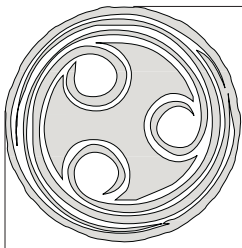


# Worship and Murder Genesis 4:1-15

“He’s a sadist. He’s an absentee landlord. Worship that? Never!”  
Al Pacino, *Devil’s Advocate*, talking about God.



sermonnotes

## Introduction

Last week we not only saw the grave consequences of sin on creation, but we began to take a look at the reality of grace in the midst of it. We do know that God is sovereignly and ultimately responsible for the fall, but we don’t know why. Maybe the answer lies in the greatness of grace in the midst of chaos. Like a fresh sprout of vegetation in the midst of a parched desert, God’s grace shines in the midst of an “evil” world. This allowance of evil is not an indication of His dual personality, but a sign of His sovereign grace in action. In many ways humanity reflects this duality. We are truly fallen sinners, but at the same time can create sublime works of art. We are at once both fallen and exalted (**Psalm 8**). Mankind has been responsible for some of the most charitable and infamous intrusions upon humanity. Even though we often judge ourselves against the “worst” of mankind, when we are honest with ourselves we know that even though, “I’m not as bad as I could be, my most inner thoughts are evil”. This is precisely why Jesus elevated the human heart as the place of judgment (**Matthew 5-7; 15:17-20** cf. **1 Samuel 16:7**), because He was well aware of mankind’s ability to hide. Today we see this sort of dualism that exists in every human (the desire to worship and the desire for power). Since the fall this dualism is present in our psyche and responsible for the loss of the unified self, which not only causes undo psychological damage, but detaches our own existence from its essential unity and dependence on God.

## From The Head...

### The Anatomy of a Bitter Unbelieving Heart

We begin our bitterness with God; we may even be religious, we may even call ourselves worshippers of God, but something has gone wrong. God doesn’t come through, so we begin to go through the motion of “worship.” We are the ones that show up to church, even serve--maybe “do a lot” for God--but we’re bitter because of it. Not only are you upset with God, but you’re upset with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. After all, they seem to get more blessings and attention from God and the people in the church. The more God doesn’t seem to “deliver” the more the bitterness grows, and the more anger and dissatisfaction you begin to feel with God, worship, the church, and the people in the church. All bitterness may not end in murder, but it ends in hatred, anger, division, discontentment, and slander. In our passage today we see Cain, who not unlike the above described “worshipper” of God, is doubting, disgruntled, and angry with God.

#### 1. Unbelief and Origins (**Genesis 4:1-2**)

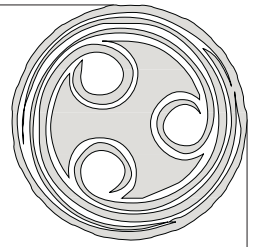
Cain was supposed to be the savior (**Genesis 4:1**) There is good reason to believe that Eve was excited about Cain’s birth because she felt this was the answer to the promise in Genesis 3:15. , but we are quickly reminded that the human condition and the consequences of sin are not going to be quickly conquered. God’s promise of **Genesis 3:15** will be in His timing, and not contrived, created, and solved by human resources. Because we are involved in religious activity, or contribute to the temple/church of our choice, doesn’t mean that we are any closer to God than the person that has actively rejected God in this world. Sin’s origin comes directly from the human will to be our own god, and is manifested with hatred and rebellion toward the God of the bible.

#### 2. Unbelief and God (**Genesis 4:3-5a**)

Cain’s condition is a condition of unbelief (see **Hebrews 11:4**), which though it can be couched in “spirituality” and religious clothing, it often reeks with ritualistic dogma and bitter anger. Both men offered their worship to God, but God recognized the offering that came with faith and rejected that which was cloaked in unbelief. God isn’t interested in our rituals, only our hearts (see **Isaiah 1**). **1 John** reminds us that if we are not motivated by love, than our faith is empty and useless. Passages such as this are a continual reminder

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that not only is family not the answer to our social ills, but neither is religion practiced from bitterness and faithlessness. Abel's offering is explained, highlighting not the offering but the grace of God. Some commentators try to make a case for an animal sacrifice over a fruit sacrifice, but the law made provisions for such offerings and I don't think this has any bearing on God's decision. It's not a matter of what we do for God. God is concerned with worshipping Him in "spirit and truth." We don't get to pick how we approach Him, but in faith we have access to God through Christ (**Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 10: 19**). Here we have a passage that is hard for our minds to understand. It wasn't that Abel was in any way more worthy than Cain, but the fact is God accepted Abel's offering, not Cain's (see **Malachi 1:2-3; Romans 9:13**). This is an act of grace. God freely chooses to accept Abel by grace, while allowing Cain to remain in his unbelief. He is perfectly righteous to do this, because He has paid for man's sins through Christ, justifying and saving anyone undeserving by His grace; and man is guilty of rebellion and rightfully deserving of any judgment that highlights God's justice.

