

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS CHAPTER 4

In this chapter we have both the world and the church in a family, in a little family, in Adam's family, and a specimen given of the character and state of both in later ages, nay, in all ages, to the end of time. As all mankind were represented in Adam, so that great distinction of mankind into saints and sinners, godly and wicked, the children of God and the children of the wicked one, was here represented in Cain and Abel, and an early instance is given of the enmity which was lately put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. We have here,

I. The birth, names, and callings, of Cain and Abel, #Ge 4:1-2.

II. Their religion, and different success in it (#Ge 4:3-4) and part of, #Ge 4:5.

III. Cain's anger at God and the reproof of him for that anger, #Ge 4:5-7.

IV. Cain's murder of his brother, and the process against him for that murder. The murder committed, #Ge 4:8. The proceedings against him.

1. His arraignment, #Ge 4:9, former part.

2. His plea, #Ge 4:9, latter part.

3. His conviction, #Ge 4:10.

4. The sentence passed upon him, #Ge 4:11-12.

5. His complaint against the sentence, #Ge 4:13-14.

6. The ratification of the sentence, #Ge 4:15.

7. The execution of the sentence, #Ge 4:15,16.

V. The family and posterity of Cain, #Ge 4:17-24.

VI. The birth of another son and grandson of Adam, #Ge 4:25-26.

Ver. 1.

Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters, #Ge 5:4. But Cain and Abel seem to have been the two eldest. Some think they were twins, and, as Esau and Jacob, the elder hated and the younger loved. Though God had cast our first parents out of paradise, he did not write them childless; but, to show that he had other blessings in store for them, he preserved to them the benefit of that first blessing of increase. Though they were sinners, nay, though they felt the humiliation and sorrow of penitents, they did not write themselves comfortless, having the promise of a Saviour to support themselves with. We have here,

I. The names of their two sons.

1. *Cain* signifies *possession*; for Eve, when she bore him, said with joy, and thankfulness, and great expectation, *I have gotten a man from the LORD*. Observe, Children are God's gifts, and he must be acknowledged in the building up of our families. It doubles and sanctifies our comfort in them when we see them coming to

us from the hand of God, who will not forsake the works and gifts of his own hand. Though Eve bore him with the sorrows that were the consequence of sin, yet she did not lose the sense of the mercy in her pains. Comforts, though alloyed, are more than we deserve; and therefore our complaints must not drown our thanksgivings. Many suppose that Eve had a conceit that this son was the promised seed, and that therefore she thus triumphed in him, as her words may be read, *I have gotten a man, the LORD, God-man*. If so, she was wretchedly mistaken, as Samuel, when he said, *Surely the LORD'S anointed is before me*, #1Sa 16:6. When children are born, who can foresee what they will prove? He that was thought to be *a man, the LORD*, or at least a man from the Lord, and for his service as priest of the family, became an enemy to the Lord. The less we expect from creatures, the more tolerable will disappointments be.

2. *Abel* signifies *vanity*. When she thought she had obtained the promised seed in Cain, she was so taken up with that possession that another son was as vanity to her. To those who have an interest in Christ, and make him their all, other things are as nothing at all. It intimates likewise that the longer we live in this world the more we may see of the vanity of it. What, at first, we are fond of, as a possession, afterwards we see cause to be dead to, as a trifle. The name given to this son is put upon the whole race, #Ps 39:5. Every man is at his best estate *Abel--vanity*. Let us labour to see both ourselves and others so. *Childhood and youth are vanity*.

II. The employments of Cain and Abel. Observe,

1. They both had a calling. Though they were heirs apparent to the world, their birth noble and their possessions large, yet they were not brought up in idleness. God gave their father a calling, even in innocency, and he gave them one. Note, It is the will of God that we should every one of us have something to do in this world. Parents ought to bring up their children to business.

"Give them a Bible and a calling (said good Mr. Dod), and God be with them."
2. Their employments were different, that they might trade and exchange with one another, as there was occasion. The members of the body politic have need one of another, and mutual love is helped by mutual commerce.
3. Their employments belonged to the husbandman's calling, their father's profession--a needful calling, for *the king himself is served of the field*, but a laborious calling, which required constant care and attendance. It is now looked upon as a mean calling; the *poor of the land* serve for *vine-dressers and husbandmen*, #Jer 52:16. But the calling was far from being a dishonour to them; rather, they were an honour to it.
4. It should seem, by the order of the story, that Abel, though the younger brother, yet entered first into his calling, and probably his example drew in Cain.
5. Abel chose that employment which most befriended contemplation and devotion, for to these a pastoral life has been looked upon as being peculiarly favourable. Moses and David kept sheep, and in their solitudes conversed with God. Note, That calling or condition of life is best for us, and to be chosen by us, which is best for our souls, that which least exposes us to sin and gives us most opportunity of serving and enjoying God.

Here we have,

I. The devotions of Cain and Abel. *In process of time*, when they had made some improvement in their respective callings (Heb. *At the end of days*, either at the end of the year, when they kept their feast of in-gathering or perhaps an annual fast in remembrance of the fall, or at the end of the days of the week, the seventh day, which was the sabbath)--at some set time, Cain and Abel brought to Adam, as the priest of the family, each of them *an offering to the Lord*, for the doing of which we have reason to think there was a divine appointment given to Adam, as a token of God's favour to him and his thoughts of love towards him and his, notwithstanding their apostasy. God would thus try Adam's faith in the promise and his obedience to the remedial law; he would thus settle a correspondence again between heaven and earth, and give *shadows of good things to come*. Observe here,

