

## Have it Your Way

Thank you, Ian. Well, it's a joy to be together this morning. I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Genesis chapter four.

Genesis chapter four, entitled this morning's message, have it your way. And some of you may remember the Burger King ad campaign years ago about your ability to customize your own burger, which works okay, I guess, if that's what we're talking about. But when it comes to life on your own terms and worship, that's another story, as we're gonna see from our passage this morning.

Last week, we stepped outside of the garden and we began to see what life is gonna look like outside of the Garden of Eden. And we noted, interestingly enough, that out of all of the events that would take place in the ensuing decades, all of the many conversations, all of the many situations, there's one primary situation that's recorded for us. This situation with Cain and Abel.

And that's just fascinating to me. When you really know little of Adam and Eve's life post time in the garden, very little of their other children, other than that they had many of them, and yet the Spirit of God intended to memorialize this situation for us. It really gives us a glimpse into what's in the mind of God and what's significant to convey.

Namely, what worship looked like in the first family. And so we introduced this topic last week, that God starts by showing what life is gonna look like after Eden, and He really focuses on how men are gonna relate to God. What will worship look like moving forward? We see even in this first generation then after Adam, that there's already the indelible marks of original sin.

Okay, the doctrine of original sin. The idea that in Adam, the human race fell, and now there's no way to avoid corruption within. Sometimes we refer to it as a sin nature.

What we're trying to communicate there is man's fallen condition, that our minds are affected. Our wills are affected. Our desires, even our bodies, all are really reeling with the after effects from the fall.

And so here we see that there's no neutrality, rather immediately upon birth. Man is not tabula rosa. He's not a blank slate that needs to be shaped and conditioned by his environment.

And we're only bad because we learn bad behavior from others but rather we are born this way, original sin. And if you remember back in chapter three, verse 15, there were two lines that God promised. Two seeds that would go forth, two offspring.

One would be characterized as being of the serpent. And we already talked about that. We said that angels don't get married.

Angels don't have kids. Spirit beings are not brought into existence through procreation. So

around Valentine's, we get those cards.

Actually, I don't get them, but some of you might get them. They have the little baby cherubs. I get Valentine's cards.

Just not with the little baby angels on them. Those exist on Valentine's day cards. They're not real, okay? There's not little baby angels.

So the idea that Satan would have an offspring or Satan would have a seed was not the idea that Satan, this angel creature, is now gonna procreate little spawns. Rather, there'd be those who were born in Adam who'd be under Satan's tyranny. And then competing alongside that, there would be those who'd been graciously rescued out of that tyranny and brought into the line of the Messiah.

Two heads, two leaders, two Adams. And in fact, if you wanna leave your finger there in Genesis 4 and just look by way of introduction at 1 John, go back toward nearly the end of your Bible, 1 John 3, and John writes about Cain, and he indicates this very reality, this idea that there are two lines. He describes Cain in 1 John 3, verse 12 in this way.

"We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one." Okay, he belonged to the prince of the power of this age. He was under Satan's dominion. That's the natural position of all humanity upon birth.

Goes on and says, of course, he murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. And so back to Genesis 4, this conflict that we're seeing then between Cain and Abel certainly involves brothers, certainly involves sibling rivalry, certainly involves jealousy, but more fundamentally than that, you actually have the opposition here of two lines, really the righteous and the unrighteous.

And as we're gonna see today, Cain's issues with his brother Abel are ultimately rooted in his issues with God. Have it your way. This morning, we're gonna see Cain's heart exposed.

I wanna read our text together. Genesis 4, beginning in verse 1. Now, Adam knew his wife, Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I've gotten a man with the help of the Lord. And again, she bore his brother Abel.

Now, Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain, a worker of the ground. And in the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.

And the Lord had regard for Abel in his offering, but for Cain in his offering, he had no regard. So Cain was very angry and his face fell. And the Lord said to Cain, why are you angry? 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.

Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it. Cain spoke to Abel, his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel 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? And the Lord said, what have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you were cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

When you work your ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. And Cain said to the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground and from your face, I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. And whoever finds me will kill me.

Then the Lord said to him, not so. If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Last week, we saw God introduced to us here the idea of the first family and how they related to God. And the first thing that happened was we met these two brothers in verses one and two, and we really saw the wonder of procreation.

We saw the gift of procreation and recognized what a wonder it must have been. It's always a miracle. It's always a gift, but this very first child would have been a moment like no other.

