

Don't Go in the Way of Cain

(A warning against apostasy)

Genesis 4:1-11

Halifax: 7 September 2014

Introduction:

This morning we will return to our regular sermon series in the book of Genesis.

- We have just completed chapter 3 where we saw how our world that God created came to be a place very unlike what it was at creation...
 - The account in chapter 3 answered the question that so many people ask about,
 - “Why...if God is a good God...do we live in a world that is filled with suffering, sin, and death?”
- We saw that although God created us in true righteousness and holiness, and put us in paradise-like conditions,
 - we rebelled against Him as soon as our loyalty was tested—as soon as God sent the Devil, the serpent of old, to test us.
 - The LORD God had warned our first father and progenitor, Adam, that if he rebelled by eating the forbidden fruit, he would surely die.
- We saw that in the very day that he and his wife Eve ate of that fruit, they immediately became dead in trespasses and sins.
 - We saw how they were estranged from God and how they tried to hide from Him when He came in mercy to find them.
 - We saw how they admitted what they had done when the LORD called them on it, but with evasions and excuses.
 - We saw how it was then that God brought all manner of suffering and hardship culminating in physical death into the world as a punishment to them and their posterity...
 - But we also saw how He promised incomprehensible mercy to them...
 - Promising not only that despite the curse, they would still be able to have children and to eat of the earth as long as they lived,
 - But that He would raise up a people from them that would turn away from Satan and the rebellion into which he had brought them...
 - He would make from the woman's offspring a people who would be for God instead of continuing in Satan's rebellion...
 - And not only that, but He also promised that though the serpent and those who continued in his rebellion would batter and crush the woman's seed,
 - it would only be a bruising of the heel—a battering from which there would be recovery...
 - but that the seed of the woman—an individual male (which of course is Jesus Christ Himself) would at last crush the head of the serpent and all who are in league with him.
 - It was the promise that sinners from among the ruins of the fall would be fully restored in Christ Jesus and eventually be fully restored to paradise!

- We saw that although Adam and Eve were then expelled from the Garden of Eden and subjected to the sufferings of this world—
 - they were able to go out from the Garden with hope and assurance in God’s promise of salvation in Jesus Christ.
 - Jesus was not yet named and it was but a promise in shadows—but it was essentially the very same promise in which all true believers hope today!
 - Only, we now have the privilege of seeing the lengths that God went to to fulfil that promise—
 - that He gave His only Son to come as the seed of the woman and to bear in His own person the pains of eternal hell and to conquer Satan.
 - What a tremendous thing it is for us to face life in this fallen world with that powerful hope of redemption!
 - It is with hope in this promise that Adam and Eve went forth when they were expelled from the garden.

But now as we come to chapter 4, we are brought face to face with the reality that not all the descendants of the woman receive the promise of salvation.

- To this very day, Satan still has many who are not delivered from their union with him and his cause.
 - And this is true even of many who are among those who are in the visible church and who profess to hope in those promises.
 - I tell you that there are millions who are baptised in the name of Christ who are no more trusting in Him than Satan is.
 - Just look around our city—the majority are baptised, but it would be generous to say that even half of them have a credible profession of faith.
 - And even among those that do, there are many who hide their rebellious hearts under the cloak of a good-looking profession.
 - In other words—what I am saying—is that there are a lot baptised people who are going to hell—there are a lot of members in good standing of reformed churches and every other kind of church who are going to hell.
- And we are brought face to face with this reality right here in Genesis 4 in the account that is given of Cain.
 - We are shown that he began with a profession of faith, but that his profession was soon shown to be false.
 - We shall see how he who once professed rejects God.
 - All those who do this can be said to go in the way of Cain.
 - This passage stands as a warning to all who are in the church not to go in the way of Cain—it is a warning against apostasy.
 - Jesus warns about this again and again in His ministry...
 - Many of the parables are about those who outwardly enter His kingdom, but then are shown to be false sons—if not in this life, then on the day of judgement.
 - His apostles also give many warnings about the need to continue in the faith if we would be saved.