1. That the religious worship of God is no novel invention, but an ancient institution. It is that which was *from the beginning* (#1Jo 1:1); it is the *good old way*, #Jer 6:16. The city of our God is indeed that joyous city whose antiquity is of ancient days, #Isa 23:7. Truth got the start of error, and piety of profaneness.
2. That is a good thing for children to be well taught when they are young, and trained up betimes in religious services, that when they come to be capable of acting for themselves they may, of their own accord, *bring an offering to God*. In this *nurture of the Lord* parents must bring up their children, #Ge 18:19 Eph 6:4.
3. That we should every one of us honour God with what we have, according as he has prospered us. According as their employments and possessions were, so they brought their offering. See #1Co 16:1,2. *Our merchandize and our hire*, whatever they are, must be *holiness to the Lord*, #Isa 23:18. He must have his dues of it in works of piety and charity, the support of religion and the relief of the poor. Thus we must now bring our offering with an upright heart; *and with such sacrifices God is well pleased*.
4. That hypocrites and evil doers may be found going as far as the best of God's people in the external services of religion. Cain brought an offering with Abel; nay, Cain's offering is mentioned first, as if he were the more forward of the two. A hypocrite may possibly hear as many sermons, say as many prayers, and give as much alms, as a good Christian, and yet, for want of sincerity, come short of acceptance with God. The Pharisee and the publican went to the temple to pray, #Lu 18:10.

II. The different success of their devotions. That which is to be aimed at in all acts of religion is God's acceptance: we speed well if we attain this, but in vain do we worship if we miss of it, #2Co 5:9. Perhaps, to a bystander, the sacrifices of Cain and Abel would have seemed both alike good. Adam accepted them both, but God, *who sees not as man sees*, did not. God had *respect to Abel and to his offering*, and showed his acceptance of it, probably by fire from heaven; but to *Cain and his offering he had not respect*. We are sure there was a good reason for this difference; the Governor of the world, though an absolute sovereign, does not act arbitrarily in dispensing his smiles and frowns.

1. There was a difference in the characters of the persons offering. Cain was a wicked man, led a bad life, under the reigning power of the world and the flesh; and therefore his sacrifice was an *abomination to the Lord* (#Pr 15:8), *a vain oblation*, #Isa 1:13. God had no respect to Cain himself, and therefore no respect to his offering, as the manner of the expression intimates. But Abel was a righteous man; he is called *righteous Abel* (#Mt 23:35); his heart was upright and his life was pious; he was one of those whom God's countenance beholds (#Ps 11:7) and whose prayer is therefore

his delight, **#Pr 15:8**. God had respect to him as a holy man, and therefore to his offering as a holy offering. The tree must be good, else the fruit cannot be pleasing to the heart-searching God.

2. There was a difference in the offerings they brought. It is expressly said (**#Heb 11:4**), Abel's was a *more excellent sacrifice* than Cain's: either

(1.) In the nature of it. Cain's was only a sacrifice of acknowledgment offered to the Creator; the meat-offerings of the fruit of the ground were no more, and, for aught I know, they might be offered in innocency. But Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, the blood whereof was shed in order to remission, thereby owning himself a sinner, deprecating God's wrath, and imploring his favour in a Mediator. Or,

(2.) In the qualities of the offering. Cain brought *of the fruit of the ground*, any thing that came next to hand, what he had not occasion for himself or what was not marketable. But Abel was curious in the choice of his offering: not the lame, nor the lean, nor the refuse, but the *firstlings of the flock*--the best he had, *and the fat thereof*--the best of those best. Hence the Hebrew doctors give it for a general rule that every thing that is for the name of the good God must be the goodliest and best. It is fit that he who is the first and best should have the first and best of our time, strength, and service.

3. The great difference was this, that Abel offered in faith, and Cain did not. There was a difference in the principle upon which they went. Abel offered with an eye to God's will as his rule, and God's glory as his end, and in dependence upon the promise of a Redeemer; but Cain did what he did only for company's sake, or to save his credit, not in faith, and so it turned into sin to him. Abel was a penitent believer, like the publican that went away justified: Cain was proud; his confidence was within himself; he was like the Pharisee who glorified himself, but was not so much as justified before God.

III. Cain's displeasure at the difference God made between his sacrifice and Abel's. Cain was very wroth, which presently appeared in his very looks, for his countenance fell, which bespeaks not so much his grief and discontent as his malice and rage. His sullen churlish countenance, and a down look, betrayed his passionate resentments: he carried ill-nature in his face, and *the show of his countenance witnessed against him*. This anger bespeaks,

1. His enmity to God, and the indignation he had conceived against him for making such a difference between his offering and his brother's. He should have been angry at himself for his own infidelity and hypocrisy, by which he had forfeited God's acceptance; and his countenance should have fallen in repentance and holy shame, as the publican's, who *would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven*, **#Lu 18:13**. But, instead of this, he flies out against God, as if he were partial and unfair in distributing his smiles and frowns, and as if he had done him a deal of wrong. Note, It is a certain sign of a proud heart to quarrel with those rebukes which we have, by our own sin, brought upon ourselves. *The foolishness of man perverteth his way*, and then, to make bad worse, *his heart fretteth against the Lord*, **#Pr 19:3**.

2. His envy of his brother, who had the honour to be publicly owned. Though his brother had no thought of having any slur put upon him, nor did now insult over him to provoke him, yet he conceived a hatred of him as an enemy, or, which is equivalent, a rival. Note:

(1.) It is common for those who have rendered themselves unworthy of God's favour by

their presumptuous sins to have indignation against those who are dignified and distinguished by it. The Pharisees walked in this way of Cain, when they *neither entered into the kingdom of God themselves nor suffered those that were entering to go in*, #Lu 11:52. Their eye is evil, because their master's eye and the eye of their fellow-servants are good.

(2.) Envy is a sin that commonly carries with it both its own discovery, in the paleness of the looks, and its own punishment, in the rottenness of the bones.

Ver. 6.