And Eve, as we saw, recognizes that she gives birth to a boy. She calls him a man. She conceived in more Cain saying, I've gotten a man, a little man with the help of the Lord.

And we said that whether she thought that this was the Messiah, the promised one, or whether she was just saying the fact that this baby got here blows my mind and the Lord is in this. We know that the Lord was on her heart. Then according to verse two, again, she bore his brother Abel.

She has another boy, another son. And this one is named Fleeting, which of course is fitting considering the premature death that he will suffer at the hands of his brother. And then the text goes on as we're introduced to these brothers, as we meet them in our story, and we see that they have differences.

Second part of verse two, now Abel is the keeper of the sheep and Cain, a worker of the ground. So rather than working together side by side, in the same role, going together like a little group through the farm work, they went their separate ways. It really indicates their uniqueness, that God designs and gifts uniquely.

He creates personalities, Abel likes animals, Cain likes working with the ground. And so then we

saw that at some point, in some way, God had prescribed the brothers bring forth an offering. And so we watched them worship last week.

That began in verse three. We saw them worship. And we see here that man, this is the very early lesson, will always worship either God as God requires, or he will worship in his own way.

Those are the only two options. It's mutually exclusive. And so in verse three, we read that in the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions.

We recognize it in our mind's eye. We often think of them as somewhat youthful, maybe a small amount of time passing between verses two and three. And yet we realized that most likely these men have been on the earth for decades by now.

Most likely they've been married. And yes, they married their sisters. Thankfully for all the little kids in the room, it's not okay to marry your brother or your sister anymore.

But back then that was all they had and it was okay. So these boys married their sisters. They probably had at the time of verse three, younger siblings.

Those younger siblings had probably gotten married. There were likely nieces and nephews at that time. The population of the earth was beginning.

We recognize that although we aren't given the explicit details, we did see that Adam and Eve were commanded to be fruitful and multiply. They had fertility, they had time and opportunity. Not only that, but there's the indicator in verse 14 that Cain is concerned that whoever finds him will kill him after he kills his brother.

And so the only other people on the earth at that time are Adam and Eve. That's kind of a strange expression. And then we saw in verse 17 that he left with his wife after committing this homicide.

So it would seem then that the best explanation when we read that Seth was born and he was a replacement for Abel, according to chapter four, verse 25, that Seth was not the third born child, but rather the most recent birth after Abel's death. And so many children between Cain, Abel, and Seth, Seth coming right after the murder of Abel, therefore called his replacement. And so we looked at this offering a bit and we tried to understand why does one brother get regarded and the other brother get rejected? And what is this offering? We saw that this offering was most likely not an offering for sin, most likely was not substitutionary, it was most likely not related to atonement.

It's just the general idea for an offering that would be given. So it'd be an expression of God's worthiness. And although we know is that there was a designated time that both brothers came, it would seem most likely probably the whole family was there.

This was probably the kind of designated time that the family would all come, whether it was harvest time, whether it was a weekly time, but they come and they present their offerings. And the Lord only tells us about two of them. Each of them come and they bring what they have.

Cain brings to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, verse three, and Abel brings of the firstborn of his flock. So Abel has animals, he brings those, Cain has fruit, he brings that. We don't know the exact nature of God's response, whether it was visible, but both brothers knew and ostensibly anyone else who was there, that one is regarded and the other is disregarded.

Okay, I want you to just think about this for a minute. One is smiled upon and the other is not. One finds favor, the other is rejected.

This is contrary to a message that is popular today, which is that God accepts everyone. I mean, our culture speaks a great deal of inclusivity, the idea that everyone is to be approved of and however they choose to live. You're seeing that message contradicts scripture.

God does not accept everyone. God does not accept everyone. He's not inclusive.

We're not universalists. We're not all God's children. Not everyone goes to a better place when they die.

The Lord has regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering, he has no regard. He rejects Cain. Cain is unacceptable to God.

God is displeased with Cain. We said that the issue was not the type of the offering per se is that the issue was Abel brought animals and Cain didn't and that was the problem. That's a suggestion that's put forth sometimes to explain God's different response to both of these men.

We'll see in Leviticus later that grain offerings were acceptable to the Lord. You can also bring things like oil and flour. And so the issue is not the one brought produce and the other meat.

