

Cain: The Portrait of a Doomed Sinner, Part 2

Scripture: Genesis 4:6-16

Code: 90-250

Well, we come to our time in the Word of God; and, as always, this takes us, as it were, into the divine presence, and we hear God Himself speak to us. We are in Genesis chapter 4. Genesis chapter 4. I confess to you that I usually am pretty good at making a transition mentally from the morning message to the evening message; and they are almost always very divergent subjects. And this is certainly the case today. But, this is one of those times when such a transition has been somewhat difficult. I have been so preoccupied and so devoured by the theme that we have been dealing with in the morning that it's a challenge to be able to sort of unthink all of that and replace it with the matters before us tonight. But we're going to seek the goodness of God to allow us to do that as we come to this most significant and important chapter in Genesis chapter 4.

For those of you visiting with us, we are in a study of origins, and Genesis is the book of origins. There are the origins of the material world here and there are the origins of the spiritual world as well. And we're in chapter 4; and the story is the famous story of Cain and Abel. Cain is presented here as the prototype of the doomed. He is the classic model of an unconverted, undelivered, unsaved, lost sinner. He is the original apostate who, when confronted by God, with the opportunity for forgiveness and the opportunity for deliverance, refuses. He is the first unbeliever who ever lived. Adam was a believer as we've learned; Eve was a believer; and this passage indicates to us that Abel was a believer. These are the only four people on the planet. Here is the first unbeliever; the original rejecter, the first fool; the first man utterly without God, without hope, without blessing. Cain's history is a tragic, tragic story. Let me remind you of it by reading the text to you.

"Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, 'I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord.' Again she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.' Cain told his brother Abel," or spoke, rather, to his brother Abel; and as a result of that conversation we read on, "And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' And he said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?'

He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the ground which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.' Cain said to the Lord, 'My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.' So the Lord said to him, 'Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.' And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him. Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden." That's the story of Cain.

His history, as I said, is a sad tragedy. There are several points that I am pointing out to you as we look through these 16 verses. We began last _____ and let me remind you that only the first point is positive. The first point is this: the doomed have hopeful beginnings. Cain shows us that even the lost and the damned have hopeful beginnings. And in his case it was very hopeful. Verse 1, "the man had relations with his wife." The actual Hebrew word, he knew his wife, Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, 'I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord.'

She knew that this child was a gift from God, as are all those precious little ones that come into the world - some of whom we have celebrated even tonight in our parent dedication. It is the Lord who allows us the privilege of having that life come into our family. Eve recognized that with the help of the Lord she had been given a son. As I pointed out last time, she may have even believed that this son was the fulfillment of the promise back in chapter 3, verse 15, that she would have a seed who would bruise the serpent's head. Maybe she believed that this was the fulfillment of that promise from God; that this was the one who would come and would bruise the serpent's head. That terrible, dreadful, disastrous, deadly serpent, who had led the human race into sin, needed to be destroyed. He needed to be overturned; his power needed to be vanquished, and Paradise needed to be regained. And God said there would come a seed out of the woman who would do just that. And it may well have been that she believed this was that fulfillment in her son.

Cain - Qayin in the Hebrew - means, "a formed thing; a creature; something made." The word can even mean, "a smith, or a refiner, or a craftsman who makes something." And so she names her son, "that one that was made with the help of the Lord." What hopeful beginnings she must have felt in her heart when that first child was born. Perhaps that child was to be the one who would bring the end of Satan and restore Paradise.

And then, again, in verse 2, she gave birth to another son. Some believe they were twins; there's no real compelling indication in the text of that. But again, at some time, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel's name, Hebel, means, "a mere breath." And certainly, he was aptly named because his life was so very brief. It's reasonable to assume he died somewhere in his teenage years, when everybody else potentially lived to be 8- or 900 years old; so his life was very brief.

Soon after these boys had reached adulthood, all of those wonderful hopeful beginnings for Cain came to an abrupt end, and his real spiritual condition was clearly revealed; and it was revealed in an act of worship. And that took us to the second point - the doom to offer unacceptable worship. Everybody is a worshipper. We pointed that out. Even the damned and the lost and those people who reject God and are apostate and refuse to believe - they are worshippers. They - you either worship the true God in the true way, or you worship the true God in a false way, or you worship some other gods, who are demons, or you worship yourself. Everybody worships at some shrine; everybody has some god. It may be the true God; truly worship the true God, falsely worship; or a false god worshipped, or self. But really, in the end, there are only two possibilities. You either worship the true God in the true way, or you have a damning worship - a worship that is rejected by God. Cain was a worshipper. And he even worshipped the true God - the God he knew to be the Creator God. But he worshipped Him in a false and wrong way.