God is here reasoning with Cain, to convince him of the sin and folly of his anger and discontent, and to bring him into a good temper again, that further mischief might be prevented. It is an instance of God's patience and condescending goodness that he would deal thus tenderly with so bad a man, in so bad an affair. *He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* Thus the father of the prodigal argued the case with the elder son (#Lu 15:28, &c.), and God with those Israelites who said, *The way of the Lord is not equal*, #Eze 18:25.

I. God puts Cain himself upon enquiring into the cause of his discontent, and considering whether it were indeed a just cause: *Why is thy countenance fallen?* Observe,

1. That God takes notice of all our sinful passions and discontents. There is not an angry look, an envious look, nor a fretful look, that escapes his observing eye.
2. That most of our sinful heats and disquietudes would soon vanish before a strict and impartial enquiry into the cause of them.

"Why am I wroth? Is there a real cause, a just cause, a proportionable cause for it? Why am I so soon angry? Why so very angry, and so implacable?"

II. To reduce Cain to his right mind again, it is here made evident to him,

1. That he had no reason to be angry at God, for that he had proceeded according to the settled and invariable rules of government suited to a state of probation. He sets before men life and death, the blessing and the curse, and then *renders to them according to their works*, and differences them according as they difference themselves--so shall their doom be. The rules are just, and therefore his ways, according to those rules, must needs be equal, and he will be justified when he speaks.

(1.) God sets before Cain life and a blessing:

"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? No doubt thou shalt, nay, thou knowest thou shalt;" either,

[1.]

"If thou hadst done well, as thy brother did, thou shouldest have been accepted, as he was."

God is no respecter of persons, hates nothing that he had made, denies his favour to none but those who have forfeited it, and is an enemy to none but those who by sin have made him their enemy: so that if we come short of acceptance with him we must thank

ourselves, the fault is wholly our own; if we had done our duty, we should not have missed of his mercy. This will justify God in the destruction of sinners, and will aggravate their ruin; there is not a damned sinner in hell, but, if he had done well, as he might have done, had been a glorious saint in heaven. Every mouth will shortly be stopped with this. Or,

[2.]

"If now thou do well, if thou repent of thy sin, reform thy heart and life, and bring thy sacrifice in a better manner, if thou not only do that which is good but do it well, thou shalt yet be accepted, thy sin shall be pardoned, thy comfort and honour restored, and all shall be well."

See here the effect of a Mediator's interposal between God and man; we do not stand upon the footing of the first covenant, which left no room for repentance, but God had come upon new terms with us. Though we have offended, if we repent and return, we shall find mercy. See how early the gospel was preached, and the benefit of it here offered even to one of the chief of sinners.

(2.) He sets before him death and a curse: But *if not well*, that is,

"Seeing thou didst not do well, didst not offer in faith and in a right manner, *sin lies at the door*,"

that is,

"sin was imputed to thee, and thou wast frowned upon and rejected as a sinner. So high a charge had not been laid at thy door, if thou hadst not brought it upon thyself, by not doing well."

Or, as it is commonly taken,

"If now thou wilt not do well, if thou persist in this wrath, and, instead of humbling thyself before God, harden thyself against him, *sin lies at the door*,"

that is,

[1.] Further sin.

"Now that anger is in thy heart, murder is at the door."

The way of sin is down-hill, and men go from bad to worse. Those who do not sacrifice well, but are careless and remiss in their devotion to God, expose themselves to the worst temptations; and perhaps the most scandalous sin lies at the door. Those who do not keep God's ordinances are in danger of committing all abominations, [#Le 18:30](#). Or,

[2.] The punishment of sin. So near akin are sin and punishment that the same word in Hebrew signifies both. If sin be harboured in the house, the curse waits at the door, like a bailiff, ready to arrest the sinner whenever he looks out. It lies as if it slept, but it lies at the door where it will be soon awaked, and then it will appear that the damnation slumbered not. Sin will *find thee out*, [#Nu 32:23](#). Yet some choose to understand this also as an intimation of mercy.

"If thou doest not well, *sin* (that is, *the sin-offering*), lies at the door, and thou mayest take the benefit of it."

The same word signifies *sin* and a *sacrifice for sin*.

"Though thou hast not done well, yet do not despair; the remedy is at hand; the propitiation is not far to seek; lay hold on it, and the iniquity of thy holy things shall be forgiven thee."

Christ, the great sin-offering, is said to *stand at the door*, [#Re 3:20](#). And those well deserve to perish in their sins that will not go to the door for an interest in the sin-offering. All this considered, Cain had no reason to be angry at God, but at himself only.

2. That he had no reason to be angry at his brother:

"Unto thee shall be his desire, he shall continue his respect to thee as an elder brother, and thou, as the first-born, shalt rule over him as much as ever."

God's acceptance of Abel's offering did not transfer the birth-right to him (which Cain was jealous of), nor put upon him that excellency of dignity and of power which is said to belong to it, [#Ge 49:3](#). God did not so intend it; Abel did not so interpret it; there was no danger of its being improved to Cain's prejudice; why then should he be so much exasperated? Observe here,

(1.) That the difference which God's grace makes does not alter the distinctions which God's providence makes, but preserves them, and obliges us to do the duty which results from them: believing servants must be obedient to unbelieving masters. Dominion is not founded in grace, nor will religion warrant disloyalty or disrespect in any relation.

(2.) That the jealousies which civil powers have sometimes conceived of the true worshippers of God as dangerous to their government, enemies to Caesar, and hurtful to kings and provinces (on which suspicion persecutors have grounded their rage against them) are very unjust and unreasonable. Whatever may be the case with some who call themselves Christians, it is certain that *Christians indeed* are the best subjects, and the quiet in the land; their desire is towards their governors, and these shall rule over them.

Ver. 8.