Perhaps there is a clue in the text that we read Abel brought a first born and Cain brought fruit but not a first fruit. But as we saw, ultimately the Lord's regard or disregard is predicated upon the man himself. It's right there in the text.

And the Lord had regard, second part of verse four, for Abel and his offering but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. It's about the men. It's about the worshiper first and foremost.

Hebrews 11, four as we saw last week said that Abel's gift was acceptable because he offered it in faith. So I just want you to think about this for a minute with me. What would that have looked like then for Abel to come to God worshiping in faith? It meant that when he got together that animal and he selected which one he was going to slaughter out of his flock, he looked out over all of his animals and he found the very best one.

And he said, that's the one that I want to give to the Lord. I want to give of my very best

because God is the provider of all of my flock anyway. It's all from him, it's his anyway.

And I love him and I trust him. And so I want to demonstrate my love for him and my treasuring of him that I think he's valuable and worthy by finding the very best animal in my flock and taking that one to him. That's my offering.

Wasn't to earn God's favor, but he thought that it was good and right and proper and it was in his heart to do it. He loved the Lord. He trusted the Lord.

Cain on the other hand would have gone to get together his offering and been thinking to himself, all right, it's time to go do the thing. I mean, we don't know a whole lot about what he was thinking. I don't want to wade into a lot of speculation, but at the very least, there's a couple of observations we could make.

Cain could have just chosen to stay home. And isn't that interesting? He could have played hooky. What's hooky? I mean, it's a very technical term actually.

Hooky is when you skip out on an obligation without permission, okay? It's an unexcused absence. And typically if you're playing hooky, what do you do? You pretend to be sick. So you can have an excused absence.

Cain could have feigned illness that day and avoided going to family worship. Or he could have just said, you know what guys? I don't really buy into all this anyway. I don't think we should have to do it.

I'm not going to go. And yet astoundingly, it's not astounding. He goes to worship.

And this is the very first example. It's inscripturated for us for our edification. The very first example of false worship.

That there are those who maintain a form of worship, but they're not actually worshipping the Lord. Cain could have blown it off. That would have been an obvious possibility.

There's hypocrisy in his heart. There's some kind of pretense. He wants to be seen as a worshiper.

He just doesn't actually want to be one. Something within him did not want to let go of the form. And at the same time in his heart, there was no love for God.

You know, people sometimes ask the question like, how could there be millions of people, millions of people across the globe trapped in false religion, believing Roman Catholic doctrine, believing Mormonism, believing Islam, believing secularism. I mean, just the dedication to false religions. You understand that right here in the human heart is the reflex to be religious, to practice worship, to value and treasure something or someone.

And so Cain can't help but be religious. That's what he wants to do. He wants to be at the

worship service at the family.

He just doesn't want to worship God. Many people offer worship in vain. That vain means that that worship is pointless.

It's useless worship. It has no value whatsoever. It's like a mirage.

And in fact, that's the word for idolatry. And idolatry is a vanity. It's a nothing.

It doesn't really exist. And so false religion is attracted to the human heart because we're designed to glory in something that makes us unique from animals. And yet worship is in vain if it's not worshipping in spirit and in truth.

See, Cain comes and he thinks he's gonna offer a sacrifice. And in the outward expression of worship, somehow he's gonna accomplish something. God is very, very clear that if you practice worship and in your heart, you don't actually glory in the worthiness of God, it is vain.

Psalm 50 verse eight. The Lord says, not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you. Your burnt offerings are continually before me.

What's the point? The rebuke is not that we had a worship service and an opportunity to come sacrifice and you were missing in action that day. You didn't show up. You have an unexcused absence.

No, you were here, but I'm still rebuking you. David understood this when he said in Psalm 51 verse six, for you will not delight in sacrifice or I would give it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

What's the point? Look at my heart is not right. And I come and bring the sacrifice. It's not gonna do the deal.

Some of those pointed words the Lord had was through the prophet Amos in Amos chapter five. Here's what he said. I hate, I hate, I despise your feasts.

I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. I will not accept them.

And the peace offerings and your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Rather take away from me the noise of your songs to the melody of your harps, I will not listen. See King comes and he offers his offering to the Lord as if he could somehow incur God's favor through the offering itself.

What does the Lord say? You think I need your offering? You really think that I'm sitting here, I'm in need of your offering. Rather what I'm interested in is your heart. I want your worship.

