

What Kind of Being is Man? Part 3

By Paris Reidhead*

Let's bow our hearts in prayer. Father, how grateful we are to Thee today, for the privilege of serving Thy hours and times and days like these. And we ask that somehow because of our thinking together, and praying together. Because of asking questions and seeking answers because we are making ourselves available to Thee for all that Thou has want to do in us, for us, and then through us our lives can render to the Lord Jesus that fuller measure of glory that He deserves. So we ask Thee today to find us where we are and meet the most pressing need we have. No two of us are in the same place before Thee; no two of us have quite the same need. The stage of our growth and development is different, consequently Father, no speaker can speak to all the needs, all the concerns, and burdens and problems to a group like this. That dost reveal to us that Thy Name El Shaddai, the God who is enough and Thou are enough for every need. So fit something to every heart we ask for in Jesus' sake, Amen.

Now if you would go back with me a little bit in your thinking. We've been talking about man. What kind of a being is he? This morning as we were going over the tape of the last meeting, my family said, You know, we don't think that's going to get anywhere, that series on "What Is Man?". It's got to be changed. What is person? Because today you know we'll be in trouble if we publish a book "What is Man?" It's going to really pull us down a little. So what is man in that generic sense? What kind of a being did God make when He made one and said in His image and His likeness and describes that person as being good?

Incidentally, you've given me a very warm welcome. The air conditioning isn't on? The window is open. Is there a fan? Years ago, I was pastor in a little country church and the funeral director put fans in the pew, you know. He'd come around every spring and put them in. And I recall once a terribly hot day. It is just insufferably hot. Every fan was going like this. And it was really a little tricky. I shouldn't have done it, but I used an illustration of a boy freezing to death of an arctic flow. And I described the blizzard and the wind. And those fans got slower and slower and slower and stopped about the time that boy just became immobile, there wasn't a fan moving.

We saw that man was made in the image of God, given the ability to think, to imagine, and to choose. And had he not been endowed with these qualities, he never could have been described as being made in God's image. We saw that temptation is the proposition presented to the mind to the intellect to satisfy a good appetite in a forbidden or an evil way. We went into some detail in the first study in dealing with those appetites. I simply recapped now; God gave to us urges and drives, propensities, appetites for the following - for food, knowledge, and security, for authority, pleasure, and sex. For each of these there was a purpose and with each of them there was a legitimate and a proper means of satisfaction. And temptation was the proposition presented to the mind of in the first instance Mother Eve to satisfy a good appetite - an appetite for pleasure, an appetite for status or authority, appetite for food in a forbidden or an evil way.

Now if you'll hold that in mind, that this ability to imagine to see what wasn't as though it were. And then the power to choose that sin had its beginning in the human heart in experience in the fact that God endowed us with these capacities, these abilities. To think, to imagine and to choose. And the result was that there was a decision by Mother Eve to eat. And in so doing she yielded to temptation and she sinned. Then she came back and as it were confronted Adam with the accomplished fact that she had done this and he had now the responsibility to choose whether he was going to stick with God or stay with her because she had made a decision and he now as the federal head of the race, made a decision not that he was beguiled and deceived, but he made a deliberate choice which was that he was going to stay with Eve and that he was going to decide how to be happy. He was going to determine what he would do with his time and his life and his energy and his intelligence.

He made a choice. And the result of that choice, her sin, and Adam's choice - both were choices for that matter - was that the sentence was imposed. "The day thou eatest thou shalt die." (Gen. 2:17) We dealt with several aspects of that death. Man began to die physically. Physical death is the consequence of sin, the penalty of sin. He didn't die instantly and that led to sort of a misunderstanding thinking that at the moment he eat he would fall down for not having any knowledge of death, he didn't quite know what it was of course - but it didn't occur quite as it was thought, because He began to die. Death was imposed but it didn't occur instantly. Physical death therefore is part of the penalty of sin.

