

The Danger of God Giving You Over

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- [0 : 0 0] The Lord is our salvation, isn't he? Amen. And of course, we get to talk about that in greater and greater terms as we move through the message this morning.
- So we're in Genesis chapter 4. And while I'll put the title for my message up here this morning, we're going to be in a different passage of Scripture, so I'm going to ask you to hold your finger there in Genesis 4 as we deal with the danger of God giving you over.
- We're going to explain what that means, the danger of God giving you over. And I'm going to ask you to start off with, if you'll turn to Romans chapter 1.
- Romans chapter 1. I'm going to begin reading in verse 18, and I'm going to tell you already that as we read through this together, this is the Apostle Paul writing to the Christians in Rome, and he right off the bat, in what most theologians in our circles call the greatest theological treatise ever written, the book of Romans.
- And right off the bat, in chapter 1, what we call chapter 1, Paul is going to establish what is going on in the souls of mankind.
- [1 : 3 4] That is, in our souls. Our nature. What is it about our nature that leaves us in the condition that we're in? And so in verse 18, Paul begins, for the wrath of God, that is, that is, the holy anger of God, is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth, that is, the truth of God, in unrighteousness.
- Right off the bat, in verse 18, Paul is establishing the reality that men and women, as a matter of course, and from their very nature, suppress the truth of God and about God as a way of life.
- This is how we all enter life. And God's holy anger is justified against each one of us. He goes on then in verse 19, because that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them.
- For since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes, both His eternal power and His divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are all without excuse.
- So we cannot cop any excuse before the Lord for the condition of our very nature, which is an anti-God nature. We all enter into the world that way.
- [3 : 1 6] In verse 21, For even though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or give thanks to Him as God.
- But they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. Oh, professing to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the likeness of corruptible man, and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.
- Now notice the therefore. If your Bible reads, verse 24, the first word being therefore, He's establishing now. Because these truths are descriptive of us as our nature being expressed in the way that we approach life as an anti-God life, as an anti-God mentality, because we see these things going on in our lives, therefore, here is God's response to that.

God gave them over. That is a terrifying statement. God gave them over. What? In the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

God is giving them over to what they desire most, what they want most. This is another way of saying that God is giving them over to their choice of worship.

[4 : 54] Idols that they have set up in their hearts and they are pursuing. And God said, this is what you choose, this is what you want, so I will give you over to the thing that you want most.

This is really terrifying, you guys. We're going to see God doing this as we move through the next few chapters of Genesis and we're going to see God's ultimate answer to it in that He wipes off the face of the earth every single human being except for eight of them.

He rescues eight people out of millions. That's how bad it got. There were no other people on the face of the earth save those eight people that we'll look at who had any regard for God whatsoever.

In fact, it had gotten so bad that the multiplied millions of people across the earth at that time deserved God's judgment and so He took them out.

And the Bible's going to tell us that. Men had set their hearts to do evil continually. And there was so much murder and so much death and so much despicable living among people that the only solution God had at that time was I'm going to send a flood and I'm going to take them all out and we're going to start over again with these eight people.

[6 : 17] And of course, we will understand and come to see that in the ark and in Noah, there is a picture of what God will do through another wooden answer.

It won't be an ark this time, it'll be a cross. And Jesus will save those whom He is bringing to Himself. Here in Romans chapter 1, Paul is telling us that as a result of what they're choosing to do in the way of worshiping creation and themselves, God is giving them over to those lusts that are born in their hearts and now their bodies are going to be dishonored among them as part of that consequence.

Verse 25, they exchanged the truth of God for a lie. There's the basis. That's exactly what happened in the garden. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie in the garden.

Here is more proof that we continue to live out of that sin nature that was established for us in the garden of Eden. And what did they do? They turned and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever.

Amen. This is exactly what we're seeing with Cain and Abel. In one case, one of these brothers was worshipping the Lord. In the other case, they were worshipping themselves.

[7 : 36] And so, God deals with that. Verse 26, For this reason, for this reason, that they are worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator and exchanging the truth of God for a lie, what He says again, God gave them over.

To what? To dishonorable passions. That is, sinful desires, cravings, appetites. For their females exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.

You will see here lesbianism. In the same way, also the males abandoned the natural function of the female and they burn in their desire toward one another.

Folks, that is a powerful word that speaks of an unsatisfied craving that drives you like an animal. This is homosexuality.

Males with males committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, that's like a summary of everything He's been saying about how they're treating the Lord.

[8 : 47] because they didn't see fit to acknowledge God, what does He say now for a third time? God gave them over to an unfit mind.

So now we're seeing the totality of their personhood brought into the consequence of ignoring and rebelling against the Lord. To do those things which are not proper, that is, in the sight of God.

Having been filled with all unrighteousness, we need to see that this is something that is emanating from within them. Having been filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of enmity, murder, strife, deceit, malice, they are gossip, slanderers, haters of God, violent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents.

Boy, does that sound like a character reference for Cain? Yes. Yes. They are without understanding.

They are untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful. Cain was all of those things. And although they know the righteous requirement of God, which Cain did, God told him that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but they also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

[10:10] It's not enough that they want to live this kind of life on their own, but now they want to legislate and dictate how the rest of society will look at them and relate to them.

