

98-03-15a Genesis Chapter 4 Presence of God -- The East Custom

This morning by asking God's blessing on us as we fellowship together. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your many expressions of grace, for preserving us, for providing for us and blessing us in so many ways.

We thank you for those things that we tend to forget or take for granted. We thank you for the things that we don't always recognize as blessings, our challenges and our trials and in some cases our sufferings. We know that all of these things work together for good to those who love you, to those who recognize their calling and their part in your purpose.

We thank you for our Savior, Jesus Christ. We thank you that because of Him we have the opportunity to be called by your name, to enjoy these great provisions in the person of your spirit and in the presence of your word. We pray this morning as we study your word together that God the Holy Spirit will give us insight and understanding.

We pray that these will be more than just interesting stories or events that took place years and years ago, but that the principles will be revealed and that we will see the application of those things in our own lives. We pray that as a result we will be better equipped to live lives that have meaning and purpose with relation to yourself and your plan. We pray that in all these things our Savior Jesus Christ will be glorified and we ask these things in His name.

Amen. For scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Psalm 68. We are continuing our study this morning in Genesis.

We will finish chapter 4 and if all goes well, actually move into chapter 5 this morning. We are looking specifically at the result of Cain's failure to change his mind. Cain has had a relationship with God.

He was the heir, the person to receive the inheritance from Adam. There is nothing standing in his way to be everything that God has promised and to take advantage of everything that God can provide. He is the firstborn son and these things are his by right of birth and yet through his choices he is losing them.

There is that same contrast expressed in Psalm 68. We want to watch particularly for a couple of things that pertain to our story of the dialogue between God and Cain. In this passage, if you will watch, I think you will see that there are several familiar sections in here.

If you have ever listened to Handel's Messiah, at Christmas time especially, I like to crank it up in July and all the other odd times of the year, but you know that the words of

those various portions of that great work are all taken from Scripture and several of those come from this Psalm. You will also see a passage that is quoted with slightly different wording in the New Testament that should be familiar to you as well. Let's look together at Psalm 68.

This is a Psalm of David, a song dedicated to the chief musician. It is a song of triumph, a song of glory. David says in Psalm 68, Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered.

Let also those who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

But let the righteous be glad, let them rejoice before God. Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly. Sing to God, sing praises to His name.

Extol Him who rides on the clouds. By His name, Yah, and rejoice before Him. A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.

God sets the solitary in families. He brings out those who are bound into prosperity. But the rebellious dwell in a dry land or a parched land.

O God, when You went out before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness, the earth shook, the heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God. Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. You, O God, sent a plentiful rain, whereby You confirmed Your inheritance when it was weary.

Your congregation dwelt in it. You, O God, provided from Your goodness for the poor. The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those who proclaimed it.

Kings of armies flee. They flee, and she who remains at home divides the spoil. Though You lie down among the sheepfolds, You will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold.

When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Zalmon. A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan. A mountain of many peaks is the mountain of Bashan.

Why do you fume with envy, you mountains of many peaks? This is the mountain which God desires to dwell in. Yes, the Lord will dwell in it forever. This section gets a little murky if you're not really tuned into the context, especially in verse 15 where it says, A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan.

Bashan represents the worship that took place in the land of Canaan before the Israelites came, the bulls of Bashan. There was a bull cult and so forth. And the mountain of Bashan is a high mountain.

There are many peaks, and this was a high place, a place of worship. When it says in verse 15, A mountain of God, this expression in Hebrew, of God, doesn't always mean of

the Lord God. Sometimes it means something that is so big and so great or impressive that they say it's of God.

There's some debate in passages where this phrase of God occurs as to whether it should be translated mighty or translated of God. For example, in Jonah, where it says a wind of God was hurled into the sea and made this big storm that resulted in Jonah being cast overboard. Well, is it a wind of God or is it just an incredibly mighty wind, this just terrific, catastrophic wind? And a lot of times when that phrase is used, there is a double entendre.