Hosea 6, 6, he makes it clear. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice. The knowledge of

God rather than burnt offerings.

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice. The knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. So you just think of it this way.

Most simply, if we're trying to understand what happened here with Cain, God does not accept loveless worship. Worship that is lacking in love and faith and obedience displeases God. And so what is the biblical prescription? It's not to stop offering worship, but rather to stop offering it in vain.

Remember what Jesus said to the Pharisees? No, no, no, hold on. Keep tithing the mint and the dill and the cumin, but guess what? Don't neglect the weightier matters of the law, like justice and mercy. See, our worship adds nothing to God's essential glory.

He's not improved by our worship. He's not intrinsically benefited by our worship. Nothing is added to him by our worship.

We don't actually give back in a way that he somehow incurs more through our worship because everything has already been given to us by him. He's provided all things. It's much like when a toddler goes to the dollar store.

It's now the dollar 25 store and like the \$5 store. It's kind of weird. But the toddler goes to the dollar store and wants to buy a present for mommy or daddy and uses mommy or daddy's money to buy the present.

I mean, it's nice. I appreciate it, but it didn't really add anything, right? Yeah, I have all these kids that are like, what? No, it's so meaningful, guys. Keep giving the gifts.

But it was my money to begin with. I don't need it. What I want is the expression of love.

And so God comes to us as his creatures, get this, and he just tells us, here I am, worship me. Is that not remarkable? It is absolutely astounding. I mean, if you've been around someone who's high-maintenance, okay, no elbowing, all right? Not trying to call anyone out here.

If you've been around somebody who's high-maintenance, takes various forms, but there's usually some consistent patterns, okay, with individuals who we would label high-maintenance. It's things like this. They have very specific preferences, okay? There is a way that things must be done their way.

And furthermore, furthermore, they insist upon them. And what do we generally say about people like that? You know, it's a little bit inappropriate, actually, to insist that everyone else does things your way. We're good friends, and we help them see what's going on in their heart.

Or maybe if it's you, the things that you've had to wrestle with would be like, am I a bit self-serving? Am I a bit proud? Am I a bit self-willed? But what if it is God saying how he wants things to be done? And then insisting upon them. That's good. That's glorious and wonderful.



Isaiah 46.9, for I am God, and there is no other. There is none like me. Isaiah 44.6, I am the first, and I am the last.

And besides me, there is no God. Question, does God have the right to set the rules for what is acceptable worship, and then require it, and then choose what he will accept, and what he will reject, or whom he will accept and whom he will reject? Of course he does, because he is above all things, and he is before all things, and there is no one like him. Do you understand how glorious and wonderful this is? And yet, the human heart tends to want to worship what? A God of our own making.

A God that suits us, and this is part of Cain's problem. Cain comes to God, and he thinks he will come to God on his own terms. A God who meets his own personal expectations, his own desires, his own sensibilities.

You and I experience this all the time. We want a God who fits our parameters. Who relates to us the way we would like to see him relate to us.

I mean, this is just part of who we are. I can imagine being on the way home from a get-together, and we met some people. It wasn't a party, right? It was just a fellowship gathering or something.

And I say to my wife, and you know what, I really liked so-and-so, that guy I just met tonight. She says, yeah, of course you did, he's just like you. He fits my parameters, my value system, the way I think of things.

You see, when it comes to God, God simply says who he is, and then you are required to glory in that revelation. To embrace the revelation of God. And very often, you've probably had a conversation with someone, you've perhaps even had these thoughts yourself, I know I have.

Hey, there's something that I've learned about God that I don't actually really like. Probably most commonly would be the thought that I don't like a God who would condemn humans to eternal conscious punishment. I mean, I want a God who wants everybody to have unending happiness and fulfillment and joy.

I can buy into that. But a God who exacts precise judgment upon sinners for eternity, I don't like it. And the scriptures call you to not only like it and tolerate it, but to embrace it and to love that God.

To worship that God, to exult in him and to praise him because he's holy and he's righteous and he's just and he's good. So he is the God who abounds in loving kindness and he's slow to anger, but guess what? He also doesn't leave the guilty unpunished and we're to worship. Christians, we often wrestle with the sovereignty of God and salvation or the doctrine of reprobation or the doctrine of hell.

The resistance is not primarily textual arguments, but it's something that is resistant inside of

us. And so Cain here has this challenge that God is not doing things the way that he wants them done. So this morning, Cain's heart gets exposed and we pick up this conversation in the second part of verse five.

