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Life under Sin **Genesis 4:1-16**

Keywords: Death, Murder, Cain and Abel, Sin, Worship

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: In this chapter we now enter into a whole new world. A world that is under the power of sin. It is a world that all of us know too well. We are able to see how quickly sin shows itself in the lives of our first parents' offspring. We see the grace of God as well as His judgments. We see misplaced assumptions and the faithfulness of God in the midst of them. And we see that worship is still the most basic and necessary thing in the heart of man. The only question is Who do we worship and How do we worship?

I. Introduction.

- A. We come again to Genesis. Our attention today will be in the 4th chapter.
- B. Adam and Eve have been sent out of the garden. There is the cherubim who is there to protect the entrance of the garden. Not a friendly angelic being but one who is mighty and frightening.
 - 1. The bible points out that because of the direction of the entrance, on the East, that Adam and Eve began their new life in sin with the garden to the West.
 - 2. One commentator's point was simple, but sad to consider. The garden of promise and beauty was to their west. And every night as they would turn their eyes to the setting sun they would ever be reminded of what they had lost.
- C. Well, in this chapter we get to see how man functions in the state of sin. And in doing so we will see lived out before us what Paul speaks of in Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."
 - 1. A key term in that passage is death.
 - 2. Death is what you will see in stark detail over the next several chapters. Death by murder. Death through aging. Death through God's judgment.

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3. Death is what marks time for humanity now. We measure so many events by births and deaths. It is now woven into the fabric of what we call normal.
 4. But death is not normal. Death is not natural. But only if you and I develop a biblical mind set so that we can properly interpret life.
 - a. It is a constant reminder of what is wrong in this age we live in. An age of sin and the consequences of sin, which is death.
 - b. Not merely death in the physical sense either.
 - c. But death in the eternal sense of damnation, judgment and hell. A living death where people will be separated from the life found in their Creator and God. Where only His holy wrath will be known.
 - d. When a friend, co-worker, family member dies apart from saving faith in Jesus Christ alone they are not met with the love of God or the kindness and grace of God; rather it is only and ever the wrath of God.
- D. However, remember too that though Adam and Eve had been cast out of the garden, there was much in which they were to hope.
1. There was the promise of the seed/offspring of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent.
 2. This was believed by Adam and that is why he called his wife “Eve.” The life-giver.
 3. And though the garden was closed to them, there was still the great hope that once again it would be opened. They were the first people who were looking for the savior, though they did not know who he was to be.
- E. Read Genesis 4:1-16.
1. Here we find life outside the Garden. A life that is radically different from what Adam and Eve knew.
 2. They are having children now. But children born under the power of sin. Children who would never know what the world was like prior to sin. It is a life under sin.

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3. And sin has a way of affecting everything. And when it does it can manifest its presence in a multitude of ways. Some obvious and some more subtle.
4. In the first 16 verses there are four lessons that we can draw from this story that help us understand life under sin.

II. Lessons from Cain.

- A. The first lesson is on assumptions.
 1. Again I want us to remember that God had promised to bring a deliverer. And you can imagine that Adam and Eve had listened very carefully to the words of the Lord at that time.
 - a. Now Eve had not yet even produced a single child when they hear of the promise of a savior. Remember that pregnancy was a concept that was not really understood. This was a first for all involved.
 - b. No details given. All we have is that verse one says that once out of the garden Eve is now pregnant.
 - (1) Think about that for a moment.
 - (2) The bible just moves rather quickly over that. But we know that time was passing. One day she woke up feeling different. Perhaps ill.
 - (3) Then her belly began to get bigger. Then she felt something move.
 - (4) Nine months pass and with it comes a great sense of hope.
 - (5) And then the child is born. And it is not a girl....but a boy!
 - (6) So? Well what gender was the promised seed in Genesis 3:15?
 - c. Notice what Eve says (1). She has gotten this child with YHWH.
 - (1) The words “with the help of” are not in the text. They are assumed to be the intent of the preposition.