It is a mighty wind, but it is also reminding you that it is of God. But here, the idea, A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan, we have both senses there. The primary one being this is a very mighty mountain.

It seems to be the most impressive mountain in the area. It's the place where they go to worship on all of these peaks. And why do you fume with envy, you mountains of many peaks? Because God has not chosen Bashan to come down.

It's Mount Sinai. It's the Mount Zion where later his capital city will be and so forth. It talks about God's chariots and so forth, but look down at verse 20.

Our God is the God of salvation, and to God the Lord belong, escapes from death. But God will wound the head of his enemies, the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses. The Lord said, I will bring back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea, that your foot may crush them in blood.

Or your version may say that your feet may wade in blood or you will dip your foot in blood. But this language should sound a little bit familiar, the crushing of the head, the wounding of the heel idea. And the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from your enemies.

They have seen your procession, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after. Among them were the maidens playing timbrels.

Bless God in the congregations, the Lord from the fountain of Israel. The psalm goes on in that same vein, but the point of this passage as it serves as our scripture reading this morning is the choice that we make, which determines whether we are comfortable in the presence of God or whether we flee from the presence of God. And whether we are those who enjoy triumph and victory and crush the head of the enemies, the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses, we have a choice of whether or not we go on in our trespasses.

And God will discipline, God will judge those who do not change their mind. It takes humility, it takes acknowledgement of where we have gone astray, where we have

failed, where we have rebelled, to change our mind. This is the choice that Cain faces.

God comes to him and confronts him with his choice, as we have seen. Because of Cain's choice, he is not going to be one of those who enjoys the presence of God. He, in fact, is going to flee from the presence of God.

If we turn now back to Genesis chapter 4, we will be returning a little bit later to Psalm 68 as it pertains to a couple of other passages we will look at. But in Genesis chapter 4, verse 16, after the pronouncement of judgment on Cain for the murder of Abel, for his failure to return to the Lord, it is possible to recover even from something that heinous, that awful, to commit a murder. King David is an excellent example.

He murders Uriah the Hittite, but he is not driven out of the presence of the Lord. He does not wander as a fugitive and a vagabond, nor does he suffer the penalty of death. And interestingly, Cain does not either, but he is given the equivalent of a living death.

Those things that are most dear to him, the tilling of the soil, the producing of fruit from the ground, is denied to him. He will have no stability, no place. Why is this? Why is God so harsh with Cain? We say, well, he murdered his brother.

It is not just the murder of Abel. It is his refusal to return to God, his refusal to acknowledge. And that is one of the primary things we see in Psalm 68.

Those who continue and go on in their trespasses are those who will have their head wounded. You join the seed of the serpent. You join the crushed head brigade by failing to take advantage of God's grace through repentance.

So in verse 16, Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. We want to pause right here because it sounds like a fairly simple thing. Well, Cain and God are talking.

The interview was over, the conversation was ended, and so Cain sort of walked out the door and went his own way. But the presence of the Lord is a very significant theme in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. We won't have a chance to look at all of the passages, but I would like to direct your attention to just a couple.

Turn over to Exodus chapter 19, verses 3 through 6. The reason we want to spend a little bit of time on this is that this principle of dwelling in the presence of the Lord is one that applies to us as well. We're not Old Testament saints. We're not looking for the tabernacle or the temple.

But we still need to assign a very great importance to the principle of the presence of the Lord. This has been called different things. It's been referred to in terms of fellowship.

Are you in fellowship or out of fellowship and so forth? So we want to explore this a little

bit and be sure we understand it as it relates to ourselves. Exodus chapter 19. This is the occasion of the delivering of Israel from bondage in Egypt and very shortly thereafter the giving of the law on Mount Sinai.

So chapter 19 of Exodus. In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day they came to the wilderness of Sinai. For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness.

So Israel camped there before the mountain. And the mountain here is Mount Sinai. Verse 3. And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel, You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people, for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

Moses came and called for the elders of the people, laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded them. All the people answered together and said, All that the Lord has spoken, we will do. Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.

