

The Sad Way of Cain

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[0 : 01] Let's turn again to look at the chapter we read in Genesis chapter 4. Genesis chapter 4. I just want to look at this section that we have here.

We can say it, verse 6, The Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?

And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. It's desirous for you, but you must rule over it. The root of all the problems in this world are found in Genesis 3.

And that, I suppose, is one of the problems that so many people face who never opened the Bible, who refuse to accept God, refuse to accept the Word of God, refuse to search out the Scripture to discover that the root of all the problems in this world are recorded for us here.

Because if this world was simply a case of evolving and supposedly getting better, we should expect that century by century, we should have learned long, long, long ago to live with one another.

[1 : 34] If us were taught that this is the way it is, that we're all just an accident in this world, and that we're just developing and becoming enlightened more and more, then you would expect, naturally, that this world would be a much better place.

That's the obvious and the only conclusion that you can come to. But what we know is it's not. It's not any better. Yes, it's better with regard to the likes of science and technology and all the advances that are taking place in medicine and such like, and the comforts that we enjoy, all these things.

But with regard to the moral and ethical behavior of people in this world, it's no better. It's still the same. And that's why Genesis, that's why the Word of God, is really the only place that we can go to discover the cause and to discover the cure.

And that is why it is so sad that people want to remove from society the only avenue that we have of discovering the real cause and also the real cure.

So the root of all that takes place in this world, and even all the natural disasters that take place, all the earthquakes and the tsunamis and all the devastation that comes through these things like volcanoes and such like, but also all the bloodshed and all the killings and all the inhumanity of man to man, all these things find their source in Genesis 3.

[3 : 09] Because Genesis 3 can be summed up really in one word, separation. There is a separation of God from man and woman, the separation of man and woman from one another, the separation of man and woman from the land, from the earth.

It's all separation. And it's probably the most tragic. Genesis 3 is, there isn't an equal of tragedy that you'll come across.

From living in a paradise, living in a utopia, living in a world of absolute harmony and peace, being thrown into this world of death and destruction.

Can't imagine it. We read about it, but there are a lot of things in the Bible when God reveals, say, things about himself. When God reveals eternal things.

When God reveals what heaven will be like. These are things we can't, we can't quite grasp because we don't have, we don't have the capacity to grasp them, and we don't have the experience to grasp them.

[4 : 18] And so it is for Eden. We cannot imagine a world of perfect harmony. But that's a world that Adam and Eve had lived in. And you remember how Satan blinded them, Satan deceived them into taking of the forbidden fruit.

Remember, Satan told them it would be an enlightening experience, that their minds would be broadened, that they would come to know evil as well as good, that all they knew at the moment

was good.

And Satan presented his case in such a way that God was depriving them, that they weren't the fool, that they hadn't discovered really what life was all about.

That if they took of the tree, then they would become like God, and they would know what good and evil was at the moment, they didn't know. And so they were lulled into believing the lie and thinking that it would be an enlightening experience.

And we know it was anything, but it was the very opposite of what they had anticipated or expected. At one level, it wasn't the opposite because they discovered evil, but they had no idea what evil was.

[5 : 35] And let us remember that anything that Satan promises, anything that Satan directs you into, will always end in pain and suffering and death.

And he knows that. And that's why he tries to take us down. Let us remember that he always has a motive of evil in his intent.

It's quite extraordinary what an enemy is, and little do we understand it, but he has had work all the time, all the time, all the time. And of course, he had this great success here.

But then we see how Adam and Eve were thrown out from the garden. They were driven from the garden. There was an angel with a flaming sword protecting the tree of life, and they were put out of the garden.

But before they were put out of the garden, and God had pronounced judgment upon them, and upon Satan, and the serpent, he had also, in the middle of that, he had given a great promise, a promise that he didn't, he had, he didn't need to give.

[6 : 43] But he did give. The great promise that although the world had collapsed, and the world would never be the same again, and although sin had now come in the place of righteousness, and goodness, and truth, that he wasn't going to leave it like that, but that he was going to send someone, that there was this promise, that we read about that back in Genesis, in chapter 3, he shall bruise, he is the promised one.

