

ANOTHER STEP DOWN, GENESIS 4

My Father's World #4

◆**Intro:** I was pondering verse 7 (sin is crouching at your door) and thinking about how I might draw that idea. So I drew a door with my head peeking out, and on the other side a huge boot waiting for me. Nothing strange about that, right. The strange part would be, it's my boot!

◆Sin is a slippery critter for sure. It's something inside us. Something we are, and something we do. And yet it seems to take on a personality of its own. Paul speaks in Romans 7 of sin "seizing an opportunity", and "springing to life" in him. Ever felt that? Sin is *selfish* to it's core and yet at the same time so *self-destructive*. It happens to us and it happens in us. No matter how you slice sin, you will always get trouble from it.

◆*Prov 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*

◆Why oh why do we ever chose it? What I'd like to do is argue against our choice to sin by thinking carefully about the consequences.

◆**1. When I sin, I automatically multiply my troubles.**

Now, we don't necessarily believe that, which is why we must talk about it. We assume that when we sin, we mostly get away with it. If a tornado doesn't blow our house away after we cuss out the neighbor, we're inclined to assume there are no necessary repercussions in this life. But we fail to see connections.

◆In v3, Cain is selfish. Adam and Eve undoubtedly taught their children all they knew about God. So two things about

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Abel's sacrifice stand out: he brought the "fat portions" and the "firstborn." In other words, the best. To sacrifice the firstborn is a risk. We don't know how many sheep this ewe will produce. Maybe we should wait till after we pay the bills, and the taxes, and take our trips and then give God our last fruits on December 31? Abel was clearly taking worship seriously. And Cain in contrast was not. Cain was showing up at worship the obligatory number of times, sleeping through most of it, and getting outta there as fast as possible... so to speak.

◆His 1) selfish disinterest pales in comparison to little brother Abel. Why should God favor Abel's commitment? It makes him look bad in comparison!

◆*"Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous." 1 John 3:12, NIV.*

◆Do not be surprised if and when people make fun of you for trying to do the right thing. It's par for the course because it makes people doing the wrong thing look bad. On the other side, do you ever feel yourself getting angry at people doing the right thing? If so, you need to take a hard look inside.

◆So he's 2) jealous, and then 3) gets angry (v6). His anger makes him 4) depressed (*his face was downcast*). He's

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stressed like an axe head coming loose and ready to fly off the handle. That turns into an actual plot to 5) assassinate little brother, and then 6) lie about it. If we could just remember that no sin lives alone.

◆ Are you angry with someone? Do you harbor a grudge in your heart? Are you holding some resentment against someone? Do you keep going over and over an offense in your mind that took place a long time ago? Cain's story is here to remind us that anger and murder are the same root. That one kind of sin tends to bring in a bunch of its friends. Do you want peace to flow again in your heart? Do not pass off something wrong in your own heart just because you might have a good reason. Sin is like covid, it has co-morbidities!

◆ By the time the episode is over Cain thinks God is the unjust one for letting him suffer the consequences of his own choosing. And this is the pathology of evil. It perpetrates on others and thinks itself the victim. Like the thief who sues for getting hurt while robbing your house. Or like a murderer agonizing over the pain that caused him to strangle his victim.

◆ Sin will always take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay. But by far the biggest loss of sin is the presence of God. Adam and Eve created

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distance from Eden. Now Cain creates more distance for himself. And with every choice we make we are either stepping toward the presence of God, or away from it, but there is no middle ground. When we sin we also turn down the lights on the beauties of the world around us. Like a horse with blinders we see nothing but straight ahead. A cool spot in the shade doesn't delight us. The smell of a fine meal doesn't make us marvel in gratitude.

◆ Get this! Even forgiven sins can still exercise power over you if you do not actively turn toward God.

Charles Wesley observes this in his hymn that says "he breaks the power of cancelled sin." There can be still an evil power in forgiven people. Forgiven people can still lead miserable, defeated lives. Forgiven people must chose to consistently step toward God to experience victory. How shall we step toward God?