We have here the progress of Cain's anger, and the issue of it in Abel's murder, which may be considered two ways:--

I. As Cain's sin; and a scarlet, crimson, sin it was, a sin of the first magnitude, a sin against the light and law of nature, and which the consciences even of bad men have startled at. See in it,

1. The sad effects of sin's entrance into the world and into the hearts of men. See what a root of bitterness the corrupt nature is, which bears this gall and wormwood. Adam's eating forbidden fruit seemed but a little sin, but it opened the door to the greatest.
2. A fruit of the enmity which is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. As Abel leads the van in the *noble army of martyrs* ([#Mt 23:35](#)), so Cain stand in the front of the ignoble army of persecutors, [#Jude 1.11](#). So early did he that was after the flesh *persecute him that was after the Spirit; and so it is now*, more or less ([#Ga 4:29](#)), and so it will be till the war shall end in the eternal salvation of all the saints and the eternal perdition of all that hate them.

3. See also what comes of *envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness*; if they be indulged and cherished in the soul, they are in danger of involving men in the horrid guilt of murder itself. Rash anger is heart-murder, #Mt 5:21,22. Much more is malice so; he that hates his brother is already a murderer before God; and, if God leave him to himself, he wants nothing but an opportunity to render him a murderer before the world. Many were the aggravations of Cain's sin.

(1.) It was his brother, his own brother, that he murdered, his own mother's son (#Ps 50:20), whom he ought to have loved, his younger brother, whom he ought to have protected.

(2.) He was a good brother, one who had never done him any wrong, nor given him the least provocation in word or deed, but one whose desire had been always towards him, and who had been, in all instances, dutiful and respectful to him.

(3.) He had fair warning given him, before, of this. God himself had told him what would come of it, yet he persisted in his barbarous design.

(4.) It should seem that he covered it with a show of friendship and kindness: *He talked with Abel his brother*, freely and familiarly, lest Abel should suspect danger, and keep out of his reach. Thus Joab kissed Abner, and then killed him. Thus Absalom feasted his brother Amnon and then killed him. According to the Septuagint [a Greek version of the Old Testament, supposed to have been translated by seventy-two Jews, at the desire of Ptolemy Philadelphus, above 200 years before Christ], Cain said to Abel, *Let us go into the field*; if so, we are sure Abel did not understand it (according to the modern sense) as a challenge, else he would not have accepted it, but as a brotherly invitation to go together to their work. The Chaldee paraphrast adds that Cain, when they were in discourse in the field, maintained that there was no judgment to come, no future state, no rewards and punishments in the other world, and that when Abel spoke in defence of the truth Cain took that occasion to fall upon him. However,

(5.) That which the scripture tells us was the reason why he slew him was a sufficient aggravation of the murder; it was *because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous*, so that herein he showed himself to be *of that wicked one* (#1Jo 3:12), a *child of the devil*, as being *an enemy to all righteousness*, even in his own brother, and, in this, employed immediately by the destroyer. Nay,

(6.) In killing his brother, he directly struck at God himself; for God's accepting Abel was the provocation pretended, and for this very reason he hated Abel, because God loved him.

(7.) The murder of Abel was the more inhuman because there were now so few men in the world to replenish it. The life of a man is precious at any time; but it was in a special manner precious now, and could ill be spared.

II. As Abel's suffering. Death reigned ever since Adam sinned, but we read not of any taken captive by him till now; and now, 1. The first that dies is a saint, one that was accepted and beloved of God, to show that, though the promised seed was so far to destroy him that had the power of death as to save believers from its sting, yet still they should be exposed to its stroke. The first that went to the grave went to heaven. God would secure to himself the first-fruits, the first-born to the dead, that first opened the womb into another world. Let this take off the terror of death, that it was betimes the lot of God's chosen, which alters the property of it. Nay,

2. The first that dies is a martyr, and dies for his religion; and of such it may more truly be said than of soldiers that they die on the bed of honour. Abel's death has not only no curse in it, but it has a crown in it; so admirably well is the property of death altered that it is not only rendered innocent and inoffensive to those that die in Christ, but honourable and glorious to those that die for him. Let us not think it strange concerning the fiery trial, nor shrink if we be called to resist unto blood; for we know there is a crown of life for all that are faithful unto death.

Ver. 9.

We have here a full account of the trial and condemnation of the first murderer. Civil courts of judicature not being yet erected for this purpose, as they were afterwards (#Ge 9:6), God himself sits Judge; for he is the God to whom vengeance belongs, and who will be sure to make inquisition for blood, especially the blood of saints. Observe,

I. The arraignment of Cain: *The Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?* Some think Cain was thus examined the next sabbath after the murder was committed, when *the sons of God came*, as usual, *to present themselves before the Lord*, in a religious assembly, and Abel was missing, whose place did not use to be empty; for the God of heaven takes notice who is present at and who is absent from public ordinances. Cain is asked, not only because there is just cause to suspect him, he having discovered a malice against Abel and having been last with him, but because God knew him to be guilty; yet he asks him, that he may draw from him a confession of his crime, for those who would be justified before God must accuse themselves, and the penitent will do so.

II. Cain's plea: he pleads *not guilty*, and adds rebellion to his sin. For,

1. He endeavours to cover a deliberate murder with a deliberate lie: *I know not*. He knew well enough what had become of Abel, and yet had the impudence to deny it. Thus, in Cain, the devil was both a murderer and a liar from the beginning. See how sinners' minds are blinded, and their hearts hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: those are strangely blind that think it possible to conceal their sins from a God that sees all, and those are strangely hard that think it desirable to conceal them from a God who pardons those only that confess.
2. He impudently charges his Judge with folly and injustice, in putting this question to him: *Am I my brother's keeper?* He should have humbled himself, and have said, *Am not I my brother's murderer?* But he flies in the face of God himself, as if he had asked him an impertinent question, to which he was no way obliged to give an answer:

"Am I my brother's keeper? Surely he is old enough to take care of himself, nor did I ever take any charge of him."