And so, verse 3, it says, "So it came about in the course of time," that is an undetermined length of time, "Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground." No doubt there was a command of God to worship Him by bringing an offering. A standard was established by God at some point. Though it's not recorded in the Book of Genesis, we can certainly assume that it happened - that Cain is responding to some command and some direction to worship God. However, he brought the fruit of the ground, which apparently, as the text indicates, is unacceptable to God. It must have been that God revealed that what He wanted was a sacrifice of an animal - that there needed to be a death.

Here is demonstration that the sinner deserves to die. Here is demonstration that somebody innocent has to die in the sinner's place; and that's what substitutionary death is all about. And you remember that God had already instituted that back in chapter 3, verse 21, when God killed the first animal to make coverings to cover Adam and Eve in their sinful shame. God Himself then slays the first animal to make the first covering to cover the sinner. God takes an innocent animal and slays that animal as a substitute to provide a covering for sinners, and that is the first illustration of the ultimate and only real sacrifice Jesus Christ - God taking the innocent Son of God, the innocent Jesus Christ, putting Him on the cross, making Him a sacrifice for sinners, and then taking His righteousness to cover the guilty. And so, the picture of substitutionary death - the substitutionary death of an innocent has already been established by God, and apparently was what God required in sacrifice.

So here, what you have is the first example of false worship of the true God. Here is the first example of self-righteousness. Apparently, Cain doesn't feel he needs a substitute; he doesn't feel that death needs to occur on his behalf. He can bring God something of his own achievement. He is himself able to approach God without sacrifice. He comes in an attitude of self-righteousness based upon human achievement, and he worships God in a false way, offering hypocritical worship. It doesn't tell us anything about the quality of what he brought; it just says he brought something of the fruit of the ground; something of the fruit of his own labor.

Abel, on the other hand, brought, verse 4 says, "the firstlings of his flock and their fat portions." He brought animals - not just that he raised animals, and that's why he brought them; but he brought animals who were the best of the best. That's what that means in the Hebrew - "the firstlings of the flock and their fat portions." He brought the very best of the very best, which is obviously what God required. He required a sacrifice of the very best. And that, too, pictures the ultimate sacrifice for sin, Jesus Christ - the very best of the very best, the perfect, spotless, lamb who was offered for sinners in order that they might be covered by His righteousness.

And we saw last time, importantly so, verse 4, "And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard." There are two elements there; very, very important. God had regard for Abel and his offering. First for Abel - and when it says He had regard for Abel, it meant that God saw the heart of Abel was in exercising pure worship. He sees into the heart of Abel and recognizes that Abel's heart is right toward God; that he comes as a penitent, humble sinner; and not only is his heart right, but therefore his sacrifice is right. He brings what God wants, he comes in obedience, he offers God the sacrifice, which is a way the sinner can say, "I'm not good; I know I'm a sinner. I need a covering. I need to die; I deserve to die. I thank You that you will provide someone to die in my place, even as You slew an animal to cover my parents." So, his attitude was right and his act was right. He had a right heart attitude of the sinner who knew he needed and deserved death, and needed a substitute to die in his place. That was Abel.

In the case of Cain, God had no regard for Cain or his offering. The heart of Cain wasn't right - it was self-righteous; and the offering therefore was not right either. It spoke nothing of his need for a sacrifice; it spoke nothing of his sin, nothing of his deserving death. So here is false, self-righteous, hypocritical worship. Cain did not please God. And he is catalogued, therefore, with those who don't please God. Remember the Book of Jude, verse 11? "Woe to them," meaning false teachers, "who have gone the way of Cain, who have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. They are hidden reefs in your love feasts, they are clouds without water, they are carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; they are wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever." Those are the people in the way of Cain. They may be religious, but they're false. They're like those who rebelled in the rebellion of Korah. They're like that false prophet Balaam who could be bought, and who would prophesy for hire to the highest bidder. Cain is classified with those who are doomed. His religion was hypocritical, self-righteous, and false. So the doomed have hopeful beginnings, but offer to God unacceptable worship.

Thirdly, the doomed resent the true people of God. They resent the true people of God. In verse 5 it says Cain became very angry, and his countenance, or his face, fell. He was showing in his physical body the attitude of anger in his mind. He hated the blessing that was bestowed upon his righteous brother. He hated the fact that Abel was righteous. And the righteous are always a rebuke to the

self-righteous. Those who are sinners, those who are broken over their sin, those who confess the need for sacrifice and substitution and a covering; those who realize they deserve nothing and must receive a righteousness not their own. Those who are therefore blessed by God are always hated by the self-righteous because the self-righteous are not accepted by God. They're not accepted as equals.

When we talk about the gospel, when we say the only way to be saved is to come to God as a penitent sinner, broken over your own sin, realizing you have nothing to please God and falling down and crying out for God's mercy - when you come like that, we also at the same time say, "You can't offer God your works, you can't offer God your self-righteousness; nothing you can do can earn your salvation." And at the same time we say that, we are rebuking all those who come to God on the basis of their own goodness. And that's how everybody else comes that doesn't come the true way. We are a rebuke to all of those people because we have to proclaim a gospel that does not accept them. God is saying to them, "I do not accept you. Salvation is by grace through faith, and not of works."