So now, if you don't relate to them in a way that honors their choice in life, because that's all it is, it's my choice in life how I want to deal with my sexuality, it's my choice in life what kind of partner I want to take in life, and if you don't like it, now you're the deviant, now you're the pervert.

This is our society. This is the upside-down, twisted way of what sin does to the human soul. And this is proof of it, as if we need any. For those of us who raise children, we don't need any proof.

We see it in the mirror when we look in the mirror at ourselves, and we see it in our children, and we recognize what the Bible teaches about this reality. Folks, this is terrible. This is terrible.

And I know that it's a very difficult way to start a sermon. It's like, oh my goodness, is it going to go downhill from here? Yes. There you go. This is where we are in the Scripture.

[11:16] God is not soft-painting the reality for us, is He? He is telling us the truth because the truth will liberate us. The truth will lead us to God's diagnosis, and more importantly, God's cure, His remedy.

That's what we need to see. I deserve this. You deserve this. Death. But God sent someone to take the place, to act as the substitute for me, for you, in order to pay the penalty for what my soul deserves as an anti-God nature.

An anti-God nature. So having looked at that in Romans chapter 1, let me quickly turn to Genesis 4, and having referenced Cain several times, let's look at what we're supposed to see about this.

So now we're taking the Apostle Paul's counsel and teaching, and we're looking back to where it all began. We're going to ask the question, how did we get this way?

How did Romans 1 come to be who we are as a people? And here it is. Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, I have gotten a man with the help of Yahweh.

[12:36] And again she gave birth to his brother Abel. Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a cultivator of the ground. And so it happened in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground.

Abel on his part also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And Yahweh had regard for Abel and for his offering, but for Cain and for his offering, God had no regard.

In other words, God did not receive Cain's offering of worship. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then Yahweh said to Cain, why are you angry?

Why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is lying at the door.

Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it. Then Cain spoke to Abel, his brother, and it happened, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and killed him.

[13 : 42] Then Yahweh said to Cain, where is Abel, your brother? And he said, I do not know. Am I my brother's people? He lied, didn't he? He flat out lied to the Lord.

Now you ask, how in the world did we get to this? Man, we've gone very quickly from paradise to absolute putrefaction in the way that we regard the Lord and each other.

Well, the sin of Adam and Eve is the origin of mankind's sin nature. This is what we've been saying in the last couple of messages.

With the couple's first offspring, and then immediately after their sinful rebellion in the garden, Moses, writing here, gives us clear proof of the inner corrupt condition of human beings.

This is what we're meant to see. Cain's sin nature is clearly seen in his disobedience and disregard, hear me now, toward God.

[14 : 48] Not just Abel and his parents, but toward the Lord. That's where the problem starts. This is Cain's heart toward God that is the issue.

It's also seen, of course, in his hateful murder of his innocent God-fitting brother, Abel. Now, as a result of all of this, the Bible tells us then that human nature bears the full guilt of sin imputed or credited to us by God based on what happened in the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve plunged the entire human race into a state of helplessly falling short of the goodness and glory of God.

And to explain that just briefly, when we talk about the goodness and glory of God being something that we fall desperately and helplessly short of, we're talking about how sin drives us away from God and in being driven away from God in our hearts, we are driven toward something else and that something else is the pride, the greed, and the lust of our hearts as we worship self.

self. We may set up a statue and bow down to it with a great big old belly and sitting there all obese and... Why in the world would we want to worship somebody that has no self-discipline obviously in his life at all?

Why would I want to bow to a fat God like that? It's sickening in the place of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's sickening and it should be and it should incentive. But that's the evil heart of man.

[16 : 30] We set up all kinds of systems to bow down to. Jeff Jackson is an idol worshiper at heart and I need to be saved from myself. That's the tragedy.

That's the reality of what we're looking at with this. And so in that state, in that condition of lostness, helplessness, degradedness, I do not reflect God in my life.

I was made in the image of God. But sin mars it and pushes it down and eclipses it so that I put myself forward for everybody to see. And I do that by my nature.

Nobody has to teach me that. I come out of the womb wanting to put Jeff forward. And I need to be saved from that and so do you. That's what it means when we say that we all helplessly fall short of the goodness and glory of God.

We don't honor God. We don't thank God. We're not grateful to the Lord for everything instead. So God, God explains and locates the problems of sin and evil within us.

[17 : 35] And that's what we don't like. That's what the world doesn't want Christianity to tell us. I remember in a conversation not too awfully long ago, I was speaking with this young woman and I was explaining to her in very gentle terms that we are all broken people.

I was responding to her about something going on in her life and I said we are all broken people and she immediately retorted to me in a very angry tone and face, she said, don't ever tell me again that I'm broken.

What a terrible thing to go around telling people that we're broken. We are special. We are unique. Each one of us is, you know, went off on this very liberal politically correct idea of what human beings are.

We are basically good. So don't tell me I'm broken. You see, this is offensive. It's offensive to us to do this. But it's also the way to freedom.

True freedom in Jesus Christ. Now you and I as a result of all of this, especially God telling us that the problem of sin and evil is within us, you and I may come to the point where we ask ourselves this question.

