

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

*"Am I My Brother's Keeper?" Part 1 Genesis 4:8-12*

October 13, 2024

**INTRO.:** Can anyone tell me what these pictures are showing? This past Thursday night they were quite visible in our area. I thought I would do a little research about this beautiful sight. Apparently, they appear quite often, almost nightly, although many times they are difficult or impossible to see. A good display may last 15-30 minutes but some can last as long as two hours. To see them well the sky needs to be dark and clear of clouds. The best states to see them in our country are: Idaho, Minnesota, Michigan, Alaska, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Maine, and PA. These are beautiful sights, but we don't see them that often in our area, at least not this well. What I'm speaking about should be happening regularly in the body of Christ and not be the exception. Over the next few weeks, I want to share why believers need to care for one another and even be willing to lovingly confront another brother and sister who is involved in sin or has walked away from the Lord. Our society would have us believe it is none of our business, but that is not what the Bible has to say. I am not talking about being gossips or spreading rumors, but genuinely caring for the welfare and testimony of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Before we look at Genesis 4 and the ongoing story of Cain that we began last week, I want us to read a few verses that point out how the body of Christ is to relate to one another.

**Romans 12:9-12** Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. **11** Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. **12** Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

**Galatians 6:1-2** Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. **2** Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

**Galatians 6:9-10** Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. **10** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

**Colossians 1:3-6** We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, **4** because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints— **5** the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel **6** that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.

The account of Cain clearly shows why we need one another. So, I ask you, "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" We're going to look at 4 things this morning when it comes to sin and how we can help one another in our Christian Walk. When it comes to sin we need to confess it but sometimes we attempt to conceal it. That doesn't work because eventually we will be confronted with our sin, and we need to remember there are always consequences to our sin.

Let's read this portion of Scripture together and see if you can pick out these 4 points.

**Genesis 4:8-12** 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. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

### CONFESS

After Cain kills his brother, Abel, what question does God ask Cain?

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

Why does God ask this question? Is it because God doesn't know what just went on? That can't be because we know, from the Bible, that God is omnipresent, that is, He is able to be in more than one place at once. By the way, Satan and his cohorts, demons, do not have this ability. He is also omnipotent, that is, He is all-powerful. The word impossible is not in His vocabulary. The only things He can't do are those that are against His character: He can't sin, and He can't fail. In the Bible God is also described as being omniscient, that is, all knowing. There is nothing that can be hidden

from God. It is important that we know and recognize these attributes of God. It will change how we view life and provide comfort in the difficult times we encounter.

So, since God is omniscient (all-knowing), He knew the evil and heinous deed Cain had just done. So, why did He ask that question? God is giving Cain an opportunity to confess (admit) or come clean with what he had just done. We saw God provide this same opportunity to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God also did it in the form of a question.

**Genesis 3:6–9** When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. **7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. **8** Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. **9** But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

God had not lost track of Adam and Eve. In fact, it was both fruitless and foolish for them to attempt to hide from God. God is providing the opportunity for them to confess their sin which they fail to do.

One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world and believers of their sin.

**John 16:7–11** But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. **8** When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; **10** in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; **11** and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Before anyone comes to faith in Christ there needs to be a work of the Holy Spirit in convicting them of their sin. The Holy Spirit also convicts the believer of sin with the end desire that we would confess or admit our sin. This is what 1 John 1:9 is all about, which is written to the believer. When a believer sins their communication with God is cut off, and when they confess (admit, agree with what God has to say about that sin). their sin to God their communication with God is restored.

**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.

**Psalms 66:18** If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

We should be thankful for the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit. God desires that Cain would confess or come clean about his sin but what is Cain’s response? Instead of confessing he chooses to:

### **CONCEAL**

He totally denies any knowledge of Abel’s whereabouts and then throws out a question of his own..

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

In this interaction Cain is denying any responsibility or knowledge of his brother’s killing. The question that he asks, “Am I my brother’s keeper?,” would have been answered in the affirmative in the Hebrew culture. In essence, he is asking, “Am I responsible for the welfare of my brother?”