So here, the place where Moses first encountered God face to face, this is the mountain of the burning bush, where Moses had his first conversation with God, first received his commission to go and be the instrument by which Israel would be delivered out of bondage. Now they are back on that mountain, and this fulfills the prophecy. We noted this some weeks ago, where God said, This will be a sign to you, you will worship me on this very spot down the road.

And here they are back in that place of worship. Now Moses is up there on the mountain, he sees the bush, he approaches, and God says, Take off your shoes from off your feet. The place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

They're back at this same place, and the presence of God is there. God says, I've brought you out of bondage and brought you to myself. I've brought you to this mountain, to the place of my presence.

They have come to the presence of the Lord, much as Cain stands in the presence of the Lord. But I invite you to notice the differences between Cain's experience in the presence of the Lord, and even Moses' experience in this very spot, in the presence of the Lord, talking with God. It's different this time.

Look at verse 9. The Lord said to Moses, Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that

the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever. Moses told the words of the people to the Lord. You notice Moses is going back and forth.

The Lord says something, and he goes and tells the people. The people say something, he goes back and tells the Lord. The Lord says something, he goes back and tells the people.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Go to the people, and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base.

Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow. Whether man or beast, he shall not live.

When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain. So Moses goes down and tells the people this. They set the security perimeter around the mountain.

And in verse 17, Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. This is a bigger, smokier fire than the one that Moses saw in the bush that was not consumed, isn't it? This is a much bigger deal.

This could be seen for a distance of miles. It's a spectacle of enormous proportions. The Lord descended upon it in fire.

Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai on the top of the mountain, and the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Here is this fearsome sight. This is so fearsome that if you look over in chapter 20, verse 18, all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. And when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.

You know how it is when they put a perimeter around a crime scene, or when they make a little security cordon around some celebrity or some event. I had the chance once in London to be at Buckingham Palace when they changed the guard. They've got the bobbies out there, and they've got a fence and so forth.

You can come a certain distance, and then you can't get any closer. So all the tourists

with their cameras get as close as they can, and they're sticking them through the bars of the little wrought iron fence that surrounds Buckingham Palace. Here's the guard marching in and out.

I was in London and saw this royal carriage go in, drawn by these beautiful horses with these wonderful harnesses and things. People press as close as they can. My brother worked as a security guard for rock concerts, moonlighting as a marine.

They'll grab somebody and pass them to the front of the crowd on the hands and the shoulders of the people, and then try to throw them across the gap between the security perimeter and where the celebrities are. But people want to crowd close. They want to get as near as they can.

And that's how it started out. Everybody crowded close to the perimeter around the mountain. But when God descended, when the presence of God was manifest, the people ran off.

They didn't get anywhere near even the perimeter of the mountain. They went far away because this was the presence of God. They tell Moses in verse 19, You speak with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

We don't want him talking to us. You go and talk to God. You walk up into the smoke and so forth.

Moses said to the people, Do not fear, for God has come to test you, and that his fear may be before you, so that you may not sin. So the people stood far off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was. Then the Lord said to Moses, Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

Now here is the opportunity to be in the presence of God. Now there are others beside Moses that could have come and approached. Turn back to chapter 19 and look at verse 20.

The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai on the top of the mountain. The Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the Lord said to Moses, Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish.

Now this is to gawk at the Lord. The idea here is that they're not there because they understand the significance of the presence of God, but it's a wonder. It's like a crime scene where people want to see if they can... Why is it that when there's a traffic accident, the traffic in the opposite lane slows down? What are people hoping to see? You know, something gory, something unusual and spectacular.

It's always very frustrating. You know my feelings about being in traffic to begin with.

And when there's a wreck in the opposite side, why is it everybody slows down on the perfectly good side? People want to gawk.

They want to look. They want to gaze at something that is unusual that maybe they haven't seen before and might not see again. Wouldn't it be interesting to see the terrible thing that might have happened to the driver of this car? Well, this is what God says.

I don't want people coming up here to gaze. That's a wrong motivation. But he does say in verse 22, Let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.