[18 : 46] How is it, Jeff, how is it that more people, given the fact that the Bible is so clear and we have so much evidence all around us that is just slam dunk about this, telling us that the evil is within us?

How is it that more people do not see and accept the truth of what the Bible explains to us? That the problem of sin and evil reside within each person? Why don't more people accept that and see that and recognize it?

Well, they do see it. They do see it. But the answer as to why they won't acknowledge it and bow to it and deal with it from a scriptural perspective comes to us in Jeremiah 17 verses 9 and 10.

Here's God's answer to that question. The heart of mankind is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.

Who can know it? Now stay right there with me for a second. Look at this first part. Your heart and my heart and everybody else's heart is more deceitful than all else.

[19 : 46] There is nothing on the planet more self-deceived than your heart. There is nothing on the planet living in greater deception about reality and truth than your heart.

And my heart says the Bible. It is so desperately sick that you and I cannot know our own heart.

You can't know my heart. I can't know your heart. I can reveal to you certain things about my heart. You watch the worship of my life and it will give you indication as to what I'm bowing to in my heart.

That's true. But I can't come to you and assign motives to you and say, oh, I know exactly what you want. I know exactly what's going on in there. No. God says, no, Jeff, you're so desperately sick and self-deceived you don't even know your own heart.

Much less you look at somebody else and assign to them. And yet this is what our world does. Don't think for one second our world doesn't diagnose these problems and then prescribe a cure.

[20 : 53] Oh, they do. And they're making billions of dollars at it. I, Yahweh, search the heart. See, this is God's domain.

It's exclusively His domain. I, Yahweh, search the heart. I test the inmost being. Even to give to each man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.

I want you to hold on to that because that's exactly what God is about to do with Cain. God did this very thing with Abel and with Cain. He searched the inmost being and heart of Abel and then He did that with Cain.

And what He found in Abel was a faithful, God-honoring, God-worshipping, humble heart. What He found in Cain was the opposite. A self-worshipping heart. A heart that desired to go His own way.

A heart that was trying to secretly in His own life bring before the Lord the evidences or outward proofs that He was bowing to God when in the reality He was doing all of that in resentment and contempt.

[21 : 56] How do we know that? Because He killed His brother. Murdering His brother was the evidence that Cain had a problem with God. Murdering His brother was a way that Cain said to God, I will show you.

I'll do what I want to do. I'll act like I want to act. I will choose whom I will choose. That's my thing. And God gave them over.

Don't think for one second that God won't allow you to run with your choices. He will. He will. And if you're like me, when I was doing that in my life and had no regard for the Lord and decided that I was just going to do things my way and my marriage and whatever else I was choosing, I can tell you that was the loneliest time I have ever felt in my life.

I felt more isolated and more lonely and more helpless than at any other time in my life. And I wonder if that's exactly where Cain is right now in his life.

I search the heart. I search the inmost being and I give to each man according to his ways. That is our God. Now folks, please hear this. While the Bible diagnoses the problems of sin and evil as being spiritual and personal to you, the world in the opposite way diagnoses the same problems of sin and evil as situational and societal.

[23 : 33] What does that mean? It means this. That misdiagnosis compounds the issue of self-deception. That self-deceiving in our hearts that God mentioned in Jeremiah.

Misdiagnosing the issue of our sin nature only serves to compound the issue of that deception. And what does that lead to? It leads to a prideful pursuit of what's right in our own eyes.

And God will leave us to those devices and let us chase our idols and we will see the emptiness and loneliness of it. We will see that it gets worse, not better. We feel even more isolated, more helpless, more hopeless.

And what do we do because it's in our nature? Do we run to God and seek Him out? No, we reach for another idol. That one didn't work. Let me get another one.

And another one. And another one. That's what we do. That's Romans 1. Now, I mentioned to you last Sunday that this misdiagnosis of our sin nature being the issue, that misdiagnosis leads people to believe that we can cure ourselves.

[24 : 48] We're under self-deception, remember. We can cure ourselves just given enough time and effort devoted to refining and perfecting and perfecting our systems. Our systems are our idols.

Eventually, eventually, they say, we will succeed in establishing a nearly flawless system of human goodwill. Now, please don't be offended with me when I say this because I don't know who does and who doesn't.

I want to show you how subtly this message that I just spoke to you comes across to people in ways that seem so innocent. And so, if you're part of this, please do not be offended with your pastor.

Please let me lovingly warn you about this. This is how subtle Satan can be. Let me say it again. I told you last Sunday that we have in our society this idea and societies across the world that given enough time and effort, we will refine and perfect our system so that eventually we can establish this goodwill among men because basically people are good at heart.

I mean, you know people and I know people that are unbelievers and you may say to me, Jeff, I know some unbelievers that are kinder and more patient and more giving of themselves than some of the people that call themselves Christians in my life.

[26 : 09] I said, I know those people too but that doesn't mean they're good because God says no one's good. So what was I going to warn you about? I didn't forget. I do that sometimes.

I want to warn you about the subtle message of the Hallmark Channel. The sentimentality of the Hallmark Channel that tells you people are basically good people at heart.