Point number one is Cain's heart gets exposed this morning. That was a long introduction. We hear the debrief.

Okay, we hear the debrief. We've already met these brothers, we've already watched the worship. Now we hear the debrief, really the conversation where God comes to Cain and he begins to address what's going on inside.

So Cain comes, he presents his offering. As we're gonna see, Cain believes God ought to smile upon me too. You gotta smile on me and Abel.

We ought to both be accepted. And when God does not smile upon Cain, Cain responds in this way. So Cain, verse five, was very angry and his face fell.

He's very angry. Cain believes that God does not have the right to be his judge. Who made you the boss of me? Who made you sovereign? Who gave you the prerogative? You're gonna assess me, I'm going to assess you.

That's the heart response. R.C. Sproul says, holiness provokes hatred. Holiness provokes hatred.

The greater the holiness, the greater the human hostility toward it. What did Jesus say? They hated me, they're gonna hate you. Why did they hate Jesus? Well, he was the most holy man to ever walk the earth.

The natural heart, the natural human heart hates holiness. And so Cain is very angry, the text says, and his face fell. The idea is it's burning exceedingly.

He is getting hot. He is very angry. I mean, you know what it is like when you get ticked off.

That is how he feels right now. I'm sure that his inner dialogue, he began fuming. This isn't right, this isn't fair.

I bring God an offering and then this is how he treats me. And what's amazing in this is anger is so blinding. Cain is not seeing this as something that he's responsible for, but rather something that's been done to him by God.

God's the one who did wrong. Cain, it seems is not yelling at anyone. He's not throwing things, it's all inside.

Yet his face falls. So you could have looked on his countenance and seen that underneath the surface, he's brooding inside, he's stewing. And sometimes we define anger very narrowly as just the outward exploding variety.

You may be angry and not explode, can you not? Just because you maintain your outward composure doesn't mean you're not angry. This text reminds us of that. I mean, we just, we love to excuse anger.

Occasionally my wife will say to me, Jacob, you seem angry right now. Of course you guys are not there to hear the conversations, but you already can imagine what my response is. My dearly beloved, I praise Jesus that you have come to me right now to reprove me in love.

Tell me, see my sin rightly that I might flee from it and put on newness of life. I thank the Lord for you. Now, what's my most common reaction? By God's grace, I'm starting, I hope to put this to death.

What's my most common reaction? The same as yours. I'm not angry. Cain is angry here.

Yet he's not yet seen himself as the problem. His face is fallen. When you read in the scripture about anger, it has the idea of heat, okay? Anger is emotion.

That's all it is, is passion. It rises up when I think a line has been crossed. God gets angry.

He gets angry when his rules are broken. And that language for hot that we use, so-and-so has a short fuse, or they had a heated discussion, or so-and-so seems hot under the collar. It originates in the scriptures.

God's wrath is to be what? Kindled, heated up. He would say that his anger burned against Israel. So it's this indication of passion that rises up against a perceived injustice.

Typically, our anger is sinful in that it is self-directed. You broke the rules of my kingdom, okay? I have a righteous standard and you violated it. And so now I'm angry.

And so anger, if it's gonna be used to our advantage, would be to take that God-given energy, that passion, and to use it to solve the problem. What Cain ought to have done right now was to have taken that anger and all that was happening, I mean, the proven metabolic and chemical changes in the bodies you get angry, to take that energy and to go figure out what just went wrong. And I'm sitting here and I'm looking, and I brought my sacrifice, Abel's got accepted and mine didn't get accepted.

Mom, dad, what happened? You guys know a lot about the Lord. You guys know a lot about sin and failure. Help me understand what happened.

Or, right, this would require a lot of humility, Abel, little brother whose sacrifice just got accepted, could you help me? Could you shepherd me right now? What just happened? Or maybe to turn and seek the Lord. Instead of using that anger, that energy, to solve his worship problem. Cain's brooding, man, he's just rehearsing the facts, he's rehearsing the injustice, he's telling himself how unfair this is, his countenance has fallen.

We know his thoughts then are futile because his face is showing it, his face is falling. He's

becoming marred in his countenance, the anger is settling in. And time is not allowing it to get better, it's getting worse.