- And indeed, we have seen those in our congregation who have gone in the way of Cain.
 - They professed to believe and they reformed their life outwardly, but then they went out from us because they were not really of us...
 - These warnings are real—they are for you and for me.
 - They are for the elect even more than they are for those who fall away—because it is the elect who hear these warnings and are turned back from apostasy.
- So we would do well to look at this passage where the first apostasy is revealed to us.
 - It will help us in examining ourselves lest we go in the way of Cain...
 - And it will help us in knowing how to warn each other in general, and in particular, when we see possible signs of apostasy in one another.
 - This is a matter about which the church has been far too negligent.
- So please give careful attention now as I read this account of the first apostasy among the redeemed community to you from Genesis 4.
 - I will read the first 11 verses. Genesis 4:1-11:

Genesis 4:1-15: Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”² Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.⁶ So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?⁷ 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.”⁸ 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.⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where *is* Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. *Am* I my brother’s keeper?”¹⁰ And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.¹¹ So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.”

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His Word.

Let us now consider these words about the way of Cain and how they apply to us—and how they teach us about apostasy that we may avoid it.

I. Consider first of all that apostates have a privileged start.

- A. What I mean is, they are brought into an intimate association with the promises of God’s salvation.
 1. Remember that an apostate is someone who turns away from the faith.
 - He has a connection with the visible church by outward profession.
 - It is not a genuine connection on his part, but he is, to use Jesus’ illustrations,

- a branch in Him (in Jesus) that is cut off—
 - a son of the kingdom that is cast out—
 - a tare that is in a wheat field,
 - ground that receives the word but is either burned up by trials or choked out by the cares of the world,
 - a disciple of His, but not a disciple indeed.
2. Paul speaks of the Jews who rejected Christ in this manner in his letter to the Romans.
- a. In Romans 3, he speaks of how they, as part of the Old Testament church, have the advantage of having God’s word...
- **Romans 3:1-3: What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?**
- b. In Romans 9:4 & 5, he speaks of them as those:
- **Romans 9:4-5: who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.**
- c. This is a great privilege that belongs to all who are among professing people of God—the church—in both the Old and the New Testament.
- Our Larger Catechism brings this out under question 63, *What are the special privileges of the visible church?*
 - It says, **“The visible church hath the privilege of being under God’s special care and government; of being protected and preserved in all ages, notwithstanding the opposition of all enemies; and of enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation [the preaching and prayers and sacraments], and offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the gospel, testifying, that whosoever believes in Him shall be saved, and excluding none that come to Him.”**
 - So you see that the gospel is right there for them—whether they believe or not—it is there for them to hear!
 - They are told of the wonderful mercy of God and of what He has done for our salvation—how He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life!
 - They have preaching and prayers and other believers to encourage them to follow Christ and to help them in their discipleship.
 - It is a marvellous thing!
- B. Let me show you how this is so with Cain.
1. First, we see it in his birth...
- He comes of believing parents.
 - Adam and Eve show that they believed the promise of God’s salvation that was given to them after the fall as we saw last time in Genesis 3.

- Adam showed this by naming his wife “Eve” because he saw that she was the mother of all living—
 - that despite the fall, by the grace of God, she would still be able to be fruitful and bring forth children that live.
 - And then God gave Adam and Eve assurance by providing clothes made from a slain animal for them to cover their sin and guilt—
 - a pledge to them that though they could not cover their own shame, He would provide a covering for them through death.
 - And now Eve shows her faith when Cain is born...
 - In Gen 4:1, she says, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”
 - She knows that it is of God’s doing that she, a sinful woman with a sinful husband, is still able to bring forth children!
 - How marvellous it must have been for her—just imagine it—having the first child that was ever born--
 - New parents almost feel like their baby is the first to be born...
 - But for her it was true...
 - And she has faith—she knows that this is of God’s mercy.
 - She may have even thought that Cain was the one who would crush the serpent’s head—or at least the one who would do that would come from his descendants....
 - What a great privilege it was for Cain to be born to parents who trusted in the Lord and His promises.
 - I think we could say, in this regard, that he was a covenant child.
 - There was no circumcision or baptism to be applied to him, but there was a promise of mercy and he was a child of that promise.
 - His parents were eager to share it with him.
2. And we see that he is privileged in that his parents did bring him up in the covenant promise of God...
- a. First, we see this because he lives in a calling as does his brother Abel...
 - Cain is, as verse 2 shows us, a tiller of ground—a farmer, and Abel is a shepherd.
 - The boys were taught to labour in the face of the curse—not to be resentful on account of the hardships and toil involved...
 - but with humility to labour with thanksgiving to God.
 - b. The thanksgiving part is clear because we see that they were taught to bring their offerings to the LORD out of their increase...
 - Verse 3 & 4 read thus:
 - **Gen 4:3-4: 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.**