And given enough time and given enough circumstance, if you'll just be patient, they'll come around. Well, if that's true, then we don't need the cross of Christ.

We just need more time. And we'll come around. But that's not true. So watch the Hallmark Channel so that you can do this and say, bless their hearts and then pray for them.

Pray they'll get saved and they'll look to Jesus and not themselves to make everything blissful. I think I told you one time. I'll do this real quickly because this is off script. I remember I was sick.

[27 : 14] I was sick so bad. I think I had that alpha gal tick thing before I knew that I had it. I was so sick on vacation at my mom's. I mean, I could barely lift my head.

And so my mom put, she watches that. And so she, bless her heart. Pray for her. She, she, she. So that was on the TV all day as I just laid comatose on the couch.

Wrapped up, chills and fever and everything. And I remember I would see some of it and then I'd go out and a few hours would go by and I'd wake up and there'd be different people but it would be the same thing.

And I would go, oh wow, what? And I told Suzanne when I was finally coherent, I said, did I dream that or did that, no, she said, no, that's what it is. It's just different people, same story.

I said, my goodness, okay, whatever. That's life. That's the reality that we live in. Folks, listen. Mankind's sin problem is a human dilemma without a human cure.

[28 : 16] And it has brought spiritual war into the hearts of mankind. It turned us all into rebels against God and each other as the bent of our nature.

this is very hard to accept. The Bible teaches it from page one all the way to page zero, right? The last one. Genesis 4 is simply the beginning of God showing us the fundamental deep-seated inherent wrong at work in each human soul.

So by God's evaluation, humans are split, as I told you last Sunday, into two warring camps in this life. Again, did you hear me say by God's evaluation?

This isn't Jeff's trying to be clever. This is what the Bible teaches us. This is what we're seeing in Genesis 4. As a result of Adam and Eve and their fall into sin in the garden, right away, their offspring begin to show us this.

There are two warring camps in life among human beings. In the first camp, in one camp, we have Satan's children. They are living out of their sin nature expressed in a life of rebellion, wrath, and disobedience toward God.

[29 : 32] Then, in the other camp, are the Savior's children. They are living out of their new nature expressed in a life of repentance, reconciliation, and obedience toward God.

Notice that in both camps, it's all about their relationship with God. Unbelievers have a relationship with God. It is a relationship of being an enemy.

We were all once enemies separated from the life of God, weren't we? That's what the Bible tells us. All of us start off that way. Now, the spiritual warfare going on between these two groups where we begin to see it in action in Genesis 4, God declared that warfare in Genesis 3, verse 15.

He says, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise him on the heel. Now, we unpacked that when I was at that place preaching through that part of Scripture.

You can go back online and you can find that section of Scripture and listen to that sermon if you'd like and learn more about what we're talking about. He declared this war in Genesis 3, 15, and that war now moves beyond Adam and Eve from Genesis 3, 15, and it hits their offspring with devastating effects.

[30 : 53] And the two sides of the conflict come into clear view with Abel worshiping God and Cain worshiping himself. Now, I want to draw your attention, if you would, to chapter 4 of Genesis beginning in verse 10.

Here's what we'll deal with today. And he said, that is, the Lord said, what have you done? Hearing that Cain had murdered his brother, which God already knew that had happened, what have you done?

The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. I mean, what's that about? And now, cursed are you from the ground. So God is cursing Cain, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hands.

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. And then we won't deal with this in detail today, but notice what Cain says in verse 13.

It kind of caps everything in the way of his response. And Cain said to Yahweh, my punishment is too great to bear. In the Hebrew, that statement is a statement of disdain.

[32 : 01] This is not a broken man. This is a man who is angry and staying angry. And he's letting God know. He's basically saying that's not the same.

We'll get to that maybe next week. Let me give you this. Cain's worship, as is evidenced here, was false because Cain's heart was at war with God.

That heart of hatred and rebellion toward God is how we all begin life. We all begin life in that camp where we are Satan's children.

The Lord Jesus established that for us. So it is our own sin nature which is now on full display in the lives of Adam and Eve's offspring.

What we see here in Cain is our problem. It has carried over into humanity. I'm going to show you that as we work through this together. Alright? So let's hasten ahead.

[33 : 06] Here's the only point that we'll deal with today. Our sin nature and then there'll be some more coming God willing next week. I'll pick it up from here and do some more. Our sin nature incurs God's just judgment.

We have to deal with that carefully and slowly. Our sin nature incurs God's just judgment. What I'm trying to tell you here in this judgment is part of God's judgment isn't wiping everybody out like in the flood.

There's another aspect of God's judgment where He gives us over to what we want and lets us run with it. And that's what's happening here. We have a two-fold aspect of God judging Cain and pronouncing cursing on him and we have God giving Cain over to what he wanted.

These are the idols that you chose. This is the lifestyle that you want. Here you go. Now you get to live for hundreds of years with your idols. I can't imagine that.

I can't imagine God letting me live one day past my salvation from the idols that He saved me from as I look back. Well, we see this in 10 through 12.

[34 : 17] What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. And then we have this curse. Cursed are you from the ground because it's opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hands.

