

## Overcome By Evil

I invite you to take your Bibles and turn me to Genesis chapter 4 this morning. No surprise there as we continue to make our way through this tremendous section of Scripture. It's a big book that we're undertaking, but we're making our way through it here bit by bit.

Entitled this morning's message, Overcome by Evil. Overcome by Evil. Ever since we left the garden, really even prior to that, ever since Eve took the bite of that forbidden fruit and gave it to her husband and he also ate, things have taken a dark turn.

Have they not? I mean, these messages have looked different than prior to that first moment. And there's an inescapable reality now that we have to deal with in Scripture. Namely, that every human heart is, from the beginning, plagued by default with the issue of sinfulness.

Man is born guilty. Okay? It means that we are born under the rightful judgment of God. Not only that, but we are born corrupt.

So the faculties within us are defunct now. They don't operate morally as they ought. And man is under condemnation.

And so this is our default position for all of humanity apart from divine intervention. This is really important. What is man's default position before God? It is not moral neutrality.

The default position of humanity is to be on the broad path to destruction. You're to think of it in terms of an illustration. Humanity is drifting down a river that is going to end in a waterfall.

And that waterfall is God's eternal judgment and wrath. And everyone is in the boat together, on the river, headed toward the waterfall. And the only people that get off the boat are those who turn to Christ for salvation.

Those whom God graciously snatches out of the boat along the way. And so, over and over in Scripture, we find that you must be born again. That you must be united with Christ by faith.

That you must be adopted into a new family. That the only way to get into that family is through the one mediator, Jesus Christ. And so this morning, what we see in our narrative about Cain is really the power of sin.

The power of sin and its influence on the human heart. Furthermore, we're going to see our need for salvation and the consequences of neglecting such a great salvation. Paul would write to the church in Romans 12:21, do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

And so this morning, what we're going to see is Cain is overcome by evil. He's absolutely dominated by it. And I don't know about you, but just as I've continually reflected on why this text, why this vignette, why this story.

We're talking about dozens of years, hundreds of individuals, all kinds of people in the family, even all kinds of interactions that Cain and Abel would have had that could have been recorded for us, and yet this is the one that the Spirit chose. Really, out of all those years, this is really the only story that's emphasized in this way. An entire chapter of the Bible dedicated to understanding Cain.

Why is that? Well, because it's so significant to set in the minds of God's people that everyone is on a path to destruction, and this is now your end. This is your demise apart from turning to God for mercy. And so let's read our text this morning.

Beginning in chapter 4, verse 1, Now, Adam knew his wife Eve, 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 the 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, and why is 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.

And 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 are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength.

You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. Cain said to the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear. Bold, you've 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. And 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. And Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod east of Eden. This morning we're gonna pick back up where we left off last week and hopefully get down through verse 16 this morning.

Do you remember two weeks ago we saw in the first section of this narrative really how the first family related to God? That was the the introduction for this story. Adam and Eve produced an offspring and we met the brothers in verses 1 and 2, Cain and Abel. It was God's grace to these

first parents to still allow them to procreate in spite of their fallen condition.

They have children, it's a blessing from God. We learn very little about these men other than their respective vocations. One is a rancher and one is a farmer.

Then the emphasis begins to focus on their worship. And so we watch them worship in verses 3 and into verse 5, and right off the bat God begins to teach us about the difference between true worship and false worship. Cain is rejected and Abel is accepted.

And immediately this sets off the trajectory for the whole storyline of Scripture of true worshippers and false worshipers. Those who come to God on his terms and those who come to God on their own terms. So we see Cain was self-styled.

Cain wanted to do things his way. Cain had an agenda in his mind that he desired to see God conform to, and that was what he was insisting upon. He doesn't submit to God's revelation.

He doesn't submit to the prescribed sacrifice. And yet, somewhat surprisingly, rather than just stay home, Cain still attends worship. He still goes to worship, but he goes in pretense.

And so we don't know his exact motivation, of course, but there was something that was pleasing to him about the religious experience. His flesh was gratified in some way by either a sense of feeling good or to gain approval from man or pacify his conscience or gain the favor of God. We can't be sure, but we know he didn't really want to worship God, and yet he also didn't want to stay home.