- You see that it says that they brought their offerings “in the process of time” which is literally “at the end of days.”
 - Probably this means at the end of the harvest year—they had been taught to bring a portion of their increase as a tithe and offering to God.
- c. It is an inestimable privilege to be brought up in the covenant so that you understand that every morsel of bread and every drop of water is of God’s mercy...
 - and that instead of complaining of what you don’t have, or resenting the trouble you had in acquiring it,
 - You come to God with your tithes and offerings to give thanks to Him for His mercies, recognising that you are unworthy of the least of them.
- 3. Of course the most important thing of all about this is to understand that God, who was estranged, is reconciled to us.
 - Again, it is to be among the people, the church that professes the gospel,
 - where you are told that God is reconciled to us through Christ...
 - where you are able to see the great mercy of God...
 - just to think that He Himself should bear our iniquities in His Son that we might be pardoned—we—the ungrateful offenders!
 - There is hope because Christ has overcome for us!
 - He has given us a future and a hope.
 - We need not perish with Satan and his own, but we can be eternally reconciled to God and receive an inheritance with His only Son Jesus!
 - Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God!
 - These are the rich promises that all who belong to the visible church are privileged to feed upon—and to embrace for salvation!
 - Whether you entered the visible church at birth or came in later as an adult, if you are in the visible church,
 - it is your great privilege to have the gospel of God’s salvation.
 - There are many who have been cut off for generations,
 - either because they are in a church where God has removed the lampstand because of their unbelief...
 - or because from ancient times since Noah, their fathers turned to idols and false religion and they and their people have not yet received the gospel.
 - It is a huge privilege to have the gospel! And apostates have it—just as Cain did.

TRANS> Do you cherish this marvellous gospel?

- If you do not, let this passage stand as a warning to you.
- This brings us to our second point.

- Having seen the great privilege that you have if you are in the church...that even apostates have...
- Now see that:

II. Those who are headed for apostasy often show their indifference toward the gospel in their worship of God.

A. Notice that our text points to the contrast between Cain and Abel in this regard.

1. We have already seen that both of them brought their offerings to the Lord at the end of days as they had been taught—and this was good in itself...
 - but we are told that God did not respect Cain and his offering, but did respect Abel and his offering...
 - Look at what it says in our text...I will begin with verse 3...
 - **Genesis 4:3-5: 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.**
2. We need to see from this that God is not impressed with our offering of worship just because we bring it to Him...
 - This is constantly emphasised in scripture...
 - We sang about that in Psalm 50.
 - Some people think that God ought to be mighty pleased with them if they go to trouble to worship Him once in a while—and especially if they do it all the time!
 - But God does not need our offerings or our worship.
 - In fact, if we come to Him in the wrong way, as Cain did, and as people often do—as Israel did in the time of the Judges and in the time of Isaiah and as the Corinthians did...
 - God has no regard for it.

B. Now I want you to see that with Cain and Abel's worship, it was both *them* (their persons) and their offerings that God either approved or did not approve of...

- It says that He had respect for neither *Cain* nor his offering—so there was something wrong with both him as a person and with his offering itself...
- And with Abel, the LORD had regard for both Abel and his offering.
- So let's look first at their offerings and then at the person who makes the offering.