In today's climate, of course, as we said this morning, all religion is to be treated as equal, and nobody is to say, "Ours is the truth and yours is not." It is intolerable to the non-Christian; it is intolerable to the doomed people; it is intolerable to the false worshippers for us to say that ours is the only truth, and we are the only people of God.

He was angry. He was angry, and his face slumped in despair and in fury. It's the way it is for people who hold on to their sin and their self-righteousness, who reject God, loving their sin, loving themselves. It is part of their attitude to be angry with the Bible; to be angry with the God of the Bible; to be angry with those who believe the Bible. We're constantly threatened with that in the public discourse. If you bring the Bible into anything, they're gonna throw you out.

I read this week, there's a mission in Florida that serves meals to homeless people. And the government has been providing them money - a portion of money to give those meals to the homeless. The government found out that, after the meal, there was a chapel service, and immediately cut off all the funds - because of the chapel service. The Bible was being preached. Our world is essentially the society of Cain; and it hates the truth, and the people of the truth, and the God of the truth. And it works feverishly and angrily to obliterate the God of the Bible and the people who proclaim the Bible from social influence and public discourse.

So, the unbelievers have a hopeful beginning. They offer God unacceptable worship, and they inevitably resent those who truly worship God as He desires to be worshipped, and are therefore blessed.

Now let's pick it up where we left off - number four. Unbelievers, or the doomed, reject the Word of God. This is obvious, but it's laid out right here for us. I think this is really a very fascinating dialogue. Verse 6, "Then the Lord said to Cain," now this is direct from God. There's no written Scripture, so the Lord speaks directly. "The Lord said to Cain." Now I want to stop there for a moment just to say this is really the direct Word of God - no more direct than the Bible, but this is the direct Word of God, right from God's mouth to Cain.

There's no getting around it; there's no equivocating. There's nothing in this conversation to indicate that Cain suspected that it really wasn't God. He knew it was God speaking to him. This is a flat-out rejection of what he knows to be the Word of God. This is direct revelation from God; God speaking pointedly, specifically to no one but Cain. This is a one-on-one conversation. God demonstrates compassion; God speaks to him with crystal clarity; God gives him a clear invitation to do the right thing, make the right choice, make the right move; God is literally offering the sinner the opportunity to be delivered from his sin. God still speaks pointedly. He still speaks directly through the pages of Scripture.

In verse 6, "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?'" Now let me say very quickly, God is not seeking information. God never seeks information. He knows all of that. God is prompting dialogue. He's initiating a conversation; and he's going to the heart. He's trying to cause Cain to take an honest look at what motivates him - to get him to take a look at his sinful heart and his brooding rage toward his brother and toward God. You see, in the words of James 1, lust was at work in him. And lust, when it conceives, brings forth what? Sin. And it was gonna bring forth a deadly sin.

And so God is saying essentially to Cain, "Take a look at your motives. Why are you angry? Why has your face slumped? Why is this brooding rage taking over? Take a look at what's going on in you. Why are you so angry at Me and angry at your brother?" And then He says to him in very gracious words, "This doesn't have to be the end of the story; this doesn't have to be the way it is." Look at verse 7. "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?" It doesn't have to be this way. "If you do well." What does He mean? If you do what's right. Here is God - this will tell you that God is by nature a savior. Here is God saying, "You can repent; you can do what Isaiah said, 'Cleanse your hearts, you sinners.' You can go back after you've repented and ask for cleansing, and offer God the sacrifice that is acceptable from a right heart. And if you do that, your face is gonna be lifted up. You don't have to be in this condition. You don't have to be brooding; you don't have to have lust conceiving greater, deadly sin in your heart. You don't have to be motivated by this anger. Just do what's right. Do what's right in your heart before Me. Repent; acknowledge your self-righteousness, acknowledge your hypocrisy, acknowledge the failure to recognize your desperate sinfulness and need of a sacrifice - and then go do what's right. And your despair will go away and your anger will go away, because I'll forgive you." That's what He's saying. "Just do what's right. And what is right is to do what I told you."

God is offering to the sinner joy - the joy of forgiveness. Your face will be lifted up. The opposite of being slumped down in rage; it's being lifted up in joy. This is the joy of repentance; this is the joy of forgiveness; this is the joy of obedience. You remember the - Luke 18 - the publican went into the Temple to pray with the Pharisee, and he was beating on his breast saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? And the text says, he wouldn't so much as do what? Lift up his eyes. He was humiliated. But then, because of his humiliation, because of his honest repentance, he was forgiven. And the man went home justified.

Well, here is a man that was also bowed down. He's bowed down, not in contrition and brokenness; he's bowed down and slumped in anger - fury against God and his brother. And God offers forgiveness. "Just do what's right. Just believe me; just do what I told you to do with a right heart. Be penitent, and I'll lift up your face." God would have applied right then and right there the sacrifice of Jesus, who wouldn't die for thousands of years. God would have still applied the sacrifice of Christ to Cain, and forgiven him if he had repented.