And then legal death. He died legally, that is he lost all claim upon God. No longer could he look to God for protection and sustenance or anything of the sort. He had forfeited that. And he died spiritually in that God knowing whom he lived and continued to live and move and have his being, did not reveal himself longer to man. He didn't reveal Himself any longer in that personal, intimate, warm sense. Oh, He came into the garden and sought him and there was revelation of God indeed, but that conscience fellowship with Him - something happened spiritually in that man now instated rebellion is no longer in that same kind of intimate conscience fellowship with God that he is subsequent to regeneration, and we would assume before the Fall.

Then there was a fourth aspect of his death and that is eternal separation from God. In each instance we saw that death has to do with separation. Physical death is separation of the spirit from the body. Legal death is separation from the claims upon one who previously had been responsible and now no longer had to be responsible. And of course spiritual death is separation from God in that sense of an intimate and immediate awareness. And of course eternal death would be consignment in an appropriate environment for one in that state. We would think of that as hell or as the Scriptures reveal it. So consequently, we have recognized that temptation is a proposition presented to the intellect to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way. Sin is the committal of the will to self-pleasing and self-gratification. And the penalty - death - is separation, not annihilation, in any instance that we have seen as it were death so used, rather separation.

Now, it's important for us to understand something of his, man's moral character at this time as he leaves the garden and there is an angel to keep him from returning. What kind of a being is it that walks out and walks out into the world too? Now work is ill and havoc upon it? What is he? Well, in the first place he is a traitor because sin is treason. Treason against just and proper government. He has betrayed the rightful sovereign, the only one wise enough and good enough, powerful enough, to deserve his obedience and his service, but he betrayed Him. Sin is treason. But it's not just treason.

An act of treason might be understood but there's something a little more. The Bible describes the sinner as being insane, up is down, down is up, right is wrong, wrong is right. And so we find that it's not just having not just committed an act of treason but he's also a rebel living in a state of continuous rebellion against just and proper government. This is set forth in Scripture throughout, from the beginning right on through to the end of it. Man is in rebellion against authority, the authority of God, as well as the authority of the state, and the authority of the family. He's a rebel, a traitor and a rebel. But there's something else about him. He's an anarchist, having betrayed just and proper government, he's now established the principle, I will do what I want to do. Every man did what was right in his own eyes. This is anarchy. And so that man who left the garden and those of us that have followed since have had this kind of a character in relation to God. Anarchy. I'll do what I want to do.

There is something else then that we have to see. We are not only traitors and rebels and anarchists, but transgressors because God has established, put up a fence so to speak to, protect you from me and to protect me from you. Thou shalt not steal, lie, murder and so on. But the history of you and me and this family of which we are a part is that when I want something you have I'll cut the fence. I'll transgress. I'll go across that fence.

We lived on a farm in Minnesota when I was a young man and a boy growing up. And every fall we got kind of frightened. You know when you wanted to go around and take a can of paint and paint cow on sides of animals for fear they would be mistaken for a pheasant or a duck or something. Because you let a man from the city get a new gun, a new coat and a belt of shells, and he's going to shoot something - that's why he's done it.

So we had one pasture, probably 100 acres of poor land. And we had some young stock that was grazing and hopefully were growing. And we had it pretty well fenced. But the neighbors told us the first year, now look when fall comes these crazy people from town come up and you better post every 25 feet, you better post that land. And so we put no trespassing, penalty of the law, we didn't know who was going to enforce it but that's what they told us to put. Signed our names, put up signs, and then we said now, sensible, respectable people will, people aren't like that.

We found out. About 5 days after hunting season opened, we got a telephone call. It had come from three different farm families and they said, We had a call from so and so and a call from so and so, that there's a group of young stock about 5 miles from here and we just got to talking about whose it would be and it looks like yours. So we went out and sure enough, with a

shot gun they had blown all the no hunting signs off of the trees out along the road. Target practice you know. And then they had come to a place where, they could drive in and so it was obviously cut with clippers that part of the city hunter's outfit you know wire cutters. And they had gone in and cut the wire, wrapped it around the post and driven in as far as they could. They had good boots to walk, but who wants to walk if you can ride. So they had gone into the woods down the road and then they had gone out and they left it open. And our young stock had gone out way down the road.