God basically says Aaron and the priests can come up. But Moses says to the Lord, The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for you warned us, saying, Set bounds around it, around the mountain and consecrate it. And the Lord appears to be a little bit disgusted here in verse 24.

The Lord said to him, Away, get down, and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest he break out against them. And what's basically going on in this little dialogue between Moses and the Lord is, the Lord says, It's okay for the priests to come up.

Moses says, Remember what you said about the boundaries? He's basically saying, I don't think the priests ought to come up. And God appears to be a little disgusted. He says, Okay, fine.

You go down and come back up and only bring Aaron with you. Don't bring the priests. And it is an indictment of the priests.

They're not really qualified to come up. Even the priests, if they're consecrated, are going to be coming up for the wrong reasons. This is the reason that this generation is going to drop in the wilderness and not enter the land.

They could have drawn near. They could have stood around the boundary and seen the glory of God and recognized it for what it was. But instead of being impressed and blessed by the presence of God, they are made afraid.

They are redeemed. They have come out of Egypt under the blood of the Lamb. And yet, they are afraid of the God of their deliverance.

They are afraid of the God of their salvation. Moses is not afraid. What's the difference? It's the same difference that allows Moses to see the glory of God over in Exodus 34.

God says, I will have compassion on whom I have had compassion. I will have mercy on whom I have had mercy. And when Moses makes the request to God, let me see your

glory, God grants it.

He hides Moses in the cleft of the rock and covers him with his hand and passes by and lets him see his hindward parts, so to speak, a lesser manifestation of his glory. Because Moses wants it. Moses has a relationship with God that enables him to enter into God's presence without fear.

But even Moses, returning from the mountain, scares the Israelites to death. He glows in the dark. They say, cover up your face.

Your face is shining. You're making us afraid. The presence of God can either be a blessing or it can incite fear.

Cain does not find the presence of God to be a blessing. Why? Because he does not repent. He doesn't depart from his trespasses.

He's not interested in being in the presence of God. He departs out of it. The amazing thing about this is that we're dealing with believers.

We're dealing with people for whom the issue is not eternal salvation, but life. In Exodus 20, verses 18-21, which we have just read, the people say, don't let God speak with us lest we die. People who are redeemed, people who have been promised by God that they will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, that He will bless them and make them a special treasure to Him, are afraid of Him.

What a terrible thing for us to be fearful of God. Why would we be fearful? Why would we be afraid? Because our heart is not right before God. If we find ourselves timid in going to the God who saved us and the God who sent His Son, Jesus Christ, the God of compassion and the God of mercy, if we find ourselves afraid, it's not because of who and what God is.

It is because of who and what we are. It's because of our choice. And like Cain, we are choosing to flee the presence of God.

Like Israel, we are backing away from the presence of God, and the reason is we are not acknowledging God's grace. We're not acknowledging the power of His forgiveness. We're not acknowledging... These people have been sanctified.

They've been qualified to stand before the mountain. God says, cleanse yourselves, on the third day I will come, and you can stand there. You can come all the way up to the border of the mountain.

You priests, you can come right on up with Moses and Aaron. And yet, they are afraid, and they back off. Why is this? And why is the presence of God here so much more fearsome than it was to Cain or to Moses at the burning bush and other places where

God confronted people? Well, if you look at Romans 5, in verse 20, you will recall that this is the time of the giving of the law.

And what does the giving of the law do? In Cain's day and in the earlier days of Moses' life, the law has not yet come in. And sin is not counted up where there is no law. Remember Paul's argument in Romans.

Before the law came, death reigned from Adam to Moses, but sin was not reckoned. But the law came. And this occasion we're looking at is the coming of the law.

The law entered that the offense might abound. People became very aware of sin. The law came to emphasize and point out the difference between the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man.

When I first became an instructor of gunnery at Fort Sill, I, like all gunnery instructors, went through a very intensive rehearsal program. For the first three and a half months of my tour at Fort Sill, I did nothing but learn gunnery from the standpoint of teaching it. And one of the things that is required of a gunnery instructor is you have to present every single lesson that you're ever going to teach to students, you have to first present that class in an empty classroom with no one there except a fully qualified and experienced gunnery instructor.

