

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Evil: The Reality and Remedy of Sin Within (Family Foundations, Part 7 – Genesis 4:7-17) www.goldcountrybaptist.org

Genesis 4:1-17 (NKJV) ¹ Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.” ² Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, ⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. ⁶ So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.” ⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where *is* Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. *Am* I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰ And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. ¹¹ So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.” ¹³ And Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment *is* greater than I can bear! ¹⁴ Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me.” ¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, “Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. ¹⁷ And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch.

One of the most common questions asked about the Bible, and Genesis, and this chapter in the Bible: “Where did Cain get his wife?” Sometimes asked by critics or confused believers. I do want to answer that briefly, but I don’t really want to spend a lot of time on that and neglect the far more important questions and observations from this chapter. I have listened to many sermons on Genesis 4, and one in particular by Don Whitney made this point in its very title: Don’t Miss God’s Favor Looking for Cain’s Wife. There is an answer to that question as to where Cain got his wife (it’s all *relative* anyways, pardon the pun). But a far more vital question than “how did Cain get a wife” is “how did Abel get God’s favor, and how can we?”

Genesis 4:1-2 records the first two sons of Adam and Eve but we find out later there were many more kids. Gen. 1-2 says Adam and Eve were the only male and female God created. God could have created multiple couples / families at the start, but He chose not to. His point: *one man, one woman to be one flesh for one lifetime*.

Jesus goes back to this to show God’s design for marriage when the Pharisees ask if they can divorce for any reason at all. He says divorce only exists because of the hardness of men’s hearts (in Mt 19:9 He mentions adultery, perhaps hard-hearted infidelity where the repeatedly adulterous one will not repent or reconcile). But He says from the beginning it was not so, and quotes Genesis 2:24 to make the point of God’s original design: *one flesh*. Those that violate Christ’s teaching there and just divorce someone for any reason at all (as the Pharisees posed the question), Jesus said if you divorce and marry another you are sinning and guilty of adultery.

Our Lord says there’s a reason God only made one man and one woman on the planet, and it was to make God’s design as clear as possible for all time: *one man, one woman to be one flesh for one lifetime*. He didn’t create other men or women as backups. From the beginning that was not to be so. Marriage is not to be like a job that we can move on from when it’s not working out or gets bad.

I bring that up because it's clear to me God was more concerned we focus on *that fact* of our first parents than the fact that all who later populated the earth would be children and grandchildren of them in the same family (in other words, Cain and Abel, all of Adam and Eve's descendants married relatives; siblings, cousins, second cousins, etc.). Abraham later in Genesis marries his half-sister – it was not till later in the time of Moses that God revealed and laid down laws for this not to take place anymore, along with a lot of other laws not in place in early Genesis (Sabbath, dietary, etc). Of course, the farther they got from the perfect gene pool of the original family through mutations, there was also risk of problems for marrying close relatives.

There also seems to be another reason God created one man / one marriage to be the source of all other life: *the unity of human race*. In Acts 17:26, Paul the Jew appeals to the Greeks in Athens that God “made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth” – the Bible does not speak of different nations as *races*, we're all one race: human. All in / from Adam.

Genesis 5 records the genealogy of Adam and Eve and their descendants. Like other genealogies, it doesn't list out every son and daughter, just important names or the name of a particular line it wants to trace (Matthew 1's genealogy even skips generations). Genesis 5:4 states explicitly that Adam had many sons and daughters. So there were others undoubtedly born after the first 2 sons (later marrying) it's just Cain and Abel are only singled out for this story.

But Cain's wife is not the main point of this chapter –I want to consider in our brief time other greater lessons in Genesis 4.

Review outline from first message in Genesis 4:

Children Are a Supernatural Gift from God (v. 1)

Children Are Seen as a Blessing, not a Burden (v. 1-2)

Children Are Special as Created in God's Image

(Abel's death vs. animal death, cf. Gen. 9:3, 6-7)

Children Are Sinners in Need of God's Truth (4:6ff)

God describes hidden evil in verse 7 graphically as *crouching* at Cain's door, a word for a crouching tiger (cf. roaring lion Satan)

Which prompted the title of this evening's message is “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Evil – The Reality and Remedy of Sin Within.”