Now that's transgression. They wanted something. There was a fence there to protect us from them and when they wanted it badly enough they cut the fence. And this is what transgression is. It's going across the line that protects others from you. And incidentally, it depends on which side of the fence you are, protects you from others.

We found then that man by nature now, by disposition having made sin a supreme ruling choice of his life has become a traitor, a rebel, an anarchist, and a transgressor. He's prepared to cross the lines, move over into the other side. And then we find one other thing about this man, there might be others, but only one that I'll give you now, and that is that he is an enemy of God.

The Bible tells us that the carnal mind is enmity against God. It's not subject to the law of God and neither can it be, of course it can. If God is, if you betray Him and rebel against Him, then you are His enemy. Now, I didn't say He is your enemy or the sinner's enemy at all. It doesn't say that. The carnal mind is enmity against God. I didn't say that God is enmity against the sinner. But the carnal mind is at enmity against God.

So here we are, this describes us, this is the picture and it's born out, God says, such a thing as this. Is there one righteous? "Not one righteous, no not one." (Rom. 3:10) Why, what's he do it? He's sitting there watching at the gate as everybody comes in and watches until they reach the age of accountability. And He says "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? "I, the Lord that searches the heart." (Jer. 17:10) And the picture is God with a microscope or an X-ray machine looking inside. Everyone that comes, finding me one, just one whose heart is right toward Him. But no, to the contrary finds to the heart, set to do evil, fixed to do evil.

Now that's what the Scripture tells us about man. But this is not what the enemy tells us. Remember what he said, You'll be as God and you'll be like God. If you just eat you'll be like God.

So today we find, and it's been for a hundred years, it's been much longer than that. In fact, you can trace it through the centuries and I don't propose to do that now. Though it's an interesting study. That throughout the centuries and more recently it's been said that man is good, man is good, the law is wrong, the rules are wrong, the standards are wrong.

For instance, in Ephesus, and it was in other cities in Asia Minor, there were actual rules against right. There were people driven out, they were hounded out of town because they were righteous. They do not do as the custom of this town is drunk and immoral orgies, and they didn't do that so they had to be driven out of town because wrong had become right and right had become wrong. And they couldn't tolerate it.

Alright, so what's happened in the last hundred years? Well it's this, that man is good, man is essentially good. The only thing that's wrong is the environment is wrong. It's the environment that makes man sin. And if we could change the environment somehow, then the innate goodness and rightness of man is going to be manifested. It's the economic exploitation of man that makes him behave in this fashion. But if we can just do away with the exploiter, then the innate intrinsic goodness and rightness and wholesomeness of man is going to be manifested. That's one of the things we're going to be seeing down the road.

Because who's the author of this? Well, it's the god of this world that's the author of it. He's the one who brought man into this state or enticed him, beguiled him, drew him into this state. Now, this man is at the point where he is described by God as being a traitor, rebel, an anarchist and transgressor and enemy. Of course, the one who is the god of this world doesn't like to have this kind of a description of his product, what he has achieved and accomplished. And so he turns around and says man is intrinsically and essentially good.

Alright, we're going to pursue the Scriptures because it's this in which we're interested. We want to find out what God's Word has to say about such a thing. Let's just look at a few Scriptures here. Genesis the 6th chapter and the 5th verse. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continuously."

Now that's quite an indictment. And it describes a generation that God visited with the flood. He was so disturbed by what He saw that he purposed to start all over again and he found one man who was not intermingled with the accursed descendants of Adam and so He then said Noah, I'll start over again with you.