He wanted to go and engage in false worship. And so we saw there that all men are worshippers by nature of being human. There's no such thing as a truly secular person.

Even those who deny the existence of God still have an allegiance to some standard of morality and core beliefs and values and a sense of purpose for the human life. And so Cain here is rejected by God, and we wouldn't really know what's going on, but then we enter into a dialogue, and we begin to overhear the debrief as we looked at in verses 5 through 7. And any time you're in a narrative of Scripture, the dialogue is very important because you can kind of follow the storyline of the facts as they happen, but then the dialogue really gives you a sense of the significance of what is happening. Why does this matter so much? And so in this debrief, God comes to Cain and begins to draw out what's really going on.

In verse 6, he says, Now this is confrontational. Interestingly enough, it's the same way that our Lord approached our first parents. He's giving Cain an opportunity to reflect, so he starts with that question, why? As we said, usually our first answer, our first several answers to why we did something, why we're feeling the way that we feel, is not generally getting at the heart of what's really going on.

It takes a little time. And so Cain probably would have answered, at least in his heart, something like, I'm angry because you accepted him and you rejected me. Or perhaps you

rejected me in front of everyone, and that was embarrassing.

And yet the anger ultimately was, in Cain's mind, circumstantial, and yet the Lord is causing him to evaluate the true source of his frustration. Frankly, Cain is angry because he wants things to go his own way, and they're not. He's not God, and it irks him.

There's something irks him about not being the authority. And then we saw our Lord be merciful, even to this sinner Cain. He says in verse 7, If you do well, will you not be accepted? And I still just marvel at God's grace in this verse.

I mean, this is the heart of God toward a sinner. Cain, come back. Cain, turn around.

Now to do that, you're gonna have to not blame me for why you got rejected. You're gonna have to own that your rejection is your fault. You're gonna need to believe that it's right for me to require worship, but then believe that I'll take you back.

This is a promise of acceptance. You understand? This is the gospel here in Genesis chapter 4. And he's not offering to Cain a performance improvement plan. He's not saying, I could put you on some kind of probation or work crew to kind of work off what you did and offering me a bad offering.

The offer is simply, do well and you'll be accepted. Come back and try again and I'll show you divine favor. I'll smile upon you.

And this promise that was made to Cain is not offered just to Cain, it's offered to all men. You remember the the wonderful words of our Lord in John chapter 6 verse 37 where Jesus said, Whoever comes to me, whoever, there's no restriction on that, whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. There's no sin that you could have committed that would disqualify you from that promise.

And yet it does require coming to Jesus. And so God offers Cain right here reconciliation. He offers him the gospel.

And yet as we have said so many times here before, the offer of the gospel is not simply an invitation. You get invited to a birthday party and you're busy. Or maybe you're not busy, but you just don't want to go.

You can decline that invitation. There's no real consequence to it. That is not the invitation or the offer of the gospel.

The offer of the gospel is a summons. You're called to embrace it. You're called to believe it.

And if you disregard it, there's consequences. And so this gospel to Cain is a summons and God says to Cain, hey, if you do well you'll be accepted. Here's the gospel.

By the way, here's the warning if you reject it. And if you do not do well, the text says, sin is

crouching at the door and its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it. See, the Lord is being gracious to Cain right now.

What he's telling him is this, Cain, you have not experienced yet the full fruit of the seed of the sin that's in your heart. Right now it's rather containable. And kind of keep it managed.

I'm sure Cain got angry. He was probably known for that because he's angry here in the text, but he'd been able to kind of keep it under wraps to some degree. And yet God is saying, if you don't address these sinful cravings, you will be dominated by them.

This seed will be watered and then it'll grow into a tree and then that tree will bear fruit. And we've said before that you cannot manage sin, you cannot contain it on your own. And so very often what happens is we start out with a little desire for sin that isn't dealt with.

The next thing we know it grows into a full blossom and we're in bondage to sin. And sin is a harsh master. I mean, I don't know anyone, I've said this many times before, who as a youth has on their list of goals, I want to grow up someday and be enslaved to pornography.

