

Cain's Consequence: Exile and Return

“‘Now you are cursed from the ground which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. From now on when you till the ground, it will not yield for you its best. You will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.’ Then Cain said to the Lord, ‘My punishment is more than I can bear’” (Gen. 4:11-13).

There are consequences for our actions. The choices we make affect others and can impact our circumstances, relationships and settings.

Cain violates a boundary. And the consequence is stiff. The consequence for the sin of Adam, Cain's father, was to be exiled from Eden. Exile is a form of death. Further, his work was cursed. The earth became difficult to cultivate. For Cain, the consequences go a step further—the ground will no longer yield crops at all.

Cain is exiled from his livelihood. He now must be a “restless wanderer on the earth.”

Cain responds: This is more than he can bear. In the second verse, Cain was described as someone who tilled the soil. It was not just his occupation; it was part of his perceived identity. Now that has been stripped away, Cain is forced into an exile from this familiarity, and left with the choice of what to do next.

We are all descendants of Cain and Adam. We are exiled from a perfect garden. We are not living the existence for which we were created, to rule the earth in harmony with one another, with nature and with our Creator. Like Cain, we are restless wanderers. We seek a place to settle, a place to rest. We desire a return of our authority, to rule the earth. We long

for a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Thankfully, there are also positive consequences for good choices. When we make a decision that honors God, serves others and reflects the glory of Christ in each of us, we reap positive consequences: the beauty of joy, the grit and intimacy of steadfastness, the hope of trusting, the return into the arms of our first love.

Our good choices may not work out as we hoped in this life. But exercising sound judgment and noble character always reaps a good consequence, a godly reward. Sometimes those rewards are put on layaway.

The great loss experienced by Adam and Cain can be restored through faithfulness. Our exile can be temporary, if we choose to accept the offer. That is a promise worth pursuing with all our strength. {eoa}

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