

Pray

I love the Bible.

A warning: Things are going to get bad in Genesis. It is one of the hardest books in the Bible to read.

In it we find almost unimaginable corruption, immorality, brutality.

And, we find marvelous blessing, goodness, mercy, grace... and righteous judgment.

The corruption and sin come from people. The goodness and mercy from God... though a few people have shining moments.

This book, frankly, is a lot like real life. It is real life.

The Bible hold nothing back as it presents real people, real life, and the God who is really there. The same God who is here.

And, sometimes we wonder what God is doing. There are no simple easy answers.

Don't get me wrong, there are answers... but the answers always leave us with more questions.

I marvel at the wonderful simplicity and complexity of what God reveals in His Word.

Be suspicious of people who preach or write or counsel and claim to have the key... some simplistic formula to life's problems.

I'm reading a book right now that says that the key to living is grace and forgiveness... a good book, but an exaggeration.

I heard a message a year ago that presented knowing your position in Christ as the key to Christian living.

Norman Vincent Peale and now Joel Osteen preach that they key is positive thinking.

We find in the Bible that there is no magic idea, no saving formula, no key to living other than God.

Those who listen to Him and live His way live the right way... but life doesn't get easy, and those people aren't perfect.

And, those who ignore God live the wrong way... and yet God often blesses them and protects them.

This story today is a story with all of these complexities, and yet teaching a powerful lesson.

A simple observation of this text allows the reader to notice a number of characters.

vs. 1 the man and Eve... but they do not have a significant role in the rest of the chapter.

vss. 1-2 we are introduced to the two main characters, brothers, Cain and Abel.

vs. 6 and following we hear what God has to say, and He is a major character.

But, if we stop there... there is a character missing that is hugely important in the lesson. Do you know who it is?

We find this character in vs. 7... it is sin, personified, spoken of as if it were a living thing.

And, in the rest of the chapter we find sin working its terrible will on the will of people.

This is a lesson, not primarily about God, but about people like you and I and about the power of sin.

Sin is Crouching at Your Door.

In chapter 3 we learn why things in God's good world have gone wrong.

We learned about the temptation of Adam and Eve, and about their disobedience and God's judgment, and His mercy.

But, this is the first time in the Bible that the word "sin" is used. Now the behavior is given a name by God.

And, we discover that it is not done. Sin is not a one time occurrence.

Sin grows, persists. It is like a chronic disease. It is not satisfied with a little destruction, it always wants more.

Worst of all, it seems that people are so vulnerable to it.

I. Our Sin seems Irresistible. vss. 1-8

Now, I should begin by pointing out that the Bible is not interested in answering all the questions that we would have.

Questions about life in these early days... were there sisters? How big was the family?

What did they plant? Did Abel eat venison or just sacrifice the sheep?

We don't know a lot of things... But, God through Moses is teaching His people in the wilderness an essential lesson.

And through them, us... that sin is powerful and pervasive and deceptive and really dangerous.

But, the story begins with tremendous hope...

vss. 1-2 Two Brothers

Clearly Eve considers Cain a gift from God, even though her husband is the father. She recognizes God's blessing.

And, he is a blessing that she doesn't deserve. According to **Gen. 2:16-17** she ought to be dead.

But, though she and her husband have sinned, God has had mercy on them. **Gen. 3:20-24**

Then she receives another child, Abel. Abel is a shepherd. Cain is a farmer.

You can almost feel the pride of Eve in these passages. Life is going well. But the blessing will not last.

vss. 3-5 Two Offerings

We don't know where they get the idea to make offerings to God... maybe from God Himself.

However, those people under Moses in the wilderness would have known exactly what they were doing: Worship.

What we find here are two different worshippers worshipping God. That's a good thing.

They are worshipping in two different ways: India, Hinduism, many people are vegetarians. Christians are non-veg.

In restaurants the menus are divided into veg and non-veg... on airplanes you are given the same choice.

One of the Indian pastors explained at this point that apparently God is non-veg! No.

Nor is the point of the text that God likes shepherds better than farmers. The Bible does not say that.

Cain brings an offering, a gift to God, from what He has.

Abel brings an offering, a gift to God, from the first of what he has... maybe there is something to that.

But the clue to the real difference we find in vs. 4-5

"The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard."

The difference is in how God accepted the person and their offering. Why? What was the difference?