Well, you know what I really hope? I hope to grow up and be enslaved to fear of man, such that I'm crippled by it. Or lust, or food, or entertainment. You know what I want to do? I want to grow up and lose my job.

I want to grow up and have broken relationships in my life. And what I'm hoping is to invite unnecessary heartache. See, what happens is we want to enjoy sin, but we don't want to be mastered by it.

That's how the natural flesh works. I don't really want to give up my sin, but I also don't want to really experience being mastered by it. And so God is graciously warning Cain here.

If you do well, you'll be accepted. By the way, if you do not do well, sin is crouching right out the door. Its desire is for you, and it will overtake you.

You must rule over it. And so Cain, of course, is going to disregard this offer of the gospel and this warning. I think there's a lesson here that we're going to see in this passage to not disregard the voice of God.

To not have that experience where God's revelation is made clear, and you receive it. It comes into your mind, it hits your heart, and then you, in either complacency or outright rejection, just let it go. Just respond in indifference.

Cain is an example to not do that. Since we don't know how long the timeline was between verse 7 and verse 8, it doesn't say how long Cain wrestled with these desires in his heart. There are a few things that we could say, certainly, from the testimony of Scripture.

We know that that he's going to murder his brother, and that in the heart is going to be hatred. That's the motive. And you can trace the line of resentment and bitterness.

You want to look at any human relationship that sours, that's what bitterness simply means. It's where a relationship that was previously sweet is now soured, colored, everything kind of feels negative. There's a negative tone to it, a negative perspective, a hard-heartedness, you might say.

At the root of that is always an offense. It could be a real offense or a perceived offense that is not dealt with biblically. So how do relationships break down? What is the the root behind a bitterness and an offense? Excuse me, a bitterness and resentment? It is always an offense, either perceived or real, that is not dealt with biblically.

And so Cain is souring on his relationship with Abel. Cain disregards the counsel of the Lord. If you were to think about it just categorically, the issue is that he does not want to humble himself.

I think what it would have taken for Cain here to actually humble himself and do well, what would he have to do? Well, he'd have to stop being angry. Anger is very satisfying. It feels good to be angry.

When you feel justified in our anger. So you'd have to let go of that. He would have to let go of that.

Not only that, he would have to humble himself and he would have to admit, I was the one who was wrong. God, you were right. Abel, you were right.

And I was...we have a hard time saying that. I was wrong. I was the one who was wrong.

I had no right to be angry. See, the admission of a sinner to acknowledge guilt before God and throw himself wholly on God's mercy is the very essence of saving faith. That's how we know that Cain did not come to salvation because this is the moment now to respond, to humble yourself and to cast yourself on the mercy of God.

And so Cain's heart gets exposed. And we saw this last week when we witnessed the homicide in verse 8. It's our first point this morning. Cain's heart gets exposed.

This really happens as we witness the homicide. Verse 8, Cain spoke to Abel, his brother, and when they are in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Now, I want you to notice just for a minute how brazen this is.

And Moses keeps highlighting this. Cain spoke to Abel, his brother. Second part of the verse, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

And this is to be felt and understood, the significance of a brother laying hands on and killing another brother. Dex says Cain spoke to Abel, his brother. So probably something like, hey bro, can we go have a chat? Just you and me, man to man? There's some things that I wanted to catch up with you on.

We don't know exactly the impetus, but Cain invites Abel and he takes him to a field. And this indicates that there was planning and intent. In other words, this is premeditated.

So to say that Cain merely killed his brother Abel is too soft. It's murder. It's homicide.

It's not merely manslaughter. It's not self-defense. They got into an unexpected heat of argument and things went further than either of them anticipated.

That was the plan. In fact, to be in the field takes on a technical meaning later in the law. Deuteronomy 22, we read that in identifying a crime, if someone took another person into the field, it was specifically so that you could not hear their cry for help.

And so Cain, interestingly enough, has some measure of control over his desires because he doesn't kill his brother in front of the family at family dinner that weekend. He's still self-preserving. So he wants to get rid of his brother, but he doesn't want all of the fallout and consequences.

So he goes and hides. He goes out into the field, and that is where Cain rises up against his brother Abel and kills him. And interestingly enough, that idea of rising up, again, would indicate intent.