He says, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. Satan will bruise the heel of Christ, and the Christ's church, but Christ would bruise the head of Satan.

He would ultimately crush him. And that is a great promise that was given in its seed. And right throughout the Bible, right throughout the Old Testament, that promise was, it was becoming larger and larger, and it was being embellished, and people would begin to see it, and the promise was developing, and growing, and growing.

But here it's given, first of all, and it's in its little seed. And it's here we see God's great grace, and mercy, and peace towards us.

I mentioned that this morning, when Paul was talking about the grace, mercy, and peace. And it is summed up in this way, that grace is for the worthless, and mercy is for the helpless, and peace is for the restless.

[8 : 20] And that is exactly where we are. We are worthless. By nature, we have nothing that we can bring before God. We have no worth or value of ourselves that we can say to God, look, see me, see all I am, see all I've done, see what I've achieved.

We haven't, there's not one thing, that we can bring before the Lord, and say, Lord, because of who I am, I deserve a place in heaven. We can't do that. So we're worthless. But God, in his grace, has said, I'm going to reach out to you, and I'm going to bring you, my grace.

We are utterly helpless. We cannot save ourselves. We do not have the ability or the capacity within us to do that. We're helpless. But that's what mercy is, is reaching out into our helplessness in order to save us.

And we are restless because of sin. The nature of sin is restlessness. We'll see that later on with Cain. He became a restless, that was what became of him, a man who was utterly restless.

He had no place. He became a wanderer. And that's where there is no peace for the wicked, the Bible tells us. But God brings his peace.

[9 : 38] And here's this great promise. And God needn't have done it. He could have said, that's it. I made this world. I'm just going to leave them to get on with it. Imagine. No, we cannot.

What it would be like tonight if God had turned us back and just left us. But he didn't. And then we find, we come in then to Genesis chapter 4.

And to a certain extent, it's quite depressing, the story of Genesis 4 and the latter part of Genesis 3. It's heavy going. But the thing is, there's so much that we have to learn from it. And that doesn't mean because something is dark that we turn away from it.

And we find here at the very beginning of the chapter, it tells us about Adam and Eve. And Adam knew Eve's wife and she conceived and bore Cain. Now the Lord had told Eve about what was going to happen in childbearing.

[10:39] I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing. In pain you shall bring forth children. Now, as we know that that is so true, for childbirth, it is a painful experience.

And yet, we always pray and hope that at the end of it there will be great joy. It isn't always the case. Sometimes it becomes a threat. Sometimes there's great pain attached to it.

And we know that very often that things can go wrong and that brings so much sorrow and pain with it. But this was all part of what happened as a result of the fall.

But anyway, Eve has brought forth this little child and she calls him Cain. And she says here, I have produced a man with the help of the Lord.

And again, she bore his brother Abel. And it doesn't tell us very much about their lives growing up. All we know is that one looked after the ground, one was a gardener and the other was a shepherd.

[11:45] That was their occupation. But what makes this story so, so sad that the first two children born into this world, and you can imagine the joy the parents had despite all the sorrow and sadness to see the little children growing up.

The first murderer, the first person born into this world is a killer. and the second person born into this world is a victim. When God said to Adam, the day that you eat of the fruit of the tree you will surely die, little did Adam understand the full consequences of that.

I cannot even begin to imagine how Adam must have felt and Eve when they saw the result of their actions. not only did they bring down death upon themselves and to a certain extent they maybe didn't fully understand just what death was at the beginning to begin with, but they saw it worked out within their own lives and within their own family very, very soon.

And so we find that there's this incredible pain within this family. Because when you think of where Adam and Eve were, only Satan and the angels that fell fell further.

They fell from heaven. Adam and Eve fell from an earthly paradise. But we cannot even begin to imagine what they had and what they lost.

[13:22] Where they were in this beautiful world of harmony and peace and love and fellowship with God walking with God in the cool of the day and now God drives them out of the garden.

It's all, as we said, a picture of separation. Anyway, verse 3 tells us there comes a time when both Cain and Abel make an offering to the Lord.

Maybe it was a special occasion, I don't know. But anyway, we find that they both come to make an offering to the Lord. And it's very interesting. Here are the two boys and it's very obvious that they're different.