And in the midst of that angry response, so first it's false worship, feigned worship, then he gets angry, and now in the midst of his anger, look at how our Lord treats Cain, okay? And we get to hear the debrief here. Spirit of God preserved it so we can overhear it. The Lord said to Cain, why are you angry? And why has your face fallen? Is that not breathtaking? The consistency here and the kindness of our Lord? Why did Adam and Eve have a conversation with the Lord? Because they came and they brought their sin to him to deal with? No, because he went and he found them in the bushes, and he pulled them out to talk to him.

And so Jesus comes like he always does to the lost. And he didn't just come to say, but he came to seek. He comes and he seeks out Cain.

And he asks him, Cain, why are you angry? And why is your face fallen? Why are you upset and why are you depressed? And so Cain now should self-reflect, right? If he has not yet, God's asking him the question, it's an opportunity to reflect. And the text doesn't say exactly what's in Cain's mind, but we know at least this, we know what pronoun he would have used to answer the question about why he was angry and why he was depressed. Because you.

See, Cain thinks the source of his problems right now is God. What should it have been? Because I, because I. Cain is angry at God. Most angry people don't see their anger is directed at God, but because he is the sovereign over all things, all anger, even if it's human anger in its expression is ultimately rebellion against God.

It is directed at God. Psalm 115 verse three, our God is in the heavens and he does whatever he pleases. So if you're displeased with how things are going at a human level, just remember the Lord above is doing whatever he pleases.

So ultimately your beef is elevated. It goes higher than just merely anger against a human. And so Cain here is in his heart, accusing God of wrongdoing.

I just tell you that if you're struggling with your circumstances in life, if you're hurting, if you're grieving, if you're in the midst of a difficult struggle, you're to bring your burdens to God. You're to express your concerns. You're to share with him where you're at.

You don't need fancy words. You don't need fancy clothes. You come and you unburden your soul.

And yet you are not allowed to accuse God of wrongdoing. It's very important. Some people will say, you know what? You just go express your anger to God.

He's got broad enough shoulders to handle it. They just tell you it's blasphemy to accuse God. It's blasphemy to speak against God.

And you are to keep your mouth shut. We're not even to accuse God in our hearts. Nor the scripture say about Job when he was grieving and sorrowful and he would express to the Lord, he would make known his difficult circumstance and even his wrestling with the injustice of it.

But according to Job 1.22 and all this, Job did not sin or charge God with wrong. You and I are not ever allowed to step outside of our creature design and accuse God. And so the Lord comes to Cain.

He asked him this question to draw him out and then look marvelously at what God says to him in verse seven, if you do well, will you not be accepted? I mean, this is amazing. You're saying Cain is not such a terrible sinner that he is beyond God's willingness or ability to save. There's still an opportunity for a fresh start.

A turnaround could still be possible. He's not past the point of return. I mean, when you're in despair over your sin or you're trying to help someone who's in despair over their sin, you wanna remember this message that so long as you're still breathing, you can turn to the Lord.

I mean, the idea here is if you do well, will you not be accepted? Cain, look, go home right now. Confess your sin, forsake it, bring the prescribed offering. You think I'm gonna reject you if you come back and you offer me a new offering from a heart of worship, from faith? You bring that cereal to me and guess what? I'm gonna smile upon it the same way I just smiled upon your brother.

We see here God is a God of second chances. He's a God who accepts repentance. Cain blew it, but God says, come back the right way and I promise you I'll smile.

God's clarifying here that he wasn't just playing favorites. It's not that he simply just liked Abel better than Cain. Rather, it's identifying that Cain had rejected the Lord and now it's a call to repentance.

Look at the pronouns. If you do well, will you not be accepted? Cain's stubborn right now, so he doesn't gain insight. If you'd asked Cain, Cain, why did your offering not get accepted? He would not have had clarity on the situation.

He wouldn't have said because my heart was the problem. He would have been confused. He would not have been able to give you a clear definitive answer on that question.

He would have been spiritually blind. And so God is offering Cain mercy and grace right now. God gives grace to the humble and yet it is conditioned.

Is it not? If you do well, will you not be accepted? If you repent, R.C. Sproul says of God's grace, God's grace is not infinite. God's grace is not infinite. God is infinite and God is gracious.

We experienced the grace of an infinite God, but grace is not infinite. God sets limits to his patience and forbearance. And he warns us over and over again that someday the ax will fall

and his judgment will be poured out.