We don't know whether it was a relatively quick and painless death, if there was a struggle. We don't know whether Cain used a farming implement or whether he strangled his brother with his bare hands. The text does not say.

But the point, of course, is that Abel did not deserve to die. Abel did not do something to his brother to warrant being murdered. Rather, the issue is envy.

And if you think about how incredibly dark and ironic this is, what is Cain's primary beef? God showed you favor and not me. But God offered Cain favor. He said, if you do well, you'll be accepted.

So Cain doesn't even really want God's favor in the true sense. It's offered to him. Rather, he just knows, I don't want Abel to get it and me not to.

That's what irked him. He doesn't care about God's favors if you really wants to be in right relationship with him because he loves God. James 4 is clear what causes fights and quarrels among you.

Is it not this, the passions that are at war within you? You desire and you do not have, so you murder. Cain's got that jealousy that's turned to envy, that's turned to hatred. He wants the benefits of being favored, but he doesn't really actually care about God's favor.

I would just say before we move on, it is helpful here to just kind of help grow our own discernment when it comes to human relationships and understanding what broke down here in Cain and Abel. This was not primarily a human relationship problem, okay? Do you

understand that? And can you imagine Adam and Eve trying to sit down with Cain afterward and just asking, okay, now help us understand, son, what exactly did Abel do that caused you to kill him? What exactly provoked you? What was so deserving of death? Help us understand. We're struggling to connect the dots here to the logic.

What's the issue? Well, there's a vertical line that must be traced, and so oftentimes in a human relationship when there's a breakdown and we're kind of befuddled, that is to the logic. It doesn't seem logical. We need to lift our eyes from the human relationship and figure out what's the vertical problem.

What do I mean by that? Well, this comes up a lot actually in marriage counseling. You sit down with two spouses and they are only able to see primarily the problems that each of them have with one another, and then what do we do? We spend time helping to trace the vertical issues that each of them have with Christ. That is the ultimate source of the problem and the ultimate solution.

So when you counsel yourself, when you counsel others, if you're to counsel Cain, the issue is not going to be found in trying to resolve only the sibling dynamics to what exactly Abel did that resulted logically in your desire to kill him. Now they're figuring out what is wrong right now in your relationship with God. And so every human relational issue, trace it back.

Unforgiveness, guess what? It's a vertical problem. It's a problem between someone and God. Rudeness, it's a vertical problem.

Lying, it's a vertical problem. Jealousy and envy, it's a vertical problem. Selfishness and entitlement, it's a vertical problem.

And gratitude and complaining, it's a vertical problem. And here, yes, anger is a vertical problem. And so Abel from a human standpoint just so happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

He didn't do anything that necessarily asked for this. Rather, his brother had spiritual issues, and his brother's spiritual issues spilled out on him. And this outcome is somewhat unusual.

Most families don't have, thankfully, members killing one another. But I'll say this, the destructive nature of anger is real in its destruction in families. I mean, I've seen families completely destroyed by anger.

And no one has been physically killed, but the relationships are dead. Impacted nearly every family that I can think of at some measure. And so this homicide surely had to have been devastating for Adam and Eve.

Producing children, they know the effects of their own sin and their own guilty conscience. They would have been hoping for some kind of redemption that things could have looked better in future generations, and now they have their firstborn son. I mean, can you imagine the



disappointment that that would have been? The heartbreak? I don't know exactly what they hoped he would be, but surely it was not a murderer.

And so we see here, of course, all of Satan's scheme coming to roost. I mean, as we looked at in John chapter 8 verse 44, Jesus said that Satan was a murderer from the beginning. This is all part of his plan.

Adam and Eve fell into transgression. Death came to man. Now you have children, you have sons, brothers murdering one another.

So Cain's heart gets exposed. We witnessed the homicide. And now in verses 9 through 16, our second point this morning, we see the response.

Okay, we see the response. And this is really the sad ending to the sad story. This is conversation 2.0. So God comes to Cain earlier.

He has this interaction with him, this conversation. He gives Cain the offer of the gospel with a warning. Cain disregards it, kills his brother, and now God comes to him a second time, and we see a sad ending to a sad story.