Now He did, but how successful was this? Well, you see He carried the same infection into the ark with him. And he had a fresh start. That generation has been judged and had been destroyed. But we find that the descendants of Noah have not undergone because they were 40 days in the ark, it did not mean that their character was any changed and we soon find that there's a replication of what proceeded it.

In fact, it's even a little worse. In a few generations you have Nimrod. And the King James says Nimrod was a mighty hunter. That word hunter in the Hebrew is rebel. And Nimrod was a mighty rebel before the Lord, against the Lord. And he organized that rather small family of earth in total organized rebellion against God.

And what you have in the Tower of Babel is organized human religion saying that man is good and God is bad, man's conduct is righteous and God's law is unrighteous, and that there has to now be a system of philosophy or religion that endorses and supports the conduct of man.

So Nimrod, we are told by Hislop in his book "The Two Babylons" and he has pretty good archeological, historical evidence for suggesting that Nimrod took his father's wife Semiramis in an incestuous relationship and made her the queen of heaven. Remember the promise that Satan made - ye shall be as god to Mother Eve - now it's being fulfilled and Semiramis is being set up as the queen of heaven and is under Nimrod's guidance getting a whole new code of ethics and morals and conduct which is totally contrary to everything God has written on the human heart and everything that God has revealed.

So we have an organized religion now that has come about subsequent to the flood. Before the flood God said that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth and every imagination of the heart was evil continually." But as bad as it was and as worthy of judgment as it was, it never came to the point that it did under Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. That never happened before, so if God was righteous in judging what had taken place in pre-flood period, judging that generation with the flood, how much more so would He have been just in judging the generation of Nimrod? But there comes a time when God has spoken. God has said "This is what I think about sin and the message is out." It's been said and no amount of how when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost and they came into the assembly and they died. If everybody that lied to the Holy Ghost has died the way Ananias and Sapphira did, boy, there wouldn't be even, there wouldn't be anybody to preach and there wouldn't any ushers to even take up the collection, either. And it would cut things right down to a bare core. You and I might be there, but boy, it would be lonely.

But God has spoken and He has said this is what I think about it. This is My attitude towards it. And He spoke with the flood; this is what I think about it. And He spoke with the Tower of Babel and dispersed the people and confused their tongues. And He said this is what I think about rebellion. Then we come down a little further and we find that in Sodom there's a people wholly given up to inverted morality. And God judges the place with fire and He said this is what I think about it, this is the kind of crime it is. This is the moral vulgarity and crudity and criminality of this conduct. And He spoke it. Now, He hasn't gone on doing at every point.

I remember years ago they had "The Bible: In the Beginning..." published and John Huston had in the motion picture. And my son James and I went to it and when we came out I said, "Jim, what's your reaction to that film?" His eyes were pretty big and he said, "I get the idea that God doesn't like sin." Well that was an understatement from a high school student.

But if you read the Scriptures you get that idea too, it's there. God just doesn't like sin. He's pretty severe about it. With the flood and the confusion with the languages, with the destroying of the cities. God's saying something. There's a message in it if you'll listen real close. This is what He thinks about sin, this is the kind of a being that man is. Now, I hope I've established this and that there's no real challenge about it.

That this is, you know in your heart, then you know it's true - I know - I asked a group of people once "How many of you are saved? How many of you know Christ in a real experience? Raise your hand." There were about 100 people there and all the hands went up. I said, "Let me ask you, how many of you have ever been lost and you know you were lost and you were aware of it, a conscience awareness of your lostness?" And four hands went up. "Now," I said, "conscience awareness of lostness. I didn't say how many of you believed the Scripture that said you were lost. But I wanted to have some idea because I had been talking about that theme .. How many of you have ever seen your own heart? How many ever realized just what you were?" And there were four hands.

Now, I'd ask you the same question. I'm not asking you to raise your hands. How many of you know that you've passed from death to life that you've been born of God? Then, you've answered that question - do you have in your mind a recollection of a time when you were aware of how lost you were? Have you ever seen yourself? You answer that question. I don't know what your answer is and I'm not asking for any exhibition of your decision.