That language comes straight from verse 7 that we began to look at last week. God says to Cain that if you do not deal with your anger, “sin is crouching at your door, it desires to have you, but you must master it.” In other words, you must control evil in your heart before it controls your life. If you are not able to master it, sin will master and rule your life and reign over you, with you as its obedient bond-slave. God says you need to understand the reality of this sin within and God says His grace offers a remedy as well.

Romans 6:12-23 (NASB95)

¹²Therefore **do not let sin reign** in your mortal body **so that you obey its lusts**,

... ¹⁴For **sin shall not be master over you** ...

...¹⁷ But thanks be to God that **though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart** to that form of teaching to which you were committed,¹⁸ and **having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**
 ...²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For a Christian, sin *remains* but it no longer *reigns*. We have a new master now, a new Lord, and our heart wants to obey Him as His subject, obey His desires rather than our own former sinful desires.

God's gift of grace was available, but Cain chose the wages of sin. The name "Cain" is mentioned 18x in this chapter, the obvious main subject, a tragic character. In this passage Adam and Eve are raising Cain (literally).

The tragic irony of Genesis 4 is that it begins with hope but ends with homicide. The first son ever brings death to the 2nd son. This first man born begets the first murder. The little baby in v. 1 surely looked more cute than criminal, but he was a cold-blooded killer.

The word "kill" in v. 8 is the common verb for intentional murder, manslaughter. God's crime scene investigation begins in verse 9:

⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where *is* Abel your brother?"

God was of course an eye-witness to this brutal crime in verse 8 with His all-seeing eye, so this interrogation was for Cain's benefit not God's. God doesn't need information, but it will be better for Cain if he will plead guilty and give a full confession. Cain's reply

v. 9b "I do not know. *Am* I my brother's keeper?"

Notice the sarcasm: "you mean the keeper-of-sheep guy, what am I his keeper now? I don't know where shepherd boy is, I'm not his shepherd. What am I responsible for Mr. Responsible now?"

Notice some of the characteristics of sin here:

- Not only evading, but lying, and indifferent about it
- insulting God (as all sin is whether we say it out loud like Cain or not, we think God doesn't see and know our sin)
- self-focus, and an assumption that he is not responsible for others, not even his own brother. Whereas God's revealed will in OT & NT is repeatedly that we *are* responsible for our brothers and to love even our neighbors as ourselves, and to even love and care for enemies. The text mentions 7x in 11 verses that they were brothers, compounding guilt
- In verse 10, we also see that sin covers. Cain tried to hide the body in the ground, but being dead he still speaks
 In verse 10 "What have you done" could probably have an exclamation point, rather than a question mark (the original Hebrew did not have punctuation marks). God is not seeking information, He is making an accusation. The verb for "crying" is used in the OT in association with an innocent victim who is brutalized, beaten down or harassed.
- In verse 13 the sinful heart is revealed in complaining against God that he is unjust and too harsh (again we may not do this out loud, but how often do we in our hearts?).

- Unlike Adam, who offers no protest on God's sentence and expulsion from paradise, Cain instantly objects and brings his grievance and complaint forward about his banishment
- In verse 14 he continues to find fault with God's seeming unfairness and severity, failing to realize his killing of Abel is what should justly now happen to him. God made clear to Adam and Eve if you sin you die. Anything less is grace!

By God's astonishing common grace even to hard sinners, verses 15-16 record that God mercifully allows Cain to live a life and be married and have children and start a new community, and be protected from blood revenge by family members for the murder of Abel. Cain didn't deserve to live, nor did Adam and Eve, nor do we when we sin. *Was it "fair?" No. Was it grace? Yes.* God can sovereignly choose to give grace to even the chief of sinners, and in fact His common grace amazingly often lets sinners live. But point is still clear: *Children are sinners in need of God's truth.*

Not every child acts out the sins that came from Cain's heart in this chapter, but Scripture is clear we all have this potential and we all have the same sins in our heart, even if modern laws and consequences may restrain many from fulfilling all sinful desires.