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- (2) But that use of the preposition is very rare, if ever used in this way. It is best translated like the KJV does it, "...with the Lord."
2. What is happening is that Eve appears to see this child, Cain, as the fulfillment of the promise of YHWH. The seed has been born! He is here!
 - a. She is looking with glory and praise to her Lord. He has fulfilled His word and she is now looking for the day of salvation.
 - b. By the way, in doing this we also see a glimpse into her heart and it is a heart of faith in the Lord.
 - (1) She had sinned. She had failed to obey the Lord.
 - (2) But there is the presence of faith in these words.
 - c. Just as Adam was showing faith in calling her Eve, so too she shows faith because she sees this child as the one promised of the Lord.
 - (1) She had not lived with doubt in the faithfulness and truthfulness of the Lord. Rather, she was eagerly anticipating its fulfillment.
 - (2) Truly it appears that Eve had repented of her sin and had turned back to her Lord. Her faith was in a God who gives promises. A God who calls us to believe in Him, just as Abraham believed God's promises and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.
 - (3) Adam and Eve had only a few words of revelation from the Lord. Yet they had fully put their trust in those words. How much more ought we to put our faith in the words of the Lord now, in the fulness of God's revelation to us. Is it not true that the Lord has said, "Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved?"
 - (4) Beloved, the amount of knowledge regarding God's promise is not what saves you. It is through believing that God WILL save you through Jesus Christ that salvation comes.

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- d. So with great joy and anticipation she looks to this firstborn son and sees in him the promise of the Lord being fulfilled.
3. Verse 2 though continues with the story.
 - a. “Abel” (actually *Hevel*), gives us an interesting picture. The word means “vapor, vain, to act emptily.” It seems that this is what is being said by the first parents too.
 - b. Something has already begun to happen to them. We don’t know the time frame of Abel’s birth. We don’t even know if other brothers had been born. There is no reason at all to assume that Abel was the second born— specially since after Cain leaves their presence he marries a woman, who was most likely his sister, or niece.
 - c. Apparently, however, Cain was not showing himself to be the deliverer that they thought he was to be. Abel’s presence and name was their way of expressing disillusionment, of disappointed hope.
4. Before we go onto the 2nd lesson I want to pause here for just a moment. Most of you already know this story well. You know what happens—Cain murders his brother.
5. And that is the lesson. Eve assumed that Cain was the promised one. But he was not. She assumed that all was going to be alright. God was going to fix things up nice and neat. But He didn’t.
6. Assumptions.
 - a. They get all of us into trouble all the time.
 - b. We assume we will live to be a ripe old age. We assume that our children will bury us. But that is foolishness.
 - c. But assumptions lull us into complacency. We assume that later will actually come. None of us has put on the calendar the day that we will die, for we don’t know that day.
 - d. Do you assume your child will be saved? Do you assume that you are right with God? Are you assuming right now that things will work out in your life?

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- e. How many of you could right now give testimony on how your life is not what you thought it would be? But we all keep moving forward on assumptions based on nothing.
 - f. Let these words here in Genesis 4 move your heart out of its slumber then. First was the assumption of great joy, then the words of great sadness, “vanities.”
- B. There is a lesson on worship.
- 1. There came a time when both these men came to give a sacrifice to the Lord.
 - a. No place in the bible is there an indication that God inaugurated the process of a sacrifice. Certainly there is no statement in the text on what was proper. We don't even know if this is the first sacrifice given. Which tells us that this is not the point.
 - b. There is a casual way that Moses wrote this that seems to indicate that it was not something out of character or new to them. It was just something they did.
 - c. The word for “offering” is a very broad term. It cannot be seen to reference a sacrifice for sin or that it was to be a bloody offering. It was just a time when they both came to make an offering to the Lord.
 - 2. We need to be very careful not to read into these sacrifices what is not there. We can wonder, but use care not to go too far.
 - a. Abel's was of the firstborn of his flock and their fat. Cain's was of the fruit of the ground.
 - b. We can be tempted to examine the offering. Or to think about the perspective of those offerings from the view of Able and Cain.
 - c. But the perspective of the person giving the offering is not important. Frankly, that is what got Cain into trouble in the first place. It is the Lord's perspective is what is important.
 - 3. Notice vss 4-5. God first looks at what? [The person, not the sacrifice].
 - a. What is the lesson? The attitude of the person is critical in worship.