I'm saying this that if you've ever seen your lostness then you've discovered that you are capable of every sin that was ever committed by any member of the human race. That's one of the most startling, offending things that one can experience. Dramatic, to have discovered that the seed of every man's sin is been planted in the seedbed of your heart. Now, they didn't all grow, perhaps there wasn't room. Too many of certain kinds were going and there wasn't room for other kinds to get sprouted. But what you discover about your heart as long as you go on with God is that nothing that anyone ever did that you weren't capable of doing.

This is a horrifying revelation. It's frightening to realize that the horrendous things that some have done I was capable of doing. I lacked incentive, I lacked opportunity, I lacked pressure but I had the capacity. I had the capacity. I could have done it. And the only but, for the grace of God I didn't do it. But I could have done it. And that is to my mind one of the first steps towards righteousness.

Samuel Rutherford, who some have said is one of the holiest men of which we have records. And some of his lovely books he expresses the devotion and love for Christ that just makes you weep as you read it. To see this dear man at 83. He said "The longer I walk with God and the nearer I come to the time when I will see Him, the more I realize the abysmal depth of iniquity in the human heart." And he said "The longer I go from that day when first I -acknowledged myself a sinner, the more I realize what it requires." Something to the effect, "what it required of Jesus Christ to redeem me." What He had to pay, what it meant. He was saying that in these many, many years, he had met the Lord early in his youth, that the longer he had gone on with God and the closer he would come to Him, the more he was aware of the capacity of his heart for sin. And I think that one sees that and understands that. Then there's no real challenge to the fact that sin is the pervading principle of human conduct. It's a basic fact.

For many years in my early years in the ministry, the extreme liberal theologians were talking about the innate goodness of man and the fact that any teaching about sin was to be considered psychologically destructive. But after the Second World War, some of them began to talk about the sin factor they called it in human conduct, in human attitude.

Now let's go back. What is it? It's the committal of the will to the principle and the policy of pleasing one's self, the end and the rule of life. And that can lead to any conduct anyone has ever done in pursuit of that principle of pleasing himself. There's nothing that anyone has ever done of which everyone is not potentially capable.

Now, what happens when we repent? What is repentance? I've given you some definitions. That repentance is the decision of the mind, of the will, to no longer live to please and gratify oneself as a supreme end of being. But, it is the decision to live, to please and to gratify God. That's the nature of repentance. So a repentant person is one who has seen the nature of the crime

and having committed his will to pleasing himself, and who has changed his mind about this and has committed his will that from point on to please God.

So we're dealing now with trying to get in perspective what happened after man fell and what kind of a being it was walked out of the garden. And what kind of progeny has he been putting into the world ever since that first pair left. And the answer we've seen is that all that have come from that first family have at the age of accountability, repeated the crime of father Adam and mother Eve and have themselves committed their will to the principle of pleasing themselves, living to satisfy and to gratify themselves, we're thus sinners.

Now let's go back and ask ourselves some other questions. What did this do? What did this factor of sin do to the capacities that man had received from the hand of his creator? We see something of what it's done something of its extension. But now I want to ask you what didn't it do? Well, if you go back into Genesis you'll find that it did not in any ways affect his ability to invent, because the sons of Adam invented musical instruments and the art of metal working and developed cities. And so we find that there was no effect on the creative abilities of man. His ability to imagine, that is to see what wasn't there and to bring it into being, was not affected. Oh his imaginations were evil in that moral sense, but he was also functionally capable of using that which God had invested in him, that which God had given to him as an endowment. It was used wrong, it was used in the wrong direction, for the wrong end, but that ability had not been impaired by the Fall. He could invent musical instruments and a scale and music. We don't know much about it but we know he did. He could invent instruments and tools for working with iron. And he could make a ship according to the directions that God gave. God could give a verbal direction and he could transfer it into a three-dimensional reality.

