

## TRUSTING GOD'S PLAN, PURPOSE, AND DESIGN

*"Sin is Crouching at My Door" Genesis 4:1-8*

October 6, 2024

**INTRO.:** The mighty Niagara River plummets some 180 feet at the American and Horseshoe Falls. Before the falls, there are violent, turbulent rapids. Farther upstream, however, where the river's current flows more gently, boats are able to navigate. Just before the Welland River empties into the Niagara, a pedestrian walkway spans the river. Posted on this bridge's pylons is a warning sign for all boaters: "Do you have an anchor?" followed by, "Do you know how to use it?" Faith, like an anchor, is something we need to have and use to avoid spiritual cataclysm.

*Source: Paul Adams in Fresh Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching (Baker), from the editors of Leadership.*

What anchors do you and I need if we are to navigate life? We are continuing our series, **TRUSTING GOD'S PLAN, PURPOSE, AND DESIGN** from Genesis, the first book in the Bible. Part of God's plan, purpose, and design is that we develop relationships with others. For all those who have come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord there are precious promises of God's constant presence in our lives. We know that because of the truth we read in the Bible, the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God.

**Hebrews 13:5** Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

**John 10:28–30** I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. **30** I and the Father are one."

**Psalms 91:1–4** He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. **2** I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." **3** Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. **4** He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

God is ever-present in the believer's life and God wants us to have relationships with those who have yet to come to faith in Christ as well as deeper relationships with those who know Jesus. In other words, God does not want us to attempt to do the Christian life alone.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9–12** Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: **10** If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! **11** Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? **12** Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

**Hebrews 10:23–25** Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. **25** Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

For the next few weeks, I want to look at the hindrances to developing relationships with people through Cain's example in Genesis 4. We will look at 4 things today: **GOD'S DIRECTION**, **GOD'S WARNING**, **SIN'S DESIRE**, and **CAIN'S DECISION**.

First, we're going to read through Genesis 4:1-8 and, as we do so, see if you can pick out those four points.

**Genesis 4:1–2** Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

## **GOD'S DIRECTION**

The first two verses of the chapter speak of Adam and Eve having two sons, Cain and Abel. We are reminded that God is the source of physical life, that children are a gift from Him. We saw in Genesis 2 that God created Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from Adam's rib and they were united in marriage.

**Genesis 2:23–24** The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." **24** For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

It was through this relationship that God gave them children. Next, we learn a little about their two sons. Abel kept the flocks while Cain worked the soil. It appears that Cain followed in the footsteps of his father, Adam.

**Genesis 4:3-4a** In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.

*"in the course of time:"* this literally reads, "at the end of days" meaning "at a specific appointed time." (Arnold Fruchtenbaum) What Moses is about to mention God had an appointed time for it to happen.

At the appointed time Cain and Abel brought an offering to the Lord. Up to this point we haven't read about any specific instructions concerning the offerings but there must have been some. Cain and Abel offer two different types of offerings to the Lord.

Cain brings "some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord" while Abel brought "fat portions from the firstborn of his flock."

What is the Lord's reaction to these two types of offering?

**Genesis 4:4b-5a** The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.

*"with respect:"* Abel's offering had God's approval

*"he had not respect:"* God did not approve of Cain's offering.

There are different opinions as to why God approved of Abel's offering but disapproved of Cain's offering. Some say that Cain did not have the right attitude. Yet, this passage and other passages seem to point to the offering being wrong.

**Hebrews 11:4** By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

When you read further into the Old Testament the harvest offerings (grain, fruit, etc.) were of the first fruits. The sacrifices were to be of blood, an unblemished, first born animal sacrifice.

The blood sacrifice reminds us of what we read in Hebrews 9:22

**Hebrews 9:22** In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

God expected His followers to obey Him, to heed His directions. From this passage in Genesis, we can conclude that Cain did not follow God's directions.

**Deuteronomy 6:1–3** These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, **2** so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. **3** Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.

