

Finding God In The Midst Of Besetting Sin

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 March 2022

Preacher: Paul Woodward

[0:00] Good evening, everybody. I will try to speak up tonight. I just got out of surgery a week before last and I've been recuperating. So if you see me walking around a little tenderly and if I have to leave and go to the restroom, I will be right back. I promise.

So I am supposed to talk tonight about finding God in besetting sin. And I will tell you, this is a hard topic because we don't want to talk about our sin, much less a besetting sin. Right.

So let me kind of define what besetting sin is. OK, or what it should mean. While I do that, if you if you have a Bible handy or one close by, go ahead and start turning to Genesis chapter four.

And yes, I'm going old school back to the Old Testament for this. I am studying to be an Old Testament scholar. So I love the Old Testament, but I promise that I will get us to the New Testament through that.

So one way to define besetting sin is the fault to which a person or an institution, but we're looking more at people, is especially prone or or or it's a characteristic weakness.

[1:29] These are sins that you just can't shake. These are sins like sexual sins that people struggle with. These are sins like I personally struggle with. I'll be I'll be real and upfront with. I struggle with pride sometimes. Pride is a besetting sin. It is a sin embedded deep within a person.

It could be anger. It could be anger. It could be addiction. It could be selfishness. There could be all kinds of things that could be a besetting sin to you.

Like all these sins, they've come about because of the fall of humanity in Genesis chapter three. In fact, one could say it's not just Genesis three, but that's the start.

You've got Genesis three at the fall. You've got Genesis six when God says, you know what? This place is so evil and so wicked and there's so much besetting sin.

I'm just going to wipe it out and start all over again. And then there's Genesis 11 with the Tower of Babel. Another thing to keep in mind about our sins is our sins have consequences.

[2:46] There's not just punishment for sin. There are consequences for sin. You can be a forgiven sinner and yet consequences for sin remain. Sometimes we might have a secret sin, but even that sin eventually can be found out.

And it's so hard and so much of a struggle to try to keep that sin hidden from everybody else, even sometimes from ourselves that we suffer and our lives suffer and the lives of those around us suffer because of our besetting sins.

Your relationships struggle, but more importantly, your relationship with God struggles due to our besetting sin. Besetting sins are a struggle for the person to which they belong.

The struggle makes us suffer and it makes other people suffer. Oftentimes in the midst of these, we don't want to find God, do we? We want to hide from God. I know in my own life personally, there have been times where I don't want to see God.

I'm ashamed. I feel guilt. I feel shame. I want to hide from God just as Adam tried to hide. If we think that we don't have some sort of besetting sin, and some people may not, you know, there might be people who honestly don't have them.

[4:14] They've struggled with them maybe early on in life and you're free and clear now. But chances are somebody in this room, even if you're not suffering with besetting sin, knows someone who is.

Someone close. A family member. A friend. A parent. A relative. Somebody close to you that is struggling with something. So before I continue on, I want to go to Genesis 4.

And I want to try to read Genesis chapter 4 quickly. We all know the story. We all know about the story of Cain and Abel. But I want us to pay particular attention to a couple of things as we read through this story.

So just bear with me for a moment as I read through here. Genesis chapter 4. And you probably have the ESV, the English Standard Version. I'm reading from a little bit different version, but you'll still be able to follow along.

It says, Now Adam knew Eve, his wife. And that's Bible nicety for they had relations, as we say in Kentucky where I'm from.

[5 : 21] And she conceived and bore Cain. And she said, I have given birth to a man with the help of Yahweh. Then she bore his brother Abel.

And Abel became a keeper of sheep. And Cain became a tiller of the ground. So we have a shepherd and we have a farmer. And in the course of time, Cain brought an offering from the fruit of the ground to Yahweh.

And Abel also brought an offering from the choicest firstlings of his flock. And Yahweh looked with favor to Abel and to his offering. But to Cain and to his offering, he did not look with favor.

And Cain became very angry. And his face fell. And Yahweh said to Cain, Why are you angry? And why is your face fallen? Back in Kentucky growing up, my mama would say, Why is your face getting like that?

You know it's going to freeze that way. God said, If you do well, will I not accept you? But if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.

[6 : 33] And its desire is for you. But you must rule over it. Then Cain said to his brother, Let us go out into the field.

And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and he killed him. Then Yahweh said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother? And he said, I don't know.

Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the ground.

Not very good if you're a farmer. Which has opened its mouth to receive the blood of your brother from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you.

You shall be a wanderer and a fugitive on the earth. And Cain said to Yahweh, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

[7 : 39] Look, you have driven me out today from the face of the ground. And from your face, I must hide. See, he's got that feeling. I will be a wanderer and a fugitive on the earth.

And it will happen that whoever finds me will kill me. Then Yahweh said to him, Therefore, whoever kills Cain will be avenged sevenfold. Then Yahweh put a sign on Cain that whoever found him would not kill him.

And Cain went out from the presence of Yahweh. And he settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

And Cain knew his wife. There we go again. And she conceived and gave birth to Enoch.

And when he built a city, he named the city after his son Enoch. And to Enoch was born Erad. And Erad fathered Mahujael. And Mahujael fathered Methushael.

And Methushael fathered Lamech. And Lamech took to himself two wives. And the name of the first was Adah. And the name of the second was Zillah. And Adah gave birth to Jabal.

[8 : 44] He was the father of those who live in tents and those who have livestock. A nomad and a shepherd. And the name of his brother was Jubal. He was the father of all who played stringed instruments and wind instruments.

Musician. Then Zillah also gave birth to Tubal Cain. Who forged all kinds of tools of bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal Cain was Naamah.

Then Lamech said to his wives. And here we have a little piece of poetry in the midst of this prose. Adah and Zillah listen to my voice. Oh wives of Lamech.

Hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me. Even a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold.

Then Lamech. Full of all kinds of pride evidently at this point. Will be avenged seventy and seven times. You may recall moving forward into the New Testament hearing about that.

[9 : 48] When Peter goes to Jesus. And says how many times must I forgive the person who has sinned against me. And Jesus says seventy and seven times. That's a direct reference back to what we're talking about right here.

Then Adam knew his wife again. And she gave birth to a son. And she called his name Seth. For she said God has appointed to me another child in the place of Abel.

Because Cain killed him. And as for Seth. He also fathered a son. And he called his name Enosh. At that time. He began to call.

On the name of Yahweh. Now you guys are probably thinking. Man he went to Genesis 4. Why in the world are we talking about Genesis 4?

Why don't we do some New Testament something? But there's a lot of stuff. And I'm not going to spend a lot of time unpacking this entire chapter. We're going to talk about this a little bit.

[10:50] But because of time. I'm not going to do a whole exposition of this chapter. But I just want to hit some high points. That I feel can benefit us. As believers.

And as prospective believers. So here we have the story of Cain and Abel. It's a story many of us know. We have the first born son of the first people. Adam and Eve.

We have his younger brother Abel. Now we know they both gave sacrifices to God. Cain from the field and Abel from the choicest of his flock. For whatever reason. God does not approve of Cain's sacrifice.

And yet he does approve of the sacrifice of Abel. And we won't get into speculation about that right now. There's no reason to believe that God didn't want sacrifices from the ground.

But there's something going on where the sacrifice from Cain. Was just not sufficient for Yahweh. So it says that Yahweh looked with favor on Abel.

[11:47] But with Cain he did not. And Cain became angry. How many times have we become in our lives jealous and angry?

And we think, well that's just a normal human emotion. And it is. It is. Until we have a problem with it. And obviously Cain's got a bit of a problem with anger.

He needed some anger management or something. Right? Because as soon as he's done talking with God. He's like, hey Abel. Let's go to the field. Premeditated murder from the get go.

If anybody watches ID Discovery in here. You already know what's going to happen. Right? So he becomes angry. His face fell. You ever get in one of those moods.

Where you see somebody. And you see the countenance on their face. Just change. And you know something is eating them. Something is wrong. Something is really going on inside that person.

[12:49] They feel angry maybe. Or upset. Or even defeated. I know you can tell. I deal with a lot of defeated people in my work. And you can tell when somebody is just checked out.

Well this is what Cain looked like according to the text. And then God says to Cain. He says, why are you angry? Why is your face falling? What's wrong with you?

It's as if God says, I've given you some constructive criticism. And you've taken it to the next level. And I'm sure many of us know people like this. Or maybe like ourselves.

We get like this at times. I know sometimes I don't take criticism very well. And my face probably falls. And I get angry. Right? But this is what Cain was experiencing.