And that's often true within families that there's differences, differing personalities, different likes, different dislikes and such like. You'll often see that you'll often hear parents say, can't get over how different my children are.

Sometimes, that's not always the case. There's often a lot of similarities but there's often a lot of differences. There was certainly, there was one major difference in these two brothers and the difference was deep down within their soul.

[14:25] Cain very quickly displays the kind of person he is. Abel, he shows us the kind of person he is. And we find that as it comes this particular time they come to make a sacrifice to the Lord.

And it doesn't tell us but we know it must be true that God would have revealed to Adam and Eve how they were to worship, how they were to approach.

and the reason we say that is that when Cain brings the fruit of the ground he brings the wrong thing and he comes in the wrong way.

And the reason we know that is there would be no sin attached to Cain's offering if God had not said there was a particular way.

Where there is no law there is no sin. Where there is you see faith operates on the word of God on the promise of God on the command of God.

[15:30] That's where obedience comes against God's word. We obey God's word. If there is no word then there is no obedience required. So for Cain to have made a wrong offering and to have

come in a wrong way then God has obviously had to explain to them the way of approaching whether he did to Cain and Abel I don't know but he certainly would have done to Adam and to Eve and they would have explained that to their children.

So the fault we see here is obviously with Cain because Cain refuses to come the way that he should.

We read that Abel that he brought the firstborn of the flock and of the fat portions and Cain brought the fruit of the ground.

Now again Cain was a gardener and you'd say to yourself well we can understand that he's going to bring from the garden but it doesn't tell us that he brought the best and what we've got to remember is that even in the Levitical law there were grain offerings there were things that were brought from the ground but in the main offering for sin there was always the shedding of blood.

The Lord tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Sin is dealt with in the way of blood and of course that was all pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[17:04] In all the great events in the Old Testament there was blood. In the Passover when Israel were taken out of Egypt the Lamb was slain in place of the firstborn.

The Lamb was slain in order to save and the blood was put upon the doorpost and on the lintel and the angel of death passed over when Saul if there was no blood then the angel of death struck.

So the blood there was the Israel who were being taught that there was a life had to be sacrificed blood had to be shed one in place of the other.

It was the same on the great day of atonement once a year the high priest entered into the most holy place with the blood and he sprinkled it before the ark of the covenant representing the people. He was bringing the sacrifice of blood before the Lord on behalf of the people. And God was accepting this because it was the God appointed way all pointing to the great moment on Calvary's cross where Jesus shed his blood.

[18:15] And so what we're being taught right at the very beginning is that the only way of coming to God the only way of approaching God is through the sacrifice of another.

That without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Cain was guilty of coming his own way of coming a bloodless way.

Really Cain is saying I'm going to come the way I want to come. I'm going to take some of my fruit and my vegetables and whatever. I'm going to bring some of the ground. It doesn't tell us he looked for the best.

Cain, Abel takes the firstborn of the flock. In other words he's taking the best he can of their fat portions.

Cain is, nobody Abel is looking out for the best. It doesn't tell us that about Cain that he brought the best. He probably just brought any old thing. But anyway, he made a sacrifice.

[19:13] And he thought his was good enough. And you know it's one of the great tragedies and there's no other word for it. It's one of the great tragedies where so many people think that they can approach God any way they want.

That they can come to God any way they want. That God will accept them anyway. And so many people will say, I don't need Jesus. I don't need.

Do you know there are people you'll hear people say, what kind of God would offer up his own son? What kind of God would do that? I've heard people say that.

I don't want to believe in that kind of God. And that's why people don't understand who God is. He is a God who has revealed himself in the Bible. That is why it's so important that people will understand the truth and see who God is.

And God is so holy and he hates sin with such a hatred that sacrifice has to be made for sin. We do not have within us what can make us right.

[20:20] There's only one who is perfect, who can stand in our place that can do that. And that's what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. And unless we come by the way of the cross, unless we come to God by the way of the cross, we don't come at all.

Do you know what the Bible tells us about the wicked's sacrifices? That they are in God's sight an abomination. It's not a frightening thought. People who think that I'm going to God and I'll do it my way.