Wow! When you cultivate the ground, it's no longer going to yield its strength to you, Cain. From now on and forever, you're going to be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth. That will carry over into eternity for Cain.

And that's really the most terrifying aspect of it. So friends, this confrontation with Cain is like that of God confronting Adam and Eve in chapter 3. God came to confront Cain not because He didn't know what Cain did.

This is God drawing out of this man the reality of what He's done. This is a confrontation of compassion. Unfortunately, Cain won't have any part of it. Cain's response to God is also similar to that of Adam and Eve with one critical difference.

You've probably already spotted it. Like Adam and Eve, Cain takes no personal responsibility for his actions. But unlike Adam and Eve, Cain shows no remorse, no sorrow, no shame, no guilt for the wrong he's done against God and his family.

[35 : 37] All God's confrontation does with Cain is make him even more bitter toward the Lord. Have you seen that happen in people's life? God will get them over and they get even more bitter, more angry at the world, more hateful toward God and others, more turned into themselves.

This is a very, very strong thing that happens in people's lives. We are very thankful that we have a sovereign, compassionate, merciful God who ministers that mercy to us and rescues us out of that.

Or we'd all go that way, wouldn't we? So what's going on? Moses is intentionally etching echoes of the fall of Genesis 3 into his account in Genesis 4.

In Genesis 4, we see the echoes of Genesis 3 in the life of Adam and Eve's offspring. I want to give you an example. If you'll notice, God asks Cain, where is Abel, your brother?

That corresponds to God asking Adam after he sinned, where are you? Remember that? He was hiding and God said, where are you? Was it because God didn't know where he was?

[37 : 00] No. Did God ask Cain, where is Abel, your brother, because he didn't know? No. No. No. This is confrontation. What was Cain doing when God confronted him?

He was hiding the truth. He never, when God confronted him, what did he say? Yeah, I don't know. I don't know. Cain's, Abel's corpse is rotting in the field and Cain's like, yeah, I don't know.

I'm not his keeper. That's dripping with resentment. I'm not his keeper. I don't know to keep up with him. He's his own man. I don't know. He's out doing his thing.

You're God. Go find him. Just resentment, contempt. God asked Adam, have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?

Again, confrontation, not because he didn't know. Then he asked C, what is this you've done? Both of these confrontations with Adam and Eve link with God confronting Cain in the same way.

[38 : 04] What did he say? What have you done? Same thing he asked Eve. What have you done? As God confronts personal sin in both of these chapters, the sequence of cursing and the phraseology parallel one another and that is Moses' intention.

Moses gives us these parallels to show us that Cain's sinful actions in chapter 4 are based on mankind's fall in chapter 3. Cain is a human being, not a thing.

And what's happened as a human being is he has taken on the same sin nature of his parents. Let me ask you something just to get you thinking with me as I move into this next section.

Think about this. It's very interesting. Let me ask you. As your kids, as your kids, if you have children or have raised children like I have, and I've launched three, as our kids are born and begin to grow up, why is it that we do not have to sit our children down as their parents and teach them not to be so abundantly giving, obedient, and thoughtful?

How come we don't have to do that? why is it that we don't have to tell our children to tone down being so good and so kind and so deferential and so sacrificial toward other people?

[39 : 42] I'm not trying to diss on our kids. Remember, I raised three little sinners myself. They had every aspect of showing their father's nature. And I understand that.

I understand scripture teaches that. Why is it that our kids don't start off in life and grow up in life like that? So that we're not having to tell them and discipline them and deal with them on the level of them doing wrong and doing sin and hurting each other and acting disrespectfully toward each other and toward us and that kind of thing.

How come we're not doing the opposite? You ever thought about that? Or did you say, no, I've been a Christian a while, Jeff, I know exactly what that is. Think about this.

As our kids become adults and launch into a life of their own, why is it that our societies worldwide don't have institutions where we actually have to incarcerate people so that we can re-educate them about taking better care of themselves because they are so giving and so loving and so caring and so self-denying they constantly go without and wear themselves out on behalf of other people.

So we have to put them in an institution to keep them from hurting themselves because they're so good and so giving. Why isn't that the case?

[41 : 08] Why do we have to incarcerate people for all the opposite reasons? because they murder and rape and cheat and steal and lie and constantly live breaking the laws that help society function as society?

Why is that? Why do we come out of the gate like that? Why do we have juvenile detention centers? Why do we have to have all that?

Where does that come from? Why don't we have a planet full of people full of good will toward each other? Why do we have wars?

Why have we seen wars happen in our lifetime where thousands and thousands and thousands of people have been murdered in those wars?

Just because they were trying to live their lives and wicked people came in and said we're going to tell you how to live your lives and if you don't like it we'll put a gun barrel in your mouth and blow your brains out.

[42 : 17] Why do we live in a world like that? Why do we have people like that? Why did our grandfathers and grandmothers endure a war where over six million Jews were murdered because of their religious state?

Why did Stalin put over 20 million of his own people to death? long before Hitler was putting people in concentration camps from other countries he was putting his own people in those camps.

A quarter of a million Germans were put in concentration camps before the war ever started on an official level. If you didn't agree with Hitler you went into one of those camps.

