4 And the man lay* with his wife Eve, and she conceived, and gave birth to Cain. Then she said, I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah. 2And again she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, but Cain worked the soil.

3Now in the course of time Cain brought an offering to Jehovah consisting of the fruit of the ground. 4And Abel also brought an offering, consisting of the firstborn of his flock together with their fat portions. And Jehovah looked with favor upon Abel and his offering; 5but he did not look with favor upon Cain and his offering. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

6And Jehovah said to Cain, Why are you angry? And why is your face downcast? 7If you do what is right, shall your spirit not be lifted up? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is to master you, but you must rule over it.

8Then Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And while they were in the field, Cain attacked Abel his brother, and killed him. 9Then Jehovah said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother? And he said, I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper? 10And Jehovah said, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. 11And now you shall be cursed by the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood which has been shed by your hand. 12From now on, when you till the ground it shall not yield its produce for you; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth. 13Then Cain said to Jehovah, My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth. Now whoever shall find me will kill me. 15So Jehovah said to him, Whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on that man sevenfold. And Jehovah placed a mark upon Cain, so that no one who met him would kill him. 16Then Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah, and settled in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. 17And Cain lay with* his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch. And Cain built a city, and named the city after his son, Enoch. 18And to Enoch Irad was born; and Irad was the father of Mehujael; and Mehujael was the father of Methushael; and Methushael was the father of Lamech.

19Lamech took for himself two wives; the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other was Zillah. 20And Adah gave birth to Jabal; Jabal became the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. 21And his brother's name was Jubal; Jubal became the father of all those who play the harp and the flute. 22And Zillah also gave birth to a son named Tubal-cain, he became the forger of all kinds of tools made of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain’s sister was Naamah.

23Then Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to my speech. I will kill a man if he wounds me, even a young man if he so much as bruises me. 24If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, certainly Lamech shall avenge himself seventy sevenfold.

25And Adam lay with* his wife again; and she gave birth to a son. She named him Seth, Because, she explained, God has given me another child in the place of Abel; since Cain killed him. 26And Seth also had a son; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of Jehovah. (Gen. 4:1-26)

Literally, he knew his wife
Introduction

Sometime between 1919 and 1921, while he was serving as Great Britain’s Secretary of State, Winston Churchill jotted down his thoughts on the destructive evils unleashed upon the world by the First World War. He wrote as follows:

All the horrors of all the ages were brought together ... Neither peoples nor rulers drew the line at any deed that they thought could help them to win. Germany, having let Hell loose, took the lead in deeds of terror; but she was followed step by step by the ... avenging nations she had assailed. Every outrage against humanity or international law was repaid by reprisals—often on a greater scale than the original offense ... The wounded died between the lines: the dead moldered into the soil. Merchant ships and neutral ships and hospital ships were sunk on the seas and all on board were left to their fate, or killed as they swam. Every effort was made to starve whole nations into submission without regard to age or sex. Cities ... were smashed by artillery. Bombs from the air were cast down indiscriminately ... Europe and large parts of Asia and Africa became one vast battlefield ... (Modern Times, Paul Johnson, Harper and Row, New York, NY, pp.13-14)

Winston Churchill witnessed a time in history when the awfulness of human sinfulness and diabolical evil was unleashed upon the world. The period of human history recorded in Genesis 4 was much the same. It was a time when the sinfulness of man and the evil of the devil were permitted to be unleashed upon the world. But the whole point of this passage is that, despite the sinfulness of sin, we as Christians must not lose confidence in the saving promises of God.