Verse 9, then the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel your brother? I mean, how would you like to have the voice of God come and ask you about a secret sin you committed? I mean, that's terrifying. And I've been caught in sin before. I know that feeling.

I mean, it's a familiar feeling that the saliva glands start to produce like crazy. I instantly start to gulp. I'm gonna gulp down the saliva.

I feel my heart rate increase immediately. What is that? Well, that's fear. It's fear of guilt, fear of judgment, fear of consequences.

Mind starts to race and think through how to respond. What is the truth? What do I say? What do I want to say? What would preserve my reputation? I mean, all of the natural instincts that immediately happen when you're caught sinning. And it seems that Cain would have known that God knows all things.

I think it's reasonable to assume this because his parents would have recounted their experience in the garden of hiding and God knowing exactly where they were. He would have understood that God was a spirit because when they came and brought their offerings, his brothers, they're not going to a man. They're not going to a shrine.

They're not going to a statute. They're offering to an unseen, invisible God, a spirit. So the question itself here highlights again the severity of the issue.

He does not just ask, where is Abel? But the Lord says, where is Abel your brother? A treachery. And Cain responds disrespectfully. He said, I do not know.

And am I my brother's keeper? Now, biblical counseling 101 is if you enter into the messiness of someone's life inevitably, that sin is going to spill out, splash out on you while you're involved. If you're trying to help a suspicious person, generally at some point they will become suspicious of you. If you're counseling somebody who struggles with lying, most likely at some point they're going to be lying to you.

And guess what? Press in on an angry fool and inevitably they're gonna get angry with you and they will respond foolishly. And so the Lord is pressing in on Cain, who is categorically speaking an angry fool. He responds exactly how we would expect.

First, he lies. Cain says, I do not know. He does know.

And then he attempts misdirection through exaggeration. When he says, am I my brother's keeper? Really, I mean, you want to get the sense of it. He's saying something to this effect.

Oh, I'm sorry. Am I my little brother's babysitter? Was I supposed to be keeping an eye on him? I mean, that's the idea of a keeper. Was he under my watch care? Was I not supposed to let him out of my sight? Are you coming to me like I'm his babysitter? Cain actually begins to attack the very question that God is asking.

I mean, this is utter folly. At this point, there was still an opportunity to repent. I mean, Cain could have just confessed his sin and been restored.

Angry people hate having their sin called out. They hate being exposed. They hate being backed into a corner.

I mean, imagine if when the Lord had come and said to him, where is Abel your brother? He just said, you know what? His body's out in the field. I disregarded your warning. I killed my brother in cold blood.

I meant to do it. I took him out there. I was wrong.

God, would you still have mercy on me? I know you said earlier, if I did well, I'd be accepted. Would you have mercy on me? Surely the Lord would have forgiven his sin. God forgives angry people.

Jesus died for angry people, even for murderers. And yet, Cain is unwilling to soften. He does not budge an inch.

Children, I want you to think about this for just a minute, okay? Kids in the room, I want you to think about this. Right now, while I'm speaking, Cain is experiencing eternal punishment. Okay? Cain is separated from God.

As we're gonna see in a minute, that's what he really wanted. He ends up getting judged for his sin. But Cain is not in hell just because he murdered his brother.

Okay? He is in hell because he would not come to God for mercy. God alone has power to forgive sin. God would have forgiven Cain, but he is hardened right now.

And so the Lord says to Cain in verse 10, what have you done? And you think, man, I feel like I've heard this somewhere before. Genesis chapter 3 verse 13, the Lord said to the woman, what is this that you have done? He says, the voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. Blood here is personified, crying out.

This is strangely a comfort for all of us. Even when there are no human witnesses to the crime, even when it seems like the bad guy is going to get away, God sees. He is God of justice.

And although this crime will not go punished by a human court, although there were no witnesses, God sees and he will bring about justice. So God begins to enact justice upon Cain. He says, and now you are cursed from the ground.

Verse 10, and now you are cursed from the ground. Do you remember in Genesis 3, we made a big point to highlight that Adam was not cursed and Eve was not cursed. Rather, the circumstances that they found themselves in were cursed.

Their domain was cursed, not them personally. You'd hear God says, cursed are you. This means divine opposition against Cain's life.