God says, look. If you do well. Won't I accept you? But if you don't do well. Then sin is crouching at the door. And its desire is for you.

[13:50] But then he says. You must rule over it. Now, I don't know how much you've read the first few chapters of Genesis. But there's a lot of talk about ruling and dominion.

Between Genesis chapter 1 and Genesis chapter. It goes on through 11. But specifically through 4 and 5. This isn't in my notes.

But I just want to touch on this real quickly. The image of God. What is the image of God? When in Genesis chapter 1 verses 26 through 28.

It talks about God making Adam and Eve. He immediately says in verse 28. That he has made us to rule over creation. That's what the image of God is.

It's not a characteristic of God. Though we do have characteristics of God. On a much, much, much lower scale than God has. But that's not what image means.

[14:50] That word for image in Hebrew is a word that means statue. In other words, we are idols of the living God.

We are the statue dedicated to the living God. As a reflection of God. And then that changed a little after Genesis 3.

After the fall. So when God says you must rule over it. I have to wonder. He must know that Cain's not going to.

He must know what's going on here. You know. But the author, Moses. Wants us to know what's in the background here. What God is thinking. And what he's talking about.

He speaks about sin as if it is a living being. Now, I don't know about you. But I know there have been times in my life.

[15 : 46] And in the lives of people I do know. Where their sin is like a living being. It is crouching at the door. It is alive and well.

And will try to destroy. And does in fact destroy people. I see it every single day. By the way, if you don't know what I do for a living.

I work at the Veterans Crisis Line. So I deal with people who are in crisis. And who are suicidal. Homicidal. At the worst points of their lives. Every single day. I know a little bit of something about struggle.

And suffering. Oftentimes what people really suffer from. Is the fact that they're caught up. In some sort of besetting sin. And there is no escape. Even the people that I deal with on a daily basis. They've got post-traumatic stress disorder.

[16 : 44] And they've got this disorder. And that disorder. And the whole world is falling apart. But oftentimes it's because of the consequences. Of their own sin. They may not believe that.

They may not think that. They may not even be a believer. Or have ever read the Bible in their lives. But that is the cause. Of what's going on. Yahweh tells Cain.

You must rule. Over your sin. He knew what was getting ready to happen. The next bit that we see. Talks about Cain.

Luring Abel into the field. Abel. Come on bro. Let's go out to the field. I want to show you something. Abel goes. He gets murdered.

And then Cain tries to lie his way out of it. He even gets snarky. With the living God. God asks him.

[17 : 45] Where's your brother? Cain says. I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper? Can I suggest something. For those of us.

Who are believers in Jesus. Yes. The answer is yes. We are. Our brother's. And sister's. Keeper. That's what the church is for.

It's. It's to keep each other. Out of these besetting sins. And I'm going to go off on a little bit of a tangent. Real quickly. I told you. I used to be a Southern Baptist.

So I'm not getting loud. Mind you. Yet. How wonderful would it be.

If rather than judge. Our brother and sister. For the sin. That they're trapped in. That we would love them. And struggle through it.

[18 : 40] With them. Amen. When I see. And hear folks. And I know a lot of unbelievers. And I spend a lot of time. With a lot of unbelievers.

And one of the biggest things. That I hear is. I don't want to go to church. With all those hypocrites. Now when I was a Southern Baptist. I said. Well I don't want to go to church. With all those hypocrites either.

But it sure is better. Than going to hell. With all of them. But that's what people think.

We are sometimes. Because how often. Do we know people. They're afraid. To talk about. Their sexual sin. They're afraid. To talk about. Their drug addiction.

They're afraid. To talk about. Their gambling. At the casino. No. And we. We feed right into that.

[19 : 35] Often. We. We. We. We have this persona. About us. We speak. Christianese. Right. We speak. Christianese. So people. They hear us.

Talk. And they know. Oh. That's one of those. Jesus people. That's one of those. Jesus people. People. But how often. Are we in the ditches. With people. Even those people.

That are sitting around. This table. With us tonight. Or the people. Who are sitting with us. In the pews. On Sunday morning. You know. We all come to church. And we wear our Sunday best.

And we put on our bright. Beautiful smiles. And we. We show off. You know. That we got our. Our eyelashes done. And our nails painted up. And my haircut. And I look like. I look awful tonight.

