

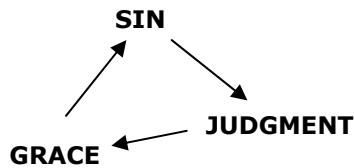


Genesis 4:1-26

PRAY

In the film 'Groundhog Day' Bill Murray plays TV weatherman who finds himself repeating the same day over and over again. As he repeats each day he has a chance to correct the mistakes he had made before. In Genesis 4 we have a 'Groundhog Day' type moment in the story of Cain and Abel. But instead of learning from the mistakes of his mum and dad, Cain's actions are worse and God's judgment is more severe.

In the previous chapter, Genesis 3 we are introduced to a pattern that is going to be repeated over and over again in Genesis 4-11. It's a pattern of sin, judgment, grace.



In Genesis 3 what was the sin? It was the rebellion of Adam and Eve who by eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil said to God 'We want you're job! We want to make the rules! We want to be god of our lives!' That's the sin.

In Genesis 3 what was the judgment? It was God's judgment on the serpent, the woman and man. The serpent was cursed, the woman was now going to experience pain in childbirth, there was now going to be a battle of the sexes, the man was going to sweat and strain in order to get food, human death was now going to happen. But the ultimate judgment was spiritual death as Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden and cut off from the life-giving presence of God. That's the judgment.

In Genesis 3 what was the grace? It was the undeserved kindness God showed to rebellious Adam and Eve. He gave them clothing. They could still have children. There is also the great hope in Genesis 3:15 of a Saviour, one who would be a serpent crusher and destroy Satan for good. That's the grace!

Who's this serpent-crusher going to be? That's the question Eve must have been wondering as she gave birth to her children. Will one of them be that serpent crusher God told us about? In Genesis 4 we find out the answer as Moses focuses on the first children, grandchildren and great, great however many times grandchildren of Adam and Eve. Moses gives us a family tree that goes from Adam by his firstborn son Cain in verse 1 to Lamech and his family, in verse 18. The family tree then starts again in verse 25 with Adam, this time it's going to follow another family line, by his son Seth. So let's look at what happens to the children of Adam and Eve and see what life is like for those living outside the Garden of Eden.

1. Cain – sin inherited (v1-16)

Let's start by looking at Cain, and we will spend most of the time looking what happens to him. The family tree begins in verse 1 with Eve becoming pregnant and giving birth to Cain. But as soon as the family tree begins, it stops as Moses reports a tragic event in the life of Cain which shows us that sin still remains, Adam's sin has been inherited by his sons. I want us to note five things about this event:

• Cain's Rejection (v2-5)

The first point is Cain's rejection in verses 2-5. Look again at verses 2-5: "*Later Eve gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.*"

Adam and Eve have been obeying God's command to be fruitful and multiply and God has blessed them with two sons, Cain whose name means 'I have achieved' and his brother Abel whose name means 'meaningless or hopeless', two more gardeners to help them with the task of looking after the world. In verse 2 we learn that Cain and Abel had different skills and interests. Cain was a farmer and Abel was a

shepherd. The story begins with these two boys approaching God with offerings hoping that God will accept them. God accepts Abel's offering but rejects Cain's offering.

Why? There are a couple of clues given. Firstly, look at how the offerings are described. Cain brought 'some' fruits of the soil, but Abel brought 'fat portions from some of the firstborn'. Cain brought whatever was lying around whereas Abel brought the best he had. Secondly, look at Cain's reaction. He's angry. He thought God was going to accept him and can't take the fact that he hasn't. Cain thought that his way of doing things was going to be fine. But Abel was different. Hebrews 11:4 tells us that *"By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings."* Abel approached God by faith, trusting that God would accept him because of the sacrifice he made. Cain and Abel live up to their names. Cain or 'I have achieved' thinks he knows best but is rejected. Abel or 'hopeless' recognises that he doesn't know best, trusts God instead and is accepted.

- **God's Warning (v6-7)**

The second point is God's warning. Cain is a hothead and is properly hacked off that God didn't accept him. But God warns him about this. Look at verse 6-7: *"Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it"*.

Like in the Garden of Eden when God comes looking for Adam and Eve and asks them questions, so God comes to Cain and asks him too some questions. Cain still has a chance to be accepted, God gives him a second chance. God tells Cain to do what is right, like Abel did, and he'll be accepted. But notice the warning God gives Cain about sin. Sin wants to take control of him, like a lion that is about to devour its prey.

Cain has a choice. Listen to God's warning and do what is right or let sin take control of him. This leads to the third point, Cain's disobedience in verses 8.

- **Cain's Disobedience (v8)**

Verse 8 is the central scene in the story. Cain is alone with his brother Abel. How will he respond to God's warning? Will he do what is right or be overcome by sin?