So now he is, in a sense, for all intents and purposes, past a point of no return. He's now under the judgment of God. And the Lord brings, as he usually does, the punishment that fits the crime.

Cain is a farmer. He farms the land. That's his vocation.

He kills his brother in the field. His brother's blood goes down into the ground. And so now the Lord really calls, in a sense, the ground to be the minister of his punishment.

Verse 11, now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. I mean, this is doubly cursed now.

Way back in Genesis 3, we already had one curse, right? Thorns and thistles and the sweat of your brow. It just got doubled down. Things are going from bad to worse.

Really, the idea is that there will be a frustrating crop year after year after year. It's like it will always be summer and never be harvest. And the worst part of this punishment is not merely that Cain is gonna have a difficult existence.

He's gonna have a hard time producing the food that he needs to sustain himself and his family. Look what the Lord also tells him. He says, you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.

The end of verse 12, you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. Translation, you're gonna be a homeless drifter. That's the idea.

What are the implications? Well, you're not gonna enjoy the relational closeness with your family like you once knew. You're not gonna enjoy all the rich heritage of family life, the estate, and closeness with God. And man, you're gonna be on the outside here.

You're a drifter. And really, the idea is you're no longer gonna have peace. You're no longer gonna have stability.

Your life is gonna be characterized by perpetual unrest. Doesn't mean necessarily that it will always be in a tent, as we'll see. It's gonna be connected with the city shortly.

But you're gonna feel unsettled. You're gonna experience relational separation. You're gonna be sent away.

And you're never gonna have the sense of peace and security in this life. I'm stripping that away from you. And so if you're Cain, I mean, this is hard news to get.

There's no way around it. And think even now what Cain could have said. And you know what, Lord? As bad as that is, my heart breaks for mom and dad.

Because they had to watch one of their sons devour another son. And I know that they have a grief that they can't actually replace the one I took, the life I took. You know what, I'm grieved by the impact to my siblings, all of our other brothers and sisters that were impacted by the loss of Abel.

I mean, Cain is already married right now. I think that's clear according to verse 17. It's possible Abel is already married.

So it'd be a sister and a wife that was grieving. But nonetheless, Cain could have been very, at this point, sobered by his consequences into a soft heart. And yet look at what he does.

Verse 13, my punishment is greater than I can bear. Cain's first priority has been himself. And even now in the consequences, it remains unchanged.

Heath Lambert writes, an immediate and critical test, whether your sorrow is godly or worldly, is whether you are willing to accept the consequences of your sin. When you're primarily concerned about what your sin has cost you, and the biggest grief to you is still the consequences, you are still in worldly sorrow over sin. I've seen this so many times, so many times.

Someone claims to be sincerely repentant, and then meanwhile they're complaining about the consequences. That is not a fruit of worldly sorrow. Children in the room, when you're given consequences, how do you think about those? It's hard to think rightly about consequences.

I get that. If your parents love Jesus and they love you, then they will give you consequences. Proverbs 13.24 says, whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

So if your parents love Christ and they discipline you in love, they're being faithful to the Scriptures. It's training, but maybe when you get a consequence, you're primarily mad at mom and dad. You feel like they're the problem.

You know, I've said before, when I was a kid, I would regularly tell my parents, hey, by the way, when I'm a grown-up, I am not gonna be doing the things that you're doing right now. What am I saying? I'm putting you on notice that I think that your consequences are bad. I tell you how we ought to think about consequences.

The design of God, the mind of God and consequences is that we would learn from lesser pain to prevent us from greater sin and greater pain. That's the whole point. To help us learn, to help us wake up and see our sin, to see our need for God, and ultimately to turn to Him for forgiveness and for encouragement.

We tell our kids a lot, you want less consequences? Change your conduct. See, this demonstrates here that Cain is reprobate. He's not one of God's children.

And when he's faced with his punishment, he's filled with terror and torment about the punishment itself, but it's still just self-pity. He's not softened by it. And I think this is instructed to us.

Sometimes we kind of naively assume that when someone experiences the consequences of their sin, that then they will want to turn to God in that moment. Yet oftentimes, as the Scripture teaches, people just become miserable in their consequences. Consequences alone do not change an impenitent heart.

