

## GENESIS 4 : 3-16

**“GROUNDS” FOR SADNESS—OVERCOME IN CHRIST !**

*And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”*

*Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.”*

*And Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear! Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me.” And the LORD said to him, “Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.*

Our text is from Genesis, the first book of the Bible. The name Genesis means “Beginning.” Genesis records many beginnings--the universe and the world, living creatures, man and woman, marriage, children; sin, death, and the Promise of the Savior. The name Adam means “man”-- *ah-dahm* in Hebrew. The word *ah-dahm* is very similar to the Hebrew word for “ground / dirt” -- *ah-dahm-ah*. Adam was made from the *ah-dahm-ah*, dust of the ground. In our text the word “ground,” comes up five times in English, six times in Hebrew (once translated “earth”). In this study we will use the word “ground” not just to mean physical dirt, but to mean “reason, foundation, basis”—“Do you have grounds for such an outlandish statement?”

Adam and Eve had sons and daughters (Genesis 5:4). Today’s text tells us about the first two, Cain and Abel. No grounds for sadness at the birth of these two! Genesis tells us, when Caid was born, Eve proclaimed, “I have gotten a man from the LORD!” When the sons were old enough, both brought offerings to the Lord. This too would have been a joy to behold. An “offering” is a gift—NOT a payment due—but a gift of love for the Savior!

However, there was a problem with Cain’s offering. God did not look at it with favor as He did with Abel’s. What was the problem? Cain brought fruit of his fields, Abel brought produce of his flocks. Did Cain bring the wrong kind of gift? No, the gift itself was fine. In the Garden of Eden God had told Adam to “dress and keep” the garden, to be a man busy in the plant world. After Adam and Eve sinned, God told Adam he would continue to till the ground, however, now with sweat. Working the soil was a godly occupation. On the other hand, also after sin, God made coverings for Adam and Eve from animals. Raising animals for personal use was also agreeable to God. Both occupations were godly. Thus both offerings themselves were godly. No grounds for complaint. So where was the problem?. Abel brought of the *firstborn* of the flock and of the *fat*—of the best. Cain brought an offering. There was a difference in heart, wasn’t there? Cain must have brought an offering because he felt he “had to.” Abel brought an offering because he “wanted to.” He treasured the Lord who made him, cared for him, and promised the Savior from sin for him. The New Testament letter to the Hebrews says, “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Hebrews 11:4). I pray that your offerings to your Lord and Savior—whether offerings of time, skills, money, etc.—are not brought in obligation, “I have to”; but in generous love, “I want to.”

Cain became angry. The Lord was concerned for Cain. He warned him to beware that sin was lying at his heart’s door. Sin desired to possess him. Cain needed to put down this sin. Almighty God who warned him would certainly help him. What was the sin? Putting self ahead of God, being angry because God corrected him being angry with Abel because his offering was acceptable. Cain needed to get this ironed out. But Cain just let it stew n his heart.

Have you ever done that? Allowed a sin to stew and gnaw at your heart? What happens? Finally it blows, like a time bomb. Regretful actions follow. A shouting match, a physical altercation, illicit sexual satisfaction, etc.

Anger, like Cain's, needs to be dealt with. When you are angry with someone, you need to talk it out—whether neighbor, friend, husband, wife, brother, sister, parents, child. Talk it out, not shout, nor fight. Pray God to help you. Get to the bottom of it. Be prepared to see your faults too—big or little, 5% of the problem or 55% of the problem—and don't worry about who was most at fault or who started it. Sin brings "grounds" for sadness. Humbly own up to your own errors, seek forgiveness, and grant forgiveness to the other apologizing party. In Christ is forgiveness, joy, and peace. Discuss what can be done to improve things for the future. It may not be easy, but unchecked anger, or any sin unchecked leads to disastrous results.

It did for Cain. Cain murdered Abel! He took the life of his own brother. How quickly and how deeply sin infected the human heart. This the very first child born on earth killed his brother. Abel's life was cut short, at the hand of his own flesh and blood brother. Tragically sad, the first death in the Bible. Death is a hard pill to swallow. It is grounds for sadness. But, take heart, in Jesus and His death and resurrection for you, death is defeated and the child of God in Christ will rise from the grave in victory!

How, do you suppose, Adam and Eve felt? "What have we done?!" Likely they blamed themselves. Was it their fault that Cain murdered Abel? Yes and No. Yes, they had brought sin into the world. No, they did not make, encourage, convince, etc. Cain to murder Abel. It is true that Adam and Eve, like all parents, certainly were not perfect, but Cain, like every child, is answerable for his own sin. Don't blame your mistakes, sins, and bad decisions on your parents or someone else. Own up to your sin. Turn to the Father asking forgiveness in the blood of Jesus. "The blood of Jesus, for our pardon cries!" (TLH 158:4). Indeed there are grounds for sadness at death and at the death of Abel, but a sadness comforted in the Savior. Abel died in faith in Christ!

There are also grounds for yet another sadness in this text—sadness for Cain. Cain sinned grievously. Cain remained impenitent. When God came to Cain, Cain blew off His questioning, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But nothing gets past God. He knew. Abel's blood cried out to Him from the ground. ---- How many things cry out to God from your life, things you have never owned up to? Stolen goods, wasted time, betrayed family members, harsh words, money spent foolishly, money hoarded, and sins of the heart? Seek forgiveness from God and your fellow man. Do not remain impenitent—for impenitence is grounds for true sadness!

Cain's sin brought consequences from God. Cain could no longer expect the ground to bear him rich harvests. He would wander from place to place, a fugitive and a vagabond. People would not like him. These consequences imposed by God were to lead him to repentance, and then forgiveness in the Savior. Whether he ever repented, we don't know. ---- Note, that sometimes even sins that are confessed and forgiven have consequences. David's sin with Bathsheba was forgiven, but the baby died. Moses' sin--taking the glory for himself--at the rock was forgiven, but Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Perhaps you knowingly have taken a foolish chance, gotten hurt, sought forgiveness in Christ, been forgiven, but now you walk with a limp. These are reminders from God, to display to you your own frailty. Trust Him—for forgiveness and help.

Cain did regret his punishment, but he never sought forgiveness. In fact Cain put the blame on God! "This punishment from Your hand, Lord, is too great! You are driving me away!" Blaming God is an attempt at self-righteousness. Yet God was very kind to Cain and gave Cain more time. He put a mark on Cain to keep him safe against those who would want to kill him. We do not know any details about the mark. God did not put Cain to death, although later God would stipulate, "He who sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6). God was very kind to Cain, yet Cain continued in his own way. Regarding Cain, we truly have grounds for sadness. An impenitent sinner to face God's judgment—hell.

When sin brings "grounds" for sadness, turn to the Bible for comfort in God's mercy, love, grace, and forgiveness in the crucified and risen Jesus! You are a child of *ah-dahm* (Adam) and also a child of the *ah-dahm-ah* (dust of the ground) who will indeed face death and return to the dust of the ground, for you are a sinner. Yet you have the amazing grounds to rejoice in Jesus! Trust Him alone for forgiveness, resurrection and new life--forever!

Amen! So be it!

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