On the other hand, verse 7, "If you do not do well," or if you do not do what is right, you haven't seen anything yet. "Sin is crouching at the door." And sin is depicted like a beast of prey; like a rapacious lion. And its desire is for you, but you must master it. Boy, He says, "You got a choice. You can do what's right, which means acknowledge your sin, acknowledge your self-righteousness, acknowledge your wretched hypocrisy, acknowledge that you have not been willing to see yourself as a sinner - and then obey what I told you and bring a proper sacrifice to Me. And you do that, and your face will be lifted up in joy. But if you don't do that, sin is crouching at the door like a predatory lion; and it's gonna rip and shred you, and you're gonna have to spend the rest of your life trying to control it."

It reminds us, doesn't it, of I Peter 5:8 - Satan goes about "like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." If Cain doesn't repent in faith, if he doesn't trust God to save him and not his own righteousness; if Cain doesn't admit his disobedience to the prescribed heart attitude of faith and obedience to the prescribed sacrifice. If Cain doesn't do that - if he doesn't do what's right, then sin, like a lion, is just waiting at the door to pounce and try to destroy him. And he's going to try to have to master that. So essentially, his self-righteous, impenitent, disobedient response will make him vulnerable to the deadly power of sin. God gives him a choice. He says, "You can either repent and do what's right, and I'll forgive you and your face will be lifted up; or you can just keep doing what you're doing, and just hold on to your sin, and you're gonna fight it all your life, and it's gonna be like a hungry lion waiting to chew you up. And your whole life is gonna be a battle to master sin."

By the way, that is the same phrase at the end of verse 7 that is used over in verses - in verse 16 of chapter 3. Remember that? The curse was on the woman. "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." It's the exact same phrase. And this describes the curse, which is the conflict of marriage. He says to Cain, "Look, if you don't do what's right, then you're gonna live your

life trying to master sin, and sin is gonna be like a predatory lion trying to devour you; and you are trying to control it. That's how you're gonna live your life - unsuccessfully." And that's the curse. The curse is, the woman is going to have a sort of predatory desire toward the man, and he is gonna have to battle to subdue that. That's the conflict of marriage among the unregenerate. And we looked at that in detail at the text.

The curse on the marriage was conflict. The woman trying to get control; the woman being, as it were, the predator - trying to pounce and take every inch of power/territory she can get; and the man constantly trying to subdue. And that's the conflict of marriage among the fallen, only to be really reversed in the power of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the same is true in the personal life. Either you come to God and your sins are forgiven, and you're delivered out of that realm of sin into the world of righteousness; or, you spend your whole life in a losing war trying to master this lion that wants to chew you up and spit you out. How can a hopeless sinner ever gain moral control over his life and defeat sin? Can't, right? Can't. So God says to Abel, "Either you come to Me and do what's right, or you lose the battle your whole life. You have a choice." Sin was deeply imbedded in Cain. He was born a sinner because his parents were sinners. Sin was deeply imbedded in him. It was inherited and it was actual. Yet he wasn't inevitably to live under sin's mastery.

It's the same with us. We're born sinners. Sin is in us; but it's not inevitable that we be always mastered by sin unless we choose not to do what's right. If we come to God, repentant for our sin, embracing the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then we are triumphant over sin. Those are the wonderful, wonderful promises of the Bible in many Scriptures. But the one that always comes to my mind when I think about that is the sixth chapter of Romans, verse 12. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts. Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." When you came under grace, sin was no longer necessarily your master; so don't let it master. You can control.

But in the case of Cain, if you don't do what's right, if you don't embrace true worship, you're gonna have a predatory lion crouched at your door your whole life, devouring you. We're all in the same situation. I mean, we all come into the world like Cain did, as sinners; but we have a choice. Even though sin is inherited and actual, it can be defeated; but only as we come to God on His terms, embracing His sacrifice for us with no hope of self-righteousness. And that was what God offered Cain. That was the Word of God to Cain.

God - listen - was the first evangelist. And God was giving to the sinner two choices: this way, that way. Do what's right from the heart and in the behavior. If you continue the way you're going, you

got a life of conflict, and you'll lose. And this sinner rejected the Word of God - just like they all do. We know that because of verse 8. Cain told his brother - should be "talked with" - spoke with his brother. And the conversation either occurred in the field or he set up a meeting in the field. It's really - it's an incomplete sentence, even in the Hebrew. The best way we can handle it is just say, "Cain talked to Abel his brother." They had a conversation. "And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." Abel was lured into a trap set by his evil brother Cain.

