

Text: Gen. 4:17-26

Title: "The Legacy of the Way of Cain"

Time: January 13, 2008 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: On the site of the first bridge ever built across the Connecticut River in 1785, now stands a bridge built some time later by Charles Vilas, known as the Bellow Falls Vilas Bridge. The bridge connects Vermont and New Hampshire, and it bears a plaque with a portion of a poem called "The Bridge Builder" by a lady named Will Allen Dromgoole. The poem is about the importance of a person's legacy:

"An old man, going a lone highway,
Came at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim-
That sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned, when he reached the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"'Old man,' said a fellow pilgrim near,
'You are wasting strength in building here.
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way.
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
Why build you the bridge at the eventide?'

"The builder lifted his old grey head.
'Good friend, in the path I have come,' he said,
'There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him.'"

Like this poem, the Bible makes much of the importance of a man's legacy, what the life of a man leaves behind him for the next generation. This can be something positive, or it can be tragic and negative. Last week we studied the way of Cain from the first part of this chapter, and now Moses has some important things to say in the last half about the legacy of Cain. The impact has been a negative thing. I want us to see three things about the legacy of the way of Cain this morning:

I. The legacy of Cain is inescapable for man (vv. 17-22).

Illustration: I can remember as a kid being told by my mom from time to time to wait until my father came home. She never said "your dad" in these circumstances; always "your father." Normally, I had so transgressed that the punishment could not be meted out until someone with stronger hands and arms showed up. The warning was always an ominous one, but it did have the advantage of giving me the illusion for a time that I had somehow avoided the inevitable, that things were not so bad after all.

Application: The section we just read describes a race of ancient people under the same kind of illusion. The way of Cain had seen him expelled from the presence of the Lord (v. 16), and he leaves behind him a legacy that adheres to the principle that life apart from the presence of the Lord might not be all that bad after all. I think the passage describes two components of this sad illusion, neither of which can ultimately stop the inevitable consequences of Cain's legacy.

A. Possessions cannot ameliorate the way of Cain (vv. 17-18).

Note the difference we see between God's promised curse on Cain (4:12) and the fact that Cain built and named a city. Commentators point out that the verb form in v. 17 *built a city* is actually indicative of ongoing action *was building a city*. They point out that the work was not completed by Cain. I think

that is a helpful observation, but it is still remarkable that God's curse on Cain, that he be a wanderer and a fugitive, did not preclude his building and naming a city, whether he finished it or not. This perhaps is best explained with the phrase in 4:16, "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord." Building a city did not bring back the presence of the Lord. Cain was still a wanderer and a fugitive in relation to the presence of the Lord in spite of a grand earthly home.

Application: The Bible warns us against materialism, living for more possessions. The void of the absence of the Lord in the life of a person cannot be filled with the possessions of this world. There are people in our community today who are too busy building their city to value the presence of the Lord. They believe that their possessions and wealth are a sign that sin's curse somehow does not apply to them.

Christians in Bible-believing churches can be this way too. Remember what Jesus told the church of Laodicea? "Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me" (Rev. 3:17). The possessions of this life are no substitute for the presence of God.

The Bible warns us against envying the people of this world who have substituted possessions for the presence of God. Things can sometimes really appear to be going well for them and bad for those who live in God's presence. But God allows us to experience this disparity in order to develop within us a true satisfaction with God's presence (Ps. 17:13-15).

B. Technology cannot ameliorate the way of Cain (vv. 19-22).

Illustration: Something neither you nor your children were ever taught in public schools is the truth that ancient man was technologically advanced. Dr. Donald Chittick holds his Ph. D

in physical chemistry, and he has written a book called *The Puzzle of Ancient Man*. Listen to a review of the book by Answers in Genesis: "Pop culture has led us to believe that ancient man was primitive, originating from primates and steadily improving through an evolutionary process of time and chance. But does that agree with reality? What does the evidence left behind from past cultures tell us? Was ancient man simple and primitive as generations have been taught, or did the level of science and technology existing thousands of years ago rival, or even surpass, the level of the 21st century?"

"Dr. Chittick reveals and examines details of technology, evidence of ancient machine power, and optical technology possessed by ancient people.

"... *The Puzzle of Ancient Man* is incredibly intriguing and shows that man has always been highly intelligent. From startling ancient inventions to maps, ziggurats, and pyramids, evidence that is perplexing to evolutionists shows that the Bible explains the true history of man. Your thinking about 'ancient man' will never be the same!"

Application: We read about some great technological advances in this passage. Today, modern man boasts about his technological achievements, not only because he sees them as the pinnacle of evolutionary history, but also because he believes that they have enabled him to outgrow misguided concern for the presence of God in our lives. Yet technology has gotten modern man into a heap of trouble in this day of Islamic terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

I want us to see that there is a strong connection in this passage between technological advance and the rise of violence in society. Verse 23 is what Bible commentators call a *sword-song*, written about Lamech's boast to his wives about his invincibility. That verse follows on the heels of verse 22, where we read about the advances of implements of bronze and iron, many of

these being weapons of violence. Technology does not save man; it merely equips his degenerate nature for greater evil.