**John 14:23** Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Please hear what I am about to say. Keeping God's commands, keeping His Word will not get you to heaven, it is not the way to His forgiveness. We need to first recognize that we can't obey God on our own. When a person comes to

faith in Christ they are given (by God) a new heart, a desire to obey God, and the Holy Spirit living inside them, making obedience to God possible. Also, please know that salvation comes with a true desire to obey God, our lives are changed by God.

**1 John 1:6-7** If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

So, God gives direction to Cain and Abel. Next, we see:

### **GOD'S WARNING**

What is Cain's reaction to God not accepting his sacrifice?

**Genesis 5b** So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Cain was not happy with God.

A.W. Pink: "Cain was furious that all his labors should stand for nothing. He was angry at the thought that he could not approach and worship God according to the dictates of his own mind. And, as we shall see later, he was filled with wrath as he contemplated the exaltation of Abel above him."

Even during Cain's anger, God shows grace and patience. God begins by asking Cain some questions.

**Genesis 4:6-7a** Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?"

There are other places where God asks questions in the middle of people's disobedience. One example is Jonah. God had given Jonah a second chance to obey God and go to Nineveh to preach, warning them of God's coming judgment. God worked and the people of Nineveh repented but Jonah was so angry with the Ninevites because of their cruelty to the Israelites, he was steaming mad that God would forgive them when they repented. He had forgotten God's grace and mercy shown to him.

**Jonah 4:4** But the LORD replied, "Have you any right to be angry?"

God even opens the door for Cain to get it right with God.

**Genesis 4:7a** If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?

So many people think there are two Gods in the Bible. The God of the Old Testament who is full of anger, wrath, and judgment. Then, there is the God of the New Testament who is full of love, grace, and forgiveness. If we read God's Word correctly God clearly shows grace and mercy throughout the Bible along with justice and righteousness. God showed grace and mercy to Adam and Eve when they first sinned. He could have taken their lives immediately. Yes, there were severe consequences for their sins, but God also promised a future deliverer (Genesis 3:15).

God gives Cain the opportunity to get it right. Today, God also gives the opportunity to get it right. For the unbeliever, the opportunity to come to faith.

**John 3:16** "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For the believer when they sin, and their communication with God is broken, God also provides the opportunity.

**1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

As God observes Cain's reaction He gives the following warning:

**Genesis 4:7b** "But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door."

This is the first use of the word, sin, in the Bible. This is a great visual, for He pictures sin as crouching like a lion ready to pounce on its prey.

**Genesis 49:9** You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?

One commentator says, "This refers to the evil inclination, which continually desires to make man sin."

**Romans 13:14 (ESV)** — **14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

You and I are only one step from disaster. We see this in many areas. It grieves me when I see pastors, whom I greatly respect, commit immorality, after many years of faithful ministry. It also reminds me that I need to beware and have barriers in place so that I don't do the same thing. Please pray for your spiritual leaders, the enemy would love to see them fall.

We see God's Direction (it is always right to obey His Word), God's Warning (sin is crouching at your door), and

### **SIN'S DESIRE**

**Genesis 4:7** If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

Sin desires to take control of your life and my life. Sin wants to destroy our testimony and our walk with God. Sin is not something to be trifled with; we're not to see how close we can come to sin without sinning.

What did Joseph do when Potiphar's wife was trying to seduce him? She was relentless in her pursuit of Joseph. Joseph is described as being handsome and well-built. As she tries to get him to go to bed with her, he says:

**Genesis 39:9** No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

Even with this she doesn't give up.

**Genesis 39:12** She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

Joseph didn't try to reason with her. There is no reasoning when it comes to sin! Run from it!!

Satan's goal for the believer's life:

**1 Peter 5:8** Be self-controlled (to be sober this is serious: command) and alert.(to be awake, to be watchful, to be on the alert: command) Your enemy the devil prowls (present tense) around like a roaring lion looking (present tense) for someone to devour.