◆ **2. Why should I step toward God?** Before we explore that though, a little encouragement to actually consider stepping toward God. This text shows us insight into the nature of sinful mankind. It also shows us insight into the nature of God. People tend to assume that God is all about cursing you for doing wrong. We saw last week that the curses are more descriptions than prescriptions. The curses are the natural outcome of choices to turn away from God.

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◆A. But the goodness is, in reality God's grace far outweighs his punishments. Bear in mind that Cain is still having verbal conversation with the Creator of the World! Right? And God is not spanking him and throwing him in a cell for doing fake church. No thunderbolts. Just prodding questions. God doesn't come and kill the murderer. He even marks Cain to protect him from his own death. God speaks to, and makes a way for Cain to go on living!! Now why would he do that?

◆*2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

◆So step toward God whenever you can. He is rooting for you. He wants your good.

◆B. Further along those lines, God reminds us of how to get the best out of life!

◆*v7 if you do what is right, will you not be accepted?*

◆Ie. Do what is right, dude. It works! And this is the nature of God, to warn, guide, urge the best. When God gives commands it's because he wants his creatures to have the best life possible. cf v.7...

◆*Deuteronomy 6:18 Do what is right and good in the LORD'S sight, so that it may go well with you and you may*

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go in and take over the good land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers,

◆ Cf. Deuteronomy 30:19-20, Amos 5:14

◆ Look, here's why it's a good idea to stop where you are and step toward God. God still had plans for the murderer Cain. Just as he still had plans for the murder Moses. And the murderer David. And the murder Paul. For some inscrutable reason these murderers were still precious to God. Do you think you are any different?

◆ **3. Stepping toward God.** You will notice that everything from the start of sin in the world (Genesis 3) up unto the calling of Abraham (Genesis 12) is a downhill slope. Cain is the next step in de-volution. Dad and Mom get persuaded by a snake, sin, get questioned by God, and make excuses. Cain sins (thoughtless offering), doesn't get persuaded by God, sins again, gets questioned by God, lies and answers sarcastically!

◆ v9 *am I my brother's keeper?* Keeper comes from the word to "watch or guard". That's what sheep herders do, they watch over, guard. So it's kinda like saying, "What? Am I the little shepherd's shepherd or something?"

◆ Cains offspring are just more steps down. The second half of chapter 4 tells us about the five generations that follow Cain. The last one is Lamech. Lamach has a son...

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- ◆Jabal who raised livestock, like Abel.
- ◆Jubal who pioneered harp and flute playing.
- ◆Tubal Cain who could forge bronze and iron.
- ◆But listen to what Lamech says in v23-24:
 - ◆Genesis 4:23-24 (NASB) I have killed a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me; If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”
- ◆So technology is improving with the generations, but morality is getting worse. Lamach is proud of being worse than Cain! He has his rainbow flag and waves it in pride, even though pride is a sin.
- ◆A. What is the one thing that is glaringly missing in Cain's story? Repentance. No one in Genesis 4 is saying they are sorry. No one is asking to be forgiven. No one is admitting that the way they are behaving is contrary to the way God designed them. And it's no different in USA in 2022. We learn from Cain that
 - ◆just taking your punishment is no solution.
 - ◆sweeping your sins under the carpet of your soul is no solution.
 - ◆excuses are no solution. Next time someone complains to you about something you did, try not to tell them why you did it.
- ◆Want to reverse a destructive pattern in your life? Name it. Confess it. Renounce it. That last one is essential to

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victory. Lots of people name their sins. They call it "coming out." There is no victory that way.

◆**Conclusion:** Cain had a deep set problem. And as you might be sensing, so have all the rest of us since then. Alexander Solzhenitsyn observed that "the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being." Murder comes from the human heart. And only humanity consistently kills it's own species. God's word tells us there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. But friends, that is precisely why Jesus came to our planet. He shed his blood, so that we wouldn't have to. To give us forgiveness of sin. It's our best option. Ask him to forgive you and break sins power!