

Introduction It is really difficult to talk about sin. Teaching or discussing the topic of sin is unpleasant, like perhaps the topic of death. We do not like to think of ourselves as bad or evil. We are uncomfortable with the assignment of personal responsibility. It is difficult to grasp the concept of sin as an inner force and controlling power rather just simply in terms of sin as individual wrong acts. We sometimes respond to the discomfort and challenge of the topic with an overreaction or exaggeration that blames everything on sin and expresses a self focused hopelessness. We address the topic of sin this morning because the scriptures do.

Sin has been described as a failure to let God be God. We see from both our experience and our study of scripture that it is second nature for people to place something or someone in God’s rightful place of supremacy. Sin is your action, attitude and settled nature that accepts the lie that you can rule your world better than God.

Many of these key thoughts that define the essence and expression of sin are found in Genesis chapter 3 that we studied one week ago. Chapter 3 ends with man and woman as sinners, banished from the presence of God with only a promise from God to cling to for any hope of going home to God. Chapter 4 now carries the story of the human family on through the next 7 generations to teach the progression of the corruption of sin in the practical experience of people. Sin is the most powerful and significant force that mankind must deal with. The progression of sin as seen in this chapter and fully illustrated in human history is absolutely scary.

Running concurrently through this dark story of human depravity is a parallel story of sin’s solution – the mercy and kindness of God. The absurdity of sin in our lives is that we receive, enjoy and acknowledge the merciful kindness of God and yet continue in our self ruled kingdoms knowing the judgment and consequences that are rightfully headed our way. You dismiss the significance of your sin and God’s mercy far too handily.

Remember that your view of sin affects every major belief and value that you would be willing to die for . . .

- The holiness and purity of God . . . is he senile, out of touch and unable to know what is going on?
- Salvation by grace through faith . . . is your need of help relatively minor or life encompassing?
- Growth in Christ-like personal holiness . . . judged by comparison with others or a divine standard?
- Discipleship, ministry and parenting . . . positive affirmation or repentant transformation?

Read Genesis 4

The progression of sin and mercy in . . .	Cain’s story	1-7
	Cain’s sons stories	8-24
	Seth’s story	25-26

Let’s trace the progressing force of sin from one man through 7 generations of his offspring to both be warned and motivated to master sin in our lives. Then we will trace the progressing force of God’s mercy so we can humbly cry out to God for the necessary and transforming help to master the force of sin in our lives and world.

1. The progressing force of sin in your life and world. *Away from the presence of the Lord* 16

Chapter four presents the progression of the force of sin, the failure to let God be God, first in a personal format in Cain's life and secondly in a corporate format by describing life as it is several generations after Cain. While describing life and a world of thousands of years ago, note the remarkable accuracy and relevancy for our understanding of the force of evil in our lives and world today.

Note vs. 7 metaphor that God uses to teach us the force, danger and impact of sin in our lives.

- A. How sin progresses as a force in your personal life. V.1-16
- Your love for God – reduced to token, external worship. 3-7
 - Your response to God – defensive, angry when challenged. 5-7
 - Your respect for God – hurt others to protect your way. 8
 - Your honesty with God – deny responsibility, hardened heart 9
 - Your fear of God – protest consequences and punishment. 13-15

Key theme/helpful picture – v.16 – sin is and sin produces movement of your life away from the Lord.

- B. How sin progresses as a force in your world. V. 17-24
- We build our cities – formalize our independence from God. 17
 - We set our own standards – marriage and family our way. 19
 - We develop our abilities and creativity – civilization for our purposes. 20-22
 - We celebrate our individuality – endorse personal freedoms and power. 23-24

Key theme/helpful picture – 23-24 poem or slogan that expresses truth that sin is radical, disproportionate rebellion against God that leads not only to acts of sin but to approving celebration of those who do them. Sin is a force to be reckoned with! Lamech like pronouncements come out of our mouths with sobering regularity.

The progression of sin in our world is addressed as 'the world' or worldliness in the New Testament
Romans 12:1-2; 1John 2:15 ff

1. The progressing force of sin in your life and world. *Away from the presence of the Lord* 16

2. The progressing force of God's mercy in your life and world.

God's mercy is simply the term to express God's loving kindness toward people. Its depth and beauty is understood best against the backdrop of people's continuing and progressing rebellion. The creator's response is certainly unexpected and seemingly strange. Why a being who is capable of doing what he did in Chapters 1-2 would not simply 'erase' everything and try again is a question begging to be asked and answered. Why does the creator God try to rebuild something with these rebels? What motivates God is his love and compassion for the people he created.

God's mercy is seen in the Cain story in 3 specific ways. God's mercy includes his care, compassion, patience and truthfulness with those in rebellion against him.

A. God mercifully appeals to the sinner. 6-7

- Problem – you have not done right, sin is present and powerful.
- Solution – you must defeat and protect yourself from sin as if it were a dangerous animal.

B. God mercifully punishes the sinner. 9-15

- Opportunity to repent refused. 9
- Sinfulness of sin explained. 10
- Consequences imposed to turn sinner back. 11-14
- Protection extended to show kindness. 15-16

C. God mercifully points to his promise. 25-26

Note the help of v.1 and the appointment of v.25 that frame this story of sin's progression with the active continuation of the promise of a seed to defeat the serpent/sin (3:15).

- An alternative to Cain's progression of sin.
- A replacement for Abel's promise of hope.

Cmp Galatians 4:3-7

Illus. Luke 18:9-14 Pharisee and tax collector

Conclusion

Call for humble repentance and appreciation of God's mercy as evidence that sin is a destructive force that we must master, but cannot master without help.

The gospel is the good news that you can master the destructive force of sin through faith in Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty of your sin, frees you from the enslaving power of your sin and provides the righteousness you need to be declared a son of God. Sin has met its master . . . the force of God's mercy in Christ . . . born of a woman . . . at just the right time.

Study Questions

1. Read and review Genesis 4:1-26.
2. Share what comes to your mind when you think of the metaphor God uses in verse 7 to describe sin to Cain. What truth about sin is God teaching and warning you about? How does it explain or complete the promised consequences of 2:17?
3. Why is it difficult for people to discuss sin in contemporary culture? Why is it difficult within the church? What are the common reactions to the subject of sin that Jesus addressed/attacked in Luke 18:9? So how might Jesus answer the question about why is it difficult to discuss sin?
4. Share a specific way that God opened your eyes or heart to the force of sin in your life through this study of his word. How will you hate sin more and cling to mercy in a greater way?
5. How does your view of sin impact your appreciation of Christ and the cross? How does it impact your approach to parenting? How does it impact your participation in worship? How does it motivate you in your spiritual disciplines?
6. Read Gal. 4:3-7. Share observations. What is the connection between adoption as sons of God in Christ and the message of Genesis 4? How complete is God's mercy in Christ to master the force of sin?