Cain decided this. "I don't want God, I don't want forgiveness, I don't want righteousness; I want sin. I love sin, my heart hankers for sin, I'm gonna plan to sin, and I'm gonna find my greatest fulfillment in my sin." Now let me tell you something, folks, that's where the sinner ends up. "I don't want righteousness, I don't want God, I don't want forgiveness, I want sin!" Jesus said it this way, "Men loved darkness rather than light because" what? "Their deeds are evil." They love their sin.

People say to me so often, why doesn't someone come to Christ? Why doesn't someone come to Christ? Why do people reject? And the answer's very simple: they love their sin. They're not desperate. They don't want to be delivered. This is a man who was getting a direct evangelistic message from the Creator God Himself. There were only four people on the planet, and he knew who was talking to him. And he knew what God could do in his life because his parents had surely told him very often about Paradise, and about walking and talking with God in the cool of the day. And God said He would take away the anger and the bitterness of his heart, and He would lift up his face. And Cain said, "Sorry, I don't want Your righteousness, I don't want Your forgiveness, I don't want a relationship with You - I want my sin." So he plotted it all.

He loved his sin, and he was fulfilled by his sin. And so he put together a trap and caught his brother in it. And by the way, in the Hebrew, "his brother" in verse 8 is emphatic. It says, "Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." "His brother" is emphatic in the Hebrew, emphasizing the closeness, the intimacy. It would have been very easy, of course, for him to lure his brother. I mean, there were only the two of them and their parents. He lured him in and killed him. Vicious hatred, vicious brutality - there never had been a killing of anybody. He invented murder. But this is the stuff of the soul of Cain.

And that's why Romans 10, when it describes the sinner, you know - sometimes we think sinners are really pretty nice people; they just don't have enough information. But it says in Romans 3:10, "There is none righteous, no not one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; none who does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their paths, and there is not fear of God before their eyes." They don't fear God, they don't care about God, they love their sin, and if it needs be, they'll kill. That's why we have to have

governments. If we lived in a society without government, without police; if we lived in an anarchy, murder would be going on all the time.

So, he made his choice. He chose not to do what was right, and sin, that was crouching on his door, pounced and turned him into a killer. And he couldn't resist it. He couldn't master it. Here were two sons - two seeds; one on the side of God, one on the side of Satan. And Cain, who in the New Testament says, I John 3, "is of the evil one." He was the seed of the serpent. Poor Eve. When that first son was born, she thought he might be her seed, who would bruise the serpent's head. And it turns out that Cain was actually the seed of the serpent himself.

The word "killed" at the end of verse 8 is a common word in the Old Testament for intentional murder - not manslaughter, not inadvertent kind of killing. This is a murder done out of envy; this is a murder done out of jealousy, done out of hatred. This is a murder done because there was a feeling of being inferior to righteous Abel. And his righteousness became intolerable to Cain. He hated his righteousness. Well, of course, there were only two people in the world. If he wanted to have a conversation, he only had one person he could pick, except his parents. So he had to hang around this righteous man. And hanging around a righteous man can be very irritating to the unrighteous. I John 3, "Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous." It just ground on him that Abel was righteous.

I'm not surprised that through the history of the world, God's people have been killed - slaughtered, persecuted; and that it's going on even today. We hear today that there are more Christians today being martyred than at any time in history.

So here's a doomed unbeliever. Has a hopeful beginning, but soon offers unacceptable worship in his self-styled religion and, when he's rejected, he resents those that are truly righteous, that truly belong to God. He gets mad at them and he gets furious with God. Then, on top of that, he rejects the very Word of God, who comes to him in a gracious way, and offers him forgiveness. This is how it is with these apostates.

The next thing that the text yields for us is in verse 9. The doomed try to hide their sin, or hide from their sin. Unbelievers, even when confronted with the truth - they might come to church (they might not hear the voice of God, as Cain did, of course today); but they might come to church and they might hear a message about sin. They refuse to listen; they refuse to admit their sin; they inevitably repudiate responsibility. This is characteristic of doomed people. For the most part, they just will not accept the diagnosis. The Lord then said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And again, remember, God doesn't need information. Because in verse 10 God said, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground." So God knew what had happened.

What this does reveal is that Cain was no longer near the body. Here's God, confronts Cain, and says, "Where is Abel your brother?" which means that Abel wasn't right there; which means that Cain had run. And that's what the sinner does; he flees the debacle that his sins have left. And he carries on the appearance of being an upstanding and noble person. This is typical of the sinner. He flees the scene of his crime, carries on the ruse of his self-righteousness. "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know." He not only flees the scene, but he lies to cover.

Again, here is a sinner who is a fixed sinner, affirming his rebellion. He won't even acknowledge his sin. He didn't say, "He's over there, just where I left him after I killed him." He says, "I don't know." Oh, the sinner - in his need for self-righteousness, runs from the scene of his crime, tries to hide his sin. And then he says, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Like, "I don't have any responsibility for him." What he's saying to God is, "Your questions aren't even appropriate. Why should I know where he is? Am I supposed to be taking care of him?" He is saying, "Your questions are irrelevant." This is the sinner hiding from his crime, and hiding the truth about his wickedness. This is that pattern that you see in the sinner, who will not acknowledge his sin.