The Minnesota Crime Commission said this: "Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it; his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys, his uncle's watch. Deny him these once, and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He's dirty, he has no morals, no knowledge, no developed skills. This means that all children, not just certain children, all children are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in their self-impulsive actions to satisfy each want, every child would grow up a criminal, a killer, and a rapist."¹

APPLICATIONS:

1. Children's Sin is Not Caused by their Environment or Peers
2. Godly Children Are Not Guaranteed Products of Godly Parenting
3. The Lord's Grace is Available Despite our Greatest Sins

#1: Children's Sin is Not Caused by their Environment or Peers

Gen. 8:21 (NIV) "... every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood"

In Gen 4:6-7 God confronts a child in his anger. His Word to Cain is basically "*Cain you need to deal with that anger and do it now.*"

God's Word echoes this note many places, including in Ephesians

Ephesians 4:26 "do not let the sun go down on your anger,²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity ...³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

You need to take personal responsibility for the sin in your own heart and put it off, fight it, repent of it, confess it, turn from it. If you don't and let it continue, the devil has a foothold in your heart. Now our world doesn't want to take responsibility for when kids go bad (or adults go bad). If my boy is getting in trouble, mom is quick to tell you the problem is his environment or his peers (or his school, or the church, or the list could go on and on).

She is sure there must be some other explanation as to the external source of the folly her child gets into. But Proverbs 22:15 says “folly is bound up in the heart of a child.” It’s already there in his heart. Mom says “he’s really a good kid but he’s in with the wrong crowd.” Well, why is his heart drawn to the wrong crowd? And are others responsible when he sins, or is he, and are his parents?

My generation has picked up on blame-shifting cues from the generation before and today’s kids (younger or grown-up kids) don’t want to take responsibility for their actions. It’s always somebody else’s fault. This is not unique to modern parents (see our first parents: Gen 3).

Let’s go from Genesis 4 to James 4 again to compare this thinking to Scripture. Think of Cain & Abel: the first two boys ever, just 1 chapter away from perfect Paradise, with no bad friends, no TV, no crime yet in their neighborhood, etc. Where does sin come from?

James 4:1-2 (NASB95) ¹ **What is the source** of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source **your pleasures** [NKJV *desires*] that wage war in your members? ² You lust and do not have; **so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain**; so you fight and quarrel ...

The source of Cain’s struggle and sin was not ultimately his circumstances or environment, and the same is true for us if you believe God’s Word. The source is our sinful desires, and when we don’t get what we want we hate and fight and quarrel (all of us are murderers at heart, Jesus said, by attitude even if not by act). It takes two to quarrel, but the other person doesn’t *make you* quarrel or sin. No others or outside influence is the source – the source is within you.

James 1:14-15 (NASB95) ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed **by his own lust [desire]**. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and **when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death**.

Again it’s our own desires within that carry us away, never ultimately something outside of us. Verse 15 presents graphically birth to sin(ner): Eve has Cain, his sin bringing forth death (Abel).

Turn to 1 John 3 which also applies the Cain and Abel story with a direct reference and a God-inspired application. The problem with sinful children (or adults like us) is not found by trying to figure out what in our past went wrong, who failed us, where our psychological needs weren’t met, who was dysfunctional, who didn’t fill our cup or who deflated our self-esteem or felt needs, and so on. The problem is not lack of *nurture from those outside*, there’s a fatal problem with our *nature on the inside*. The problem is not primarily with our physical parents; who’s our spiritual father? Apart from adopting grace, nature-replacing, new creation, regenerating of and from God, we are all evil and of the evil one.

1 John 3:10-18 (NASB95) ¹⁰ By this the children of God and **the children of the devil are obvious**: anyone who **does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother**. ¹¹ For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ¹² **not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil**, and his brother’s were righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death**. ¹⁵ **Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer**; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren [**we are responsible for our brethren and in fact are to give up our life for them!**]. ¹⁷ But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and **closes his heart against him**, how does the love of God abide in him?

¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

If you can't love your brother, you don't love God. If you don't have inside of you His love, you don't have Him inside of you (the present tense in 1 John refers to the pattern of your life). If you habitually live a life hating others, you in reality hate God. Your crimes towards others are first and foremost crimes against God.