You teach the class to a teacher. And he will sit there and he will make the typical dumb student mistakes. He will ask the typical dumb student questions.

He will take a yellow pad and write notes on everything you say and give you a critique. And after the class is over, then he will go over that class with you. He will either pass you or fail you.

If he's not satisfied with the way you gave the class, you've got to go back and give it again. One of the first principles that I was taught as a gunnery instructor is in order to hold the attention of the students and in order to make your classes effective, they have to know why you are presenting this. If you're going to teach a class on complementary angle of sight, which is an obscure ballistic trajectory thing, if you're going to spend a day on complementary angle of sight, why is anybody going to pay attention to you? They know that they may be tested, but why is it important? So we would begin classes by illustrating why this principle is important.

We had lots of illustrations from the war in Vietnam where someone who disregarded the principles that we were teaching wound up killing their own troops, wound up failing to achieve the fire support that was needed and so forth. The whole principle is you create the need. If you're going to present a solution, someone who sees that solution has to understand the need for it.

A drunk can fall overboard off of a yacht and be so oblivious to reality that they don't

really recognize that they're drowning. Well, you can throw all the life rings you want, and if someone doesn't think they're drowning, they're not going to grab a hold. No one is going to recognize the value of a solution unless they are aware of the severity of the problem.

And in some cases, God lets us experience the severity of our problem, the awful power of it, the overwhelming slavery that we may feel to it. Our inability to escape it. Our inability to overcome it.

Because, as Jesus says about the woman who was washing his feet with her hair, the Pharisee says if he knew that this woman was a harlot, he wouldn't let her anywhere near him. He wouldn't let her in his presence. But he says, this woman has been forgiven much, and he who has been forgiven little loves little.

He who has been forgiven much loves much. The law came in to impress us with the magnitude of our sin problem. That's why when Israel comes up to the mountain, it's such a fearsome sight.

That's why people are so impressed with the holiness and unapproachability of God in this situation. Because the law is coming in to make that distinction clear. How can we possibly approach this God? How can we possibly be in the presence of this God? Well, the entire population of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, don't know the answer to that question.

Moses does. And Moses marches up the mountain into the thick cloud, up into the very presence of God, the presence that lights him up like a Christmas tree. Why? Moses understands the mercy of God.

Moses understands the compassion of God. And you go to Exodus 34. And Moses is so bold as to not only enter the presence of God, but to ask for a glimpse of God's glory.

And so in Exodus 33, verse 18, he's having a conversation with God and he says, please show me your glory. And God answers in Exodus 33, verse 19. He said, I will make all my goodness pass before you and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you.

I will be gracious to whom I have been gracious. And if your English says anything different than that, you need to correct it. Because there are two different forms of the verb here.

They are not both future tenses. It literally says here in the quote of this passage in Romans 9 in the Greek, also reflects the difference in verb form. I will be gracious to whom I have been gracious.

And I will have compassion on whom I have had compassion. And so then later on in 34.5, the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there. Stood with Moses there.

Moses in the presence of God proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. Then you have sort of a semicolon.

By no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation. And if you look at that in other contexts, it is the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, of those who don't avail themselves of God's grace, of those who do not depart from their transgression or their trespass, those who are not repentant. This is Cain's problem.

The reason Cain and his offspring are not blessed by God, don't enjoy the presence of God, do not call upon the name of God is that they are not interested in the compassion and the mercy of God. They are not willing to avail themselves of it by acknowledging their transgression. And that's the whole point of the Old Testament age is to acknowledge where we stand before God and our need for God's grace.

But Moses does, and Moses is confident in God's compassion and God's mercy. And Moses sees things that no other Old Testament saint saw because God walks before him and he enjoys the presence of God. Now what does all that have to do with Cain and what does all that have to do with us? There are other passages that talk about the presence of the Lord.