1. What was the difference in their offerings?

- a. First, notice that they both brought to God an offering from their labours—
 - Cain being a farmer brought the produce of the field,
 - and Abel being a shepherd brought an offering from his flocks...
 - This was something they were supposed to do...

- But some have pointed out that there must be a blood sacrifice to atone for sin that accompanies a grain offering.
 - They have suggested that Cain may have disregarded this aspect in bringing his grain offering.
 - He may have sought to approach God as if he did not need an atonement—even as many do today who do not come to God in Jesus’ name.
 - These persons wrongly suppose that they can barge into God’s courts without resting in the sacrifice that God has provided for His people’s sins.
 - They come with their prayers and their praises, but they do not come with a profession of faith in Jesus...
 - If you ask them, they will tell you that God accepts them without an atonement...because they are good or because God is merciful and does not require such things.
 - They will say that He is able to overlook our sins without the cross and that Jesus’ suffering is an example to us of dedication, that it is not an atonement for sin.
 - I tell you, if that is your profession, your worship is not acceptable to God—no one can rightly come without confessing his need of Christ and His atoning sacrifice.
- b. Secondly, notice what is said about the quality of their offerings.
- With Abel, we are told that he brought his best—the first of his flocks and the fat...
 - but with Cain we are simply told that he brought an offering of the produce of the earth
 - There is a striking omission here—it does not say that he brought the first-fruits of his produce.
 - If these verses did not go out of their way to specify that Abel *did* bring his firstborn and the fat, then we might overlook this...
 - But because that is included, it suggests that Cain brought an offering that was not up to par.
- We can’t say for sure that Cain’s offering was defective in itself on account of these reasons...
- But we can say that...
- c. Those who are headed for apostasy often bring worship that in itself is sloppy and defective—
- We can say that defective worship is a sign of apostasy.
- 1) Those whose hearts are warm toward the gospel will not be slack in their worship.
- If the heart is right, the outward form will be right too.

- It is true that the form can be right when the heart is wrong, but if the form is wrong, it shows a problem with the heart.
 - If the heart is right, the form will follow...
- 2) Abel brought his best because he understood the mercy of God.
- His worship was an expression of his love for God.
 - Worshippers who are gripped by the gospel bring their best before the LORD.
 - They will not neglect their worship—it will be a priority for them.
 - Worship is a big deal to them because God’s mercy is a big deal to them.
 - They will not be lukewarm in offering it...
 - They sing with joy from a full heart!
 - They will listen eagerly to God’s word!
 - They will pray fervently.
 - They will be engaged when they receive the sacraments.
 - They will not bring lame sacrifices to God.
- 3) The prophets cry out against those who bring lame offerings...
- Malachi charges worshippers in his day with bringing offerings that are diseased and lame...
 - They come before God in a way that they would not dream of coming before an earthly monarch.
 - And in His message to the Ephesians in Revelation, Jesus accuses the Ephesians of having lost their first love...
 - He solemnly warns them that this is the beginning of apostasy and will lead to the removal of their lampstand.
 - The Apostles admonish their hearers to receive the word with eagerness and to bring the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of their lips giving thanks to God’s name.
 - Paul charges the Corinthians for coming together to eat the Lord’s Supper in a way that brings judgement instead of blessing—treating it like a common meal to fill their belly with instead of as a holy sacrament to remember Christ!

TRANS> So we see that the offering itself of those headed for apostasy is often defective as Cain’s seems to have been...

2. But now let’s see how our text also contrasts the worshippers themselves...
- It was not just their offerings that mattered, but even more, it was them!
 - God respected Abel, but He did not respect Cain.
 - Even if the offerings themselves had been identical, they would not be acceptable if the worshippers were not right with God.
 - But why would God not accept them as worshippers?