Why did you do that? Well you're reading about it right now in Genesis chapter 4. They barely get out of the garden and the first human beings born to these people who fell into sin in the garden are killing each other and they're going to keep doing it.

We need to come to grips with this because our souls are on the line. Our souls are on the line. you and I pass on the maladies and malice of mankind from one generation to the next through our kids.

[43 : 46] Our children are born as sinners from sinners and they grow up to live as sinners among other sinners. That's how God defines it.

That is the human condition that you and I endure from birth due to sin. So while we have to stop short of blame shifting Cain's sins onto his parents, Adam and Eve's sinful rebellion in the garden changed human nature forever.

Changed into rebels at heart. Cain is the first human being being born into slavery to sin. And that's the case with all of us.

sin. The fall of humanity into lawlessness against God committed by Adam and Eve rebelling against the Lord is the basis for the evil and wrong we do toward God and each other.

The sin nature is the rotten spiritual root which produces the rotten spiritual fruit in the form of our sin. That is basic Bible theology about the doctrine of sin.

[45 : 02] Hormatology. Hormatology. At the heart of our problem of evil is our evil hearts. And this is what separates us from God and each other.

This is what produces spiritual and physical death in us and this is what robs us of an eternity with God. And folks, listen, there is no amount of time and there is nothing on planet earth or in the minds of men that can solve this problem.

It's a human dilemma without a human cure. So the Apostle Paul then, I'll put this up here, the Apostle Paul tells each of us that in our unbelief, quote, we also formally, before we were saved and became Christians, we also formally conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, like Cain, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest.

That's Paul's assessment. Now this is how the Bible is characterizing Cain's sin. It is his nature to disobey God as a child living under God's wrath, and that means that he's God's enemy, God's enemy, living under God's judgment.

What a terrible way to live life. Here's something even more terrible. To live that kind of life deceived about. What a terrible way to live life. What a terrible way to live life. What a terrible way to live life. What a terrible way to life.

[46 : 31] So you chase the cure in all the wrong things, and you just make it worse. I see that in my own family.

This nature comes out initially, back to what we're talking about with Cain. This nature comes out initially as Cain pursues deceitful desires to please himself. You understand that what Cain is doing in chapter 4 in murdering his brother and defying God?

It pleases Cain. Cain likes it. We like our sin. He's pursuing these desires and then those desires become sinful actions in a direct and disobedient, deceitful fashion for the Lord.

So as terrible as Cain's sin of murder is, the most egregious aspect of Cain's sin, what makes all sin sinful, is that sin is always rooted in our rebellion and disobedience toward God.

Example, if I sin against my wife by being unkind and impatient in a moment of self, the most egregious, the most terrible, the most wicked, the most debased aspect of my sin in regard to my wife is not what I'm doing to Suzanne, as bad as that is in that moment, the worst aspect of what I'm doing is I'm sinning against God.

[47 : 59] In other words, I'm telling you the reason that it's sin is because first and foremost, at its base, it's sin against God. My first concern needs to be that I have sinned against the Lord.

I want to educate my conscience. I want to educate my heart, my life, to become more and more sensitive to sin in my life so that I can continue to repent of it, turn away from it, and replace it with something that pleases the Lord.

My wife wins when I'm living a life like that and so do you in your relationship with me. Do you see that? The most important aspect of what we're talking about right now, what could change Cain's life is if it gets right with God.

But he won't do that. He refuses to do that. The answer is not something outside of us that we can manufacture or with a little bit of time we can tweak and fix and get right.

The answer is God doing a work in us that is transformative, that is radically transformative. Right? Well, we need to be told that because we're under deception.

[49 : 11] Under deception. The willful, rebellious disobedience toward God that Cain is living in is poisoning every aspect of Cain's life.

Every aspect of it. You'll feel that when you disobey the Lord and run from the Lord and defy the Lord and do your own thing. You will feel the weight of that rebellion.

It will poison every part of your life. Sin has so deeply hardened the human soul since the Garden of Eden that Cain dismisses God's counsel in verse 7, disobeys God and then with seething anger he murders Abel.

Look what God told him. Cain in verse 7. Cain, if you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is lying at the door and its desire is for you.

But you must rule over it. God gave him a way out. I preached about that last time. God gave him a way out. He refused. He had so hardened his heart against the Lord. Abel's soul was God's creation.

[50 : 18] Cain is messing about in things that have no business with him messing about and dealing with. He's way, way, way out of his pay grade messing with his brother in this way.

Cain had no right to take Abel's life and now we're told in Scripture that Abel's righteous living soul, you understand? That his body died. When Cain murdered his brother, his body ceased to function but his soul continued to live.

Amen? And so as his soul continued to live, it's personified in the form of his spilled blood in the ground, in the dirt. And it's said to cry out to God.

This is a cry for vindication. This is a cry for judgment against the aggressive. This is what the Bible is trying to tell us. This is very real in the ears and the eyes of Almighty God who sees and hears all things, even the secret things of your heart.

And so this is a personification of the soul of Abel crying out for vindication to the Lord. And the Lord is telling us, I hear those cries.

