

Genesis 4:7-8—A New World: Living By Conscience—Choosing Between Good And Evil

Memory Verse

Genesis 3:15 NKJV (God speaking to satan)

And I will put enmity between you [satan] and the woman, and between your seed [the antichrist] and her Seed [the Messiah]; He [the Messiah] shall bruise your [satan's] head, and you [satan] shall bruise His [the Messiah's] heel."

Revision (Genesis 4:1-7)

1. The Birth Of Cain and how the Bible describes sex (v 1)
2. The birth of Abel and who did Cain marry? (v 2a)
3. Modern agricultural practices established in the first generation of mankind (v 2b)
4. Abel accepted because of his faith—Cain rejected because he didn't have faith (vs 3-5)
5. The direct link between sin and depression (vs 5b-7)

Outline

1. Sin's unquenchable desire to control and manipulate us for it's own gain (v 7)
2. The example of Cain—what it means to live by conscience (v 8)

Genesis 4:1-15 NKJV

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." ² Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, ⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

⁶ So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

¹⁰ And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. ¹¹ So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

¹³ And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! ¹⁴ Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me."

¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

1. Sin's unquenchable desire to control and manipulate us for it's own benefit

Genesis 4:7 NKJV

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, *sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.*"

Sin and satan want to control us so that they can lead us to a life of bondage and despair

v 7 **Desire:** The Hebrew word translated “**desire**” means: “longing, craving, an inclination to want things, and the feeling that accompanies an unsatisfied state”.

v 7 **Sin lies at the door. And it's desire is for you:** Sin will only be satisfied if it has total control over us—nothing less will do. Sin is like satan—destructive, vengeful, pitiless, merciless, and just plain mean. Satan only wants us to be his slave, for the singular purpose of using us in his fight against God—because satan hates God, he also hates those made in the image of God—he wants to take as many humans as possible to spend eternity with him in the Lake of Fire.

John 10:10 NKJV

The thief [satan] **does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.** I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

It's important to realise that aside from satan, the real enemy, sin, lurks inside all of us—we are all born with a sin nature. Simply put, we are our own worst enemy. If believers don't choose to submit to Spirit of God living inside of them, then the default situation is that they will be controlled, manipulated, deceived, and led astray by their own sinful nature.

James 1:12-15 NLT

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. ¹³ And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, “God is tempting me.” God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. ¹⁴ **Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away.** ¹⁵ **These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.**

Sin, like satan, is like a pedophile grooming a child. It gives gifts, flatters, promises them that they can have anything they want, and along the way poisons the young child's mind against those who actually love them. *All this is done for the singular purpose of gaining control of the person, to manipulate them to do what it wants. In the end it is all about control: There is no relationship—only the appearance of a relationship is from the point of view of the one who is being manipulated—they are deceived into thinking that the other person, the narcissistic and predatory satan, actually cares for them.*

This means that after we have rejected the Spirit's rule of righteousness over our lives and instead allowed ourselves to be manipulated, controlled, and deceived by our sinful nature—after we have compromised and chosen worldly friends and relationships, worldly entertainment, and worldly pleasures—then all we are left with is emptiness and despair. Why? Because we finally come to realise that our minds have become so dark and corrupted that the only things that give us any pleasure anymore *are also those things which will hurt and destroy us*—we want the pleasure without the pain, but with sin, this is eventually impossible. Indeed, eventually, the sinful lifestyle becomes more painful than pleasurable. However, like the drug addict, we often continue the destructive lifestyle, and ultimately destroy our lives. We find ourselves lonely and empty, having gained the world but lost our peace, satisfaction, joy, and love for God.

Romans 8:5-6 NLT

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶ So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

Why do people go to Hell?

Jesus tells us the reason that many refuse to repent and believe, and therefore end up in the Lake of Fire, is because of their inherent selfishness—they are not willing to give up what they want, which means that they are unwilling to repent of their sins. Remember that *repentance is the attitude which is willing to give up what I want to have, and who I want to be, so that I can instead do what God wants me to do and be who God wants me to be.*

Matthew 16:24-26 NKJV

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Sin equals selfishness, and selfishness makes us weak to fight temptation because it wants the easy road and not the hard road

Matthew 7:13-14 NKJV

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ **Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life,** and there are few who find it.

So often, even as believers, we see sin as our friend; we see satan as someone who actually has our best interests at heart. We may not articulate it this way, but we are all too willing to accept his destructive gifts because they give temporary satisfaction, acceptance, and pleasure. However, there is another big reason why so many believers compromise and fall into sin. When not controlled by the Holy Spirit (see Romans 8:5-6) *their selfish sinful nature makes them want an easy life—a life where they don't have to struggle against sin.* They will choose to do what is wrong, even though they know that it is wrong, simply to avoid the struggle. Remember that the struggle against sin only gets harder as time goes on—the temptation to sin just to end the struggle increases over time. Again, a selfish person wants things their own way, to have an easy life. However, the fight against sin necessarily means that we must give up what our sinful nature wants, meaning that we don't get our own way and life isn't easy—every day is a battle. Jesus is the ultimate example. He never gave up the fight against sin and temptation, and it ended up costing Him His life—remember what Jesus said, if we want to live, we must first die.

Hebrews 12:1-4 NLT

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. **And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ² We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus,** the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now He is seated in the place of honour beside God's throne. ³ **Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. ⁴ After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin [like Jesus did].**

Don't forget where sin leads—we become like who we serve

But what we fail to understand, or choose not to remember, is that sin and satan are only there to destroy us. Left to our own devices, with our sinful nature, we would destroy ourselves. *Remember, the more we sin, the more like sin we become—we become like what we serve, either more wicked or more righteous and holy.* The pre-flood world is a good example of this—God had to step in and save humanity from themselves.

Romans 6:15-19 NLT

Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! ¹⁶ Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. ¹⁷ Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. ¹⁸ Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

¹⁹ Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. **Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.**

The narcissistic nature of sin, and why we must separate ourselves from the world

A narcissist is simply a very self-centred person. They are a person who is almost wholly given over to their sinful nature. They live in a false reality, and they use people to try to create and maintain that false narrative. The world today is becoming more and more self-centred and narcissistic, and Scripture warns us that things will only get worse.

2 Timothy 3:1-6 NLT

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. ² For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. ³ They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. ⁴ They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. ⁵ **They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!**

⁶ They are the kind who work their way into people's homes and win the confidence of vulnerable women who are **burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by various desires.**

A good example of the above Scripture in today's society is that so many, including many Christians, choose not to obey God and keep themselves pure for marriage. Instead they go through endless cycles of broken relationships. Why? Because sin and satan have convinced them that a relationship is all about what they can get, and not what they can give. Waiting and self-denial is hard and requires the spiritual discipline of delayed gratification (which is made possible by the fruit of self-control). However, *the compromising believer only wants what is easy and comfortable at that moment*, so they accept satan's destructive gift of a live-in boyfriend/girlfriend relationship; they get to enjoy physical intimacy right now without having to wait. But any relationship based solely on satisfying selfish desires will never last. Remember, Jesus said that it is more blessed to give than to receive (see Acts 20:35). Giving always costs, is always a sacrifice, but always results in joy and lasting happiness.

To sin or not to sin

v 7 **If you do not do well, sin lies at the door:** Here God warned Cain about the destructive power of sin. Cain could resist sin and find blessing, or, he could give in to sin and be devoured. God has given every person free choice whether or not to sin.

v 7 **Rule Over:** The Hebrew word translated “**Rule Over**” means: have dominion, rule, exercise dominion, exercise authority over, and govern.

v 7 **And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it:** “We prevent sin from ruling over us by allowing God to master us first. Without God as our master, we will be slaves to sin.” (David Guzik) This is a great reminder that without God, we cannot enjoy victory over the basic selfishness that is inherent to our sinful nature. *So how does a believer **rule over their sinful nature, keeping it in check? By first submitting to God and allowing Him to rule over us?** But how do we come to this place of genuine submission to God? **By repenting of our sin.** James shows us how.*

James 4:7-11 AMP

So be subject [submit] to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you.

⁸ Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery].

⁹ [As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins].

¹⁰ Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant].

Application: Manipulative desire and its negative effect on marriage.

This same word for desire is used in Genesis 3:16 of the desire of the woman to master or control her husband. “Because of the curse, Eve would have to fight a desire to master her husband, a desire that works against God’s ordained order for the home.” (David Guzik)

“The principle of Adam’s headship as a husband was established before the fall (see Genesis 2:18 and 2:22). Now the curse on Eve makes it much harder for her to submit and flow with God’s institution of male headship in the home.” (David Guzik)

“As a result of the fall, man no longer rules easily; he must fight from his headship. Sin has corrupted both the willing submission of the wife and the loving headship of the husband. The woman’s desire is to control her husband (to usurp his divinely appointed headship), and he must master her, if he can. So the rule of love founded in paradise is replaced by struggle, tyranny and domination.” (Susan T. Foh, cited in Boice)

Bottom line—the wife’s struggle to submit to her husband as her head, is a direct picture of the believer’s struggle to submit to God as his head. Therefore, the most important thing for every believer to remember is *submission*. We must continually “deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily”—only then can we obey Christ’s next command to “follow Me”.

Luke 9:23-24 NKJV

Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.** ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

Luke 9:24-25 NLT

Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, **you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me.** ²⁴ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.

2. The example of Cain—what it means to live by conscience

Genesis 4:7-8 NKJV

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, *sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.*"

⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

We either rule over sin, or sin will rule over us—there is no middle ground.

Here we see the choice that Cain made. Cain was warned by God that he was being tempted by sin and that it would lead to his downfall. But Cain didn't listen. Why? Because he didn't want to repent. He was selfish and wanted to do things his way, the easy way. It all comes down to repentance. *This is where everybody has a free choice—to repent or not repent.* Remember, only genuine submission will result in genuine repentance (an outward change in behaviour that results from an inward change in attitude). In Cain's case it was God personally convicting him. But today, it is the Holy Spirit convicting us.

Ephesians 4:30 NKJV

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Every person is constantly making the choice to either soften or harden their hearts, both unbelievers and believers. For the unbelievers, the decision to continue in sin, refusing to respond to the convicting voice of the Holy Spirit, only makes it harder for them to respond in the future. It's like their spiritual ears get more and more deaf to the voice of the Holy Spirit as He convicts them of the sin of not believing in Jesus (see John 16:8-11). They are like Pharaoh, and the end of their rebellion will be the Lake of Fire.

For believers, it's not our salvation that is in danger, but rather the depth of our relationship with God: we sacrifice intimacy with God for the passing pleasures of sin, unnecessarily grieve the Holy Spirit, and force God to discipline us, as our choice to continue in sin causes our heart to grow harder and harder towards Him. Hebrews 3:12-19 refers to *believers* who live in habitual sin and harden themselves against God—the result being that they follow the example of the first generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt. They failed to enter into God's rest, which is a picture of walking by faith in God and so experiencing in a real way the love, joy, peace, presence, and power of God in our daily lives.

Hebrews 3:12-13 NKJV

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; ¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," **lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**

Hebrews 3:12-19 NLT

Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. ¹³ You must warn each other every day, while it is still “today,” so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. ¹⁴ For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, **we will share in all that belongs to Christ.** ¹⁵ Remember what it says:

“Today when you hear His voice, don’t harden your hearts as Israel did when they rebelled.”

¹⁶ And who was it who rebelled against God, even though they heard His voice? Wasn’t it the people Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And who made God angry for forty years? Wasn’t it the people who sinned, whose corpses lay in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom was God speaking when he took an oath that they would never enter his rest? Wasn’t it the people who disobeyed him? ¹⁹ **So we see that because of their unbelief they were not able to enter his rest.**

So we see that living by conscience for the Christian *really comes down to whether or not we believe—whether or not we choose to trust (believe or put our faith in), what God says in His Word.* If we believe what God says, then we will avoid those people, places, friends, and activities that God says are bad for us, even if our sinful nature finds much pleasure from them. *Why? Because we will choose to believe that what God has for us is much, much better for us in the long run.* Moses leaves us with this example of faith.

Hebrews 11:24-27 NLT

It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. ²⁵ He chose to share the oppression of God’s people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. ²⁷ It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the One who is invisible.

Conversely, if we don’t believe what God says, then we will not avoid those people, places, friends, and activities that God says are bad for us. *Why? Because we will not choose to believe that what God has for us is much, much better for us in the long run than the temporary or passing pleasures of sin that we are currently experiencing.*

1 John 2:15-17 NLT

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. ¹⁷ And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

Why the believer is free from the power of sin

For the Christian we are free to choose righteousness instead of sin. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, God has defeated our old man, the part of us that held us in bondage to sin. Consequently, we are free to choose either to sin or not to sin. The Christian never sins because they have to, but only because they want to or choose to—when they make the choice to not believe what God says in His word.

Romans 6:6-14 NLT

We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ⁸ And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. ⁹ We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰ When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. ¹¹ **So you also should [reckon it to be true or] consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.**

¹² **[Therefore] Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires.**

¹³ Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. ¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

Look at the progression in these verses from Romans.

1. We know or learn that sin has lost its power in our lives (v 6-7)
2. By faith we reckon or consider this to be true even though it might not feel true (v 11)
3. We live according to truth and experience freedom from the power of sin (v 12)

Secondly, God has put His Holy Spirit inside of us, and *there is nothing that God cannot do!* Yes, that's right, *there is nothing that God cannot do!* But without God we can do nothing. *You know it, but do you believe it?*

John 15:4-5 NLT

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵ "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

Philippians 4:13 NKJV

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

2 Peter 1:3-5 NLT

By His divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know Him, the One who called us to Himself by means of His marvellous glory and excellence. ⁴ And because of His glory and excellence, He has given us great and precious promises. **These are the promises that enable you to share His divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.**

⁵ **In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises.**

Romans 8:12-13 NLT

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, **you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do.** ¹³ For *if* you live by its dictates, you will die. But *if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature*, you will live.

Clearly, the Christian never *has* to sin, they only sin because they want to sin, when they make the choice to not believe God's word. Like with Cain, God wouldn't have given Cain the choice if the choice wasn't possible. So let us not make excuses. Let us not play the victim, inventing excuses as to why we are continuing in sin. Let us not pretend that, as believers, we are still under satan's power. Instead, let us believe what God says in His word, demonstrating our belief, faith, and trust by putting into action what is right, and avoiding what is wrong.

Remember, there is nothing that God cannot do, but God has given us free choice to either walk in His ways by His power, or to walk in our ways by our own power.