Allen Ross, “His question to God was defiant and was meant to be rhetorical; he was saying he had no responsibility for his brother’s welfare. But his question actually had an answer: Yes, he was his brother’s keeper. It was his duty to look out for the welfare of his brother, as his brother would have for him. But he had no intention of protecting the life of his brother.”

Kenneth A. Mathews; “The Mosaic law would have given an affirmative answer to Cain’s question. His crime would have been recognized as a particularly heinous violation of community solidarity, which was highly esteemed among the Hebrews. Community presupposed mutual responsibility that was foundational to covenant commitment (e.g., Lev 19:18; Gal 5:14). Even death did not obviate family obligations to a deceased family member (e.g., Num 35:19, 21; Deut 25:5–10). Community responsibility took priority over individual preferences or rights.”

There is in all of us, wrapped up in our sin nature, the natural reaction to conceal our sin. We are willing to lie about it to God, to others, and to ourselves. As a parent, one of the things you stress with your children is that, in all circumstances and situations, they tell you the truth. I wanted my sons to know that I would rather have them tell me the truth about something bad they had done than have me find out later they lied to me.

Not only doesn't Cain come clean but now he defiantly denies any knowledge of his brother's whereabouts. How many people have vehemently denied wrongdoing only to be exposed later? There is much more damage done to them and others when it is revealed much later that they had lied.

We see it with some athletes with the use of banned performance-enhancing drugs after denying they had been used. We see it with some governmental leaders, and even in some church leaders. You and I are not immune to the temptation of trying to conceal our sin.

Cain is attempting to hide his sin from God. Isn't that what Adam and Eve did?

**Genesis 3:9–10** But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" **10** He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Further on in the history of the Israelites (Joshua 6-8) God provided a miraculous victory over the city of Jericho, causing the walls of the city to collapse while the Israelites marched around the walls. God gave clear direction that they weren't to take any of the devoted things for themselves, but Achan took some of the treasure and hid it. Because of his sin some Israelites died, and they lost the initial battle to conquer Ai. Finally, Achan admits his sin, and the things he had hidden.

**Joshua 7:20–23** Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: **21** When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." **22** So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. **23** They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the LORD.

Achan's hidden sin was very costly. It affected the Israelites (some died in battle), his family, and himself. We may be able to conceal our sin for a bit, but it will eventually come out.

God desires for us to confess our sin, but the natural response is to conceal our sin. So, God

### **CONFRONTS**

**Genesis 4:10** The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

God asks, "What have you done?" This is not just a question; it is an accusation. Cain can't claim innocence because God says, "Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, "This is the first mention of blood, and it cries out for vindication."

As I think about confronting sin in our lives I see the following possible responses:

- 1) We listen to the Holy Spirit when convicted by our sin and respond in confession and repentance or we ignore the Holy Spirit and continue in sin
- 2) We listen to another brother and sister when they confront us with our sin, and we respond in confession and repentance, or we ignore their warning and continue in sin
- 3) Our sin confronts us with even more dire consequences, and we respond in confession and repentance, or we harden our heart and continue in sin

If we don't confront our sin, our sin will confront us.

**Numbers 32:20–23** Then Moses said to them, "If you will do this—if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for battle, **21** and if all of you will go armed over the Jordan before the LORD until he has driven his enemies out before him— **22** then when the land is subdued before the LORD, you may return and be free from your obligation to the LORD and to Israel. And this land will be your possession before the LORD. **23** "But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.

Abel's blood convicts and confronts Cain with his sin of killing his brother. It is only by the blood of Jesus that are sins are forgiven.

**Ephesians 1:7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

**Colossians 1:19–20** For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

**Hebrews 9:12** He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

**1 Peter 1:18–19** For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

**Revelation 1:4–5** John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, **5** and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,

**Revelation 5:9** And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

When you and I sin, we can respond by confessing our sin, concealing our sin, being confronted by our sin, but there will ALWAYS be:

### CONSEQUENCES

Sin ALWAYS brings consequences, and it is one of the reasons sin never makes any sense. The cost is far more than what we want to pay! It is no different in this situation.