### 3. Unbelief and Conviction (**Genesis 4:5b-7**)

Cain not only becomes angry, which is bitterness that results from God's free and unrestrained grace (see how both God [ultimate cause] and pharaoh [proximate cause] hardened pharaoh's heart **Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27** cf. **8:15; 9:34**), but he fails to listen to the convicting voice of the Lord. "If you do well" literally has the idea of, "if you accept my words." The problem is that we are in an unbelieving struggle to agree with God at all (see **1 John 1:7-10**). Sin literally sits at our door, and that door is usually opened because of our anger at God. **Ephesians 4:26** indicates that we give Satan a foothold when we don't deal with bitterness. But our bitterness begins by our distrust and lack of contentment with God and the life He has given us. When we are angry with God it is natural to dismiss the convicting voice of the Spirit in our lives. Have you ever felt God clearly saying one thing and yet you do the other? It's most likely the result of distrust, lack of contentment, and a heart that is inwardly bitter toward God. The word "desire" in verse seven is the same word used for the woman's "desire for her husband." It is only used three times in scripture. One time for the man's sexual desire for his wife (**Song of Solomon 7:11**) and the other two times are used in Genesis in our passage and Genesis 3:16. Because of context, like 3:16, it is quite clear that desire here is used in animosity and the desire to dominate. Satan's desire is to dominate God's creation. He wants to be God (**Isaiah 14**), and his pride compels him to act against God's people. He is the voice that continually asks, "Did God say...?" He is called our accuser. He runs both ends of sin. He not only tempts us to act against God, but then he turns righteous and accuses us after the fact. It is unbelief and anger towards God that falls into this because we begin to believe that God isn't good and we deserve a better life. "But you must master it." How well do you "master" sin? Most often we feel that, "sin doesn't have control of me." Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 6:12** that "*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.*" If we don't get a hold of our anger and bitterness, it will most definitely master us.

### Unbelief, Arrogance, and Depravity (**Genesis 4:8-14**)

There is no way that I am advocating here that unbelievers are more depraved or bigger sinners than believers here. What I am saying is that unbelief leads to a downward spiral into depravity. **Romans 1:18-32** is quite clear here that when we "suppress the truth in unrighteousness," He gives us over to a "depraved" mind. Depravity doesn't necessarily manifest itself in total depravity, but it does manifest itself in a mind that can't think in God's terms. This kind of mind calls "evil good and good evil." All of our fallen minds think in these categories. This is why we often judge God for evil in the world. We sit as the judge and jury against God as if we actually know something. God asks Cain two questions only to be answered in contempt, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" God tells Cain that His brother's blood is crying from the ground, reminding us that injustice has a voice, a voice that God will not stop listening to, and a voice that condemns those who act unjustly. Cain's words to God are not so much whinings for his punishment as much as it is bravado

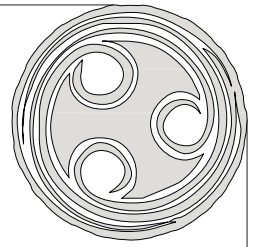
in the face of judgment. It's an anti-fear of God. No matter what you may be able to do, "go ahead and do it." It's human arrogance at its best (worse). Here we see him hiding from the face of God, just like in chapter 3, but this time it is with more force and resolve. We hide because we hate God and His judgment. The non-believer who is under the penalty of God's wrath hates Him for it. It is only through God's grace that we can love Him and see and perceive what He has done for us.

**Unbelief and God's Continuing Grace (Genesis 4:15)**

In spite of man's insolence and hatred God continues to act in grace and protect Cain. God's common grace is something that we never thank Him for, and something that even though God has allowed judgment on some people, His common grace is extended to all (**Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:16-17**).

Sin is brutal and the destroyer of anything good. God's grace stands in contrast to the evil that mankind can devise, and His patience is extensive, yet not infinite. God righteously judges those that continue to reject Him, and He has the perfect right to allow us to continue in our sins. Apart from God, we are under His judgment. Even though that often leads to further hatred of Him, He has granted us grace and the sacrifice of His Son for our salvation. We can either choose life, or we can choose death, but no matter what religious fronting we do, it will never take away our sins and relieve us from the guilt of our iniquity.

**sermonnotes**



**... To The Heart**

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