Some think he reflects on God and his providence, as if he had said,

"Art not thou his keeper? If he be missing, on thee be the blame, and not on me, who never undertook to keep him."

Note, A charitable concern for our brethren, as their keepers, is a great duty, which is strictly required of us, but is generally neglected by us. Those who are unconcerned in the affairs of their brethren, and take no care, when they have opportunity, to prevent their hurt in their bodies, goods, or good name, especially in their souls, do, in effect, speak

Cain's language. See [#Le 19:17](#); [Php 2:4](#).

III. The conviction of Cain, [#Ge 4:10](#). God gave no direct answer to his question, but rejected his plea as false and frivolous:

"What hast thou done? Thou makest a light matter of it; but hast thou considered what an evil thing it is, how deep the stain, how heavy the burden, of this guilt is? Thou thinkest to conceal it, but it is to no purpose, the evidence against thee is clear and incontestable: The voice of thy brother's blood cries."

He speaks as if the blood itself were both witness and prosecutor, because God's own knowledge testified against him and God's own justice demanded satisfaction. Observe here,

1. Murder is a crying sin, none more so. Blood calls for blood, the blood of the murdered for the blood of the murderer; it cries in the dying words of Zechariah ([#2Ch 24:22](#)), *The Lord look upon it and require it*; or in those of the souls under the altar ([#Re 6:10](#)), *How long, Lord, holy, and true? The patient sufferers cried for pardon (Father, forgive them)*, but their blood cries for vengeance. Though they hold their peace, their blood has a loud and constant cry, to which the ear of the righteous God is always open.
2. The blood is said to cry from the ground, the earth, which is said *to open her mouth to receive his brother's blood from his hand*, [#Ge 4:11](#). The earth did, as it were, blush to see her own face stained with such blood, and therefore opened her mouth to hide that which she could no longer hinder. When the heaven revealed Cain's iniquity, the earth also rose up against him ([#Job 20:27](#)), and groaned on being thus made *subject to vanity*, [#Ro 8:20,22](#). Cain, it is likely, buried the blood and the body, to conceal his crime; but

"murder will out."

He did not bury them so deep but the cry of them reached heaven.

3. In the original the word is plural, *thy brother's bloods*, not only his blood, but the blood of all those that might have descended from him; or the blood of all the seed of the woman, who should, in like manner, seal the truth with their blood. Christ puts all on one score ([#Mt 23:35](#)); or because account was kept of every drop of blood shed. How well is it for us that the blood of Christ speaks better things than that of Abel! [#Heb 12:24](#). Abel's blood cried for vengeance, Christ's blood cries for pardon.

IV. The sentence passed upon Cain: *And now art thou cursed from the earth*, [#Ge 4:11](#). Observe here,

1. He is cursed, separated to all evil, laid under the wrath of God, as it is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, [#Ro 1:18](#). Who knows the extent and weight of a divine curse, how far it reaches, how deep it pierces? God's pronouncing a man cursed makes him so; for those whom he curses are cursed indeed. The curse for Adam's disobedience terminated on the ground: *Cursed is the ground for thy sake*; but that for Cain's rebellion fell immediately upon himself: *Thou art cursed*; for God had mercy in store for Adam, but none for Cain. We have all deserved this curse, and it is only in Christ that believers are saved from it and inherit the blessing, [#Ga 3:10,13](#).

2. He is cursed from the earth. Thence the cry came up to God, thence the curse came up to Cain. God could have taken vengeance by an immediate stroke from heaven, by the sword of an angel, or by a thunderbolt; but he chose to make the earth the avenger of blood, to continue him upon the earth, and not immediately to cut him off, and yet to make even this his curse. The earth is always near us, we cannot fly from it; so that, if this is made the executioner of divine wrath, our punishment is unavoidable: it is sin, that is, the punishment of sin, lying at the door. Cain found his punishment where he chose his portion and set his heart. Two things we expect from the earth, and by this curse both are denied to Cain and taken from him: *sustenance and settlement*.

(1.) Sustenance out of the earth is here withheld from him. It is a curse upon him in his enjoyments, and particularly in his calling: *When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee its strength*. Note, Every creature is to us what God makes it, a comfort or a cross, a blessing or a curse. If the earth yield not her strength to us, we must therein acknowledge God's righteousness; for we have not yielded our strength to him. The ground was cursed before to Adam, but it was now doubly cursed to Cain. That part of it which fell to his share, and of which he had the occupation, was made unfruitful and uncomfortable to him by the blood of Abel. Note, The wickedness of the wicked brings a curse upon all they do and all they have (#De 28:15), &c., and this curse embitters all they have and disappoints them in all they do.

(2.) Settlement on the earth is here denied him: *A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth*. By this he was condemned,

[1.] To perpetual disgrace and reproach among men. It should be ever looked upon as a scandalous thing to harbour him, converse with him, or show him any countenance. And justly was a man that had divested himself of all humanity abhorred and abandoned by all mankind, and made infamous.

[2.] To perpetual disquietude and horror in his own mind. His own guilty conscience should haunt him wherever he went, and make him *Magor-missabib, a terror round about*. What rest can those find, what settlement, that carry their own disturbance with them in their bosoms wherever they go? Those must needs be fugitives that are thus tossed. There is not a more restless fugitive upon earth than he that is continually pursued by his own guilt, nor a viler vagabond than he that is at the beck of his own lusts.

This was the sentence passed upon Cain; and even in this there was mercy mixed, inasmuch as he was not immediately cut off, but had space given him to repent; for God is long suffering us-ward us, not willing that any should perish.

Ver. 13.

We have here a further account of the proceedings against Cain.