I John 3:15, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer." This was a murderer who hated his brother. Same context as we read earlier about Cain. He hated his brother, and he loved his sin. But he hid it, because it wasn't something you paraded around. So he denies any knowledge of his brother's whereabouts, he denies any killing, he rejects any responsibility for his brother's well being, and you begin to see, folks, at this point, what terrible progress sin has made since the Fall. When Adam and Eve sinned, there was a sort of a timid hiding in the Garden. And now there's this boldfaced, blatant lie. And sin has pounced; turned him into a murderer, turned him into a liar. His denial, of course, is absolutely useless, but it is the desperate attempt to silence the voice of God by a lie - and that is no defense at all.

You know, the doomed person can deny his sin all he wants, and we may not see it; but God sees it and knows it. Sinners will deny their sin. They may even reclassify it as "personal expression of individual freedom." It's what seems to be the way you do it today. You just don't classify it as sin; you just say it's freedom. It's the "new morality." The modern definition of sin is righteousness. Man is now the noble savage, who acts in freedom to do whatever he feels he wants to do; and that's the nobility of his freedom. The sinner inevitably runs from the scene of the crime and tries to hide the sin.

The next point. In spite of that, the doomed are eventually indicted by God. Eventually, they all wind up at the bar of God. They all wind up before God. Verse 10 - here we have God as the investigator, first of all; the interrogator. And He said, "What have you done? What have you done?" You understand that expression even in Hebrew. When your kids do something terrible, "What have you *done*?" Again, God is not asking for information. He says, "How could you have done this?"

essentially. "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground." Now God pulls him into the court; God is the interrogator who asks, "What have you done?" God is the investigator who brings in the evidence; and the evidence is the blood of Abel crying to God out of the ground, metaphorically. God moves from being the interrogator to being the investigator to then being the prosecutor. And there are no more questions. Verse 11, "Now you are cursed." Brought before the divine tribunal, this is the indictment of God; interrogator, investigator, and prosecutor - and judge. No more questions. "Your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground."

Really an important sentence in the Bible. Every crime committed, every sin committed rises to God, cries to God. Whatever that sin is, it cries to God. That's why David, in Psalm 51 said, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned." He knew that every sin reaches God. That's a figure of speech to indicate that every sin rises to God; and all sin offends Him and is known to Him. And God responds as the divine avenger. He was the evangelist; and then He became the interrogator and the investigator and the prosecutor. And the blood of dead Abel obviously couldn't actually speak; but the fact that there was blood on the ground spoke volumes to God. It cried out to God before His heavenly throne, demanding divine vengeance. And Cain is blood-guilty before God.

And the divine sentence comes in verse 11. "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand." The very ground from which he had drawn his self-congratulatory offerings; the very ground which had yielded the crop which was such a delight to him; that very ground which not only gave him the crops, but opened its mouth to receive his brother's blood. And that's the final verdict - that Cain is the killer, by the way. That is the final statement. "From your hand," at the end of verse 11. And God says, "You did it. You did it. You are the killer. That ground, which has received your brother's blood, that ground which has yielded you the crops will be reluctant to yield its bounty to you from now on. You will never be able to survive as a farmer. You are cursed from the ground." This, by the way, is a direct commentary on the offering of Cain. God would see that he never, ever was able again to make another offering of the fruit of the ground. No more hypocritical offerings.

The curse is further explained in verse 12. "When you cultivate the ground, if you try, it will no longer yield its strength to you." "You're never going to be able to produce anything out of the ground. You're never gonna be able to farm. If you try, you're going to get absolutely nothing. At the point of your cherished pride, at the point of your cherished profession, you will not succeed."

Now at this point, we need to ask the question, "Why didn't God just kill him?" Isn't God for capital punishment? Isn't it true that if you take a life you give a life? Isn't that what it says in Genesis 9:6? Yes it is. Isn't it true that even Jesus said to Peter, "Put down the sword. If you live by the sword, you'll die by the sword," which means if you take a life with the sword, then they have a right to take your life? Why doesn't God just kill Cain? Why doesn't He just slay him on the spot?

Are there - it doesn't tell us, but there are several thoughts. One, grace - and certainly that's true, isn't it? God is by nature gracious. And even though God had pronounced a curse on Cain, He was still going to extend some grace to him.

Secondly, government. The right of capital punishment belongs to a duly constituted government, and is never, ever to be an act of personal, private vengeance. And God didn't establish an illustration of personal vengeance here. God could have said, "I'm going to ask your father Adam to kill." There was no government at this point. God designed capital punishment to be carried out by society, not as a matter of personal vengeance. And I agree with capital punishment. Judicial execution is indeed the usual punishment for murder, prescribed by God. But at the time, there were no established courts. To be put to death by the blood avenger as a means of punishment is opposed by the law of God. And when there was no court to sentence him to death, God graciously allowed him to live.

And I think there was a third reason God allowed him to live. If God killed him, there wouldn't be any living example of what an unbeliever's life is like. It might have been the best thing to kill him, rather than have him go on with the horrible life he lived. But if God had killed him, then there wouldn't be anybody to see what an ungodly life is like. And so I think because there were so few people in the world, God wanted to make it very clear to the rest that were being born after that the distinction between the life of the righteous and the life of the unrighteous.

Interestingly enough, Cain must have married his sister, which was, in the early plan and purpose of God, not the problem that would be today in the decline of the gene pool and intermarriage in a family. And God married his sister, and out of his loins came the population that follows. Mary - I should say, Eve and Adam had other children and they intermarried and they produced children, and more and more children. And the sad reality is, by the time you get through that first generation, there so bad that God only saves how many from the flood? Eight. That's the best we can say. God didn't kill him because of grace, He didn't kill him because there hadn't been government and duly appointed courts established; and God wasn't gonna set an example for personal vengeance. And to let it be seen what life is like for those who reject God.

So He says to him in verse 12, "You'll be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." This is what they call a hendiadys, which is just, "You'll be a wandering wanderer." You'll be a roaming roamer, is the kind of idea. Not a nomadic shepherd - that's different. Not a - not somebody who has a sort of a mobile tent and moves around. "You'll just be a vagrant. You will be a wanderer. You will never stop anywhere. You will never be able to do anything but wander just to eek out survival. You will be a fugitive - a nawanad- a wandering wanderer; a wandering fugitive." Cain was to be a vagabond; aimless, detached, no roots - roaming the earth under the sentence of God.

And this again is the pattern for the unbeliever, for the lost person. Meandering purposelessly, meaninglessly through the world, under divine judgment. Nothing they ever touch has any eternal value, nothing they ever touch has any lasting meaning. They cannot draw anything out of life that matters eternally.

And there's more - another thought that comes out of this text, and we'll hurry to a conclusion. The doomed protest their judgment. The doomed protest their judgment. They have hopeful beginnings, they offer unacceptable worship, they resent God and God's people, they reject God's Word, they hide their sin. They are ultimately indicted by God and under judgment; and, inevitably, they protest divine judgment. The sinner resents what God says. I tell you, that's true today. If all you have to do is just get up in the church and preach judgment - preach the judgment of God - hell, damnation, and all of that; and sinners resent that. Cain did. He said to the Lord in verse 13, "My punishment's too great to bear. You're not fair. This is ridiculous. You gotta be kidding. This is more than I should have to bear." That's all he had to say. He didn't say, "Oh God, I'm sorry. Forgive me. I can't bear this curse." He just said, "You're not fair." There's no repentance, there's no contrition, there's no desire to overcome sin, there's no longing for forgiveness. He still loves his sin, he still wants his sin. He will hold on to that sin even if it means he has to live an unfulfilled life of a wanderer under a divine death sentence. This is the sinner's obstinate rebelliousness.

"My punishment is too great to bear." That is not repentance, folks. That is an assault on God's fairness; that is an assault on God's kindness and God's justice. That is saying, "God, you've gotta be kidding! You can't be that hard on me!" And rather than repent and be forgiven so as to have the curse removed or mitigated, this lover of sin only complains about the unreasonable burden and unkindness of God's sentence. And that's what unbelievers do when they hear the message about hell and judgment. "That's not fair; that's not right. God can't do that." They resent that message.

And to reinforce his resentment, he recites the curse, as if such a recitation in God's ears is gonna make God change His mind. Verse 14, "Behold, Thou hast driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Thy face I shall be hidden, and I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." And he's reciting it, as if in God's hearing it He somehow will reconsider. Actually, it's possible to translate "and from Thy face I will seek to hide." Disudo the Hebrew commentator translates it that way. "So, God, I can't get anything out of the ground. You've cursed me, and I'm going out and I'm gonna hide from Your presence. This is what You're doing to me. And I'm just gonna wander all over the place all my life as a vagrant and a wanderer in the earth; and," he adds this, "it'll come about that whoever finds me will kill me." "I know what'll happen. Whoever find me will kill me." Why? Because they were all related to Abel. Right?

Now this indicates that the population may have been growing; certainly soon would be growing. There must be adults in the world who would kill him. So it is reasonable to assume that somewhere

along the line - and it's hard to be dogmatic about this - the population was growing and developing. And Cain was gonna live a long time - a long time. And people would be born; they would grow and they would have children. And they would all know about Cain, the killer of Abel, because they were all relatives.

As I said, Cain's wife would be his sister, and there would be a family proliferation through the years, and everybody would want to kill Cain. Can you imagine how tough it would be to live? You're the only - there's only a few people. You're thrown out; you go out on your own. Where are you gonna go to get food? You can't grow anything; you don't have any animals. You're gonna have to try to kill something here or there, or try to grab something that's growing off a tree; try to eek out some kind of survival. As the years develop and as people populate the world, they're all gonna know the story about you. They're gonna hate you. And because of what you did, they're gonna seek to kill you. So he's saying, "I'm not only gonna have to hide from you, I'm gonna have to hide from everybody else."

