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Cain the Philanthropist

Many Christians are extremely godly and generous in their offerings. Scripture reveals this in contrast to a man named Cain who gave God a deficient offering. Scripture only mentions the kind of offering, but does not specify precisely what was wrong with it. Many have speculated on just what was wrong with it. One thing we can be certain of, Cain's behavior and attitude were ungodly. God said that if Cain performed well, then he would have God's favor, but his offering constituted misbehavior. His poor performance was based upon a wrong heart towards giving which necessarily constitutes a wrong relationship with and attitude towards God. (Gen. 4:2-7; cf. Heb. 11:4).

Some may consider Cain and conclude their offerings would rate greater favor from God. Indeed, many Christians give very generously and do so with a holy attitude. They are living their faith and will reap God's blessings. Unfortunately, some Christians are far more stingy than even Cain was or the carnal children of Israel, who often did not give the bare minimum tithe (10%). Some give little or even no offerings even when they have meaningful employment, justifying their Cain-like attitude by viewing financial sacrifice to God as unreasonable or to be done at their discretion, not God's.

Compared to some modern Christians, Cain would be a *philanthropist*, an "icon of merit", a high standard to strive to emulate of *generosity*. Cain at least showed up with an offering. How could any be so deceived as to think God is pleased with tightfistedness? Cain's attitude led to further misbehavior which eventually resulted in great curses (Gen. 4:11-14) as with those who follow his example, who will eventually reap the same (Lk. 16:25; Jam. 5:1-3; 2 Co. 9:6; Gal. 6:7-8). How unlike that was the poor widow who lived according to her faith by giving a generous portion – "all" – relative to her tiny wealth (Lk. 21:2-4).

When Cain was reprovved, instead of taking it to heart, he got defensive and angry at the reprover, God. His resentment turned into bitterness and he eventually took it out on Abel. Giving, especially to God, often reflects the true state of the human heart (Mt. 6:19-24; 2 Co. 9:6-13). God's Word is a two-edged sword, which discerningly distinguishes between righteous and wicked intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12-13). It warns us not to trust our own heart (Jer. 17:9). To stand aloof, not supporting the feeding of the sheep and preaching of the gospel through supporting the church is no less rebellious than was Cain.

Let us all prayerfully reflect on God's Word and ask him to reveal where we stand with him regarding offerings. Let us pray that none react in a hardened spirit, as did Cain when his conduct regarding offerings was challenged by God. Let us seek God's influence upon our hearts so that we have a living faith and spirit like Abel's (Heb. 11:4). If we are living our faith, let us rejoice in the assurance of God's involvement in our lives and our reaping his eternal blessings, for it is impossible to out-give ... or out-love God.