In other words, he could read blue prints and follow plans, and he could proceed to accomplish the things that he had been instructed to do. When God dealt with Noah, He told him just the kind of a vessel that he should make. And He gave him the dimensions of it and the specifications for it.

So whatever else sin did, it did not affect man's ability to change his environment. It did not affect his ability to imagine, to see, to picture, to plan and then to proceed to accomplish his plans.

I think one of the most telling articles that came out in the 60's about the young people that were revolting on the American campus, came from the long shoreman philosopher Eric Hoffer. He wrote an article in some magazine. I saw his name in the article and so I bought it. I don't generally buy the magazine and I couldn't tell you what it is exactly, but I read it and still have it filed. But he was describing what was happening to the young people on the American campus. And he drew this analogy, he said the young people all of sudden became aware of problems; social problems, economic problems. And they felt that the problems shouldn't exist. And so they ran and were screaming onto the campus and into the streets saying these problems have got to go away. But when they didn't go away, with the first scream or lunge or kick, then the young people in their desperation decided that the one thing they could do was identify with the victims of the problem and he used the term and he said in using the term, speaking of the black community of America, is the community he singled out among several that had been deprived of certain privileges and goods and participation in the stream of American life, he said these young people saw that the black community was deprived and so they rushed out into the streets, screaming against the problem, kicked against the difficulty, and when it didn't solve itself by a scream and a lunge and a kick, then they joined the problem. They joined the victims of the problem. And he said what we see today is the negrification of a generation of American college youth, which is giving no satisfactions to the black community. But he said what it is doing is evidencing one of the great tragedies of our educational system, that they've been told so long that they are of animal ancestry and they've evolved from an animal origin and that they're the victims of forces that they can't control, that they have begun to act in an instinctive animal response to a problem.

Now years ago on the farm in New York State we had some riding horses. And we enjoyed them for the time we had them. We found that there was a considerable amount of intelligence. Flame, when he got thirsty, we had a hose. It was very dry. And we had a tub out there, a half a barrel. Flame would put one foot into that barrel and then he would kick it. And boy, that was the water bell, I want some water. We could hear the ring across the farm and we knew Flame was asking for a drink.

And Beauty would knock down the rails on the fence. We had some rails we put up in this particular pasture. And in the morning we'd wake up and move around and we'd hear whinnying at the window. She'd been standing there for an hour or so, she knew we were sleeping so she just stood. But as soon as there was any noise in the bedroom she'd, you know, I'm ready for breakfast. And so we tied a rope on that rail and so she chewed that. And when we would come out in the morning, the rail was down. She was using her teeth as a tool.

We found that when they got into a squabble over the (there's a) pecking order with the horses you know bring a new one in, I'll tell you they're going to find out what the order is. The first one comes and eats the others (back away) bag of wyes. Beauty, they would get up there and they would fight. And if they wanted to get away, they'd run. They're animals with a little bit of evidence of intelligence made it pleasant, but they didn't plan. I mean, you never, you saw them out there with their heads together, but they weren't saying now tomorrow, here is what we are going to do. That wasn't what was happening. You know. The only one to whom God has given that kind of ability is man. To see a problem, to measure a problem, to weight its difficulties, to analyze its complexities and to start out today with the goal down the road of doing something.

I suppose highest dignification man as a being is the moon shot, getting man to the moon. It was it 1962, when President Kennedy, said, During this decade we're going to get men to the moon and bring them safely back. And someone said, 33,000 problems later, they did. But it was man that was able to see the possibility of it. And developed the procedure of accomplishing it. And step by step solved one problem after another.

And fallen man, rebellious man, sinful man, was endowed by his creator with the capacity to do that. And the Fall did not affect that capacity. That is what I'm trying to say. Sin did not obliterate that ability. Man carried that ability with him. After the moral degradation had set in. He still was capable of picturing in his mind and then proceeding to accomplish what he pictured.