And that opens us up to another mark of an apostate, a mark of a doomed man. The doomed fail to appreciate common grace. Look at this in verse 15. "So the Lord said to him," okay? This is common grace. "Therefore whoever kills Cain [or whoever would kill Cain], vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." Seven is sort of the number of completion. Complete vengeance. Perfect vengeance in a perfect measure. God says, "'Whoever kills Cain, vengeance is gonna be taken on him sevenfold.'" And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, lest anyone finding him should slay him." Now, people always ask, "What is that sign?" and the answer is, "Who knows?" I have absolutely no idea what it is. I don't know what it is. I've read paragraph after paragraph about what it is; page after page - nobody knows what it is. But God says, "I'm gonna bring the full strength of divine law on anybody who acts in personal retribution on Cain." God did not want to establish personal retribution - personal vengeance - as a means of dealing with criminals.

Throughout the Bible you read about that too. Deuteronomy 3, Psalm 94, Romans 12, Hebrews 10; God says, "'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.'" God is the avenger. God places that vengeance in the hands of a duly constituted government - a court; but no personal vengeance. He doesn't allow blood revenge. In fact, He becomes the protector of the killer. He becomes the protector of Cain. This I call common grace. This is the providential common grace of God. God doesn't have to do this; He could have killed him. He let him live; not only let him live, He protects him by marking him with a sign - sort of like blood on the doorposts in Egypt. It made the death angel pass over. He put some mark - some visible mark on Cain so that everybody would know that's the mark of God, and if you kill him, you will receive the vengeance of God. There's no other way to understand this than common grace. This is God being gracious to a wicked, reprobate man. And why does God do that? Why is God gracious to the sinner? The answer in Romans 2:4 and 5, "The patience and forbearance of God is intended to lead you to," what? "Repentance."

So here was God. God had already pled with him to make a right choice. God had given him a curse, and yet protected him from death, which would have given him an opportunity to say, "I'm sorry. I repent. If you're gonna let me live, then I repent." He doesn't do that. So now God says, "I'm gonna make sure nobody takes your life. I myself am gonna put a mark on you that signifies that I am your protector." And God - here is God Himself protecting this wicked sinner. That is God's common grace. That is the grace that God extends to every reprobate, every ungodly person, every wicked sinner, every unbeliever, every doomed person. And the purpose of it, Romans 2:4 and 5, is to lead that person to repentance. Cain had absolutely no appreciation for that whatsoever - absolutely none.

And the last point is the doomed settle defiantly outside the presence of God. Verse 16, "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord." No comment. No comment on God's invitation to him to do the right thing, no comment on God sparing his life and giving him space to repent, no comment of God becoming His protector. Is that not amazing? God is the protector who makes sure that even the worst, wicked, reprobate sinner is given time, is given life so that there may be an opportunity to repent. But that doomed sinner settles defiantly into the world. He went out from the presence of the Lord. That's the saddest comment yet - no repentance. He chooses to live apart from God. That is the settled conclusion to the matter. "And he settles" - I like that word - "he settles in the land of Nod, east of Eden." Where is that? I don't know. East of Eden, somewhere. It doesn't matter where the land of Nod is; it only matters that it was out of the presence of the Lord. He settled in the world. He loved the world, so the love of God was not in him (1 John 2). Nod is an unknown place, but it symbolizes the place where God is not considered. It's out of His presence.

So here is the prototype of the doomed. And he gives us the path to damnation. Here it is: have a hopeful beginning, but offer unacceptable, hypocritical, self-righteous worship. Resent God and His people; reject God's Word and refuse to obey it; hide your sin by denial or redefinition; be obstinate when confronted by the divine judge; and, when being delivered from immediate death, make no repentance; protest only God's judgment and refuse to be broken under it; fail to appreciate God's common grace which lets you live and enjoy His wonderful world, and settle defiantly into the system of Satan. Such are the children of Cain.

All right, let's pray. Father, we thank you again for Your truth. We've covered a lot; and yet, we've covered only one thing - one great subject: what it is to be an unbeliever, with all of its facets. And we haven't said the half of what should be said, but we can only pray that we've at least begun to understand the greatness of this passage. Oh how I pray for any who are in the way of Cain. Oh Lord, may - may they repent at Your invitation to do what's right. May they be broken under the grace that postpones their doom. May they fall at Your feet in gratitude over the forbearance and patience that You exhibit in becoming even the protector of the unrighteous; and may they turn and seek forgiveness; and not just in anger settle finally into the world out of Your presence. Father, rescue, deliver sinners, even tonight through Your Word and Your power. We pray in Your Son's name.

Amen.

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