- We are given the answer in Hebrews 11:4—we are told specifically why Abel was accepted and Cain was rejected...
 - Abel approached God with faith and Cain did not.
 - It says:
 - **Heb 11:4: By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts;**
- We already saw that outwardly we must come in Jesus' name...
 - but this must be true inwardly as well!
 - There must be a credible profession of faith—but there must also be a heart of faith.
 - The church is to oversee the outward profession, but only God sees the heart, so there are many who come with outward professions that are fine, but with hearts that are far from God.
 - God sees our hearts and we must have faith in Jesus!
 - The LORD knows if worshippers are coming before Him supposing that He will be impressed with them and their offerings of worship...
 - or if they come confessing their sins and looking to Christ for their acceptability.
 - It is the most arrogant thing in the world for sinners like us to barge into God's courts and think He will be pleased with us on account of us!
 - He is a holy God—He is a consuming fire to all sinners!
 - He is glorious and pure and has no regard for sin!
 - You are not coming to *Him* if you don't recognise that—you are coming to a god that you made up in your own head...
 - God did not send His Son to be crucified because He was impressed with us the way we are and found us acceptable...
 - He sent Him to atone for our sins so that we could be reconciled and be accepted...
 - Like Abel, you must have faith in Christ and in God's promise of salvation through Him.
 - If you have been trying to impress God with your life you need to repent...
 - I mean, yes, of course you ought to try to please Him, and yes, He graciously accepts your works through Christ...
 - but it is only through faith in Jesus that you can...no one can come to the Father but by Him.
 - Without faith, it is impossible to please God.
 - We have to have forgiveness...

- And this ought to be a big deal to you—that you who are unworthy are forgiven in Christ...
- That God sent Him to bear the pains of eternal hell for us so that we could be delivered.
- If you miss that, you miss everything!
 - If you are indifferent about the gospel, you and your worship are unacceptable to God.

TRANS> So to summarise this point,

- Those headed for apostasy do not worship God acceptably...
 - Outwardly, their worship is often defective, inwardly it is always defective.
- That was true of Cain—and now we shall see how God graciously confronts him, but how Cain, instead of repenting, hardens himself.
 - This is our third point...

III. The apostate is the one who hardens himself in the face of God’s gracious pleas and warnings and invitations.

- There is a progressive hardening that alienates the soon to be apostate more and more from the LORD, and this rejection of God’s warnings is a part of that hardening.
 - Let’s look at this with the example of Cain...

A. First, you see that when he learns that God has rejected his worship, he is greatly angered—not humbled, but angered!

- Verse 5 says,
 - **Gen 4:5: but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.**

1. We are not told how God made it known to Cain that he and his offering were rejected, or to Abel that his was accepted...

- We are not told, and so we do not need to know...but somehow He made it known.
- In our day, He often does this through preaching—
 - even the very kind of preaching that you have heard from me today.
 - telling you that unless you come to God with faith in Jesus, your worship is not acceptable to God!
 - People will say, “What, you mean to tell me that all these years that I have been worshipping God, my worship is not acceptable?”

2. Consider that it is wonderfully kind of God to expose this to you if it is true.

- It is a work of His Holy Spirit to convict you of sin and of your need of Christ...
 - It is a great mercy if He does not let you go on in your delusions of self-righteousness...

- In Jesus' day, many of the Jews were self-righteous, and Jesus kept on exposing their sin—
 - It seemed like every time He came around, their sin was exposed...
 - It was a great mercy to them to be shown this...so that they could see that they needed a saviour like Jesus...
 - not just to take away their problems, but to offer Himself for their sins...
 - There are many self-righteous people in our day who need to see that too...
 - But in our society there is also another great delusion that God often exposes...
 - There are many people who think God is just a big grandfather who doesn't mind that much if they sin.
 - They think that He is the kind of God who would never punish sin, especially not forever and ever in hell...
 - This is a great delusion in our day—but how wonderful it is when God finally reveals to a sinner like that that He is a God not only of mercy and grace, but also of truth and righteousness...
 - That He will not overlook sin!
 - That we are not acceptable to Him apart from Jesus.
3. But it is not easy to be shown this! It is not easy to receive it!
- a. Cain responded the same way that all apostates respond...and the way that some who are not apostates also respond...
 - He was angry and his countenance fell—you could see it on his sullen face that he was bitter and cold toward God—resentful that God did not accept him.
 - You can often see it in the face of a person who is heading for apostasy.
 - They look very hard and cold—and they are angry with God!
 - b. This is the way the Jews were in Jesus day when He exposed their self-righteousness,
 - and this is the way people are in our day when they are shown their need of Christ—angry and sullen!
 - For this reason, there are many who do not preach the gospel in all of its strength—
 - they speak of our need of Jesus to be our friend,
 - but they do not speak of our sin and our need of Him as a sacrifice for sin.
 - This is wrong!
 - Even though people get angry, we must tell them the raw truth—as kindly as we can—but we must tell them all.