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- b. If the person's heart does not fall short, nor will his offering, his worship. God looks at the heart of man, not on the outward form.
 - (1) Jesus said, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God."
 - (2) David said to his son Solomon, "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever."
 - (3) And the heart is something we cannot fix. We can be like the religious leaders of Jesus' day. Religious on the outside but vile and evil in their hearts. Only God can change one's heart.
- 4. And this is what occurred in Genesis 4. God looked to the two men, He searched their hearts. But what is it that He finds there?
- 5. In Hebrews 11:4 we see that it was Abel who offered in faith whereas Cain's was not. So one was found to be a heart of faith, a whole heart; while the other man's heart was found to be wanting.
 - a. Evidently Cain was giving an offering because it was time. Abel, however, was giving it in a heart of true worship.
 - b. God hates mere external worship. He has no time for those whose hearts are far from Him. Of the people of Israel he says in Isaiah 29:13, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote."
- 6. The lesson is simple. God determines what is right and acceptable, not us. God hates formalism in worship. He looks to the heart of the person and delights in the one who first delights in Him.
 - a. Let us ever remember that beloved. Let us draw near to God with a clear conscience and a clean heart.

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- b. To do so requires that we come through the Lord Jesus Christ. We worship in “spirit and in truth.”
- C. The third lesson is a sad one. It is a lesson on the possibilities of sin.
 - 1. Cain is angry. Note the hardness of his heart in verse 9. He has just killed his brother and his response is one of impudence and coldness. It is a direct challenge to God. That is sin.
 - a. We see it in the anger of Cain. It is there in his heart, it is flooding his mind. It is gripping him, even while being warned against it.
 - b. How many times has that been true to us? We are warned away, but our love of sin and our proud heart pulls us deeper into its grip.
 - 2. What we see now is what God already saw, the horrid state of Cain’s heart. As the Apostle John said, Cain was of the evil one. The evil one, who was a murderer from the beginning, now his child, his seed, lives that out against his own brother.
 - 3. Let this settle into your minds beloved. No man, no woman in this room is exempt from this reality.
 - 4. This is why it is foolishness to flirt with this world. Why do we do so? What will be the cost. How many parents will ache as they see their sons and daughters go the way of Cain? Then they will be filled with sadness, then they will say, “If only.” But then it is too late.
 - 5. Preach to your children the doctrine of sin. Dwell deeply on it yourself. Do not downplay it, rather learn it, and hate it with a holy hatred. And then preach Christ!
- D. The last lesson is on grace and repentance.
 - 1. Note first how the Lord is gracious to warn Cain in verses 6-7.
 - a. He doesn’t just disregard the offering, He then speaks to Cain about his heart.
 - b. A few points in these verses. Cain is already sinful. But even in that state he is expected to exercise morality. God is saying, “do not give in to your sin.”
 - c. God is showing great grace here. Cain is a sinful being. God has every right to ignore him, but He doesn’t. Even here God crouches