And, here, the New Testament helps us tremendously. **Heb. 11:4 and 6** Faith, seeking God for the reward from Him.

Now this is the critical moment: Cain making his offering, Abel making his...

The picture is of Abel looking heavenward in worship and faith.

Where is Cain looking? (end of vs. 5) He is looking over at his brother Abel...

...not in admiration... not in order to learn how to make his offering better, acceptable to God...

He looks at his brother in anger and he becomes sad. Cain is jealous.

Brothers and sisters, Cain is the man in poverty who looks at the rich man and says, "I should have some of what he has!"

Cain is the father who's son in on the bench and so he hates the father who's son starts.

Cain is the girl who hears her friend sing so beautifully... and hates her for it.

Cain is the mother whose children are struggling... and she hates that family where everyone seems so good.

Cain is the preacher who hears talk of an amazing message they heard from someone else and he hangs his head.

Cain is me... and Cain is you. We are just like Cain... sinners tempted by jealousy, by all kinds of sin.

vss. 6-7 Two Possibilities

Now, the Lord Himself actually comes to speak with Cain.

The Lord asks him questions. Does God not know the answer? God knows. It is Cain who does not.

Then the Lord presents him with a choice. The choice is in getting his heart right with God and his brother.

If Cain succeeds then he will be lifted up, acceptable to God.

If he fails, "Sin is crouching at the door." It wants him. It wants to master him. Like **1 Pet. 5:8**

God made human beings to be the masters of His world, to rule over it, to manage it for good.

But, now we discover that there is something that wants to be our master.

People think that they can be their own master. But this is an illusion. You listen to something, someone.

Who do you listen to? God? Or sin, your own sinful desires?

You and I are all in Cain's place, every day. Making decisions just like this one.

Think of all the advantages that Cain has:

He is apparently used to living before God's face. **Gen. 4:14**

He does not have any bad influences that we know of. His brother is a good guy. His parents are Adam and Eve.

There is a very short history of corruption. Things in the world are still fairly good.

And, God visits with him personally to encourage him to make the right choice.

He would seem to have a much better shot at doing the right thing that we do. And yet he fails.

This being so, what chance do we have to resist sin, even with all the warnings in the Bible, if we listen to them?

vs. 8 He makes One Choice. The wrong choice.

And, what transpires is so ugly that it is hard to believe, until we see around us that this is just what the human race is like.

This murder is not a result of some fit of rage. This is not manslaughter or second degree murder.

This is murder in the first degree and murder of his own brother.

We've already read about the struggle within Cain.

Now we learn that he goes and talks to Abel, probably getting him out into the field, away from help.

Then he kills him. So, the first man born into this world is a murderer. It is not good for our race.

Why? He was jealous. **1 John 3:12**

Well, you might say, "Cain was a really bad guy. I would never do anything like that."

It is just for people who would say this that Jesus teaches what He does in **Matt. 5:21-24**

II. Our Punishment seems Unbearable. vss. 9-15

Things do not get better in Cain's heart and his attitude after his horrible sin. They get worse.

vss. 9-10 Confrontation

God finds him. Asks him a question. Cain tries to cover up his crime, just as we do.

Cain's answer is atrocious. "Knowing" and "keeping" are fundamental family responsibilities.

"brother's blood crying to Me from the ground" = evidence leading to a verdict. No one escapes guilt before God.

vss. 11-12 Curse

So, Adam's curse becomes even worse for Cain. **Gen. 3:17-19**

The ground will not yield anything for Cain. He loses his livelihood. He will have to leave his fields and wander.

vss. 13-14 Complaint

Still Cain does not admit wrong! There is a recognition that he is in trouble, but no repentance, no change of heart.

Is this not just like us when we are found out in our sin? Our first impulse... blame, complaint, excuses, justifications...

Jude 10-11 tells us that he "reviled" things he did not understand.

First Cain hid his sin. Then he denied his sin. Now he protests the punishment. All this leads to misery.

This has been the pattern in people ever since. Is there any hope for us, we who are like Cain?

vs. 15 Compassion (two truths)

Inexplicably, God protects him. Furthermore, think of how God has treated Cain throughout: constant opportunity to repent.

So, God protects and gives us opportunities to repent, over and over. But, be careful. The opportunities will end.

Second: **Heb. 12:18-24** Jesus blood speaks better than the blood of Abel. We deserve death. Jesus died in our place.