



The Sermon

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Genesis 4:11-26

"The Slippery Slope of Sin"

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TRANSCRIPT

I want to begin reading in verse 10. The title of this message is "The Slippery Slope of Sin." And due to time, I'm only going to read the first 16 verses so I can have the time I need, because at the end of this message we're going to be taking the Lord's Supper together; and in no way do I want to rush through the Lord's Supper. So let me read these opening verses. We're going to be looking through the rest of the chapter, Lord willing, this morning.

But beginning in verse 11, God is the speaker, "He's speaking to Cain: 'Now you are cursed 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 said to the Lord, 'My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.' So the Lord said to him, 'Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.' And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.' Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden." Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Father, we humble ourselves beneath Your mighty right hand, and place ourselves under the authority of Your word. We believe that Your

word is authoritative and is binding upon our lives. It instructs our minds, it excites our hearts, it directs our wills, and we want it to have that influence, that control in our life today. So as Paul said to the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you," may Your word richly dwell in us this day. May it move in and set up home in our hearts. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. [End]

The title of the message is "The Slippery Slope of Sin." In these verses we see a further description of what the New Testament will call "the way of Cain." The way of Cain is the broad path that's headed for destruction. The way of Cain is a downhill path that is a slippery slope that descends downward from one level of sin to a baser level of sin to a grosser level of sin. Sin a person's life is never stationary. You never hold the level at where you are if you are on the way of Cain. It's like one of these moving sidewalks at the airport: once you're on it, it's propelling you forward. And it will always be taking you to the next level of sin. You'll always be pushing the fenceposts out, because one sin always leads to multiple other sins. A person living in sin never remains the same; and without repentance, a person's life is never evolving upward; apart from repentance is always devolving downward.

The way of Cain is the way of sin, and it will take you where you do not want to go, and it will cost you what you do not want to pay. And that is precisely what we see in this passage. And maybe one more thought before I transition to the passage. You can be on the way of Cain and look very respectable. You can be on the way of Cain and be up an upstanding citizen, you can be a member of a church. But down in your heart, your heart can be on the way of Cain; and it will always be taking you along as if you're floating downstream, it will always be taking you to the next level of sin.

And that is what we see here. This is precisely what we see in the life of Cain. In Genesis chapter 4, we see him on the slippery slope of sin, descending down and down and down into deeper levels of sin. And after killing his brother, it doesn't just stop there. He takes really the bull by the horn and he goes yet further into sin.

And as I said, apart from genuine repentance no one ever rises up to a higher level, you always go down. And what is true for an individual is true for any culture and any society and any country, especially the country in which we find ourselves. Apart from gospel repentance and apart from wholesale turning around in confession of sin and embracing the Lord Jesus Christ, any and every culture, whether it be the United States, whether it be France, whether it be England, whether it be China, no matter where it is, it will always be plummeting down. It will never go up, it will always go down from bad to worse to moral insanity. And that is exactly where we find ourselves in this country, and that's exactly where Cain was.

So as we look at this passage, we have a number of verses to cover. I want you to note, first, "The curse upon Cain." That's in verses 11 and 12. And God is the speaker, and He says, "Now you are cursed from the ground." This is an immediate pronouncement of judgment upon Cain. While the blood is still there laying in a pool in the ground, God says, "You, Cain, are cursed." The wages of sin is always death. "In the day that you eat of this fruit, you shall surely die." "The soul that sins it shall surely die," Ezekiel 18:3. And so God pronounces the just condemnation upon Cain: "You are cursed."

The opposite of being cursed is to be blessed, is to be graced, is to be favored. And Cain is now under the curse of God, and he says, "The curse is from the ground," meaning the evidence of his sin is there in the ground, and it's crying out for God's judgment. We see He adds, "which has" - referring to the ground - "has opened its mouth" - that's a metaphorical figure - "to receive your brother's blood from your hand. Cain, you have blood on your hands. Cain, your soul is stained with your sin, and the ground itself, the land in which you are living is stained, and the land itself is crying out for your judgment."

He says in verse 12, "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you," and God pronounces a judgment, a regional judgment, if you will, upon this very area here in Eden where Cain has killed his brother. And God says, "This ground will no longer be productive and fruitful." And if you were to travel to where this took place you would find

yourself in modern-day Iraq in a desert, in a wilderness; and to this day nothing is growing there.