TRANS> So an apostate, if he learns that he and his worship are unacceptable, becomes angry...But God does not stop with this...

B. Secondly, we see that the LORD pleads with angry Cain to repent and receive mercy—and that this hardens him even more!

1. The LORD is so gracious to do this pleading—

- Look at how He does this in verse 6 & 7:
 - **Gen 4:6-7: 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.”**
- Isn't that just like the LORD?
 - If you are in Christ today, you know that the LORD has done that with you—many times...
 - Perhaps you were converted as an adult or teenager and you can remember resisting Him and how He kept pleading with you...
 - You just could not get away from it...
 - He said, “Why are you angry with me? I have only told you the truth.”
 - The question is meant to help you see how foolish it is to be angry when you are the one in the wrong...
 - And He says to you:
 - “I have given my Son for guilty sinners like you and I will accept you if you repent and come to me through Him...
 - If you do right, you will be accepted...
 - And if you do not come—what will you accomplish?”
 - And then He warns you:
 - “If you will not come, it will only get worse—sin wants to take you over and it will unless you come Christ—it will turn you more cold and more bitter than you are now...do you want to be like that forever?
 - Do you want to be hardened beyond remedy?”
 - Perhaps there is someone here today that is angry because God has shown you your sin...
 - Sin is personified as lying at the door—waiting to seize you—it is a dreadful warning—it wants to possess you—to take you over forever—
 - That is the warning—it desires you, but you must not let it—you must master it and not let it master you.
 - This is not just talking about the fact that we are dead in trespasses in sins until Christ saves us—
 - but this is talking about sin wanting to take even more control of you—such possession of you that you will never come to Christ.

- It is an earnest, gracious plea to not let that happen—to come to the Lord for mercy.
 - And you who know the LORD know how He comes to you even after you are converted...when you are stubborn about admitting your sin...
 - True believers struggle with this too you know!
 - And you know how He prevails with you and keeps on at you—
 - exposing how foolish you are to be angry and not to deal with your sin...
 - and how He shows you the danger you are in...
 - And if you are indeed a true believer, He always does this until He wins you over...
 - How happy you are when at last you repent! How good His promises are! How good He is!
 - How your countenance is lifted!
 - How graciously He accepts you—no matter what you may have done!
 - Is this not what men like David and Peter found when they repented of their sin?
 - They confessed their sin and they found mercy.
2. But the apostate is the one who does not repent when God graciously pleads.
- That is what distinguishes an apostate from a true believer...
 - Both struggle with sin, and both can struggle with anger when sin is exposed—but eventually the believer is won...
 - a. The apostate becomes even more hardened and even more bitter!
 - Rather than delighting in Christ, he resents Him all the more!
 - He bitterly resents the fact that Christ and those who trust Him are accepted and that he is not accepted.
 - He wants to destroy Christ—however he can best get at Him...
 - In Jesus' day, they crucified Him.
 - In our society, they mock Him and dismiss Him and call His people foolish and backward.
 - In many parts of the world, they kill His people.
 - He will commit brazen sins—fornication, cursing, blasphemy, stealing...
 - b. You can see that this is exactly the reaction that Cain has as he hardens himself even more.
 - 1) You can see his wicked deed in verse 8...
 - **Gen 4:8: 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.**
 - Murder is always a very wicked sin—it is characteristic of those who are of their father the devil.