God tells Cain he must master sin. Either we will master sin or sin will master us. We CANNOT do this without God!! Sin is not happy until it controls our lives. We are in a battle!!

**ILLUS.:** Our youngest son is currently in Army bootcamp. The Army purposely makes this training extremely challenging to prepare men and women for battle. Are you prepared for the spiritual battle you are facing or going to face? When someone comes to faith in Christ life does not become all roses and sunshine. Sometimes it gets harder because you now have enemies: the world (that which is against God and His Word), the flesh (our own sin nature), and the devil.

Back to 1 Peter, after Peter tells us about the devil he provides this command:

**1 Peter 5:9** Resist him (command), standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Cain shows his anger, which will turn into jealousy, envy, and eventually rage against his brother, Abel.

As we shall see, when we are not right with God, it will not only affect our relationship with God, but it will also greatly affect our relationships with one another. It's why we are given warnings throughout the Bible about anger and other accompanying responses.

**Ephesians 4:31–5:2** Get rid (command, passive) of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. **32** Be (to be, to become, present tense, command) kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving (present tense, to show favor, to forgive) each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. **1** Be (to be, to become, present

tense, command) imitators (mimics of God, therefore, as dearly loved children **2** and live (present tense, command) a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

### **CAIN'S DECISION**

What is Cain's next move?

**Genesis 4:8** Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

This reminds us that sin makes no sense. Sin allows us to rationalize what is clearly wrong. This is the first homicide recorded in the Bible: Cain kills his only brother! How messed up is that?

This truly is the fulfillment of James 1:15.

**James 1:15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Two weeks ago, I shared the quote by John Bunyan: "This book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book."

Sin also causes us to hide from one another. Sin allows us to build up walls and not allow others into our lives. Things like anger, envy, jealousy, gossip, and pride build walls between us and other believers. Instead, we need to humble ourselves, admit our sin to one another, and seek forgiveness. Maybe we haven't seen a brother or sister in Christ in a while or we know that something isn't right between us and them. What do we need to do? We need to go to them. If they're involved in sin, what do we need to do? We need to go to them in humility, out of love and concern, and seek to have them return to fellowship with the Lord.

Sin breaks our fellowship with God and with one another. We can't let it fester and grow.

### **SO WHAT???**

Today we have been reminded what happens when we allow sin to affect our relationship with God. It affects our relationship with others. We need to be warned, "sin is crouching at our door."

What is the answer?

**James 4:7-8** Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

The remedy begins with our relationship with God!

\*Submit to God: this is a command and it begins with a personal relationship with God, and then a daily walk with the Lord.

\*Resist the devil: this is a command, and we can only do this through the power and strength of the Holy Spirit living within us.

\*Draw near to God: this is a command. How close am I to God? He hasn't moved!

\*Run from sin: it desires to rule you. Let's work together as a body of Christ in running from sin!

### **Warnings About Sharks and Hell**

British evangelist Rico Tice says, "Loving people means warning people." He illustrates with the following personal story:

I was once in Australia visiting a friend. He took me to a beach on Botany Bay, so I decided I had to go for a swim. I was just taking off my shirt when he said: "What are you doing." I said: "I'm going for a swim." He said: "What about those signs?" And he pointed me to some signs I'd not really noticed— Danger: Sharks! With all the confidence of an Englishman abroad, I said: "Don't be ridiculous—I'll be fine." He said: "Listen mate, 200 Australians have died in shark attacks— you've got to decide whether those shark signs are there to save you or to ruin your fun. You're of age—you decide." I decided not to go for a swim.

[Many of the words about hell found in the Bible] are all straight from Jesus' lips. And they're a loving warning to us. The reason Jesus talked about hell is because he does not want people to go there. The reason Jesus died was so that people wouldn't have to go there. The only way to get to hell is to trample over the cross of Jesus. That is a great motivator for our evangelism. *Source: Rico Tice, Honest Evangelism (The Good Book Company, 2015)*