Does God judge a land because of sin that is committed in that land? Well, the answer to that is yes, according to this text. And I believe the case can be made, if we had time, that God sends judgments upon a land in the natural realm because of their high-handed sin against Him. God sends droughts, God sends famines, God sends earthquakes, God sends plagues, God sends natural disasters, because in that land there has been open cosmic treason against Almighty God. And I wonder if what we are seeing in our day is but the law is sowing and reaping, that we have sown to sin, and we are reaping now the judgment of God upon our land.

It does make me think that since Roe v. Wade was passed, there has been 62 million babies slaughtered in their mother's womb. How could the judgment of God not be upon our land. As it has been well said: "If God doesn't judge America, He would have to raise up Sodom and Gomorrah, and apologize." Well, God judged the land where Cain was. And it would no longer be a garden, it would no longer be fruitful, it would no longer be green; and it remains that way to this very day.

This leads, second, to, "The complaint by Cain. The complaint by Cain," verses 13 and 14. What follows is really the protest of an unrepentant heart. And in verse 13, "Cain said," - really - "Cain complained to the Lord, 'My punishment is too great to bear!'" Cain thought that the judgment of God upon him to be cursed and that the land would no longer be productive was too excessive, that the punishment far outweighs the crime: like if you walked across the street and received a ticket for jaywalking, they would give you the death penalty; that the penalty is far too stiff.

Well, the fact of the matter is it's just the opposite. The punishment was far too lenient. It was in the mercy of God that God withheld the full measure of His just judgment upon Cain. God will impose the death penalty in Genesis 9:6 for taking the life of another person. But it's not as though God suddenly changed by the time we get to Genesis 9:6. No, God is the same

yesterday, today, and forever. And God should have taken the life of Cain immediately. He did, Ananias and Sapphira, for lying in church. He has taken the lives of others as soon as they committed a sin, a lesser sin. No, Cain does not understand what true justice is. A true justice is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; that's not bad, that's good. And what that means is, if you take out someone's eye, then you need to replace that eye; if you take out someone's tooth, you need to replace that tooth; that the punishment perfectly fits the crime. That's what we call justice.

Oh, of course, Cain thought that God was unjust, that God was too heavy-handed. And I have a verse for you, I want you to hear this: Proverbs 28:5, "Evil men do not understand justice. Evil men do not understand justice." Most people in prison think they shouldn't be there, that somehow injustice was served. And evil politicians want to empty all the prisons. Why? Because evil men do not understand justice. Our society wants to remove the death penalty for taking the life of another person. Evil men do not understand justice. Activist judges want to legislate from the bench and not carry out justice. Evil men do not understand justice.

So in verse 14, "Cain said," - continuing his complaint - 'Behold, You' - referring to God - 'have driven me this day from the face of the ground. God, You have expelled me. You are expelling me from Eden. You are expelling me from this general area in which I have committed the sin of killing Abel.'" And this verb "driven me," - Do you see it in your Bible: "Behold, You have driven me"? - this verb in the original language means to expel, to run out, to drive out, to cast out. It's even translated in the Old Testament as divorce, where there's just a severance, there is a break, there's a breach in the relationship. And that is what God is doing with Cain, because God is a holy God, and His eyes are too pure than to behold iniquity, Habakkuk 1:15. And so God drives Cain from His presence.

And then he says, "and from Your face." And he says, "I will be hidden." And Cain acknowledges that sin has created this chasm between Holy God and sinful Cain, that there is this enormous separation that is now taking place. And Cain knows the results of it. He says, "And I will," - in verse 14 - "I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." And that really will

be the result of what's on the inside of his heart. He will have a restless soul that will never find God, and will never find what only God can give. He will be a restless soul who will always be looking for satisfaction and peace, and he will never find it; and for the rest of his days he will be just in search of that which is elusive, and he will never have contentment within his own heart and within his own soul, because he does not have God in his life.

And then he adds, "and whoever finds me will kill me." No, Cain's guilty conscience affirms to him he knows his own life should be taken, long before God spoke it in Genesis 9:6. And who knows what God has already spoken that is not recorded in these opening chapters. But Cain understands that the swift hand of judgment should come down upon him.

"Whoever finds me will kill me." A guilty conscience will either drive you further away from God, or it will drive you to God, depending upon how you respond. And if you puff up your heart and become stiff-necked, a guilty conscience will just drive you further away from God, and deeper and deeper into sin. Or, if you would but humble yourself, and repent of your sin, and turn to the Lord, that guilty conscience would actually drive you to the only place where you would find forgiveness of sin.