[51 : 29] They don't escape me. When you're persecuted, when things happen to you that are unjust, when people treat you in ways that are unkind and try to get away with things, and they do, in our world, you will not get perfect justice.

God says, I see. This is our understanding. God sees. God will deal with it. Now you say, well, Jeff, that may not fix my circumstances.

No. But ultimately, God sees and God vindicates. There is a greater, higher, eternal reality to this. And God is asking us to grasp that, hold on to that, and take hope in it.

That's what I want us to do. I don't want you to miss this. How are you and I to understand why this issue of Abel's blood crying out is mentioned where we have this first murder against the person who was actually seeking to follow God in faith?

Well, the answer is this. Life is in the blood. This is what the Bible teaches. We know this as the New Testament teaches us about Jesus, listen now, spilling His blood for us on the cross.

[52 : 42] Spilling His blood is the same as saying that Jesus gave up His life. If you spill your blood, you die. If your blood drains out of your body, you die.

So it's a way of saying that. Jesus spilling His blood is a way of saying Jesus gave up His life for us. And that spilling of the blood in the way that Jesus died is very important to God.

That particular way of Him offering up His life for us was very, very important to God's economy and purpose for our lives. He had this He could have stayed on the cross for days and died of what?

Shock to His system. He could have died for lack of water. But what did He die of? He bled out.

They tortured Him to death and He bled out. His heart broke and He died. And that blood coming out of Him is something important to the Lord.

[53 : 47] We know this as the New Testament teaching. In fact, I can take you here. Look at this with me. Just to give you real quick. The author of Hebrews picked up on this theme of blood to illustrate God's provision.

Provision for what? For our salvation through the blood of Jesus. What does He say? But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God that is the heavenly Jerusalem and to myriads of angels and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood which speaks better than the blood of whom?

Abel. What is He talking about? Well, here is how Dr. MacArthur helps us understand this particular teaching. Let me offer this to you.

the mountain of the new covenant is Mount Zion representing the heavenly Jerusalem. The opposite of Mount Sinai.

Mount Sinai where Moses got the Ten Commandments, the law. The opposite of Mount Sinai, it is not touchable but it is approachable. This Zion place is approachable.

[55 : 01] Sinai symbolizes law and Zion symbolizes grace. The law confronts us with commandments and judgment and condemnation. Grace presents us with forgiveness, atonement, and salvation.

Then he goes on to say, whereas Sinai was forbidding and terrifying, Zion is inviting and gracious. Sinai is closed to all.

Why? Because no one is able to please God on Sinai's terms. That is, perfect fulfillment of the law. We're sinners. We're already broken the law. Zion is open to all because Jesus Christ has met those terms and will stand in the place of anyone who will come to God through Him.

Zion symbolizes the approachable God. Amen. So from birth, Abel had the same sin nature as Cain.

The difference between Cain and Abel was God's work of salvation done in Abel's heart. What does that mean? Listen, by God's grace, Abel turned to God in faith and repentance, trusting in God's promise of a Savior from sin back in Genesis 3.15.

[56 : 13] Abel believed that. That came to Abel, I'm assuming, through the teaching of his parents, and Abel grasped it in faith and ran with it as a work of God saving him by grace through faith.

So while Abel's blood cries out, for justice, Jesus' blood shed on behalf of our sin-soaked souls brings cleansing, forgiveness, and peace with God.

Jesus' blood pleads for mercy on our behalf. Abel's blood was crying out for vindication and justice. Folks, if we got God's justice, what would we get?

Death. In a word. Death. Eternal death. But we get mercy. The blood of Jesus brings peace between God and His people.

Here is the way that the Apostle John said it. If we walk in the light as Jesus Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son does what?

[57 : 21] Cleanses us from all sin. Hallelujah. Jesus spilled His blood and His love for us as He made Himself our substitute to pay for our sins against God.

Every single one of us begins our life sharing Cain's heart of rebellion and disobedience against God. So, to save us from the punishment of this eternal separation from Himself in a devil's hell, God laid our sins on Jesus as if Jesus Himself had committed those sins instead of us.

And then God punished Jesus for our sins. Why? Why? Why did God do that? Because all sin must be punished under God.

God doesn't look the other way against sin, does He? It requires punishment. Jesus said, look, if you punish them they're going to get eternal separation from you.

I will step in and I will stand in their place as their substitute. You take their sins and lay those sins on Me as if I committed them and then you punish Me with the punishment they deserve.

[58 : 34] And so He did. But He didn't stop there. You've heard Me tell you many times. And then after doing that, God said, now I have you in the position where My Son has paid your penalty for you.

So you're now delivered from the condemnation that you deserve from Me. Now what I want to do is give you the better gift. What is that? Now I want to credit you with the perfect sinless life that My Son lived on your account.

He gets your sin and pays the death penalty for it. You get His perfect sinless righteous life and stand before Me forever and enjoy My Heaven for eternity. Because it's the only way any of you can get this.

As I give you His righteousness as My gift. And now come. Now come and be with me. And you say, Jeff, how do we get that righteousness?

You embrace it through faith. Jesus is the object of our faith. We believe that Jesus did that for us. And so we don't put our faith in us. We don't put our faith in the world, the systems of the world.