I'll bring to God what I want. I this, I that. God says no. That actually is an abomination in my sight. And so right at the very beginning God is showing us that there's a right way and there's a wrong

way of coming to him, of approaching him, of worshipping him.

And so we find that God rejects Cain's offering, but he accepts Abel's. And then we find, of course, that Cain becomes really angry.

And the Lord said to Cain, why are you angry? And why has your face fallen? And we find that Cain here, he has become incredibly, we could say, unreasonable.

[21 : 46] Because the Lord is saying to Cain, if you do well, will you not be accepted? If you do well, Cain, if you do what I say, you'll be accepted.

But you're not prepared to do what I say. You're going to do it your way. It's really incredible impudence before God.

And then the Lord warns him, be careful, he's saying, because sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you. And you know what the Lord is saying to Cain is true of all of us as well.

sin is crouching at the door of our lives, whether we realize it or not. It is the most powerful force. And I have to say it, and I've said it so often, that I feel very often that the greatest enemy I face is within me.

That I have more problems with myself than with anything that is round or about, even the powers of darkness. Because there is just so much sin the potential to every conceivable kind of sin lies and lurks within our own heart.

[23 : 02] And has the potential to explode at any moment. That's what the Lord is saying. It's crouching in you. It's like a volcano inside you, bubbling away, waiting to erupt.

And you know what we're told in the scripture, that as a patient thinks in his heart, so is he. What is the real you, the real me? It's what we think in our heart. That's quite a sobering thought.

What we really are is how we're thinking. And that's quite a disturbing thought, isn't it? Because sometimes our thoughts are not very good.

The way we think of people, the way the attitudes that sometimes we have. If the Lord were to stop us to come and say, hey, what are you doing? What are you thinking?

Why are you thinking like that? that's dangerous. We talk of dangerous talk, well, there's dangerous thinking as well. Because as that person thinks in his heart, so is he.

[24 : 00] And that's the problem with Cain. His thought was all wrong. And you know, Cain's biggest problem is that his relationship with God was wrong. If Cain's relationship with God had been right, Abel would have continued to live.

But because his relationship with God was wrong, then every other relationship was wrong. And again, we will find that is often true. That if our relationships in life have gone wrong very often, not always, but often, it is because our relationship with the Lord isn't right.

And so we find that Cain, he just has no time for listening to what the Lord is. The Lord is warning him. Sin is crouching at your door. Cain, watch yourself.

But Cain didn't listen. He hadn't listened to God in the first place about how to sacrifice. And he's not going to listen to God now. I'm not my brother's keeper. And then he goes and he kills his brother.

And the Lord challenges Cain, what is it that you've done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. It's not quite a thought.

[25 : 11] You think of all the horrors of this world. All the blood that has been shed. And blood on the ground is a voice.

It's crying to the Lord. You think of all the injustices and all that has happened in this world. And then we find that God speaks to Cain.

And he tells him, now Cain, you are cursed from the ground. Now what a blow to Cain. Because remember, this is verse 12, when you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength.

Now we know that one of the immediate results of the fall was that the earth, which we can't imagine it would have been free from weeds and rushes and all these kind of things.

The earth was just beautifully fertile. And whatever you planted, it grew. And I would imagine after the curse, yes, everything changed. But in Cain's experience, it was going to change even more.

[26 : 23] Because he was going to become a frustrated gardener. Not only were there going to be the weeds and the thorns and thistles and whatever, all these things that were growing up, interrupting the growth, it was now going to become a major problem for the ground to yield anything for him, because of his sin.

But then the Lord said to him, you are going to become a fugitive or a wanderer on the earth. And isn't this interesting, Cain said to the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear. Didn't think anything of killing his brother. But now that the Lord is dealing with him, oh, I can't take it. And you know, this is going to be the frightening cry throughout our lost eternity of those who are banished from the presence of the Lord.

My punishment is greater than I can bear. It's an awful thought because it tells us that Cain went out from the presence of the Lord. And that is what will happen.

Your punishment will be greater than you can bear. It's an awful, awful thought. That's why God so loved the world. That's why he sent Jesus. And that's why we don't have to die in our sins.