Kent Hughes points out the sin of hatred (heart murder or actual murder) 'is an act of hatred toward God for making or accepting another who offends us or troubles us or is favored with gifts and honors we do not have or stands in our way. That's precisely the way it was with [not only Cain in his anger toward God that he took out on his brother, also the case w/] King David, the murderer of Uriah the Hittite, as evidenced by his astonishing confession to God: "Against you, you only, have I sinned" (Psalm 51:4) ... King David saw within himself the cause of his horrendous crime: It was with God that he was offended because God had limited his freedom by forbidding him the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David's crime was directed at his restricting God. According to Jesus we are likewise exposed by our own hatreds because they are spiritual homicides ultimately directed at God – however private they may seem (cf. Matthew 5:21-26).'²

Matthew 5:21-22 (NASB95) ²¹ "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' ²² "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.

Application #2: Godly Children Are Not Guaranteed Products of Godly Parenting

Adam and Eve had faith in God (3:20, 4:1) and their son Abel was called righteous by Jesus and a prophet. He's heading the list of faith heroes in Hebrews 11. The godly line of another son of their Seth is followed in the next chapter even through Luke's gospel. But Cain had the same parents and lived a very ungodly life. Why?

Let me say first that Scripture says parents have *the* most important role to play in bringing up godly children. God has given the spiritual training responsibility to parents, not a Christian school, not the church, not AWANA, not Christian camps, clubs, etc. God most commonly uses godly parents to raise godly children (and children; praise God for a godly home) ... but it's not a guarantee.

What about Proverbs 22:6. Let's look at that passage:

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Is Proverbs 22:6 an absolute biblical promise we can claim that as long as we tried our best to train up our children in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it? Is that verse a guarantee that if we as godly parents do our part, our kids will walk faithfully with the Lord? Is this a guarantee they'll be saved?

The Hebrew concept of a Proverb is not the English concept of a promise. The Jews understood the proverb genre to be general principles rather than guarantees. Hebrew wisdom sayings do not imply there are never any exceptions under any circumstances.

In Isaiah 1:2 God says “Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.” God’s own sons went astray, and of course God is the most perfect Father ever, so we cannot say that it is always the Fathers fault when a son goes astray.

John MacArthur writes: ‘That [salvation-guarantee] notion is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the Proverbs. These are wise sayings and truism – not necessarily inviolable rules. For example, two verses earlier, we read, “By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life” (v. 4). That is certainly not a blanket promise that everyone who is humble and fears the Lord will always be rich and receive honor. Too many other verses also teach us that the righteous are inevitably persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12) and often poor (James 2:5).

Furthermore, Proverbs 10:27 says, “The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.” We know that this principle does not hold true in every case. It cannot be claimed as if it were a binding promise from God to all who fear the Lord. Likewise, Proverbs 22:6 is a principle that is generally true. The same principle would be true if applied to soldiers, carpenters, teachers, or any other form of training ... who are also, normally, products of their training ... The great Puritan commentator Matthew Henry made these remarks about the truism of Proverbs 22:6 ... “Ordinarily the vessel retains the savour with which it was first seasoned. Many indeed have departed from the good way in which they were trained up; Solomon himself did so. But early training may be a means of their recovering themselves, as it is supposed Solomon did. At least the parents will have the comfort of having done their duty and used the means” ...

[MacArthur concludes] God often uses faithful parents as instruments in the salvation of children ... But ultimately a grown child’s spiritual fitness alone is not necessarily a reliable gauge of the parents’ [faithfulness].

Having said that, I want to stress that sometimes – I should say *often* [if not usually, parents *are at least partly*] to blame for their wayward children’s rebellion. And it has been my observation over the years that parents are generally more to blame for wayward kids than society, or peers, or any of the other influences parents tend to blame ... God Himself has given the responsibility for raising children to parents – not to schoolteachers, peers, child-care workers, or other people outside the family – and therefore it is wrong for parents to attempt to unload that responsibility or shift the blame when things go wrong.³

Application #3: The Lord’s Grace is Available Despite our Greatest Sins

In the text of Genesis 4, one of the great lessons is that the Lord’s grace is still there for Cain despite his greatest sins. We’ll pick up on this idea this time.

¹ John MacArthur, *The Fulfilled Family*. Includes index. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985.

² Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 105.

³ John MacArthur, *What the Bible Says About Parenting*, 17-19.