I. Continue to Trust in God’s Promises, Even When Sin “Overcomes” the Righteous

Adam and Eve believed God’s promise recorded in Genesis 3:15, and with the birth of their first born son they had high expectations that he was the fulfillment of that promise, this is evident from Eve’s exclamation, “I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah” (vs. 1.) But rather than being the expected Savior, their first born son would prove to “belong to the evil one,” note 1 Jn. 3:12,

Cain belonged to the evil one, and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because his own works were evil. (1 Jn. 3:12)

Far from being the Savior of God’s covenant people, Cain became the murderer of his righteous brother, Abel. Cain murdered Abel precisely because Cain “belonged to the evil one.” Here is the first instance in which the enmity the children of devil harbor against the children of God was openly expressed (cp. John 8:40a, 44a and John 15:18-19.)
Jesus said: “But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God. …44You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning …” (Jn. 8:40a, 44a)

Jesus said: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before you. 19If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (Jn. 15:18-19)

Cain murdered Abel precisely because his own works were evil, and his brother’s works were righteous. Cain exhibited the appearance of righteousness: "Cain brought ... an offering to Jehovah" (vs.3.) But the true nature of his heart was exposed when his brother presented his offering: “Abel also brought an offering, consisting of the firstborn of his flock together with their fat portions” (vs. 4.) Abel’s offering was in keeping with the Great Commandment recorded in Matthew 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Abel’s offering convicted Cain by exposing the true nature of his heart: “The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable to Jehovah. How much more is this so when he brings it with an evil intent!’ (Prov. 21:27.)

Because he belonged to the evil one, Cain’s response was not to repent of his works, but rather to remove the righteous man by murdering him (cp. John 3:19-20 and John 15:24):

And this is the reason for the condemnation: the Light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil. 20Everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, so that his works will not be exposed. (Jn. 3:19-20)

Jesus said, "If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not have had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. (Jn. 15:24)

These events involving their two sons must have been devastating to Adam and Eve. They had been promised a Savior. Their first son not only does not fulfill the promise, but he murders his righteous brother. This is the hour when the power of darkness asserted itself, and now what will become of God’s promise? But the overall message of this passage is that, as Christians, we must continue to trust in God’s promises, even when sin “overcomes” the righteous.

II. Continue to Trust in God’s Promises, Even When Sin Becomes Exceedingly Sinful

As this passage of Scripture continues to trace the early descendants of Adam, things go from bad to worse. Genesis 4:16-24 records the line of Cain unto the
sixth generation. By the sixth generation the exceeding sinfulness of sin has become evident. The first generation (Cain) and the sixth generation (Lamech) are especially highlighted in order to show the increasing dominion of sin.

Genesis 4:9-17 gives an account of the heart and history of Cain. When the LORD confronts him, questioning him about his brother, Cain seeks to conceal his guilt: he does not know where his brother is, and he is not responsible for his brother’s well-being. His question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” implies that Cain does not think that his brother’s well-being is his responsibility. Contrast Cain’s view with Matthew 22:39, (“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”) and Matthew 7:12 (“Therefore, with regard to all things, do to others what you would want them to do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”)

When the LORD pronounces His judgment against Cain, Cain exclaims, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" (vs. 13.) There is no repentance, no asking for forgiveness and no seeking restoration to God. But Cain does recognize his need for God’s divine protection if he is going to survive to live out his earthly days. Cain declares, "[In my present state], whoever shall find me will kill me" (vs. 14). The LORD graciously grants Cain a divine protection: He placed a mark upon Cain (vs. 15.) This mark may have been like the divine protection given to Jacob at a later date:

    Jacob and his family began their journey, and a terror from God fell upon the cities that were all around them, so the inhabitants of those cities did not pursue the sons of Jacob. (Gen. 35:5)

Note the LORD’s mercy and longsuffering—as seen by the fact that He did not immediately put Cain to death and consign him to eternal damnation, as well as by His use of His covenant name, "Jehovah." All are intended to invite Cain to return to the LORD and be saved. But rather than respond to God’s offer of mercy, verse 16 immediately reports, "Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah." Now God’s long-suffering and mercy towards Cain become an opportunity for sin to show its true awfulness and wickedness in Cain and his descendants and thus show that they are truly deserving of the divine judgment.

Cain names his son “Enoch” (from the Hebrew "םות", meaning “to initiate,” "to consecrate"); and then Cain builds a city with the same name (vs. 17.) Rather than take advantage of the LORD’s offer for him to return and be saved, Cain is just going to take advantage of the LORD’s mercy for his own personal benefit. Cain is going to make a new start, a new life for himself; and rather than be a wanderer (vs. 12b), Cain will build a city in defiance of God.