I. Here is Cain's complaint of the sentence passed upon him, as hard and severe. Some make him to speak the language of despair, and read it, *My iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven*; and so what he says is a reproach and affront to the mercy of God, which those only shall have the benefit of that hope in it. There is forgiveness with the God of pardons for the greatest sins and sinners; but those forfeit it who despair of it. Just now Cain made nothing of his sin, but now he is in the other extreme: Satan drives his vassals from presumption to despair. We cannot think too ill of sin, provided we do not think it unpardonable. But Cain seems rather to speak the language of indignation: *My punishment is greater than I can bear*; and so what he says is a reproach and affront to

the justice of God, and a complaint, not of the greatness of his sin, but of the extremity of his punishment, as if this were disproportionable to his merits. Instead of justifying God in the sentence, he condemns him, not accepting the punishment of his iniquity, but quarrelling with it. Note, Impenitent proud hearts are therefore not reclaimed by God's rebukes because they think themselves wronged by them; and it is an evidence of great hardness to be more concerned about our sufferings than about our sins. Pharaoh's care was concerning this death only, not this sin (#Ex 10:17); so was Cain's here. He is a living man, and yet complains of the punishment of his sin, #La 3:39. He thinks himself rigorously dealt with when really he is favourably treated; and he cries out of wrong when he has more reason to wonder that he is out of hell. Woe unto him that thus strives with his Maker, and enters into judgment with his Judge. Now, to justify this complaint, Cain descants upon the sentence.

1. He sees himself excluded by it from the favour of his God, and concludes that, being cursed, he is hidden from God's face, which is indeed the true nature of God's curse; damned sinners find it so, to whom it is said, *Depart from me you cursed*. Those are cursed indeed that are forever shut out from God's love and care and from all hopes of his grace.
2. He sees himself expelled from all the comforts of this life, and concludes that, being a fugitive, he is, in effect, *driven out this day from the face of the earth*. As good have no place on earth as not have a settled place. Better rest in the grave than not rest at all.
3. He sees himself excommunicated by it, and cut off from the church, and forbidden to attend on public ordinances. His hands being full of blood, he must *bring no more vain oblations*, #Isa 1:13,15. Perhaps this he means when he complains that he is *driven out from the face of the earth*; for being shut out of the church, which none had yet deserted, he was *hidden from God's face*, being not admitted to come *with the sons of God to present himself before the Lord*.
4. He sees himself exposed by it to the hatred and ill-will of all mankind: *It shall come to pass that every one that finds me shall slay me*. Wherever he wanders, he goes in peril of his life, at least he thinks so; and, like a man in debt, thinks every one he meets a bailiff. There were none alive but his near relations; yet even of them he is justly afraid who had himself been so barbarous to his brother. Some read it, *Whatsoever finds me shall slay me*; not only,

"Whosoever among men," but, "Whatsoever among all the creatures."

Seeing himself thrown out of God's protection, he sees the whole creation armed against him. Note, Unpardoned guilt fills men with continual terrors, #Pr 28:1; Job 15:20,21; Ps 53:5. It is better to fear and not sin than to sin and then fear. Dr. Lightfoot thinks this word of Cain should be read as a wish: *Now, therefore, let it be that any that find me may kill me*. Being bitter in soul, he *longs for death, but it comes not* (#Job 3:20-22), as those under spiritual torments do, #Re 9:5,6.

II. Here is God's confirmation of the sentence; for when he judges he will overcome, #Ge 4:15. Observe,

1. How Cain is protected in wrath by this declaration, notified, we may suppose, to all that little world which was then in being: *Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold*, because thereby the sentence he was under (that he should be a fugitive and a vagabond) would be defeated. Condemned prisoners are under

the special protection of the law; those that are appointed sacrifices to public justice must not be sacrificed to private revenge. God having said in Cain's case, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay*, it would have been a daring usurpation for any man to take the sword out of God's hand, a contempt put upon an express declaration of God's mind, and therefore avenged seven fold. Note, God has wise and holy ends in protecting and prolonging the lives even of very wicked men. God deals with some according to that prayer, *Slay them not, lest my people forget; scatter them by thy power*, #Ps 59:11. Had Cain been slain immediately, he would have been forgotten (#Ec 8:10); but now he lives a more fearful and lasting monument of God's justice, hanged in chains, as it were.

2. How he is marked in wrath: *The Lord set a mark upon Cain*, to distinguish him from the rest of mankind and to notify that he was the man that murdered his brother, whom nobody must hurt, but every body must hoot at. God stigmatized him (as some malefactors are burnt in the cheek), and put upon him such a visible and indelible mark of infamy and disgrace as would make all wise people shun him, so that he could not be otherwise than a fugitive and a vagabond, and the off-scouring of all things.

Ver. 16.

We have here a further account of Cain, and what became of him after he was rejected of God.

- I. He tamely submitted to that part of his sentence by which he was hidden from God's face; for (#Ge 4:16) *he went out from the presence of the Lord*, that is, he willingly renounced God and religion, and was content to forego its privileges, so that he might not be under its precepts. He forsook Adam's family and altar, and cast off all pretensions to the fear of God, and never came among good people, nor attended on God's ordinances, any more. Note, Hypocritical professors, that have dissembled and trifled with God Almighty, are justly left to themselves, to do something that is grossly scandalous, and so to throw off that form of godliness to which they have been a reproach, and under colour of which they have denied the power of it. Cain went out now from the presence of the Lord, and we never find that he came into it again, to his comfort. Hell is *destruction from the presence of the Lord*, #2Th 1:9. It is a perpetual banishment from the fountain of all good. This is the choice of sinners; and so shall their doom be, to their eternal confusion.