- It is especially wicked because it is impossible to make restitution for it—it is so final.
- 2) And there are several things that make this murder by Cain all the more heinous—several things that make it even worse...
 - a) First, that he strikes down his brother—his own brother...
 - b) Second, that the murder is premeditated—he takes him out to the field and he talks to him and then he rises up against him in violence.
 - c) But worst of all, he lashes out against Abel because Abel represents the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ.
 - Abel's only offense is that he and his offering have been accepted by the Lord—nothing else.
 - Often, those who kill the righteous will have some pretense for their killing, but here it is simply because God accepted him.
 - We are told in 1 John 3 that that is the only reason he killed him.
 - This is at the heart of all killings for righteousness sake.
 - Ultimately, it is resentment toward Christ and His cross!
 - The very idea that I must have a crucified Saviour to be acceptable God!

TRANS> Cain is after Christ, and so he strikes down the one who represents Him...

- But still...

C. Our gracious LORD confronts Cain and again, Cain hardens himself even more.

1. Now that Cain has gone so far as to murder his brother, his sin is more obvious than ever...

- And that is why the Lord comes to him again to get him to confess...
 - If he did not see his sin before, surely he will see it now!
 - But look at what happens...
- a. In verse 9, it says:
 - **Gen 4:9: Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?"**
 - When God confronts you like this—no matter how great your sin may be—He is giving you a chance to confess your sin—
 - to own up to what a wicked wretch you are and to repent.
 - He even did this with those who had delivered Jesus up to the Romans to be crucified...
 - Through Peter's preaching, He confronted them for crucifying the Lord of glory by lawless hands, and He promised them that if they repent and are baptised in His name, they will be forgiven.
- b. You see how with Cain, the LORD puts the question to him..."Where is Abel your brother?"
 - It is a question that ought to have broken Cain—have broken him down in humble repentance—have caused him to plead for mercy.

- to have caused him to be pricked in his heart and to cry out and to say, “What must I do to be saved!”
- Truly, the mercy of God is amazing!
2. But so is the hardness of an apostate amazing...
- Cain, rather than repenting, denies what he has done and then adds a brazen, cheeky response—to almighty God.
 - His condition is utterly desperate.
 - At the end of verse 9 we have his wicked words:
 - God says, “**Where is Abel your brother?**” and he says,
 - **Gen 4:9: “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”**
 - What a brazen response this is after what he had done!
 - Adam at least admitted that he had sinned...but Cain is much deeper in his sin...
3. Now the LORD charges Cain directly with what he has done...
- If you will not confess your sin, the LORD Himself will declare your sins—He will expose them all and there will be no remedy for you.
 - In verse 10, the LORD says,
 - **Gen 4:10: “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.”**
 - The idea of blood crying out to God shows that Cain’s sin must be dealt with—
 - The blood cries out to God for vengeance.
 - The matter cannot to be left—it must be dealt with.
 - Do you see this? Do you understand this?
 - If you will not confess your sin and get to Christ for mercy, then God will pour out His wrath and curse upon you.
 - If you reject His remedy, you will feel His curse.
 - We will look at the curse next time.
 - Obviously, it is a dreadful thing to bear—we cannot even imagine what it is to bear the curse when we see that it took it took nothing short of Christ crucified to take it away!

Conclusion: Now let me ask all you...

- Is there anyone here who is on this dreadful path to apostasy?
 - To rejecting the salvation that God holds out to you and freely offers you?
- Is there anyone who is angry because you have been confronted with your sin?
 - Well let me urge to repent—to do well—and you will be accepted...
 - Let me urge you to not let it fester anymore because it wants to have you—it wants to possess you—the way it possessed Cain.
 - Get to Christ, or it will not go well with you.

- Even if you have gone deeper into apostasy...
 - Even if you have gone from anger to lashing out against God in rebellion with murder or drunkenness or stealing or sexual immorality...
 - The LORD in His mercy still calls you to repent before you harden yourself beyond remedy.
- And you who are resting in Him...who are trusting in our dear Lord Jesus...
 - Oh give thanks to Him for His great mercy!
 - You have so much to be thankful for!
 - God has prevailed with you—just think of the horrors from which you have been delivered!
 - Who is like the Lord our God, full of mercy and grace to all who call upon him!