The history of the Cainites now skips through the following generations until it comes to Lamech, the sixth generation (4:19-24). Lamech took two wives: a violation and total disregard for God’s original creation ordinance as stipulated
in Genesis 2:24, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall be bound to his wife; and they shall be one flesh.” Even Cain respected God’s creation ordinance, according to Genesis 4:17, “Cain lay with his wife” (singular.)

Lamech, in his song, reveals the exceeding sinfulness of sin. There is no sense of dependence on God; rather, there is complete self-reliance. Cain confessed that he needed God’s protection (vs. 14b.) Lamech, perhaps wielding a sword forged by his son, Tubal-Cain (vs. 22,) declares that his might and his weapons will defend him: “I will kill a man if he wounds me.”

There is also the spirit of ungodly pride. Lamech’s whole emphasis is, This is what I, Lamech, will do! I will kill anyone who dares to injure me! Finally, there is the spirit of blood-thirsty vengeance. Lamech’s attitude is, If anyone dares so much as to bruise me, I will kill him! Lamech declares, “I will avenge myself seventy-seven-fold”—this is far beyond “an eye for an eye;” rather, Lamech speaks of ruthless, merciless butchering at the least provocation. Here is the desire to usurp the role of God as Judge, and to do so with a vengeance. Lamech’s cry is, “I shall avenge myself!” In Romans 12:19 the Apostle Paul exhorts us, “Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but allow God to express his wrath, for it is written, ‘Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord.’” God promised to avenge Cain 7-fold; Lamech vows to avenge himself 77-fold.

By the time the line of Cain has come to the sixth generation, the exceeding sinfulness of sin has revealed itself. When the spirit of Lamech is permitted to express itself, the world becomes a hell on earth. Churchill, describing the state of the nations during World War I, commented:

Every outrage against humanity or international law was repaid by reprisals—often on a greater scale and of longer duration than the original offense.

What Churchill was describing is the spirit of Lamech.

But the overall message of this passage is that, as Christians, we must continue to trust in God’s promises, even when sin becomes exceedingly sinful.

III. Continue to Trust in God’s Promises, Because the Lord is Faithful to Fulfill Those Promises

In time the Lord caused Eve to bear another son. Eve recognizes the distinctiveness of this son: he was appointed by God to replace Abel. She refers to him as "another child," (or, "another offspring," ) recalling the words of the promise recorded in Genesis 3:15. The Lord must have made it clear to Adam and Eve that this son, Seth, was the one who would carry on the special covenant line, which would eventually give birth to the promised Savior.
Just when it appeared that the covenant line had been extinguished with the murder of Abel, the Lord faithfully provides another son to insure that the divine promises will be fulfilled. Note that when Eve speaks of this newborn son she declares, "God [Elohim] has given me another child." What Cain (in human wickedness) took from her, that has Elohim (God in His divine omnipotence) restored. (Commentary on Genesis, Keil and Delitsch, The Pentateuch, Vol.1, p.119.)

Then, instead of suffering the same fate as Abel, Seth gives birth to the next generation in the covenant line. Seth names his son "Enosh" (from the Hebrew, נון, meaning, "to be weak," "to be frail"). Seth is acknowledging our absolute dependence on the power of God to preserve His people and fulfill His promises.

Verse 26 informs us that it was at this time "men began to call upon the name of Jehovah." Not only was the covenant line restored with the birth of Seth and his descendants; but the Lord began to call other men out of the kingdom of darkness and bring them into His covenant of grace and into His kingdom. We must read the statement of verse 26 in light of such passages as Joel 2:32, "whoever calls on the name of Jehovah [or, the Lord,] shall be saved." Here was the beginning of what Revelation 7:9-10 describes in its final form:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation and from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were dressed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. 

10They cry out with a loud voice, "We attribute our salvation to our God—the one who sits on the throne—and to the Lamb!" (Rev. 7:9-10)

The message of this passage becomes clear in the light of these closing verses: Continue to trust in God’s promises, because the Lord is able and faithful to fulfill those promises.

Conclusion

Despite the sinfulness of sin, we must not lose confidence in the saving promises of God. Continue to trust in the saving promises of God, even when sin dominates this present world.