- II. He endeavoured to confront that part of the sentence by which he was made a fugitive and a vagabond; for,

1. He chose his land. He went and *dwelt on the east of Eden*, somewhere distant from the place where Adam and his religious family resided, distinguishing himself and his accursed generation from the holy seed, his camp from the *camp of the saints and the beloved city*, #Re 20:9. On the east of Eden, the cherubim were, with the flaming sword, #Ge 3:24. There he chose his lot, as if to defy the terrors of the Lord. But his attempt to settle was in vain; for the land he dwelt in was to him *the land of Nod* (that is, of *shaking* or *trembling*), because of the continual restlessness and uneasiness of his own spirit. Note, Those that depart from God cannot find rest any where else. After Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, he never rested. Those that shut themselves out of heaven abandon themselves to a perpetual trembling.

"Return therefore to thy rest, O my soul, to thy rest in God; else thou art for ever restless."

2. He built a city for a habitation, **#Ge 4:17**. *He was building a city*, so some read it, ever building it, but, a curse being upon him and the work of his hands, he could not finish it. Or, as we read it, he *built a city*, in token of a fixed separation from the church of God, to which he had no thoughts of ever returning. This city was to be the head-quarters of the apostasy. Observe here,

(1.) Cain's defiance of the divine sentence. God said he should be a *fugitive and a vagabond*. Had he repented and humbled himself, this curse might have been turned into a blessing, as that of the tribe of Levi was, that they should be *divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel*; but his impenitent proud heart walking contrary to God, and resolving to fix in spite of heaven, that which might have been a blessing was turned into a curse.

(2.) See what was Cain's choice, after he had forsaken God; he pitched upon a settlement in this world, as his rest for ever. Those who looked for the heavenly city chose, while on earth, to dwell in tabernacles; but Cain, as one that minded not *that* city, built himself one on earth. Those that are cursed of God are apt to seek their settlement and satisfaction here below, **#Ps 17:14**.

(3.) See what method Cain took to defend himself against the terrors with which he was perpetually haunted. He undertook this building, to divert his thoughts from the consideration of his own misery, and to drown the clamours of a guilty conscience with the noise of axes and hammers. Thus many baffle their convictions by thrusting themselves into a hurry of worldly business.

(4.) See how wicked people often get the start of God's people, and out-go them in outward prosperity. Cain and his cursed race dwell in a city, while Adam and his blessed family dwell in tents. We cannot judge of *love or hatred by all that is before us*, **#Ec 9:1,2**.

3. His family also was built up. Here is an account of his posterity, at least the heirs of his family, for seven generations. His son was *Enoch*, of the same name, but not of the same character, with that holy man that *walked with God*, **#Ge 5:22**. Good men and bad may bear the same names: but God can distinguish between Judas Iscariot and Judas *not* Iscariot, **#Joh 14:22**. The names of more of his posterity are mentioned, and but just mentioned; not as those of the holy seed (Genesis 5), where we have three verses concerning each, whereas here we have three or four in one verse. They are numbered in haste, as not valued or delighted in, in comparison with God's chosen.

Ver. 19.

We have here some particulars concerning Lamech, the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain. Observe,

I. His marrying two wives. It was one of the degenerate race of Cain who first transgressed that original law of marriage that two only should be one flesh. Hitherto one man had but one wife at a time; but Lamech took two. *From the beginning it was not so*. **#Mal 2:15; Mt 19:5**. See here,

1. Those who desert God's church and ordinances lay themselves open to all manner of temptation.
2. When a bad custom is begun by bad men sometimes men of better characters are, through unweariness, drawn in to follow them. Jacob, David, and many others, who were otherwise good men, were afterwards ensnared in this sin which Lamech begun.

II. His happiness in his children, notwithstanding this. Though he sinned, in marrying two wives, yet he was blessed with children by both, and those such as lived to be famous in their generation, not for their piety, no mention is made of this (for aught that appears they were the heathen of that age), but for their ingenuity. They were not only themselves men of business, but men that were serviceable to the world, and eminent for the invention, or at least the improvement, of some useful arts.

1. Jabal was a famous shepherd; he delighted much in keeping cattle himself, and was so happy in devising methods of doing it to the best advantage, and instructing others in them, that the shepherds of those times, nay, the shepherds of after-times, called him *father*; or perhaps, his children after him being brought up to the same employment, the family was a family of shepherds.

2. Jubal was a famous musician, and particularly an organist, and the first that gave rules for the noble art or science of music. When Jabal had set them in a way to be rich, Jubal put them in a way to be merry. Those that spend their days in wealth will not be without the timbrel and harp, #Job 21:12,13. From his name, *Jubal*, probably the jubilee-trumpet was so called; for the best music was that which proclaimed liberty and redemption. Jabal was their Pan and Jubal their Apollo.

3. Tubal Cain was a famous smith, who greatly improved the art of working in brass and iron, for the service both of war and husbandry. He was their Vulcan. See here,

(1.) That worldly things are the only things that carnal wicked people set their hearts upon and are most ingenious and industrious about. So it was with this impious race of cursed Cain. Here were a father of shepherds and a father of musicians, but not a father of the faithful. Here was one to teach in brass and iron, but none to teach the good knowledge of the Lord. Here were devices how to be rich, and how to be mighty, and how to be merry, but nothing of God, nor of his fear and service, among them. Present things fill the heads of most people.

(2.) That even those who are destitute of the knowledge and grace of God may be endued with many excellent and useful accomplishments, which may make them famous and serviceable in their generation. Common gifts are given to bad men, while God chooses to himself the foolish things of the world.

Ver. 23.

By this speech of Lamech, which is here recorded, and probably was much talked of in those times, he further appears to have been a wicked man, as Cain's accursed race generally were. Observe,

1. How haughtily and imperiously he speaks to his wives, as one that expected a mighty regard and observance: *Hear my voice, you wives of Lamech*. No marvel that he who had broken one law of marriage, by taking two wives, broke another, which obliged him to be kind and tender to those he had taken, and to give honour to the wife as to the weaker vessel. Those are not always the most careful to do their own duty that are highest in their demands of respect from others, and most frequent in calling upon their relations to know their place and do their duty.