See, Cain is dismayed, but he's not corrected. He's not sorry. He's complaining about his consequences.

He says in verse 14, And he's just recognizing, I'm gonna leave the farm, I'm gonna leave the family, I'm gonna leave your protective influence. At least this is how Cain is thinking. And he's recognizing, I'm gonna be exposed to martial law.

I grew up, there was five boys in my house, and there was this little code known as the Brotherhood. And if one brother started to kind of get out of line in the way that he was treating another brother, we would call on the Brotherhood to enact vigilante justice, which usually turned into some kind of dogpile and then, you know, pink belly or other things I'm not going to describe right now. You can talk to me after if you want to hear about them.

But the idea was, we need to take matters into our own hands. We need to enact justice. And so Cain is afraid that he's gonna go out, and then he's gonna run into a nephew or a little brother.

He says, It's time to avenge Abel's blood. Excuse me, I'm going to take your life. The Lord said in verse 15, Not so.

That's not gonna happen. If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. I'm gonna protect you, Cain.

And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. We don't know what the mark was. Some said it was a physical malady or perhaps a brand or a tattoo.

We don't know exactly. But it would seem that there was a visible indicator to other people that Cain was not to be touched. My dear brothers and sisters, this is yet another evidence of the grace of God.

It's not saving grace, it's not redeeming grace, but in God's common grace, he's saying, I'm gonna protect the life of this rebel. It's God's care even for a sinner. Still gracious.

Verse 16, we come to really the end of this sad story, at least this section. And Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain went away from the presence of the Lord.

You see, that's the main takeaway from this story. What do we learn from Cain? Well, Cain rejected the presence of God and then found, as a consequence, he was rejected from the presence of the Lord. You understand that this was devastating for his earthly life, and yet what was more devastating were the eternal consequences.

As we've said before, hell is for people who want to be distanced from the presence of God. They do not want the presence of God in this life, and then in hell they essentially get what they've asked for. How do we respond to a story like this? Well, I would just say this morning, if you are not in a right relationship with God, if you do well, you will be accepted.

Turn to the Lord. Leave behind whatever you're hanging on to and find forgiveness through Jesus Christ. And then secondly, I think to recognize if you're in Christ that you're to look beyond your sin and experience the joy of forgiveness.

See, Cain was not repentant, but if you're in Christ, then you have repented of your sin. Thomas Watson writes this regarding worldly sorrow, which is what Cain experienced in godly sorrow. He says, If there are not some donnings of faith in the soul, it is not the sorrow of humiliation, but of despair.

So when you feel bad about your sin, do you stay in that spot of angry resistance before the Lord? Or do you turn to him and find relief with the pulley of faith? David, King David, after his sin would say many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. See, the blood of Abel cried out from the ground, and Abel's blood cried out, Cain is guilty. That was what it was testifying to you.

That's the imagery that the Lord used. There's other blood that cries out. According to Hebrews 12 24, Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, has a sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

What's the writer of Hebrews saying there? Well, he's personifying blood. Abel's blood was personified as speaking. What it spoke was judgment upon Cain.

Now the blood of Jesus comes and it speaks as well. What does it speak? Well, it speaks not of guilt, but of grace. It speaks of forgiveness, and it testifies to a new covenant.

And so I want to end this morning with the words of David from Psalm 51. He said, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgression.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Father, thank you for accepting sinners. Lord, you don't accept us apart from the merits of your beloved Son who was punished for sin.

Lord, I thank you that in the cross we can see love and justice meet. We can see both your grace and your mercy as well as your hatred for sin. Father, I pray that we would have the sobriety that I believe this text is intended to produce in our souls.

Or that there are any who are taking sin casually that they would be shaken out of that stupor to see it for what it is. Or there are those in hardened resistance that they would see the folly and cast themselves upon your mercy. And then, Lord, for those of us who are in Christ, that we would glory that you've seen fit to pull us out of that wrath that was headed toward destruction and surround us with your loving-kindness.

Lord, thank you for the forgiveness that you've provided and the cleansing for sinners such as us. We love you and we praise you. Amen.

I'm thinking about Psalm...