This leads us now to Number Three: "The compassion upon Cain," in verse 15. Despite Cain's guilt, God shows goodness to him; and this is an expression of the goodness of God even upon those who have made themselves to be His enemy. So we read in verse 15, "So the Lord said to him, the Lord said to him, 'Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.'" So actually, God becomes the protector of Cain. Is this not an amazing thing? God intervenes and builds a wall of protection, an invisible wall of protection around Cain, and promises that He will inflict vengeance sevenfold upon anyone who takes Cain's life. And this is an expression of the goodness of God even to His enemies.

Do you remember in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Love your enemies"? And then He says, "You are to be like your heavenly Father." In

Matthew 5:45, "God causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." God is so good that He shows what we call "common grace" even to those who have turned their backs on God and God has expelled from His presence. God's goodness just overflows into their life. It's not saving grace, it's what theologians call "common grace," which is a non-redeeming grace. God is so good, it's almost as if the goodness of God cannot be held back towards those who are the least deserving, and He allows even unbelievers to marry, to have children, to appreciate art and music, to play sports, to excel. God even allows unsaved businessmen to be successful, and to go on a vacation, and to go to a doctor and receive health.

All of this is an expression of the common grace, the non-saving goodness of God. In fact, God even feeds the animals. God just lavishes His goodness. Even in the midst of His judgment there are still expressions of God's goodness. And that's what we see here in verse 15 – please don't miss this. God steps in after driving him out, and says, "Whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him, the avenger, sevenfold."

And then God goes a step further, "and the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him." And we don't know what this sign is. It may have been some physical mark. It may have been – who knows what it would have been. None of the commentators know what this sign was. But that's not important what it was. What is important is who did it, and upon whom he did it, and what would be the results of it; it would be a protection to Cain, who actually deserves the death penalty. It really is an expression of the patience of God, and the longsuffering of God, that He blesses even unbelievers with common grace. God shows His kindness even to His enemies when His judgment is upon them.

Notice, fourth, "The casting out of Cain." That's in verse 16: "Then Cain went out." He went out because he was driven out. He went out because God expelled him. He went out from the presence of the Lord. And this is exactly what had happened to Adam and Eve. Same verb is used here, that they were driven out, they went out of the garden of Eden.

Even so, God now expels Cain from His most holy presence, "and settled in the land of Nod." Now Nod is an unknown place. All we know is what is at the end of the verse, "east of Eden." Eden is between the Tigris and Euphrates River, which flow through modern-day Iraq, and east of that is just somewhere in the middle of modern-day Iraq, "and he settled there." And even his settling down was a reminder to him of the restlessness that remained in his heart, because he did not have God in his heart.

It was Augustine who said, "Our hearts will always be restless, until they find their rest in God." Your heart will always be restless just going from one thing to the next, to the next, until you settle down with God, and rest in God. And so with every step of Cain's life right now, he's on the way of Cain. He's going further and further away from God, and he will be going deeper and deeper into sin. And that's the slippery slope of sin.

I want you to note, fifth, "The children of Cain." That's in verses 17 and 18, "The children of Cain." And here's another expression of, really, the common grace of God. God allows even an unbeliever who is in rebellion against God to be able to procreate with his wife and be able to have children. This is the long-suffering of God.

And so, we read in verse 17, "Cain had relations with his wife." I told you last week, "had relations" is a Hebrew word that literally translated means "know." Cain knew his wife intimately, privately, personally, in a way that he knows no other person. And this raises the age-old question, "Where did Cain get his wife?" Well, the answer is he married his sister, he married the daughter of Adam and Eve. And there is not the mutant genes yet building up. It's like a river; by the time it gets to the Gulf of Mexico, it's muddy and it's polluted. But way upstream in Minneapolis, it's pure and it is clean.

And so, really, where we are here is we're way upstream where the human race first begins to flow, and there is a purity that will, when a brother and a sister would marry, there it would not produce an undesired result, as it would later on. And by the time we get to the book of Exodus, there will be instruction, putting a firewall between a brother and a sister in a



relationship. But here it is right and it's pure; and where Cain received his wife was he married the girl next-door. Selah. Pause and meditate. See, I smiled.

"And she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch." Now in God's goodness He allows Cain to even have this son. This is not the Enoch who walked with God who is mentioned later in the New Testament as well as a hero of the faith. In fact, that Enoch will be mentioned in the next chapter; we'll look at him next Lord's Day. But this Enoch is really the first Enoch.

"And he came, built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son." He was so proud and he was so happy to now have a son, we have the building of the first city. It's probably just a walled-type area that multiple people can live in, we don't know how many. But nevertheless, it's the beginning of civilization. It's the beginning of building a place where multiple people, many families could live.

