

Text: Gen. 4:1-16 **Title:** Cain, Abel, and Acceptable Worship

INTRODUCTION:

—None of us is immune to the effects of sin; we've all seen its deceitful devastation. I've watched it break marriages, tear churches apart, ruin strong friendships, confuse people to the point of physical changes. Sin plays no favorites, and though it starts as destruction, its end is always death.

MOVEMENT 1:

Gen. 4:1-2 *Now Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord."* **2** *And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.* —Adam and Eve carry out the Dominion mandate by having children, and teach their sons to work. **Gen. 4:3-5:** *In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.* —Contextually, we can assume that this might be an offering of atonement. There is debate around whether Cain's offering wasn't received by God strictly because Cain didn't bring the "correct" offering, or he brought the correct offering with the wrong heart. —**Hebrews 11:4** states: *By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.* —The passage highlights the "faith issue," so at face value, we might say it was about his heart not being correctly postured, and *nothing* to do with the offering itself. —Illustration: Question, which child is being faithful to me? I ask my son to clean his room, putting all things in their proper place, and sincerely he joyfully begins to clean his room; however, as I walk in to inspect his work, everything has been shoved under the bed—he did it *his* way. I ask my other child to clean *her* room with the same instructions, and she does so begrudgingly and ungratefully the entire time, but she does it perfectly per the instructions. Which child was faithful? Answer: neither. You can have all the sincerity and joy in the world living for Christ, BUT if you're doing life your way and not God's way...it's faithless. At the same time, you can do life God's way, but if your heart isn't in it, and you're going through the motions...it's also faithless! —Therefore, the primary problem is not with what was offered, but it was the man who offered it. Cain wanted to interact with God on *his* terms, in *his* ways. We don't get to choose or make the call on how we approach God. He regulates what acceptable worship and holy living looks like. **Rom. 12:1:** *"...in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.* —**God wants us to approach Him in reverence, both with the right motivation and in the right and holy way.**

MOVEMENT 2:

—**Gen. 4:5-7:** *So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. 6 The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 7 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 for you, and you must rule over it."* —**Don't downplay sin—it's rejecting God's best for you—it's rejecting holy living and the purpose for your existence**—it entices you to play a role you're not capable of playing—anger, bitterness, and resentment will set in. Two things we can know about sin: **1) Close in proximity.** Nobody is untouchable (case and point American Idol worship leader, Caleb Flynn—loved wife/spoke highly of her... fame/notoriety—affair, staged murder, consequence). —We are *all* capable of the worst atrocities/ don't say never. —**2) Sin desires to rule you**—wants to rule over/have dominion over you. —BUT God understands, we must fight the sin of our fleshly desires. **1 Cor. 9:27** *But I discipline my body and keep it under control. Without Christ, there is no fight, but in Christ we exercise control and live intentionally for Him.* (Illustration: Feeding the two dogs—flesh/spirit. The dog that's fed more, will consume the other). —When we live for self, and we reject the ways of God in heart and action, bitterness and anger become the perfect platform for sin to manifest itself physically.

Gen. 4:8-10a *Cain spoke to Abel, his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel 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 the Lord said, "What have you done? –We're not in Eden anymore, family should be about watching one another's backs—protecting and caring for your fellow man, but when sin is entertained and ruling over a person, they become wild and chaotic. –Sin corrupted Cain's role and responsibility to care and protect Abel, and instead he dehumanizes and dominates his brother. But why? 1 Jn. 3:12 Because [Cain's] own actions were evil and [Abel's] were righteous. "Everyone who does wicked things, hates the light" (Jn. 3:20). The righteousness of Abel was a threat and conviction to Cain. –God graciously provides an opportunity for Cain to come clean, but Cain bears down and lies and deflects. If you want to hide your sin, lie and deflect—make excuses, but understand you're only watering chaos and feeding death. —What can we learn about sin here? –1) **Sin disrupts and distorts our relational responsibilities.** 2) **Sin always impacts both our vertical relationship with God, and our horizontal relationship with others.** –When we are not in right fellowship with God, it impacts the fellowship with others.*

MOVEMENT 3:

Gen. 4:10b-15 *The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. 11 And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 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." 13 Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14 Behold, you have 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." Sin has real consequences. The innocent blood shed desecrates the sacred space in which Cain finds himself in the presence of the Lord; but instead of taking Cain's life to satisfy the blood already shed (Num. 32:33-34), God graciously sends him away; however, the ground will no longer produce at its best—a reminder to Cain and us of the far reaching effects of sin, not only relationally but how it even impacts our physical world.*

—Sin has consequences, but even the consequences of our sin can be an extension of God's grace to get our attention to submit to Him. Undealt with sin, makes one into a: "**Fugitive**"—one running away attempting to not be found out/discovered—there is loneliness in the midst of community, a desire to isolate, or coverup. Undealt with sin will make us "**Wanderer**"—leads us away from home, and creates an unstable and aimless life—if life isn't aiming at holiness, you're not truly living, but simply surviving—going through the motions (unsatisfied living—Celebrities/professional athletes—suicide). 15 *Then 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. 16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

CONCLUSION:

—Under the New Covenant of Christ, we don't need to hide or run, for in Christ there is freedom to boldly approach God and find healing: **Hebrews 12:23-24** *to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*
 —Under the New Covenant of Christ, we don't need to suppress our sin, but confess our sin and find life! **Ps. 32:3-5** *For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away, through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. 5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. –Hebrews 3:13 also reminds us that sin wants to deceive and harden our hearts, but because of Christ's redemption, as good brothers in Christ encourage those stuck in their sin, to turn to the Lord and find life. And those captive, heed the words of Christ, and repent from your ways and find freedom!*

BENEDICTION: 1 Peter 5:10-11