

Series: God & Cain #1050

Title: Genesis 4.13

Cain's Concern With His Punishment

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We finish the week together, continuing on in our series *God and Cain*. And today I want to draw your attention to Genesis chapter 4, and verse 13. But so that we have the full context before us, I will read Genesis 4, verses 8 through 15. If you have access to your Bible, join me in the first Book of the Bible, Genesis, just the fourth chapter and beginning at verse 8.

"It came about 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?' And he said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?' ¹⁰ [God] said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. ¹¹ Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.' ¹³ Cain said to the Lord, 'My punishment is too great to bear! ¹⁴ Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.'

¹⁵ So the Lord said to [Cain], 'Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.' And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him."
This is God's Word to us in Genesis chapter 4, verses 8-15.

Did you notice, as I read, the dialogue between God and Cain? In verse 8 Cain kills Abel his brother. In verse 9 God addresses Cain and Cain responds. Then, in verses 10-12 God speaks. And in verses 13 and 14 Cain answers. And finally in verse 15 God speaks again. Back and forth the two go – most holy God and most sinful Cain. And as we come to verse 13 we find that, finally, God has gotten through to Cain concerning the wretched sinfulness of his act of murder.

Already this week we have seen that God is Judge and God the Judge convicts Cain and sentences Cain to his punishment. And once the punishment is given, *then* (and only then) did Cain express any measure of fearing God. Stunned at the sentence God gives, Cain blurts out, "My punishment is too great to bear!" **This is a key verse in the Bible, because it deals with the attitude that lies in the heart of every sinner. Sinners are most often more concerned with the punishment than they are with the sin itself!**

Even people who are not Bible believing Christians will often comment on someone who is caught in a crime and then punished, "They are only sorry for getting caught! He or she is not sorry for the crime, but only sorry for spending the rest of their lives in prison." In America we often apply these thoughts to politicians who get caught doing something seedy and illegal. And we are often right to do so. There really is not remorse for the disreputable act itself, but rather there is remorse over having been caught in the act, and now having to face the corresponding punishment, even if that punishment is just losing popularity.

We also find this bad heart attitude in murderers to this very day. I can point you to murder investigations going on right now, investigations in which the person who carried out the homicide is defiant in defending themselves and positioning themselves as completely innocent. This goes on and on, often involving many different lawyers who have dug up laws that will cover the guilty person for at least some period of time, until it becomes abundantly obvious this person has indeed murdered the other.

Well, when the convicted murderer faces that moment of reckoning before a judge and jury and is found guilty and the judge then reads out the sentence, oh, *then* finally there is some measure of regret and remorse. But what took so long? Why wasn't there an admission of guilt earlier? Why did not the murderer confess their actions as sin and seek genuine repentance? Here is why: the murderer is really not sorry for the killing itself, but rather only sorry to be caught, convicted, and now sentenced. Hard prison time awaits and that puts real fear, anxiety, and worry in the brazen criminal.

And, by the way, before we are too harsh/too judgmental with those who commit murder, we should again look inward and ask what is our attitude with the sins we commit everyday? If you and I were to get caught doing something that we know we should not be doing, would we genuinely repent of our sin – by calling our deeds sinful, and by being sincerely sorry for what we have done (the sin itself) – or would we also cover? Would the punishment bother us more than the sin itself? None of us have to wait until we kill another person to face the fact: we are all sinners and this attitude resides somewhere deep inside each one of us!

When I read Cain say, “My punishment is too great to bear!” I do not get the sense Cain is repenting of his sin. I get the sense, rather, that he is complaining about the punishment. He is fearful of what God’s judicial sentence will mean for him. I think verse 14 confirms this. For just a moment, let me re-read Genesis 4.14. (I will deal with the verse next week.)

“Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” You see, it is the punishment that worries Cain, not the fact he has taken the life of his brother – a man made in the image of God.

Dr. Aalders writes, “True repentance does not complain about the severity of the punishment.” True repentance does not complain about the severity of the punishment. And I agree. In fact, true repentance will feel that the punishment is warranted. The punishment is well deserved. If Cain was truly repentant before verse 13 or even at verse 13 he would have surrendered himself to God and come to the Lord and sought God’s forgiveness and restoration of fellowship. And we know that it is very much within the character of God to have forgiven a truly repentant Cain. But that is not what Cain did. He rejected God’s grace and now he is landed with the punishment.

Sinners are most often more concerned with the punishment than they are with the sin itself! We find this at the very beginning of Scripture and at the very end. (On Monday we will meet a man, much like Cain, who expressed this same corrupt attitude in the Gospels – so be here on Monday.) But for now, let’s go over to the Revelation of Jesus Christ and put in at chapter 16. As much needed context, this is the time of the (still) coming Great Tribulation and the judgments of holy God are quickly escalating here on earth.

In Revelation chapter 16 we have the bowl judgments. And listen now as I read Revelation 16, verses 8-11, which describes the fourth and fifth bowl judgments. Are you with me? Revelation 16, beginning at verse 8. **“⁸ The fourth *angel* poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. ⁹ Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give [God] glory.**

¹⁰ Then the fifth *angel* poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, ¹¹ and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.”

I hope you noticed that attitude of the ungodly sinners who refused to repent of their sins and give glory to God *even when* they will be so severely punished by the Living God. This is really, very incredible. In verse 9 the men will be scorched with fierce heat. They will be set on fire. And yet, *still* they blaspheme God and will *not* repent! In verse 10 they are in so much pain they will gnaw on their tongues and yet *still* they will blaspheme God and not repent of their sins.

Wow! The sinner is so exceedingly sinful that it is not the sin itself that bothers us and leads us to repentance, but rather only the punishment is our concern. The punishment: being scorched with fierce heat and pain so severe it results in gnawing at your own tongue *that* is a problem. But *not* the sin of blaspheming and dishonoring God. That will still be OK at the coming bowl judgments in Revelation 16. This wretched attitude found within Cain is still around today and *will* be around until the Lord brings His final, concluding judgment.

As we have already learned in our journey thus far in Genesis 4, Cain's life speaks to our own. There is much to learn from him about what *not* to do, especially in relation to God. I hope you are learning alongside all of us. Let's return to verse 13 of Genesis 4 on Monday on God Is.

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