

Series: God & Cain #1055

Title: Genesis 4.15

God Protects Cain (Part 2)

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. As another work week draws to a close, I am grateful that you have set aside this short time so that we can discover who God is. I pray that what we have been learning together about God in light of the events in Cain's life has been beneficial to you. Has it?

If so, I would like to know about it. You can send your feedback to me in three ways. By email: my address is mark@godisministry.org. By mail: God Is, PO Box 802, Winchester Massachusetts 01890. By social media: on Facebook and Instagram just like and follow God Is Podcast (that's God Is Podcast) and drop your feedback for me by making a comment on one of our many posts. You can get me by email, regular mail, and through the social media. But I will not know how you are receiving what we are discussing if you keep it to yourself. I can read books, but I cannot read minds!

So, let me read your note this weekend! If you want to learn more about God Is, myself, and if you want access to all the free, downloadable podcasts, visit our website on the weekend: godisministry.org (that's godisministry.o-r-g). And, invite others to come along and learn with us.

Let me read our text for us. This is Genesis chapter 4 and verse 15, **"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."** (That's Genesis 4.15.)

Yesterday I shared my surprise at God's response to Cain here in verse 15. This is not what I was expecting. How about you? If you have been following in the chapter with us thus far then you know Cain killed Abel. God pursued Cain, offering him God's grace and mercy. Cain refused. Actually, he gave a very impolite refusal. So the Lord God brought His judgment against Cain. And then Cain complained about his punishment. But then, here at verse 15 God does what? God offers to defend Cain? God offers to protect him? As J. Vernon McGee puts it (quote), "This is strange. God is actually harboring a murderer, a criminal (31, *Thru the Bible Genesis*)."

I thought God would bring down the death penalty upon Cain. I anticipated that God would have Cain put to death. But instead, we get the opposite. God preserves Cain's life!

We have already talked about capital punishment here in Genesis 4. And you might remember that at Genesis chapter 9, verses 5 and 6 God will require that when one person takes another person's life, the life of the murderer him or herself will be required. (Life for life.) Since God *will* require this, why does God not make an example of Cain in Genesis 4 and bring an end to Cain's life? He murdered Abel and now, being found guilty, why was his crime not punishable by death?

The reasons, I believe, are two-fold. First, by preserving Cain's life, this demonstrated to others how serious God takes sin in general and the sin of murder in detail. Let me illustrate this with a fictional story. Let's say that there is a man named Joshua. And Joshua is alive at the very time when Cain has killed Abel. Joshua is actually a relative of both Cain and Abel. And Joshua has married Naomi and together they have a daughter named Abigail.

Well, everyone has heard about how Cain killed Abel. In fact, Joshua, Naomi, and Abigail attended Abel's memorial service. At this point – so early on in the history of the world – the people all lived very close to one another and each knew the other's business very well. They were all blood relatives of one another. It would have been impossible to avoid news of the first murder. And who isn't curious when there is a homicide somewhere in the neighborhood.

Well, as the time has come and gone when YHWH Himself has met with Cain, there is surprise in the community that God has not taken Cain's life. Indeed, word has gotten out that not only did God preserve Cain's life, remarkably the Lord also said that anyone who killed Cain – in order to avenge Abel's blood – that person that murdered Cain would have vengeance taken on him "sevenfold." And, *and*, not only that but YHWH also appointed a sign for Cain so that no one who stumbled into Cain would slay him.

This perplexed Joshua and his wife Naomi, but they wholeheartedly trusted the Living God. However, their daughter Abigail was a very curious little girl and she kept asking her parents “Why did God do this? Why is Uncle Cain allowed to live after what he did to Uncle Abel?” One night, under the starry sky, outside their tent, Joshua took little Abigail aside and answered, “You know how you often forget things, like some of the chores, your mother has given you to do around the tent here?” “Oh yes,” admitted Abigail, “I do sometimes forget.”

“Well, that is what we people do. We are told to do something or not to do something, and at first we understand it and we remember to do what we are told or to avoid doing those things we should not. But, eventually, we also forget. Honey, the reason God allowed Uncle Cain to live is so that we would always remember that murder is wrong. God calls it sin and forbids it. Anytime we bump into Uncle Cain, or we hear that he is living in a certain city, it will remind us of how much YHWH hates sin and how He forbids us to kill one another.”

“Oh,” said Abigail, “Like tying a string around my little finger so I can remember to do what Mom asks?” “Yes, that’s right,” her father said. “God let Uncle Cain live to serve as a living reminder to us of how holy God is and how all people have been made in His image, therefore, we are never to intentionally hurt another person, certainly never to take another person’s life.” This answer satisfied Abigail and when she got back home she told Naomi, “Mama, Uncle Cain lives to remind us not to be like him. We should never do what he did to Uncle Abel.” Joshua and Naomi smiled at each other.

I think that’s one reason God did not give Cain the death penalty at Genesis 4, verse 15. First, by preserving Cain’s life, this demonstrated to others how serious God takes sin in general and the sin of murder in detail. Cain is a living reminder of what not to do.

Second, the penalty of a long life in exile was a greater punishment than ending Cain’s life. To be a roving exile on the earth – God says a vagrant and a wanderer Cain will be – that was a greater punishment than instantaneous death. To quote Merrill Unger, “Sometimes he who dies is happier than he who lives and suffers many deaths (28, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*).” “Sometimes he who dies is happier than he who lives and suffers many deaths.

Related to this, it is also important that I tell you of something. There are those who interpret God here as changing his mind about penalizing Cain for his sin. They see in verse 15 a softening of God’s judgment. Many, many so-called “Bible scholars” are constantly trying to lighten the severity of sin and therefore need to soften up God. But for anyone who is tempted to think verse 15 overrides, changes, softens, the preceding verses, let me quote theologian Dr. Aalders to set them straight.

Quote, “It should be remembered, however, that Cain was not sentenced to death. This protection of his life, which God provided, in no way altered the penalty that had been pronounced...The punishment of being made a lifelong fugitive and vagabond in the earth was a heavy one (127-128, *Bible Student’s Commentary Genesis, Volume I*).” (Unquote.)

That is a very wise and well-worded way to say that we should read verses 10-12 clearly. In handing down His just punishment against Cain God never said he would be punished by death. God did not give the death penalty in verses 10-12. Therefore, in verse 15 when God promises to shield his life from being killed God *does not*; I repeat God *does not* go back on His punishment or soften the punishment.

We must not ever attempt to lessen the severity of God’s punishment for our sin.

More needs to be said about verse 15, and we will continue with that on Monday. I am sure you are curious, what does the sevenfold kind of vengeance mean? And, the big question, what is the sign that God gave to Cain? These are the questions we will be answering, Lord willing, next week. That is another significant week in our soon-to-be-ending series *God and Cain*. Join us again on Monday for God Is.

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