Application: Note that music was a form of technological advance. Technology always involves conformity to the laws of science or nature. Good livestock technology requires an understanding of and a conformity to the laws of nature related to livestock. Good metalworking requires an understanding of and a conformity to the laws of nature related to the properties of the metals you were working with. And good music technology must involve an understanding of and a conformity to the laws of nature related to music. These laws exist, and they must be followed. Good music is not whatever style you make up in your head anymore than is good animal raising or good metal working.

II. The legacy of Cain is destructive to man (vv. 19-24).

Illustration: This past week my Ohio State Buckeyes were thumped for the second year in a row in the national championship college football game, this time by the LSU Tigers. If you know the game of football and watched the game, you know that penalties were a big reason that Ohio State was destroyed in that game. Their number-one-in-the-nation defense, a defense that normally gave up an average of around 10 points per game, allowed the Tigers to score 38 points.

The critical point in the game was during the Tigers first drive of the second half. The score was Tigers 24-Buckeyes 10 at that point, and allowing another score would surely make the deficit insurmountable for the Bucks. The Buckeye defense stopped LSU, but on the punt a Buckeye ran into the punter committing a penalty called *roughing the kicker* that gave the ball back to LSU. A few plays later, our freshman defensive tackle got frustrated and punched an opponent, again giving LSU another free 15 yards and a first down. Eventually, the Tigers scored on this drive, the score went to 31-10, and the

chances for victory became out of reach. The Buckeyes self-destructed in that game because they were not able to stick to their coaches plan and avoid penalties.

Application: This is what happens to mankind stuck in the way of Cain. They seek to live apart from God's presence and consequently God's gracious plan for them is destroyed. Moses mentions two aspects of this self-destruction.

A. God's plan for love in man's home is destroyed (v. 19, 23).

Application: God's plan for the home is very clear in the early pages of Genesis. We saw this plan back in 2:24. Lamech designs his own plan for the home. This is the first instance of polygamy in the Bible. Rather than a one-to-one covenant of love, the relationship between Lamech and his wives reads more like that of a rock star and his groupies. He obviously shows them very little respect as he expects them to cheer his boast of violence and sin.

Mormonism has been in the news recently with the candidacy of Mitt Romney. That religion was founded by Joseph Smith, who in 1843 claimed to have received 135 revelations from God, including that polygamy was God's will. Many of these revelations are laid down in the Mormon text called *The Doctrine and Covenants*. Section 132 of this work is on plural marriages, and it includes a specific exhortation to Emma Smith, Joseph's wife, to receive the additional wives that had been given to her husband on pain of everlasting destruction (vv. 52-54). Utah had trouble becoming a state over this issue, so in 1890 the then Prophet/President of Mormonism, Wilford Woodruff, issued something call "Official Document I" which advises Mormons against contracting any marriage that is forbidden by the law of the land. Utah became a state then in 1896. But the revelations of Smith on polygamy have never been officially disavowed by the church.

But the way of Cain gives our world far more destruction to God's plan for the home than Mormonism ever dreamed up. There is the breaking of covenants with infidelity everywhere, wife and child abuse in the home, divorce is rampant among believers and unbelievers, and the homosexual agenda demands to redefine this God-given institution called *marriage* in ways even corrupt Lamech could never have imagined. This is the legacy of the way of Cain, and it destroys God's plan for the home. As we read this account of this legacy, we fast approach the days of the flood. Our judgment will come as well.

B. God's plan for justice in man's society is destroyed (vv. 23-24).

Application: Note that a sevenfold level of judgment was something God-ordained (4:15). Lamech throws off God's plan for society when he proclaims, "I shall be avenged seventy-sevenfold" (Leupold, 224). The destruction of justice and security is a consequence of the way of Cain, of building a society apart from the presence of the Lord. Gang violence is a real and growing problem in our country. Our kids feed on violent video games and movies. We mentioned the school shootings last week. "Road Rage" is a term that we have had to invent for incidents of violence we see happening on our highways. Our society is beginning to reap what it has sown. We have lost the presence of God, we have chosen the way of Cain, and we get a thirst for violent personal vengeance in the deal, which destroys God's plan for justice in a society.

Contrast the countermand of Christ in this regard for believers to forgive "seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22).

III. God's plan can defeat the legacy of Cain (4:24-26).

A. He plans the promised seed - Jesus Christ (v. 25). Note that Eve called Cain a *man* (4:2) and Seth a *seed* (4:25). As Eve contemplates the gift of Seth, she echoes the promised hope of

Gen. 3:15. The line of Seth is the line of the promised Seed, and that descendant was Jesus Christ (Luke 3:23, 38). As Eve rejoices in Seth she rejoices in the promise of God that the Messiah, the Savior of the world, would come to trample down the legacy of the way of Cain. God's plan for man's salvation has overcome the legacy of Cain, given us new access to the presence of God, and freed us from our sin and its consequences.

B. This plan demands a personal response of faith (v. 26). Our text tells us that man began to call on the name of the Lord with the birth of Enosh. I think that this is likely the beginning of prayer, and as the beginning of prayer it is also the beginning of the sinner's prayer, a word of saving faith.

Conclusion: Have you called upon the name of the Lord for your salvation in Jesus Christ the promised seed of Genesis 4, or will your legacy be that of the way of Cain?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching