

The Progressive Civilisation of Sin

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bibles, into our Bible reading for this evening, which I think you'll find in, if you have one of the Vista's Bibles, on page 3, so very near the beginning.

And we're in Genesis chapter 4. Genesis chapter 4. After a week's break last week, we were looking at these early chapters of Genesis.

And of course, chapter 3 ends the scene of perfection and delight with which we're presented with the creation of God, with everything in perfect harmony.

God has created everything good, indeed very good, becomes very good with the creation of human beings, the crown of God's creation, what it's all for.

But sadly and ironically, it turns out to be human beings who spoil everything. And chapter 3 ends with the great tragedy that human beings, man and woman, are cast out of the place of God's dwelling, out of the garden, out of the place of life.

[1 : 12] And it ends with these terrible words that God drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden, he placed a cherubim with a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

And now the story goes on to its development from that first family into what we would call human society and civilization.

Now Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I've gotten a man with the help of the Lord. And again, she bore his brother Abel.

Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain, a worker of the ground. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.

And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering. But for Cain and his offering, he had no regard.

[2 : 24] So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The Lord said to Cain, why are you angry? And why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?

And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it. Cain spoke to Abel, his brother.

And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel, your brother? He said, I don't know.

Am I my brother's keeper? And the Lord said, what have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. Cain said to the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear.

[3 : 33] Behold, you have driven me away today from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.

And the Lord said to Cain, not so. If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch.

When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. To Enoch was born Erad, and to Erad fathered Mehezhel. And Mehezhel fathered Mehushel.

And Methushel fathered Lamech. And Lamech took two wives. The name of one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. Adah bore Jabal.

[4 : 38] He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the lyre and the pipe. Zillah also bore Tubal-Cain.

He was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Nama. Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zillah, hear my voice, you wives of Lamech. Listen to what I say. I've killed a man for wounding me. A young man, a young boy, for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold. And Adam knew his wife again. And she bore a son and called his name Seth. For she said, God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel. For Cain killed him. To Seth also a son was born. And he called his name Enosh. At that time, people began to call upon the name of the Lord. [5 : 49] Amen. And may God bless to us his word. We'll do turn to Genesis chapter four. It'd be very helpful, I think, if you have that in front of you.

A chapter all about the progressive civilization of sin. Now, Christian people face a great deal of hostility in the world today, both in secular cultures, but also from many aggressive religious cultures in some places.

I think we all know that the 20th century saw more Christian martyrs than every other century before it put together. Not in our nation. But that has been the case before in our nation.

And we'd be fools, wouldn't we, to think that that could never be so again. There probably hasn't been real martyrdoms in this country since the late 17th century. But it could happen again. And certainly in my lifetime, I have never known such aggressively hostile governments to everything that is godly and everything that is true. But that hostility to truth and to godliness is nothing new.

[7 : 03] It goes right back to the very dawn of human history. And in fact, Genesis chapter 4 goes a long way to explaining why the whole of human history has been such a story of fracture, of division, of strife, and even of hatred.

The stories of Cain and Abel are more than just history, though they do record history. But the New Testament tells us that in them lies the root of two cultures, two whole destinies.

Those who are like Cain, who, as John says, are of the evil one. And those who are like Abel, who are people of faith, and therefore people of God, as Hebrews 11 calls them.

So Moses is teaching his first readers and us both realism and hope. Realism about a conflict that has always been and will always be between the people of Cain and the people of Abel.

But also hope that the fact of this real oppression and violence towards God's people in history is not the whole story.

[8 : 11] God is in control. And all things do work according to his gracious plan and purpose for the ultimate glory of those who belong to him.

Now that was a message that Moses' people needed. Just as it's a message that hard-pressed Christians need today all over the world. Israel knew what it meant to face hostility.

They lived under subjection in Egypt. They were now facing hostile enemies all around them in Canaan. And they would do ever afterwards. That's why at the end of his life, Moses wrote down these books from Genesis to Deuteronomy, as we call them.

The books of Moses. And he commanded them to be read to all Israel frequently so they would remember God's truth and be strong in the face of that hostility. At the end of those books, near the end of Deuteronomy, he says this.

Do not fear or be in dread of them. For it is the hand of the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.

[9 : 14] And part of what he wrote in these books to encourage his people was Genesis chapter 4. It's the last act of this first book of beginnings that began in Genesis chapter 2, verse 4.

And it is a chapter that tells us all about the progressive civilization of sin. It tells us of the way that sin permeates human culture.

In such a way that we can both be scared by its sheer corruption and its bestiality. But also seduced by it.

Because of its culture. Because of its beauty. And we've got to grasp both of these different aspects of sin's civilization. Moses is saying to us, don't be scared.

By the conflict and by the oppression of an ungodly world. God will never leave you nor forsake you. But he's also saying, don't be seduced either.

[10 : 14] By the civilization of a godless world. You must never forsake the Lord your God. For the bright lights of human deification. Human idolatry.

Human self-promotion. Human self-promotion. So let's look at this chapter together. You can see, I think, it divides very easily into three movements. Each beginning with the same introduction. Verse 1. Adam knew his wife Eve and she conceived. Verse 17. Cain knew his wife and she conceived. And again in verse 25. Adam knew his wife again and she conceived. So there's three acts to this drama. And the first in verses 1 to 16 tells us of a conflict beginning. These verses tell us all about the enmity of the godless human heart. They tell us that man's heart, when it's full of resentment against God, will also inevitably be full of hatred for God's people. Just because they are God's people. [11:18] They will hate you, said Jesus, because of me. This is not just a story of murder, a story of fratricide.

It's a story of religiously motivated hatred and murder. What we see beginning to be played out here is the curse of Genesis 3.15.

Progressing in history. God said, I will put enmity between your offspring, the serpent's offspring, and hers, the seed of the woman.

Eve's true seed, the line of faith. And here's the progressive entail of sin. It begins by corrupting and destroying the relationship of the first couple, and now the first family, and then the first human societies.

Until at last, when you come to Genesis chapter 6, as we'll see, the Lord saw that all the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

[12:24] But here's where it began, you see. Notice first what the root of this conflict really is. There are two seeds, not by accident of birth, but because they represent two sovereignties.

Two sovereignties at work in the world and in the human heart. Verses 1 and 2 tell us of two natural births. Of Cain, a man that Eve has gotten with the Lord's help.

It's hard to know if Eve's expression there is a mark of faith, or as some suggest, she's essentially saying, oh, well, I've done this by myself, with a bit of help from God. I think it's probably the former. But what is certain is that Moses pinpoints very clearly the root of the conflict, and it's not just normal sort of family tensions. It's spiritual.

Verses 3 to 5 here tell us very plainly, don't they, that God had regard for Abel, but not for Cain. The root problem was a heart problem and a difference between the two.

[13:30] Cain was religious. But he felt that God should be delighted with Cain's own ideas about what worshipping God meant, regardless of what God might himself want or require.

Whereas Abel, by contrast, Abel had a humble heart and an obedient heart, and that was reflected in his sacrifice in verse 4. For Abel, we're specifically told here, gave of the best.

He gave of the firstborn. And he gave of the fat portions. That's the choicest part. Now, every Israelite reading that knew immediately what that meant, because that is what God commanded, and that's what God desired.

Anyone who's been listening to Stephen preaching on Leviticus recently will know that. But Cain, you see, Cain did religion his way. And he got very angry when God dared to say to him, Sorry, Cain, but remember, I'm God, not you.

And I decide these things, not you. But Abel, you see, did religion God's way. He listened to God, and he approached God in the way that God had commanded.

[14:40] The only way that there is to come to a holy God, through God's appointed way, through God's appointed sacrifice, and no other way. And that's the fundamental divide, you see, of the world, into two seeds.

Because they represent two sovereignties, two rulers in life, God or ourselves. And it's been so ever since.

Self-rule, we rule, we decide. Or submission to God, who rules and decides. Francis Schaeffer said, From this time on, in the flow of history, there are two humanities.

The one humanity says there's no God, or it makes God's own imagination, or it tries to come to the true God in its own way. The other humanity comes to the true God, God's way.

And there is no neutral ground. And that is the root of the spiritual conflict. The world is divided forever into these two humanities.

[15:49] Two seeds defined by two sovereignties. The one true God, and his way, and his rule, versus everything else that there is.

Secondly, notice the result of this conflict. There are two sins, aren't there? Does Cain sin against God? Not just by his first attitude, and his sacrifice, which God rebukes, but also in his entrenched and willing defiance to refuse God's mercy.

Look at verses 6 and 7. God holds out to Cain a better way, doesn't he? It's a promise. You too can be accepted, Cain, if you'll do it my way, if you do right. And also a warning.

If you don't, you're deliberately choosing the power of sin as your master. It's crouching at your door to devour you. Well, that's the eternal gospel, isn't it?

A promise and a warning. Revelation chapter 14 calls it the eternal gospel. Fear God and give him glory. But no, says Cain.

[16:59] Cain sins on persistently, disobediently, deliberately saying no to God. And that's a very, very dangerous thing to do, you know.

To willfully refuse God's grace and mercy when he rebukes you and shows you the right way.

People do it. People do it today all the time, just as Cain did it way back then.

And you see, that led to his second sin against Abel, his brother. Bruce Waltke says, because he fails at the altar, he fails in the field.

Because he fails in his theology, he will fail in his ethics. And you see, the Bible tells us that plainly, doesn't it? Corrupt behavior always flows from corrupt thinking.

Read Romans chapter 1. It's refusal to honor God that darkens people's minds. And it's that that leads to debased human behavior. And that's the reverse of true worship.

[17:58] It's the reverse of what we're made for. We're made to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength. And our neighbor as ourself.

But you see, Cain, in Cain's world, won't have the Lord and hates the Lord. And so he hates his neighbor as well, his brother. Cain de-gods God, and therefore he dehumanizes himself.

And he recognizes that. Look at verse 14. He's lost his identity. He's driven away from the ground and from God.

He's driven away from the one who he's made for and the thing that he's made for. Lost his identity. He's lost his society. I'll be a fugitive, he says. And he's lost his security in life.

Everyone will want to kill me. All because by refusing God's blessing, he's brought on himself the curse that God put on his enemy, the devil, back in chapter 3.

[19:03] Now you are cursed, he says. You brought it on yourself, Cain. You've chosen to be of the evil one and under his curse. See, if you refuse God's mercy, even repeated second chances like God gave to Cain, then eventually God will give you what you want.

The serpent's curse. And that's the result that comes from the root of that conflict for Cain. And that's the same for all God's people everywhere.

Because Cain has a continuing line. And it's over against God and his people. Notice, though, that there's also a reassurance to this conflict.

Because the conflict goes on because of God's mercy even to Cain. God does not destroy Cain. Immediately does he? Look at verse 15. He protects him.

Even Cain, of the evil one, a fanatical God-hater, a murderer, he's the recipient of God's preserving grace, at least in his earthly life.

[20:17] Isn't that staggering? God does not wipe out Cain. Doesn't even wipe out his progeny. Not yet, at least. It's interesting, isn't it, today that in our modern world, we find talking about judgment, God's judgment, is a real problem.

I find it difficult to even want to think about a God who can judge. It's God's judgment that's a great problem to us. In the Bible, it's the exact opposite. The real problem is, why doesn't God judge evil? The real problem for the Bible is, why does evil prosper? That's the cry of the psalmist, isn't it? How long? When will you judge the wicked? That's a cry all through the Bible. Why are there so many enemies, Lord?

Why will you not wipe them out right now? Where is your justice against evil and wickedness? I guess there are many Christians around the world today, especially those living under persecution, who are praying those very questions.

And we often pray in that way, don't we, in a sense? Lord, take these hardships from me. Take these struggles away. Take these awful injustices out of my life. But you see, this God has a much bigger agenda.

[21 : 31] Jesus tells us very plainly, doesn't he, that our Heavenly Father makes the sun rise on the evil as well as the good. And the Apostle Peter tells us why.

He says, The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, but he is patient, desiring that none should perish, but that all should reach repentance. See, even God's judgments in history are merciful judgments.

He preserves Cain, and he preserves Cain's line, so that in the fullness of time, there will be, through the salvation promise in his holy seed, there will be many, even from among the most rebellious of this earth, who will reach repentance, and who again will be called sons and daughters of the living God.

Many of us here today, in fact, all of us here today, are only here through that very mercy of God alone. Isn't that right? But you see, for that to be so, there has to be an ongoing conflict.

There has to be the suffering of the seed of the woman, the holy seed, the people of God. And there will be, says the Bible, always, right till the very last, when God's judgment does finally come.

[22 : 48] And when at last he does, once and for all, separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares, the canes from the abels of this world. And you see the encouragement that that must have been to God's people Israel, living in the time of Moses.

The conflict they faced was very real. But it was because of their calling to be God's people, through whom God's blessing was going to come to the whole world, to all the nations, even those nations which now were their enemies.

The privileges here of being the people of the holy seed is to be a people who are born into conflict, born for battle. That was the title of a book that we used to read as students.

Conflict and battles and hatred and persecution. That is not the sign of being under God's curse.

That is the sign of being under his blessing. It's not the sign of God being absent from your life, but God being present.

Don't fear, because I will never leave you or forsake you. And the New Testament tells us exactly the same thing for us as believers today. Jesus' teaching is full of it.

[24 : 03] In the world, you will have tribulation, you'll have conflict. But blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

And so it was with the prophets who were before you. Because it's the sign of real faith. It's a sign that you belong to Abel and his people. And it's always been so. Remember Paul in Galatians 4 talks of a similar conflict.

The same division manifests this time between Isaac and Ishmael. Those of the flesh always persecute those born of the Spirit. Remember Peter, when he says, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you face as though it was something strange, but rejoice in that you share the sufferings of Christ, that you may also be glad when his glory is revealed.

That's a staggering thing to say, isn't it? Not just to rejoice in sufferings, but the reason. We share, he says, in Christ's sufferings. All the holy seeds share in the experience of the holy seed, the Lord himself.

Paul says the same things to the Philippian church. In Philippians 1, it's been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him, but suffer for his sake. You're engaged in the same conflicts, says Paul, as you see that I had, and I still have, and all God's people still have.

[25 : 26] You see, we share in Christ's sufferings. We bear the pain of conflict for Christ's sake, so that the mercy of Christ may reach the world of Cain.

If God had destroyed Cain and cast off his seed, there'd be no conflict, would there, for the godly line of Seth? There'd be no enemies for Israel, either. But also, there would be no salvation for a lost world.

But God chose, for his chosen seed, to bear the pain of conflict, so that through Abraham's seed, salvation would come, not just to Israel, but to all the nations, even their enemies.

I think it's a very different perspective, doesn't it, to the struggles and battles that we may face as believers today. Especially if there's great opposition to our ministry and to our mission.

And we're praying, oh Lord, end this conflict. Well, the Bible tells us there will be an end. Abel's blood still cries out from the ground, and every injustice will be judged by God.

[26 : 40] God is not slow to judge. God is not unjust. But he is also merciful. And he's willing to suffer evil.

Even himself. So that the great harvest that he's determined to have, he shall have. See, when the day of conflict ends for God's people, the day of mercy will also end for God's enemies.

But until then, you see, because we face conflict, there is still a day of salvation. So we shouldn't fear, we shouldn't despair at the reality of the conflict that we will always face.

We share in Christ's sufferings. And it's for the sake of his mercy that many, even who are still enemies today, will bow down yet to him and be glad on that last day and welcome the coming of the Lord himself.

when multitudes from every tribe and tongue and nation will join in praising the risen Jesus. Even the enmity of the godless human heart serves the glorious purpose of God.

[27 : 59] The psalmist says even the wrath of man will praise him. And that perspective, I think, will help us with this second section, verses 17 to 24, where you see a city is built.

And these verses are all about the enigma of godless human history and they describe the ambiguity of human culture, human civilization, which has developed for the most part not seeking God's glory but pursuing man's glory and in opposition to God.

and yet is not totally abandoned by God. There's many gifts, there's many graces and mercies that he's given to human beings.

Do you see how the ongoing blessing of God is seen here even in the world of godless men? Cain knew his wife and she conceived Enoch, verse 17 and verse 18. He had children, he had grandchildren and he had great-grandchildren and so on.

So the blessing of God on humanity from creation be fruitful and multiply is still going on. It's not revoked. Even though, yes, it is tinged with pain, it's tinged by the curse, it's not utterly gone.

[29 : 14] And similarly, the cultural advancements and the civilization described is the outworking here of God's purpose for man, isn't it? To subdue the earth, to have dominion over the earth.

So here are human beings building cities, building culture, civilization beginning to flourish. But it's chiefly godless civilization.

It's seeking human autonomy, it's seeking human creativity and seeking for that what really only belongs to God himself, but what man has forfeited because he's rejected God.

So it's all done a wrong way. Verse 17, Cain builds a city, but it's not the city of God. It's the city of man. And he names it as his own creation after his own son, just like the Egyptians did after their pharaohs for their cities.

Moses' audience would easily understand what he's saying. Here's a city that magnifies me and my family. And he's doing it, you see, to seek his own solution to the curse that he's brought upon himself.

[30 : 20] Why do you build a city? Why do you build civilization and culture? Well, to give yourself identity, to give yourself society, to give yourself security, the very things that Cain had lost, that he'd robbed himself of because of his sin and because of his rejection of God.

And that's what humanity has been doing ever since. Still does today. Building to the glory of man. Building cities and nations and civilizations and cultures and philosophies to give ourselves identity, to give ourselves significance and society and security.

And see, that is what explains the enigma, the ambiguity of human history. Mankind is ruined, is ruined, but we are a glorious ruin nonetheless.

See, on the one hand here, there's a glorious advance of culture, of civilization. We go to verse 17, speaking about the birth of architecture, isn't it? Building cities. Verse 20, he's talking about the rise of agriculture from Jabba, the man of livestock and so on.

Verse 21, it's the rise of the arts from Jubal with his lyre, with his flutes, with music and the arts.

Verse 22 speaks of artisans, of Tubal Cain.

[31 : 45] He's the father of all the technology, all the science, metal work, and all the rest of it. The whole gamut, you see, of human civilization is being summarized there and it's a summary of great glory.

But it all comes from Cain. It all comes from godless humanity. But because, you see, man is still made in God's image. He is a ruin, but there is still glory even in that ruined state.

And he still blessed the earth despite all the rebellion. That's what we call, in theological terms, that's what we call God's common grace.

God's common grace is at work in the world for the whole world in blessing. He blesses the just and the unjust. Not all good things in the world that we rejoice for came from Christians, do they?

The vast majority of things that we rejoice in were created by complete pagans. But the glory of God, even in their ruin, even in their rejection of him, flourishes in all that they produce.

[32 : 51] And Moses is being very clear here. We're not to despise these things. Whether it's the music or the arts or technology or science or whatever it is, all of these good gifts come from God. They're God's common grace to all mankind.

Even though they came from the seed of Cain for the most part. Some Christians don't grasp that. They get confused. They want to make a hard divide between the secular and the sacred. We should only have Christian music as though that was somehow different from secular music. Well, the reformers would have none of that. They took a whole book in Scotland of ballads and pub songs and rewrote the words, Christian words to these tunes so that people could redeem them and sing and praise God with them.

Christians can sometimes say, oh no, if I'm ill I must have a Christian doctor or a Christian psychiatrist. Well, I've got nothing against Christian doctors.

I've certainly got nothing against Christian psychiatrists. I'm married to one. But let me tell you, if I'm ill I want a good doctor. Not necessarily a Christian one. In fact, just a Christian who's a bad doctor is no use at all to anybody.

[34 : 02] See, the whole point of these verses is to make God's people see that God even uses those who despise him to bring blessing to the world.

To bring blessing to his own people and to bring blessing to the whole wide world despite themselves. So we're not to despise the culture here, the civilization of Cain's descendants. We're to receive with thanksgiving, says Paul, all good gifts that God has brought into this world for us. We're not to despise them, but of course we're not to deify them either. Moses might well here be having a tilt also against pagan ideas that all these different things came from pagan deities, the pagan gods of music, the gods of wine, the gods of livestock and all the rest of it.

No, no, no, says Moses. All the humanities are just that. They are human inventions which come ultimately only from God through his common grace.

They were never to deify culture and civilization and bow down to them or spiritualize these things. No, they're just human things. Never be mesmerized by man's glory.

[35 : 18] Never make these things the object of our worship. They all are just gifts of God. Now that was a real warning for Israel. Read Deuteronomy chapter 12, for example, where again and again Moses warns against being ensnared by the Canaanite culture and their civilization that would lead them away from the Lord.

And that's a warning for us also because it's easy for us, particularly in the modern western world, to idolize things from man's culture, to idolize education, to idolize science, to idolize the arts, to idolize progress and so on.

It's easy to do that because there is a beguiling beauty in man's glory. But no, we're not to be deceived by these things. We've got to see the other side as well.

We've got to see the ruinous side of man's glory. We mustn't despise man's civilization, but we mustn't be deceived either about the dark side.

And verses 23 and 24 certainly highlight that, don't they? Look at them. Alongside this high culture, you see, as so often, goes high corruption. Verse 19 tells us that Lamech took two wives, despising God's creation order of one man and one woman to be one flesh forever.

[36 : 44] And along with his sexual deviation goes his social depravity, as is so often the case. And he's not just a murderer, is he, Lamech, like Cain.

He boasts about it. He sings about his murder. Verse 23, listen you wives. He's, I think, warning his wives, don't you try and mess with me. You touch Lamech, you get blown away.

That's what he's saying. A man wounded him, he says, and he retaliated. He murders him. In fact, the word there is a young man, a young boy. A little boy gave a little wound to Lamech, and Lamech smashed his life to pieces.

There's sheer pride, isn't there, in that. If Cain is avenged seven times by God, that's what God said. Look at me, Lamech. I'll outdo God.

It's 70 times seven, if you dare mess with me. Bruce Walkie says, Cain's identity is marred by violence.

[37 : 42] Lamech is marked by violence. And that too is a feature, isn't it, of the advance of human culture and civilization.

We know it only too well, don't we? Because glorious as he is, without God, man is a ruin, and man creates ruin, always. That's the enigma of godless human history.

The advance and the progress of culture and of civilization, and along with it, always the advance and the progress of corruption and of cruelty.

There's beauty, yes there is, but with it, there's brutal bestiality. There's enterprise, but with it, there's evil on a grand scale.

There's high culture, but alongside it, there's heinous cruelty. Together. And that is the story of human history, is it not? The rise of humanity, hand in hand with the rise of inhumanity.

[38 : 47] Ancient Babylon, home of the wonders of the world, but full of the weeping of the brutalized at the same time. Same with Egypt, same with Rome, same with Nazi Germany, as the beautiful music played in the concert halls and people's bodies were shoved into the ovens in the concentration camps.

And it's true in the celebrated cultures of today as well. Here's a piece written in one of our newspapers some time ago by a commentator.

At both ends of the life cycle, it seems that our society is rapidly evolving into a culture of death. What was once considered worthy of the utmost respect, human life and the right not to be killed, has now become an inconvenience to be snuffed out like a candle flame.

We're forgetting what it is to be human. Life has become very cheap. And just today, somebody sent me an article from the papers promoting a so-called death pod for Scotland, a personal gas chamber that you can make with your 3D printer for personal, private euthanization.

Life has become very cheap. And you see, it's baffling, this reality about history, it's baffling to the progressive liberal mindset that thinks that humans are basically good and that if only we're set free then our liberated genius will lead us to utopia.

[40 : 18] But there you see, the Bible looks at the world honestly and it faces the real enigma of human history head on and it explains it because God has not utterly departed from man.

That is why we have a glory of culture. But man has utterly departed from God and that is why we have the horrors of cruelty in our world that we see.

And it's a sobering picture, isn't it? Who can say that Genesis 4 does not speak about our world as we know it today? But it's not quite the end of the chapter, is it?

Do you notice? Because as well as explaining the world, the Bible points us to the true and the only answer to our world. Look at the last two verses because they tell us that in the midst of this enmity of conflict, in the midst of the enigma of human civilization and culture, in the midst of all of that, a church is born.

And these verses speak unequivocally about the endurance of godly human hope. over and against all the entail of sin and the curse that man has brought into the world, there is the inextinguishable certainty of God's promise of a future for those who will reject the hubris, the arrogance of man, and turn instead in humility to God.

[41 : 44] It's just tagged on at the end, isn't it? But in fact, you see, look, we're back to Adam and Eve again and their new offspring alongside Cain, Seth, whose name means granted or apportioned by God.

It might just seem to be a footnote in the story, but you see, that's the style of the God of the Bible. Behind all the vain glory of man, he is at work, quietly, in the background, but he is at work.

And here is the answer to all the pride of man and all the ruin of our world. The answer is a little child, but one in whom all the future of the human race rests.

Because here is the beginning of a new line, a counterculture, a holy seed in the midst. It's the evidence that God's promise hasn't failed.

It's the evidence that his seed will not be destroyed. No, a church is born, a community of faith will abide through everything until everything in God's gracious plan of salvation is accomplished.

[42 : 55] Look at what marks out this people of hope. First of all, do you see, they trust in the holy seed. Verse 25, she bore a son and called his name Seth because she said, God has appointed the seed of salvation.

the promise lives on. The promise lives on, is what she's saying. It's a wonderful echo in those words, isn't there? All down the ages, the word of faith and the promise.

Behold, said Isaiah, the virgin will conceive and bear a son and you will call his name Emmanuel, God with us. Behold, said the angel at last to a young peasant girl in Galilee, you shall conceive and

bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus and he will save his people from their sins. But here it is right back at the beginning. You see the pattern. The same gospel, the same hope. In the midst of a conflict, through all the progressive civilization of sin, through all the culture that is opposed to God, there is hope for those who will trust in the holy seed as promised. In verse 26, to Seth also a son was born and he called his name Enosh which means weakness. And that's significant, isn't it? Because people who trust in the holy seed will also be people who look not to their own strength, not to their own might, not to their own cities for salvation, not to their glory and their civilization and their culture, but rather they're content with a humble spirit. [44 : 36] They know their weakness. They humbly confess it publicly. Names his son. We're weak. Because they know that God opposes the proud like Cain and gives grace to the humble.

They know that he saves a humble people but the haughty he brings low. And so putting their trust in the holy seed and being content with a humble spirit, they call out, don't they, to the heavenly savior.

At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord. And that's the only answer to this world's longings. Don't look to this world's civilization and culture for your help.

That's the world of Cain. That's the world of Lamech. It can't help you. It can only hurt you and destroy you. But your help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

As you call on him from a humble heart and as you look to the coming of the promised seed, the promised one, the savior from heaven, that is the way to find the hope of his salvation.

[45 : 49] The people of faith long ago needed that word. As they went to the land of Canaan it offered them many, many alternative ways. It was a powerful culture.

All sorts of religion and culture that seemed so, so attractive. And Moses kept saying again and again and again, you will not worship the Lord your God in their way. But you will seek only the place that the Lord will choose to make his name dwell there.

And we need that just the same, don't we? when the conflicts of our life of faith weary us, when the sheer scale of the city of man and its culture opposed to us would sometimes overwhelm us.

Remember, friends, remember when all the glory of the culture and the civilization of this world lies in dust and ashes, the church of Jesus Christ will be standing still filled with glory.

And neither the city of man nor the gates of hell itself according to the Lord Jesus will ever prevail against it. So don't despair, however great your conflict. And we may not yet live through many far greater conflicts than we've ever known.

[47 : 10] Don't despair. Trust and keep on trusting in the holy seed and call out and keep on calling out to our heavenly Savior from humble hearts. That's the only hope amid the progressive civilization of sin.

But it's a certain hope. It will never, ever, ever disappoint us. Listen to these words from the Apostle Paul. Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly.

Their glory is their shame with minds set on earthly things. That is Cain's world. That is Lamech's world. But he says, our citizenship is in heaven.

And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him to even subject all things to himself.

[48 : 21] Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and my crying, stand firm thus in the Lord. A certain hope that will never disappoint us no matter all the hostility that we will face in this world of wonderful civilization and terrible corruption.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that your word is so contemporary that explains the world that we see and know, that shines truth upon every aspect of our life and of this world and gives us clarity of your way and the way that you call us.

Help us, Lord, to call on you constantly from humble hearts that you might lead us and help us and strengthen us day after day. You've kept your promise through all the ages.

You will keep it to the end. To keep us, we pray, faithful. for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.