Nimrod sitting around talking to his family and rebelling against the message come down through these few years from the time of Noah against this God that wants man to live in the holy life of respecting the rights of others. And he is revolting against God. And he is saying you know what we really ought to do fellows, is build a temple. And touch way up to heaven and just knock God off His throne. We can do it! Because we have got the engineers and the architects and we can do it! And we know how to make the best most solid mud bricks that have ever been made. And so here is these fellows sitting around planning and talking. Somebody else sat around and he said you know see that thing up there, oh we got to get somebody up there to find out if it is green cheese or not. And so the decision was made that we're going to send someone in this decade to the moon.

I saw a cartoon a while ago, a fellow standing on his balcony looking up and "May gee that's beautiful isn't it?" There is a picture of the moon, bright. And the host said, "Yes, but you should have seen it before people started walking on it." But walking on it was just a hopeless idea. Now, there's a rule someone, I don't know where it began, but it's true. I think there is a tremendous amount of truth. It says this, whatever the human mind can conceive and can believe, it can achieve. Now, I'm going to repeat that, whatever the human mind can conceive and can believe, it can achieve.

I've dwell in some length on the effect of the Fall. I hope you realize I haven't minimized it and the nature of sin and the crime of sin. Now, what I'm talking to you about is the intrinsic endowment that God put into man, which was not rescinded, amended or withdrawn because of sin. God had given to us, given to our kind, this family of men the ability to see, to imagine, and then to plan, to organize our efforts and our resources to achieve what we have seen or planned or imagined.

Now, I think we ought to dwell on that. We have to reinstate this. Because today we are hearing a great deal about man being the helpless victim of his environment, of his circumstances of his conditions. And the Bible doesn't tell us that. It tells us that he is a monster of evil. And he set his heart to do evil. But evil does not, that does not in any ways counteract or remove the investment God made in man giving him the power and the ability to change his environment. So if you'll accept that, if you're with me to this point, you better be careful, because I know where I'm going and you don't. If you don't fight me along the way in your own mind and clarify, you're going to end up where you didn't expect to be.

So just got to do like the Bereans did and search the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so. Because I believe very firmly that's time that we rediscover what the Bible says about man. What kind of a being he is. What his powers are. What his weakness is. What his crimes are. And what his potential for ceasing in those crimes.

So let's then think. Here is this first pair, they have sinned, they have been judged the coats of skins have been made and the Lord has driven them from the garden. And set an angel at the garden gate to keep them from going in lest they should eat of that tree of life and thus live forever. So now they're out, it says "Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and bare Cain. And said I have gotten thy man from the Lord. And she then bares his brother Abel. And Abel was the keeper of sheep. And Cain was the tiller of the ground. It came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock" (Gen. 4:1-4)

Here are men that have decided on their, on their occupation. One's going to be a farmer and the other is going to be a herdsman. Tremendous intelligence and ability implicit in this. And sometimes when I try to picture in my mind what Cain's offering was, I can see the kind of thing we use to have at the county fair when all the women of the grange got together. They put the wheat into a nice little bundle and the canned goods and the vegetables and shined it up. Weren't those attractive? How long has it been since you've been to a county fair or state fair and saw what they had put up? It's beautiful! And that's what I kind of think Cain did. He had brought all the things he had grown. The nicest and he polished them and he put them up there and said Lord, look what you've done. You've given me intelligence, and you've given me the soil, and now I've gone ahead and tilled the ground as You've said. I've been fighting the weeds. Look here it is, Father. Here it is, this is it.

And it could very well be that Abel is the rascal of the two. I kind of think so, it takes after a lot more discipline, and a lot more effort and a lot more attention to detail, in some respects, to be a good vegetable grower, than it does to take care of some sheep. You know, sheep do a lot of it themselves. You just protect them a little bit they're going to do a lot. Abel was kind of a, well I would rather have a few sheep out here gives me more free time in the afternoon. And Cain, if you've done any vegetable growing, you don't have much free time.

He's disciplined, organized, and he presents this it's an effort a reflection of his intelligence, his abilities and his talent and his discipline. And Abel brings a sheep, and Abel puts it up and I think Abel had a pretty guilty conscience. I think Abel was pretty well aware of the kind of fellow he was. Probably had a pretty good idea what kind of a person what kind of a citizen he was. He figured that he needed all the help he could get and he remembered that day when his mother and father who undoubtedly told him about it. When the Lord had called them out from where they had been hiding and they'd confessed that they had sinned, He took a lamb and slew the lamb. He wrapped the skin around each of them. Picturing that day when one would say of Him, "Behold the Lamb". (John 1:29) Abel now goes out and takes the lamb brings it, cuts its throat, and lays it out and says Lord, If my father and mother sinned, how much more have I? I've been everything that You've saw them to be. Here take this offering You covered the sins of my parents with the death of the lamb. And God accepted it.

But here is a man who does not know, he has tremendous intelligence and tremendous ability and tremendous capacity to plan, to organize, to achieve, but he hasn't seen his own heart. And so he brings his vegetables and he lines them all up and he says, now Lord, it took a lot of time and thought and patience. These are the works of my hands and I bring them as an offering. And God's fire comes down picks up Abel's offering consumes Abel's offering it, burns it up. And poor Cain just sits there. Cain did not know his heart. If you'd said Cain you are a murderer you have the potential capable of murder, he'd have said no you've quite miss understand me, I'm the gentleman in this family, that fellow is the ruffian. Look at him out there. There he is one of the sheep he has taken. Doesn't care about himself. He doesn't worry about anything. He is just a free spirit. Not me, I've learn to accommodate myself and to discipline myself and he's the one you have to be afraid of. He didn't know his heart. But he becomes jealous, he becomes envious. God has accepted. So he meets him in the field one day and he is true to his nature. What is his nature? I'm going to get what I want and do what I want and be what I want. I'm going to rule my life. And he doesn't even know himself. He has committed himself to the principle of ruling in governing and choosing. He's offered God the works of his hands. He's never seen his own heart. And so he picks up a nearby club or takes the staff in his hands and he clubs his brother into the ground. He is a murderer. If you'd ask him, he'd denied it. He had never seen himself. But he is a murderer.

What I've got to understand and you've got to understand, is that I'm potentially Cain. You are that and any other crime. Because of the horrendous nature of sin. And he buries him and hides, as did his parents. And He says, "Your brother's blood cries to Me from the ground, said God." (Gen. 4:10)

What was it? Well, he has carried into this life a tremendous intelligence, ability, to organize, to plan and to change his environment and a heart that will betray him. You've got to understand what kind of people we are. And if you haven't done what Cain has done, it wasn't because you weren't capable, it just that you haven't had incentive or opportunity or God in His grace restrains you. Do you remember when you were a youngster and when you went out of the house you slammed the door? When that door rocked on its hinges and slammed against the sill, you were really saying, I'd kill you if I wasn't afraid it wouldn't cost me more than I get out of it. What we have to do is understand what sin is. What it has done and what it hasn't done. And deal with what we can and use what's not been effective. Deal with the sin. So the potential that's in us can be realized.

Father, we thank you for your Word. We're asking as we think about man, think about what happen to him and what hasn't. What You see in him, what You've invested in him and what the potential is, that our lives are going to be shaped and molded and formed to point where they'll bring You the greatest possible glory to Jesus Christ. Shows us our own hearts. Shows us how great was that love of the Lord Jesus, who is willing to be made what we were, so we could become what He is and help us to use our full potential for His glory.

In His name and for His sake Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The 4th Presbyterian Church, Discerners Class, Bethesda, MD on Sunday, July 27, 1980 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

©PRBTMI 1980