2. How bloody and barbarous he was to all about him: *I have slain*, or (as it is in the margin) *I would slay a man in my wound, and a young man in my hurt*. He owns

himself a man of a fierce and cruel disposition, that would lay about him without mercy, and kill all that stood in his way; be it a man, or a young man, nay, though he himself were in danger to be wounded and hurt in the conflict. Some think, because (#Ge 4:24) he compares himself with Cain, that he had murdered some of the holy seed, the true worshippers of God, and that he acknowledged this to be the wounding of his conscience and the hurt of his soul; and yet that, like Cain, he continued impenitent, trembling and yet proud. Or his wives, knowing what manner of spirit he was of, how apt both to give and to resent provocation, were afraid lest somebody or other would be the death of him.

"Never fear," says he, "I defy any man to set upon me; whosoever does, let me alone to make my part good with him; I will slay him, be he a man or a young man."

Note, It is a common thing for fierce and bloody men to *glory in their shame* (#Php 3:19), as if it were both their safety and their honour that they care not how many lives are sacrificed to their angry resentments, nor how much they are hated, provided they may be feared. *Oderint, dum metuant--Let them hate, provided they fear.* How impiously he presumes even upon God's protection in his wicked way, #Ge 4:24. He had heard that *Cain should be avenged seven-fold* (#Ge 4:15), that is, that if any man should dare to kill Cain he should be severely reckoned with and punished for so doing, though Cain deserved to die a thousand deaths for the murder of his brother, and hence he infers that if any one should kill him for the murders he had committed God would much more avenge his death. As if the special care God took to prolong and secure the life of Cain, for special reasons peculiar to his case (and indeed for his sorer punishment, as the beings of the damned are continued) were designed as a protection to all murderers. Thus Lamech perversely argues,

"If God provided for the safety of Cain, much more for mine, who, though I have slain many, yet never slew my own brother, and upon no provocation, as he did."

Note, The reprieve of some sinners, and the patience God exercises towards them, are often abused to the hardening of others in the like sinful ways, #Ec 8:11. But, though justice strike some slowly, others cannot therefore be sure but that they may be taken away with a swift destruction. Or, if God should bear long with those who thus presume upon his forbearance, they do but hereby treasure up unto themselves *wrath against the day of wrath.*

Now this is all we have upon record in scripture concerning the family and posterity of cursed Cain, till we find them all cut off and perishing in the universal deluge.

Ver. 25.

This is the first mention of Adam in the story of this chapter. No question, the murder of Abel, and the impenitence and apostasy of Cain, were a very great grief to him and Eve, and the more because their own wickedness did now correct them and their backslidings did reprove them. Their folly had given sin and death entrance into the world; and now they smarted by it, being, by means thereof, deprived of *both their sons in one day*, #Ge 27:45. When parents are grieved by their children's wickedness they should take occasion thence to lament that corruption of nature which was derived from them, and which is the root of bitterness. But here we have that which was a relief to our first parents in their affliction.

I. God gave them to see the re-building of their family, which was sorely shaken and weakened by that sad event. For,

1. They saw their seed, another seed instead of Abel, #Ge 4:25. Observe God's kindness and tenderness towards his people, in his providential dealings with them; when he takes away one comfort from them, he gives them another instead of it, which may prove a greater blessing to them than that was in which they thought their lives were bound up. This other seed was he in whom the church was to be built up and perpetuated, and he comes instead of Abel, for the succession of confessors is the revival of the martyrs and as it were the resurrection of God's slain witnesses. Thus we are *baptized for the dead* (#1Co 15:29), that is, we are, by baptism, admitted into the church, for or instead of those who by death, especially by martyrdom, are removed out of it; and we fill up their room. Those who slay God's servants hope by this means to wear out the saints of the Most High; but they will be deceived. Christ shall still see his seed; God can out of stones raise up children for him, and make the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church, whose lands, we are sure, shall never be lost for want of heirs. This son, by a prophetic spirit, they called *Seth* (that is, *set, settled, or placed*), because, in his seed, mankind should continue to the end of time, and from him the Messiah should descend. While Cain, the head of the apostasy, is made a wanderer, Seth, from whom the true church was to come, is one fixed. In Christ and his church is the only true settlement.

2. They saw their seed's seed, #Ge 4:26. *To Seth was born a son called Enos*, that general name for all men, which bespeaks the weakness, frailty, and misery, of man's state. The best men are most sensible of these, both in themselves and their children. We are never so settled but we must remind ourselves that we are frail.

II. God gave them to see the reviving of religion in their family: *Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord*, #Ge 4:26. It is small comfort to a good man to see his children's children, if he do not, withal, see peace upon Israel, and those that come of him walking in the truth. Doubtless God's name was called upon before, but now,

1. The worshippers of God began to stir up themselves to do more in religion than they had done; perhaps not more than had been done at first, but more than had been done of late, since the defection of Cain. Now men began to worship God, not only in their closets and families, but in public and solemn assemblies. Or now there was so great a reformation in religion that it was, as it were, a new beginning of it. *Then* may refer, not to the birth of Enos, but to the whole foregoing story: *then*, when men saw in Cain and Lamech the sad effects of sin by the workings of natural conscience,—when they saw God's judgments upon sin and sinners,—*then* they were so much the more lively and resolute in religion. The worse others are the better we should be, and the more zealous.

2. The worshippers of God began to distinguish themselves. The margin reads it, *Then began men to be called by the name of the Lord*, or to call themselves by it. Now that Cain and those that had deserted religion had built a city, and begun to declare for impiety and irreligion, and called themselves the *sons of men*, those that adhered to God began to declare for him and his worship, and called themselves the *sons of God*. Now began the distinction between professors and profane, which has been kept up ever since, and will be while the world stands.