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- down to speak to him like a Father to a son. He seeks to arouse Cain to the evil that is within him.
- d. As a side point, it is obvious from this passage that God still would come and be with the people at times. These are known as theophanies.
2. But there is a frightening thing about Cain's response to this act of grace.
 - a. No repentance. No grief. No sorrow for the heart of anger. No thanksgiving to a God who would point him away from sin.
 - b. Just silence.
 - c. Then he calls out Abel to the field and he kills him.
 3. And again we see grace.
 - a. God again comes to him.
 - b. God asks him a question, just like he did with Cain's parents. Not to find out information, but to cause the person to either flee or repent.
 - c. God could have killed him outright, but he did not, again, consider the grace of God. Consider the patience.
 - (1) Remember what Paul said in Romans 2:4 ff.
 - (2) Cain is storing up that wrath.
 - (3) He acts like he is on equal ground with the Lord.
 - (4) Cain also shows the progress of sin since his parents' fall. In their case there was hiding and excuses. Here there is a boldness, a coldness, and a heart of utter defiance.
 - (5) But also remember this beloved, defiance is always vain when it is against our Lord.
 - (a) Psalm 2:1-5 Why are the nations in an uproar, And the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed: "Let us tear their fetters apart, And cast away their cords from us!" He who sits in the

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heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury:

- (b) Psalm 37:12-15 The wicked plots against the righteous, And gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him; For He sees his day is coming. The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow, To cast down the afflicted and the needy, To slay those who are upright in conduct. Their sword will enter their own heart, And their bows will be broken.

- 4. Having given Cain a chance again to repent, God then shows that He already knows.
 - a. The blood of Abel is speaking.
 - b. And here is something for us to note. It is not God, so much, who is the witness against us. It is our actions themselves.
 - (1) The thing that cried out against Cain was his sin.
 - (2) In the same way it will be for all who have not run to Jesus Christ for salvation. Their sin will speak against them. Their sin will condemn them.
- 5. And for the first time in the bible, God's curse is actually given against a man.
 - a. It involved two things.
 - (1) First, being driven away from the cultivated land. It will not produce for him.
 - (2) Second, he will be a vagabond. A wanderer.
 - b. Cain was a tiller of the ground, yet now he sees the horror of his sin. He is now driven away from that ground. It is not his to work anymore. From this time forward, his life will be only one of hardship.
- 6. No longer is there impudence. Now there is despair. God has crushed his enemy—He has condemned the one who mocked his grace and warnings.

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Cain thought he had it all under control. And now it has all come crashing down upon him.

7. Even here, however, God's grace is shown. He gives Cain a sign (what we don't know) but it is a point of protection.
8. Let me give you several reasons why God may have spared Cain from immediate death.
 - a. The presence of the man as a fugitive was a potent warning to all other as to the horror of the curse of murder.
 - b. It shows that banishment from the presence of God is the worst curse of all. It is a picture of the horror of hell, where the person is separated fully from the presence of God.
 - c. It shows that God is the one who alone determines when it is right to terminate a life. Even here we see a premium place on human life by God.
 - d. We also see that it is part of God's plan that tares and wheat grow together. God is still God, but uses sin and its slaves to accomplish his purposes.
 - e. Lastly, we see in Cain the presence of the seed of the serpent. And we know now what Adam and Eve found out to their great sadness. Cain was not of the seed of the woman, he was the seed of the serpent.

III. Conclusion.

- A. These are the lessons that I see here.
- B. God's grace is very obvious, but the presence of sin is too. I again implore each of you to give pause.
- C. What is the hope of your salvation? Are you guilty of assumption? Do you assume that God has saved you? Are you assuming that God will save your child? Are you assuming that tomorrow is the day you will come to Jesus?
- D. May I say again, run to the Lord while there is time. Do not delay. Confess your sin. Turn from your heart hardness. Come to the Lord, for he is quick to forgive.

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Community Group Questions

- **Talk about how bad assumptions caused you trouble. What are some solutions to this from a biblical perspective? Consider Proverbs 27:1; James 4:13-17; Luke 12:16-20 (draw out the many principles in this one); Psalm 39:4-7.**
- **Think about the various areas of “life” we all have in one way or another. What are assumptions that could lead you or others astray? Think about this in family, employment, finances, spiritual life, church, and government/society.**
- **I said that God hates formalism in worship and that He wants worship borne out of faith. Does this mean we approach God however we wish as long as we have faith? Does worship not have certain forms that are proper? Why or why not?**