See, the first part is if you do well, will you not be accepted? Here's the gracious offer to come to me. It's the same one that Jesus makes to all sinners. Come to me and I will give you rest.

If you confess your sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins. But that's the first part of the dialogue. Next he says, and if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.

It's right there. It's right on the threshold. You've not been overtaken yet, but sin wants in and it wants to consume you.

See, undealt with anger is a gateway to all other sins and the Lord is urging Cain, listen, sin is more powerful than you can handle. You need to turn from it now before it's too late. Don't play around with it.

Don't mess around with it. It's at the door. It's at the entrance.

It's not inside yet. Slam the door because if you let it in, you're gonna get dominated by it. It's desire is contrary to you.

Contrary is an interpretive decision. The original just says the desire is for you. I think that's the clearest.

God is commanding Cain to do that. That means that he's able to do it, not by his own power or by might, but by faith he could turn and repent. God is offering him right now acceptance.

It's offering him here forgiveness and he's giving him a warning to not delay. And some of you might need to hear this message right now because you have sin crouching at the door right now and you're thinking, I don't need to slam the door. I don't need to urgently repent and turn from it.

I don't need to be concerned about doing well right now. Why does the Lord say it's desire is contrary to you or it's desire is for you, but you must rule over it because if you don't rule over it, it's going to rule over you. And so Cain here gets his heart exposed.

We hear the debrief with him and God, God is exploring what's really going on in Cain's false worship, his personal sense of injustice, his thought that God is wronging him. Next we see the homicide. And we're just going to introduce this for a moment.

Cain's heart gets exposed in verse eight and we witnessed the homicide. This happens after the debrief. Cain does not respond to the warning.

Cain leaves that conversation with the Lord and he doesn't go home and confess and forsake his sin. He doesn't humble himself. He doesn't go get encouragement from his family members to help shepherd and guide him and understand what just happened at that worship service.

Rather, he remains entrenched in his own thinking that God has wronged him. God is unjust. And so that anger becomes settled and it needs an outlet.

Verse eight, Cain spoke to Abel, his brother. He draws him out. This is premeditated.

And when they're in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. I don't believe that Cain thought that first moment when he saw his worship not be accepted by God, I'm going to kill my brother. But it's where sin led him.

And sin takes us so much further than we anticipate where we could go. It is good to have a proper assessment of yourself that your flesh is capable of sinning in ways far beyond what you've already sinned. And Cain here was unwilling to back down.

He had the resentment in his heart. And rather than come to God for mercy and for help in time of need, he tried to manage it on his own. And ultimately his lusts would only be satisfied with the death of his brother.

Cain was unable to restrain his anger. And he ends up taking the first human life, killing an image bearer of God. You need to say killed is too soft.

This is murder, it's homicide. It's not manslaughter. There was intent, there was planning, there was motive.

He called his brother to come out to the field. He did it not in front of witnesses, it would seem, because the Lord is the one who comes and confronts Cain. All this resulted from resistance in Cain's heart to simply bow the knee.

So listen, as you are here today, I want you to understand that what God requires of creatures is that they worship him in spirit and in truth. Jesus had that conversation with a woman who was confused about worship. And there he was demonstrating that God is the one who ultimately makes all of our worship acceptable.

In fact, Jesus Christ is the one who provides the merits by which God would ever find us to be pleasing. And that you do have to bow the knee, do you not? Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Next week, we're gonna see the Lord come to Cain and really the continued self-pitying mindset that Cain has. Even after he kills his brother, there still would have been opportunity for repentance and forgiveness. Yet Cain is gonna continue in that stubborn resistance and self-pity, not turning to the Lord, but really continuing his self-focus that got him into this in the first place.

Let's pray. Lord God, we confess that so often we don't regard you as holy, and yet we thank you that Jesus paid even for those sins on our behalf. Lord, we come trusting in his sacrifice.

Lord, in rejoicing that you see fit to make your own name great through taking rebels and

bringing us into the family. Lord, I pray that you'd help us to take this message to heart in whatever way we need to apply it. Lord, where there's resistance toward truth about who you are, maybe an area of your character that we're wrestling with, or a circumstance that we find distasteful, or perhaps even if there are those who attend church and call themselves Christians, but they know that while their words are near you, their hearts are far from you.

Lord, I pray that even today they would call upon your name and be saved. Thank you for all of these things in Jesus' name, amen.