Look at verse 8: *"Now Cain said to his brother Abel "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him."* Cain allows sin to master him and kills his brother. Cain refused to listen to God's warning about sin and as a result the first man to be born becomes the first murderer. The first man to receive life takes life. It's a warning to us about what could happen if we allow sin to master us.

Cain's disobedience leads to the fourth point which is Cain's punishment in verses 9-16.

- **Cain's Punishment (v9-16)**

Abel's blood cries out for justice and God comes to Cain this time in judgment. Look at verses 10-12: *"The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."*

Like in Genesis 3, God must punish sin. Cain's sin is worse than Adam's and his punishment is more severe. In Genesis 3 it wasn't Adam who was cursed but the ground. Here in Genesis 4 it is Cain who is cursed. His punishment affects his relationship with creation as the land won't produce crops for him. His punishment affects his relationship with other people as verse 14 tells us he fears being killed in a revenge attack. His punishment affects his relationship with God as he is driven from the LORD's presence to be a wanderer in the land of Nod.

But whilst Adam took his punishment, Cain protests. God it's too much! Look at verses 13-14: *"Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."*

- **God's Grace (v15)**

Amazingly we have a fifth point, God's grace. Look at verse 15: *"But the Lord said to him, 'Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.'" Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no-one who found him would kill him."* God shows undeserved kindness towards Cain and puts a mark on him to protect Cain from a revenge attack. This mark would remind Cain of his sin but at the same time remind him of God's grace and mercy towards him.

Did you spot the pattern of sin, judgment, grace in the story of Cain and Abel? What was the sin? Cain murdering his brother Abel. What was the judgment? God put Cain under a curse, the ground will no longer yield crops for Cain, and he'll be a wanderer. What was the grace? God puts a mark on Cain which will protect him so that he can live out his life without fear of being killed.

Before we move on, let's just stop and think about what lessons we can learn from these verses. There are lots but let me pick out two.

The first lesson is about how we approach God. If we approach God the way you want to or the way you think is best, like Cain did, it will lead to rejection. For instance, if you think you deserve to be accepted by God and let into his heaven, because you go to church or you help old ladies across the road, or because you are a good person, sadly you will be rejected. But if you approach God the right way, like Abel did, by faith, which means trusting in the Lord Jesus, the only acceptable sacrifice, God will accept you and let you enter his heaven. This is reminder to those of us here who are Christians and those who are not, that God will only accept those who approach Him by faith, by trusting in Jesus.

The second lesson is a reminder about God's grace, His underserved kindness towards sinners. In this story God gave Cain, a mark which saved his life. This mark reminded him of his sin and God's mercy. In the New Testament we read of another mark. This mark reminds us of our sin and God's mercy shown to us. These marks remind us that our lives have been saved. In John 20 we read about the marks on Jesus, the marks of crucifixion. It was our sin that nailed Jesus to the cross. It was God's grace that he should send his son to die for us. It was on the cross that Jesus took the punishment of hell that people deserve because of their sin. It is on the cross that the lives of those who trust in him are saved.

Very quickly let's see who else Moses draws our attention to...

2. Cain's family – sin continues (v17-24)

Secondly let's look at Cain's family in verses 17-24. In the lifetime of Cain and his family the world becomes more technologically advanced. Urbanisation is taking place. Cain builds the first city in verse 17. There is the development of farming in verse 20 with the raising of livestock. In verse 21 there is the development of music. Jubal the flute and harp player and distant relation of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Then there's the development of metal work in verse 22. Tubal-Cain would never have known making tools out of bronze and iron would lead to the iPod.

But at the same time progress in this area is made, we see sin continues and wickedness increases. One of Cain's descendants is a man called Lamech. Lamech is a nasty piece of work. In verse 19 we read that Lamech married two women. He commits polygamy. He goes against God's ideal plan for marriage. Lamech is also a violent man who boasts of his brutality in verses 23-24. Sin is continuing and spreading from one generation to the next.

As Moses focuses on Cain and his family, he gives us a description of what life was like outside the Garden of Eden, and it's a description of what life is like in the world we live in. A world where as technology advances, sin continues to ruin the good world God created. Is there any hope for this sinful world? We've seen reminders already, and here's another one, as in the darkness of chapter 4, a light is about to shine as Moses draws our attention to a third and final person, Seth.

3. Seth and his family – a new beginning (v25-26)

Look at verses 25-26: *"Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying 'God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.'" Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD."*

We get in these verses a flashback to an event that happens after Abel was murdered. God gives Adam and Eve another son, Seth. Why is this important? Remember the promise of Genesis 3:15 that a serpent crusher would come from the offspring of the woman. It's clear that it wasn't going to be Cain or come from his family. It's not going to be Abel because he's dead. But God gives Eve another child in the place of Abel; could Seth or someone from Seth's family be the serpent crusher? Maybe, because at that time men began to call on the name of the LORD!