**Genesis 4:11-12** Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

"*curse:*" essentially means to be removed or banished from the place of blessing. (Allen Ross)

It reminds us of what God said to the serpent:

**Genesis 3:14–15** So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. **15** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

This also reminds us that sin is serious business, whatever sin it is. We tend to rank sins but sin is always serious because of who it is against first and foremost. David, with his sin of adultery and murder says this in Psalm 51, a psalm of repentance.

**Psalms 51:4** Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

This doesn't mean that he didn't also sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, her husband.

Now you are under a curse and driven from the *ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.*

This also isn't the last time we see the ground opening up.

**Numbers 16:30–35** But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men

have treated the LORD with contempt.” **31** As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart **32** and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah’s men and all their possessions. **33** They went down alive into the grave, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community. **34** At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, “The earth is going to swallow us too!” **35** And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense.

What consequences would Cain face? It is two-fold:

1) When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you.

Adam, when he sinned, faced the following consequences:

\*the ground would be cursed

\*he would face painful toil in working the ground

\*he will have to fight weeds (thorns and thistles)

\*it will be hard work to produce food (by the sweat of your brow)

God’s curse on Cain is that he will no longer be able to have the ground produce crops. This was his livelihood.

2) You will be a restless wanderer on the earth

Cain will be without roots, constantly forced to wander.

There are ALWAYS consequences to our sin! Yes, the Lord does forgive when we confess and repent, restoring our communication with Him but there is discipline.

**Hebrews 12:5–11** And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, **6** because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” **7** Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? **8** If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. **9** Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! **10** Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. **11** No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Sin is NEVER worth the price we pay!! When we are headed toward sin wouldn’t it be great if another brother or sister would warn us!

The Bible warns us about how we come to communion.

**1 Corinthians 11:27–32** Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. **28** A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. **29** For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. **30** That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. **31** But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. **32** When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

Lying brings with it the consequence of a lack of trust. An outburst of anger has the consequence is a damaged relationship. I could go on, but I want us, including me, to recognize that sin has consequences. Adultery brings with it the consequence of a broken relationship and a deep sense of betrayal. Sin is never worth what it costs.

**SO WHAT???**

### **The Garbage We Leave Behind**

Since 1953, when Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reached the summit, over 4,000 people have successfully climbed Mount Everest. Unfortunately, the climbers have also littered the mountainside with garbage, such as used oxygen bottles, ropes, and tents. Today, Everest is so overcrowded and full of trash that it has been called the “world’s highest garbage dump.”

No one knows exactly how much waste is on the mountain, but it is in the tons. Litter is spilling out of glaciers, and camps are overflowing with piles of human waste. Climate change is causing snow and ice to melt, exposing even more garbage that has been covered for decades. All that waste is trashing the natural environment, and it poses a serious health risk to everyone who lives in the Everest watershed.

Both governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have attempted—and are attempting—to clean up the mess on Mount Everest. In 2019, the Nepali government launched a campaign to clear 10,000 kilograms (22,000 pounds) of trash from the mountain. They also started a deposit initiative. Anyone visiting Mount Everest has to pay a \$4,000 deposit, and the money is refunded if the person returns with eight kilograms (18 pounds) of garbage—the average amount that a single person produces during the climb.

Possible Preaching Angle:

Source: Staff, *"Trash and Overcrowding at the Top of the World," National Geographic (10-19-23)*

Sin produces an incredible amount of damage. It leaves an immense amount of garbage behind. Only God can clean up our lives.

When convicted by God of my sin, do I confess it and have my communication with God restored or do I attempt to conceal it from God (which is fruitless) and others? Sometimes we hide in the shadow of guilt and shame. Sometimes we may need a brother or sister willing to come to us, out of love and concern, to confront us with our sin.

\*Have I come to know Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord?

\*Do I have sin I need to confess to the Lord and those to whom it's against?

\*Am I concealing sin in my life?

\*Who am I allowing to speak truth into my life?