, what happens to the nation of Israel? They are driven out of the land.

They have to live out scattered among the nations. There's a very powerful foreshadowing and prefiguring of this principle that starts with Cain in the nation of Israel and forward throughout human history. So, for example, look at Leviticus chapter 7 and verse 18.

Leviticus, the word Levi there in the name, this is the things pertaining to the Levites. The Levites were the priests, the sacrifice offerers, the ones who maintained the religious life of Israel. So, in the book of Leviticus, you're going to get all of the Levi stuff, all of the rituals for sacrifice and so on.

You look at Leviticus chapter 7 and verse 18, and here it says, in the midst of talking about an offering, it says, if you do the wrong thing, if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering is eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted. Well, we need to back up. Here's someone who has come to God and has offered a sacrifice, but if he makes a mistake in the way the sacrifice is performed, that sacrifice will not be accepted.

We need to back up and find out what exactly is going on here. So, go back to verse 11 of chapter 7 in Leviticus. This section is talking about the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that Israelites could come and offer to God.

This is not the redemption offering. This is not the one that pictures salvation. This is a peace offering.

This is a restoration to fellowship. This is a restoration to qualification to come before God and worship. And this is an offering that can be offered by way of thanksgiving.

Look at verse 12. He can offer this peace offering for a thanksgiving. And he can offer, with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, or cakes of blended flour mixed with oil.

Beside the cakes, as his offering, he can offer leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offering, and so forth. But then in verse 15, you have the technicalities of this particular voluntary offering. Not a required offering, not a specific day or occasion that it has to be offered.

This springs from the heart of the offerer, just the way Cain and Abel's sacrifice did. The flesh of the sacrifice in verse 15 of the peace offering for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until morning.

That's the ideal. When you bring this sacrifice, you actually partake. You eat a part of this meat.

But, if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow or a voluntary offering, notice this is voluntary sacrifice, it shall be eaten the same day that he offers the sacrifice, but on the next day, the remainder of it also may be eaten. You can spread this out, consuming the sacrifice over two days, if you so desire. Verse 17, the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day must be burned with fire.

If it was a big animal, and you didn't consume all of the meat on the first day and the second day, you don't eat any of it on the third day. Wow, this is just mumbo-jumbo. It seems like a very arbitrary thing.

God's just making up rules as He goes along. Well, we're going to study Levitical offerings one of these days. Every single one of these details has meaning.

Most of it foreshadows the work of Jesus Christ. What do you know about three days related to Jesus Christ? What's the big deal with three days and Jesus Christ? No sign will be given this generation except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, even so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth, how long? Three days and three nights.

He told his disciples several times that he would be killed and that he would be in the grave for two days, and on the third day he would rise again. Whenever you see that number cropping up, that's one of the things to watch for. Is this a prefiguring of the work of Christ? Just very briefly, without going into all the details of the sacrifice, why is it that this sacrifice has to be finished up and not continue to be consumed on the third day? Because what happens on the third day? Resurrection.

The penalty is paid, the physical death is over with, and now you have resurrection. The third day is the day of resurrection, not the day of continuing to have Christ on the cross, not continuing to look at the problem. Now you're looking at the solution.

This is one of the problems, just from a semantic point of view, with using crucifixes. The Catholic Church and even some others like to use crucifixes. We have sort of an instinctive frown on our face when we see that, but just from a symbolic point of view,

we as believers recognize Christ as the risen Christ.

We understand his work on the cross, but we look in retrospect. He has not only been crucified, but he is risen and is coming again. And that's why Protestant crosses don't have Christ on the cross.

We don't dwell, we don't stop at the point where he's on the cross and continue to eat the sacrifice on the third day, so to speak. We acknowledge the fact that Christ is risen, and this is the age of life, this is the age of new birth, this is the age of growth and fruit bearing, not continuing to fulfill the purpose God had in the Old Testament of focusing on the problem. Anytime you want to improve, anytime you want to learn something new, anytime you want to fix a difficulty, what's the first step? Look at Alcoholics Anonymous, read the big book.

What is the biggest hurdle for an alcoholic or any other form of addiction? You have to arrive at a place of acknowledgement of the problem. That's the biggest step. People can even go through the motions of the STEP program or Alcoholics Anonymous or whatever, but if you don't in your heart acknowledge that there is a problem that you can't lick on your own, you can't recover, the reason AA works is that they encourage people and bring people to the point of acknowledgement, confession, I have got a problem and it's bigger than I am, I need outside help.

That's a terrific principle and the reason AA is so successful is that this is a principle of human life, this is a principle from God. You're not going to get anywhere until there's acknowledgement that I have a problem that I am responsible for and I don't have the power to fix it. I need something from the outside.

And this is essential for healing, it's essential for recovery and this is why God built it into the religious life of Israel. This was Cain's problem, he never acknowledged that he had a problem. He refused to, even when God confronted him face to face, and this tells you the power of our own volition.

We can reject even Almighty God face to face and say, nothing wrong with me, leave me alone. But this is the offering and it can be rejected by God because of someone looking at the offering not as a Thanksgiving offering, not as a vow offering, not as a voluntary offering, but it's more important to me to finish up the meat, I don't want the meat to go to waste. The meat is more important to me than pleasing God.

Even in the midst of doing what God has commanded, here is a violation, the meat is more important, the substance of the sacrifice is more important to the person than pleasing God and so they don't burn the meat on the third day, instead they finish it up, get that last beef steak or whatever it is. And God says, if they eat of it on the third day, that offering is not accepted, it will not be imputed to him, it shall be an abomination to him who offers it and the person who eats it shall bear guilt.