And in verse 18, "Now to Enoch was born Irad. Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech." Not a Billy Bob in that list. And so here is now the perpetuation of one generation to the next, and culture and civilization is being developed as they are building this this city.

And this leads us, Number Six, "The corruption from Cain." In verses 19 to 24, "The corruption from Cain." "Lamech took to himself two wives." Now Lamech is a seventh generation from Adam and a sixth generation from Cain. And the Bible does talk about the sins of the fathers being passed down to the third and fourth generation. That does not mean that the third and fourth generation are charged with that sin. I mean, there's no reparations going on there. What it means is there is an influence that comes down from a father. Something is set in motion in a family that can easily be passed down from one generation to the next, whether for good and for God, or whether for evil and to trace this family line back up to Cain. This is a polluted river that is flowing out of this home. And there are

those downstream who are now being defiled by this ungodly influence that starts with Cain.

And so, "Lamech" - who's in this flow - "took to himself two wives." Where did this come from? In Genesis 2 we read, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two become one flesh." And that was to be the standard in every generation down through the centuries. This is the first case of bigamy, this is the first case of multiple wives, and it is an evil attempt, it is an evil attempt to destroy the perfect design of God, and it will build a society that will crumble to the ground, because the essential building block of any society is the family unit; and it is to be a father and a mother. And every child needs a father and a mother. Not every child has a father and a mother to grow up under. But there needs to be the softness and the sweetness of the mother, and the strength of a father; and those come together to form the package that every child needs under the wisdom of Almighty God.

But now two wives, and this now is throwing the home into chaos. And surely the devil is behind this. If God is the greatest home-builder, then the devil is the greatest home-destroyer; and the devil knows if he can pull the rug out from underneath the family unit, that a whole civilization will come tumbling down. And that is what is taking place here with these two wives.

"The name of the one was Adah," - that's the first wife - "the name of the other was Zillah," - that's the second wife. And now there will be competition in the home. And now there will be jealousy in the home. And now there will be envy in the home. And now there will be a divided heart in the man. And now there will be confusion among the children.

Verse 20, "Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock." That's a description of what we call nomads, people who live in tents in the desert, and have flocks or herds of cattle or sheep, and they just go with the wind, and they pull up stake, and they move their tent to another location where there might be better water or where there might be green grass. And they will relocate their tent to

another place, and they will bring their herd with them. And this says that, "Jabal was the father of this," meaning he's the founder, he's the inventor. And again, society and civilization is beginning to take shape here at the very outset.

And then in verse 21, "His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe." He's the inventor of musical instruments. A lyre is a stringed musical instrument, and a pipe is a wind musical instrument. And civilization is just advancing to the next level, but the problem is, so is sin, becoming now more complex and complicated as well.

Verse 22, "As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger" – meaning, again, inventor or founder – "of all instruments of bronze and iron." And please note there's no bronze age, there's no iron age that goes billions of years. None of that nonsense is ever found in God's word, which is true. No, it's in this generation that now instruments of bronze and iron are being forged. And Tubal-cain is the first inventor of this. "And the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah."

Verse 23, "Lamech said to his wives, 'Adah and Zillah.'" And as he says this, he is just boasting. He's a peacock strutting. He is arrogant, and he is prideful. And listen to what Lamech boasts to his two wives. And see, sin never just stops with two wives, it now struts down Main Street.

He goes, "Listen to my voice, you wives of Lamech." He refers to himself in third-person, which is kind of an arrogant thing to do as well. "Listen to my voice, you wives of Lamech, give heed to my speech, for I have killed a man for wounding me." Now does that sound familiar, the sins of the father being passed down? That's exactly what Cain did, he rose up and killed his own brother, remember? And so that's in almost the spiritual DNA as that's being passed down.

And so now Lamech makes this boast that he has killed a man simply for wounding him. Who knows, the man may have just slapped him. And he is so arrogant: "Who are you to do this to me, Lamech?" And Lamech responds by shooting a mosquito with a cannon. He overreacts. And that's what pride always does. Pride always overreacts and blows up, "because I have been offended." A humble man cannot be offended. A prideful man is offended by the smallest offense. "For I have killed a man for wounding me." And here again, the punishment far outweighs the crime.

And then he adds he's done it again, he's done it to someone else. He's done it to a boy, he's done it to a lad, someone not even his own age, someone not even his own size. And we read, "and a boy for striking me," – meaning, "and killing a boy for striking me." This is such an excessive punishment. But this is what pride and ego does, it takes vengeance, because you have too high a view of yourself. You have too high of a view of your own self-importance and your own self-worth, and you take it out on someone else. And that's exactly what Lamech is doing here. And it would be bad enough if he kept it to himself; but instead, he pontificates this to his two wives, verse 24.