[59 : 46] We come and we put our faith. We can only do that if God is drawing us to Himself and opening our eyes to see that's our only hope. Jesus is our only hope. It's not a plan.

It's a person. It's a relationship with God through His Son. It's the beauty of the gospel, the good news, that Jesus saves them. So, likewise, because God is a righteous judge who doesn't play favorites and has to punish sin, God in this case with Cain is acting righteously to bring Cain to account.

And then God duly punishes Cain to fit his crimes. You see that here with me in verse 11, and now cursed are you from the ground which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

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. Cain is cursed from the ground.

That means that the earth will never again produce for Cain. Remember, he made his living as a farmer. A lot of Cain's identity was wrapped up in him being a farmer. God said, not anymore.

[60 : 58] What you worshipped as a farmer and what you withheld from me in that worship, remember we talked about that, Cain did not bring the best of his produce and his crops. He gave God the leftovers.

God said, now I'm going to use all that to punish you because this is what you've chosen for yourself. You will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.

Folks, please hear this as I move toward a close. Listen, listen, God is dealing with Cain at the point of his idolatry. Please hear this. Cain worshipped himself and now he will have himself all to himself.

Did you hear me? Fine. You want to be your God? I will give you a lifetime of worshipping you as your own God and we'll see how that works out for you. This is not God being vindictive.

This is not God being a grumpy grandpa. This is God giving us over to what we want in our rebellion. The blessings of working the land, the blessings of enjoying its produce are gone forever from Cain's life.

[62 : 04] He despised his blood pen. He took for granted his bond of brotherhood with Abel. He disregarded his role as a son, the oldest son, the first born son.

And in his boiling after Cain despised God and his wisdom and counsel which could have saved Cain from destruction. So, God will give him over to what Cain chose for himself.

Cain will no longer have a home of his own. You will be a wanderer and a vagrant forever. That's for eternity, not just on the earth. I'll tell you about that.

You'll be a wanderer forever. You will never settle into life within a community. You will have no sense of belonging. You will have a long life to be lonely.

And Cain will reap what he sowed. Proverbs speaks to all of us who would turn a hard heart to God and his wisdom for life.

[63 : 14] Here's what Proverbs says. They hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They were not willing to accept my counsel and they spurned all my reproof.

That is, every time I tried to discipline them and turn them back, they just would have no part of it. So, they shall eat of the fruit of their way and be satisfied with their own devices.

I'll give them what they want. The worst of this judgment against Cain is that the punishment involves God cursing Cain personally.

God's curse on Cain means that he's estranged from God forever. What he's experiencing on the earth will be his eternity. He will be separated from God.

We'll deal more with that next time. God will. Cain's remark in verse 14, notice verse 14, from your face I will be hidden. Again, that is not a comment of remorse, humility, or brokenness.

[64 : 14] He's saying that in bitterness. That describes the eternal separation that Cain understands God's doing with him now. And that's the worst fate for any human being on the planet, that you be eternally separated from God because God's given you over to what you want.

That separation is just what Jesus Christ came to save us from, beloved. Please notice that while God cursed the serpent in chapter 3, verse 14, God never cursed Adam and Eve personally.

Did you see that? God never cursed Adam and Eve personally. What God did was to give Adam and Eve over to their choices and like Cain, they would also live with the lasting consequences which would apply to all mankind now, which would act as reminders of consequences for disobedience to the Lord.

That's what we're dealing with. That's what sober us. So, beloved, please hear me pastorally as I close now. Each person is either like Abel or like Cain in their relationship to God.

Remember the two camps of humanity. We are either humbly submitting our hearts to God through faith in Jesus Christ or we are hardening our hearts against God through faith in ourselves.

[65 : 38] So, we need to be certain we understand that we will reap what we sow. God will give us over to what we worship.

So, the appeal is this, from a merciful and compassionate God who gave us his only son to save us from this terrible, terrible truth. Turn in faith to trust in Jesus Christ and live in peace with God, a peace which Jesus gives you through his shed blood.

That is the appeal. That is the hope. And that is the heart of our God. Will you pray with me? Father, in this message today, we have been humbly challenged with and perhaps even shocked by the message of your gospel that tells us that Jesus had to spill his blood and die on our behalf to rescue us from ourselves.

And so it is with mankind. We need saving. And you have sent your son to save us. So, I pray that if there be any precious soul in this place who is struggling with being absolutely certain that they are worshiping God, that they are submitting to you, that they are trusting in Jesus Christ alone to save them from their sin, their sin nature, that we have them separated from you for eternity, I pray that you would use today's message to call them to yourself, that they would kneel before you and confess to you their desperate need for Jesus, and that they would put their faith in him and trust him for the forgiveness of their sin, and look to live with you and walk with you and grow with you as your disciple, your learner.

Thank you, Almighty God, for the message that you give us through these true accounts of what's happening in Genesis.

[67 : 50] Thank you for calling our hearts to yourself, and thank you for making us your people. We pray now that you will help us to take these words into our hearts to be doers and not hearers alone, and that as we come to sing this final song and have bread pray for us, God, we will be overjoyed and full of the gratitude that we should have because of a sovereign God who has done so much for us to bring us to yourself.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.