By the way. But we see that. And we. Automatically. Judge. Now. Don't get me wrong. There is a place.

[20 : 28] For judging. In the church. Okay. That's a whole other sermon. And I'm not even going to go into that right now. But there is also. A place. For love. And to be. The keeper.

Of our brother. And sister. And if we would do that. Imagine. What we could do. As Christ's church. On the earth. On the earth. Imagine.

Imagine the impact. And the power. We would have. Not only over. Our own lives. But the lives. Of the people. Around us. If we can sum up. The two greatest commandments.

In loving the Lord. Your God. With all your heart. Mind. Soul. And strength. And loving your neighbor. As yourself. Let's face it. How much. Do we love ourselves. If we loved. Other people. Like that. There would be no stopping. The church. On earth. All right. Stepping down off. My soapbox. So God.

[21 : 25] Asks him. What he's done. He curses. Cain. He says. Okay. When you till the ground. It's no longer. Going to yield. Its strength to you. You're a farmer. But now. It's not going to work.

It's just not. Which. Is kind of ironic. Since back in Genesis. Chapter 3. At the fall. When Adam. Came out. He said. That's his curse. He was going to work the ground. And it was going to give. Thistles.

And hardship. And suffering. And now. The one who does. Work the ground. Nope. You're cursed. You can't work the ground anymore. But then what?

Cain tries to reason with God. He says. Look. You've driven me out. From what I know. What I do. Who I am. From the ground. And now. I have to hide my face.

In my sin. From God. You know what the punishment for sin is? And I want you to think bigger.

[22 : 22] Than just. Hell. Hell is punishment. That's true. But tell me. What's the bigger punishment? Hell. With the. With the flames. Licking at your flesh.

From now. Until the end. Of never. Because it's always going to happen. Thank you. Separation from God.

Adam and Eve were driven. From the garden. They were separated. Cain is. Cursed. To become a wanderer. In the wilderness. He is separated.

Humanity. Has been separated. From God. From Genesis 3. Genesis 6. Genesis 11. And so on. And ever since we got tossed out of the garden. The whole rest of scripture is about how we're going to get back.

To the garden. Until we get to Jesus. And then we find the way back.

[23 : 25] The only obedient one. The one who could rule over sin. He had no sin. But he was tempted with it.

He had to rule over it. He was the true human being. Who could do such thing. He is the one who restores our relationship to God.

Cain is cursed for his sin. He's separated from God because of his sin. We are trapped in addiction. Or sexual immorality. Or some form of besetting sin. Like pride or arrogance.

Do we not feel separated from God? We hide from God. And we know that he is hidden from us. Or else he would come and get us out of this. Whatever it is that we're in.

But he hasn't left. We did. Yahweh puts a sign on Cain to protect him. So even in the curse.

[24 : 25] There is a blessing. That he would not be killed. Anybody who touches him. Will be avenged sevenfold. And then Cain and his wife.

By the way. Where did his wife come from? That's another story. Right? They give birth to a son called Enoch. Then they build a city.

Man, wife, and child build a city. Where are the people for that? Look. There's a lot here. Right? There's a lot here. There's a whole city. And we just had Adam and Eve one chapter ago.

Then we get through this list of people. Until we get to this person named Lamech. Who appears to be even worse than Cain by this point. Because now not only has he killed somebody.

But he's bragging about killing somebody. He's like the dude in the jailhouse who says, Look at this tattoo. You know what this was for? I killed somebody. That's what he's like.

[25 : 30] And he's like, Cain was avenged sevenfold. I'm so good. They're going to avenge me 70 times seven. Like I said, A direct reference from Jesus back to him.

About vengeance. And avenging somebody for sin. And forgiveness of sin. Which is the greater? Which is the one that obviously God wants?

Amen. So we've talked about the sinning part. We see the consequences of Cain's sin. We see the consequences of Lamech's sin. And here's the really important part that I want us to catch.

Verse 25. Then Adam knew his wife again. In the Bible a very polite way, right? Give birth to a son. Son's name was Seth. Eve says, God has appointed to me another child in the place of Abel.

Because Cain killed him. Calling out her own kid. And as for Seth, He went on to father a son. He called his name Enosh. Alright, here's the part I want you to catch.

[26 : 34] At that time, He began to call on the name of Yahweh. In all of his sin, the world fallen into sin.