Israel, for example, in 2 Kings 13.23, even though they have experienced great failures, God says He did not cast them from His presence. They have transgressed. They have erred greatly.

But God says He did not abandon them. He did not cast them from His presence. But they reach a point in their rebellion and their apathy toward God where God finally does cast them from His presence.

And you find that in 2 Kings 24.20. It is possible to basically wear out God's patience. This is what Israel does. Israel represents believers.

Israel is composed of believers. And by their impenitence and hardness of heart, they eventually exhaust the patience of God. They exhaust the grace of God.

And there is no more remedy. And God casts them from His presence. This is what Cain does.

He is unrepentant. God confronts him on different occasions. He does not acknowledge.

He does not seek God's forgiveness. He doesn't seek out God's mercy and God's grace. He's not interested in it.

And so he leaves the presence of God. Very interesting parallel when we talk about being the seed of the serpent versus the seed of the woman. Satan himself, twice in Job, is said to go forth from the presence of the Lord.

He comes up there and has a little conversation about Job. God says, well, you can take away the things that he has, but don't touch Job himself. So then it says, for example, in Job 1.12, then Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.

Identical phrase to what it says about Cain. And that's not unintentional. Satan doesn't particularly enjoy the presence of the Lord.

He will leave the presence of the Lord to go and do evil. To go and harm everything that Job has. And later on in Job 2.7, Satan departs from the presence of the Lord again to afflict Job himself.

The contrasting principle you can see in Psalm 51 and verse 1. And this is what we need to keep in mind ourselves. Again, this is a prayer of David. This is the Psalm of David.

When Nathan the prophet went to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba, after the murder of Uriah the Hittite, after his adultery with Bathsheba, he goes to God and says, Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness, according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. Blot out my transgressions. Entirely different attitude, isn't it? Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me.

Against You and You only have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight, that You may be found just when You speak and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part You will make me to know Your wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice.

Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me by Your generous spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways and sinners shall be converted to You." It is attitude of heart that determines where we stand before God. We can stand in His presence or we can find ourselves uncomfortable in His presence, distancing ourselves from His presence, standing afar off like the nation of Israel, that generation that does not enter the land of promise.

Even though they have been delivered, even though God has cleansed them and has

redeemed them, they are fearful of the God of their deliverance. Jesus Christ is going to return one day for us. And Paul says several times in the New Testament that it is important for us to pursue a walk with God, to pursue a knowledge of God, so that we are not ashamed at His coming.

Some of us will be ashamed when the presence of God returns in the physical sense, in the person of Jesus Christ. What will we do? Will we be like Moses and go forward to enjoy the presence of God, to seek to see the glory of God revealed? Or are we going to stand afar off and say, one of you other people go forward there and talk to God. I'm just going to stand back here at a comfortable distance.

It's up to us. And it isn't because of anything that we have done. David has committed these bad sins.

David has committed adultery. David has committed murder. But David understands the compassion and the mercy of God.

And he says, God, You can create in me a clean heart. You can cleanse me. You can purge me.

And You can enable me to continue to enjoy Your presence and Your Spirit. Please don't take these things from me. It's our choice.

It all depends on whether or not, as we saw in Psalm 68, we want to continue in our trespasses or acknowledge them and have them cleansed. It's entirely up to us. God is merciful.

God is compassionate. There is nothing He wants more than to cleanse us and to bring us to Himself and into His presence. But we make the choice.

And it's a faith choice. We have to trust that God is able to purge and that God is able to cleanse. We have to trust that we will not be struck down in His presence.

And our desire for God's presence and our willingness to march up the mountain, as it were, depends in part on our faith in God's compassion and our faith in God's mercy. And that's why He demonstrates it throughout the Scripture for us. And that's why we have Moses as a wonderful example in contrast to Cain, in contrast to the people of this generation in Israel.

So it gives us something to think about. And it is a great encouragement because it also gives us a promise to cling to by faith. Let's pause and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see the significance of where Cain goes when he departs from the presence of the Lord. Is there any meaning to the land of the East? We'll find that out when we come back.