He goes even further in verse 24, he makes it even worse. He says, "If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold. I'm far more important than Cain. If someone did something to Cain, he should be punished seven times; if someone does something to me, he should be punished seventy-seven times." Do you see what an inflated view he has of himself? He's an egomaniac strutting his way to hell, thinking he's too good to be damned. No, he has a grossly inflated self-importance. There's a there is not one drop of humility in Lamech.

Listen, no one will ever enter the kingdom of God except by humility, and no one will ever grow and advance in the grace of God except by humility. John Calvin said, "The leading Christian virtue is humility." First Peter 5:5 says, "God is opposed to the proud, and He gives grace to the humble." You and I have every reason under heaven this morning to be humble, and we have not one legitimate reason to be prideful or arrogant. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, "I am what I am by the grace of God." That

needs to be on your tombstone, that needs to be on my tombstone: "I am what I am by the grace of God."

And Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, he said, "What do you have, except that you have received it?" I mean, the only thing we brought to the table was our sin, right? That's the only thing we brought to the table. Everything good about you is by the grace of God, and everything that is not good about you is your own doing. But everything good, start to finish, is the grace of God in your life; and that is why we should be the most humble people on planet earth. And we may not be the biggest church in town, but we can be the most humble church in town. And we need to understand that we have nothing except we have received it from the hand of a loving, sovereign God. Well, Lamech had zero clue about that.

Finally, I want you to see, "The contrast with Cain, the contrast with Cain," because this chapter now concludes as it started. This chapter now concludes with Adam having a relation with Eve, and conceiving and bearing a child. This is a literary device known as an *inclusio*, or inclusion, which are like brackets around a whole literary unit. It's like bookends that hold up everything in between. And so this chapter starts with Adam having relations with Eve, and it ends with Adam having relations with Eve, and it's like brackets around the hull to help us identify this unit of thought.

And so in verse 25, we read an echo really of the first two verses: "Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, which means appointing, for she said, 'God has appointed me another offspring, for Cain killed him.'" And so Eve sees Seth now as an expression of the goodness of God. She has lost a son, she is now gaining a son. And though she would love to have Abel back, God nevertheless is so good that He gives now a replacement son.

In verse 26, "To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord." And this chapter that is all about the slippery slope of sin ends with good news. It ends on a high note, that God's grace intervened in the midst of this

dysfunctional family, in the midst of this family that has made all the wrong decisions, has gone its own way, in the midst of this family that just can't get it right, there is in-house fighting and bickering and even the taking of a life and sending downstream this ungodly influence that comes all the way down six generations to Lamech; nevertheless, God is still upon His throne, and God steps into this dysfunctional family, and they begin to call upon the name of the Lord.

And this should be of encouragement to you. Maybe you've come from a non-Christian family. Maybe you didn't grow up coming to church. Maybe you had an abusive father. Maybe you had a home situation that's even difficult for you to talk about; maybe it paralyzes you, and you don't want to even pursue marriage because you've gone through this train wreck of an unhappy home. Well, I have good news for you, that God's grace intervenes into the affairs of our lives according to His own pleasure. And who is to say but how God would work in your situation and have the last word, and there would be a family around you that would rise up and call upon the name of the Lord, that you could be like a brand plucked from the fire, that you could be part of the remnant. You could be like an island of grace surrounded by oceans of guilt; but you could be on this island. It would be the goodness of God to do this in your life.

And so this should be such an encouragement to us, that God's never out of it – listen to this – that God never has to have the circumstances perfect for Him to work. In fact, God delights the most in working in the most difficult and dark situations to shine forth the glory of His grace – Did you get that? – because it brings Him greater glory, that out of nothing, God can produce that which brings glory to His name. And that is exactly what we see as we come to the very end of this chapter, a chapter that has just been marred by murder, and a chapter that has been corrupted by carnality. Here it ends on this mountain peak of, "They call upon the name of the Lord." And if you're in a family, that is a Christian family, that calls on the name of the Lord, you are in such a favored privileged place.

And sometimes we become frustrated over the smallest little friction that happens. You need to see the big picture. If you're in a house, if you're in a

home, if you're in a family in which the people call upon the name of the Lord, you are in such a rare, favored, graced, blessed place. You should rise up and give thanks to the Lord, because what do you have but what you have received from the hand of God. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, help us to learn the truths from these verses. Help us to live the truths of these verses. Help us to love the truths of these verses. Thank You for the infallible record of Your Word. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.