[27 : 34] because Jesus Christ has come. He has shed his blood. His blood has been spilled onto the ground in order that you and I might have life. We don't have to go down into the darkness.

We don't have to cry like Cain, my punishment is greater than I can bear. Because Jesus cried on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

God forsook him in order that he would bear our punishment so that we don't have to. Cain went, it's very interesting, he went to the land of Nod.

We often use the land of Nod as an expression for going to sleep. You're in the land of Nod. But land of Nod was anything but a place of sleep. It was a place of wandering, a place of restlessness. And Cain is a picture of all those who live away from Jesus. There's a restlessness in the heart. of all those outside Christ.

[28 : 36] Maybe tonight you are outside Christ and you say to yourself, I'm not restless. Yes, you are. Deep down within your soul, there is a restlessness that is natural to every person who is separate from God.

And that restlessness will make itself clear and evident at some stage within the life. we can try and drown it and escape from it and run away from it just as Adam did.

There are lots of things we can do. One of the chief things people do is say there is no God. People choose to believe there's no God. It's an easy option. It's not an easy option. It's a frightening option.

But they try and make themselves feel better. If I take God out of the equation and people say, don't tell me you believe in that. Well, it's by faith we believe it.

But you know, it is true. And every single person whose heart has been opened by God, they know it is true.

[29 : 42] As the apostle says, I know in whom I have believed. And you can put your arm into that tonight. You know in whom you have believed. Nobody can take that away from you.

Nobody can deceive you. You know the reality. You know the truth. And I pray tonight if there's anybody here who doesn't, you know the truth in your mind, but you don't know it in your heart. That tonight you'll say to the Lord, Lord, I really need to get right with you. I read about what you've done for me. What you're saying to me, Lord, is this, that I do not need to bear the punishment of my sin.

You know, here's the big difference between the lack of Cain and the lack of David. Cain says, Cain is only concerned about the consequence of his sin.

David was concerned about the heinousness of his sin against God. Oh, he says, against thee, thee only, have I sinned. David was just broken because of what he had done and he was so conscious of having sinned directly against God.

[30 : 55] But not Cain. All he's concerned about is the consequences of that sin. And that's a huge mark that will separate the believer from the non-believer.

Don't be like Cain where you have to wallow in the sorrow and in the punishment. Because the punishment has already been taken on Calvary.

And the punishment that Jesus bore, he says, look, I'm going to make all that over to you, if you will, but accept me. So what is your response to this?

Are you going to walk away and say, I'll see about it again? Well, remember what it says now. It's the accepted time. Now, right now, is the day of salvation.

Let us pray. Lord, our God, we pray that as we've considered what is often a very dark and solemn part of your word, we pray that we may appreciate and lay hold upon what you're saying to us.

[31 : 58] Help us to realize that there is only one way of coming to you, and it is not our own way. It is the way of the cross. we are to worship you in spirit and in truth.

Help us, Lord, to hear and heed what you say, and forgive us when we hear and don't heed. Lord, bless us, we pray, and take us all to our home safely.

Do us good and forgive us our sin. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to conclude singing from Psalm 77 in Sing Psalms, Psalm number 77 in Sing Psalms, and the tune is Amazing Grace. It's on page 100, from verse 7 to verse 12. Forever will the Lord reject and never show his grace. Has he withdrawn his steadfast love and turned from me his face? For all time has his promise failed. Is God no longer kind? Has he in his great wrath dismissed compassion from his mind?

[33 : 12] Then to my heart there came this thought. On this I will rely. The years of the right hand of power of him who is most high. I will recall the Lord's great deeds, your works of long ago.

I will meditate on all your acts, your mighty deeds I will show. Psalm 77, 7 to 12, on page 100, and the tune is Amazing Grace. Forever will the Lord Lord reject.

I'll never show his grace as he withdrawn his steadfast love and turn from from me his face.

For all time has his promise failed. His God no longer kind has seen in his great wrath dismissed, compassion from his mind.

Then to my heart there came this thought, God, on this I will rely the years of the right hand of power of him who is most high.

[35 : 34] I will recall the Lord's great deeds, your works of long ago, I'll meditate on all your acts, your mighty days I'll show.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.