

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

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- [0 : 0 0] Beloved, we continue in this expositional series through Genesis, the book of Genesis. How far will we go in the book? Will we finish all the way to the end? I don't know. I don't even know if I'll have breath for life next Sunday. So we'll just take it a week at a time and see what the Lord does.
- But for today, we're in Genesis chapter 4. Remember, last week after a several-month hiatus from Genesis, as I was in 1 Timothy, I did a review of Genesis chapter 3 dealing with the theme of sin, the fall of the human race into sin.
- Sin is not a popular topic. It isn't something that the world just gravitates to hear about, for sure. In fact, the opposite is true. Sin is something that we're told we shouldn't preach on and we shouldn't talk about because people don't want to take one of their only days off during the week and come sit under someone who's going to tell them all of the bad news about how sinful they are and how sins ruin the world, etc., etc.
- But again, I remind us that there is no good news of the Savior unless we first deal with the reality of why we need a Savior in the first place. And so that's why we talk about sin. We talk about sin to lay the groundwork to hasten to the Savior, don't we?
- [1 : 3 1] And we'll do a little bit of that back and forth as we talk about this today. The title of my message for today then, Am I My Brother's Keeper? What a question.
- Am I My Brother's Keeper? will be in Genesis chapter 4 and I'll be dealing with verses 1 through 9. Now the man knew his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth to Cain.
- And she said, I have gotten a man with the help of Yahweh. And again she gave birth to his brother Abel. Abel was the keeper of flocks, but Cain was the cultivator of the ground.
- So it happened in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground. Abel on his part also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.
- Yahweh had regard for Abel and for his offering, but for Cain and for his offering he had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.
- [2 : 4 2] Then Yahweh said to Cain, Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is lying at the door and its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.
- Then Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And it happened when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then Yahweh said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother?
- And he said, I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper? The story goes on, the true accounting of these historical realities and events, and tells us more of how God encountered Cain and dealt with Cain.
- But I'm going to stop there for now and we'll plan, God willing, to pick it up next week and see how God's going to deal with Cain in all of this. Now let me get you ready to talk about the events that are taking place in this particular passage to this point.

And so if I asked you to name the worst offenses that we can do to each other as human beings, what do you think would be number one?

[4 : 03] In your mind, what would it be? Murder, you think? Yeah. Murder usually tops the list of worst offenses we can do to each other, perhaps alongside, coming in a close second, to things like adultery and God forbid, rape and child abuse.

We usually lump murder in those top categories and we learn to even justify sin against the backdrop of murder.

You'll know that people can rationalize sinful behavior saying things like this, well, it's not like I murdered someone. No, I just cut you down to the quick and made you feel like an ant walking on the face of the earth or I lusted after you to the point where I took advantage of you and manipulated you or whatever, but it's not like I murdered somebody.

And so we rationalize things we do. Comparing sin lists. Maybe we'll do that against somebody else. You know, at least my sin isn't the sin of murder.

No, that's not how the Lord looks at it. Instructively for us, the Bible records the very first murder. And most importantly, most importantly, the Bible gives us critical details details of the context for what took place in that first murder.

[5 : 30] Now, why are these details? Why is this context so important for us as we look at this issue of murder or the first murder?

And I want to put this up on the screen for you because this context frames the ways our sin captures and controls our lives so that our sinful behavior is the evidence of our sin nature.

That's why this context is so important. It is what this context is. As bad as murder is and as central a feature as this murder takes in the text itself, the context around murder is pointing us to what God wants us to understand about the prevalence of this immediately after the fall.

Right away, human beings are faced with this reality. And so, what we're dealing with here is sin sin affecting the core of our personhood and God placing that sinfulness inside each one of us.

We're going to see why that is so important. So, Cain is the first demonstration we have of how Adam and Eve's sin nature is evidence in their offspring who in turn reveal that same sin nature alive in all mankind.

[7 : 12] And this is the doctrine of original sin. Months ago, we talked about, as I mentioned, original sin as it took place in the Garden of Eden.

Now, original sin, theologically, theologians typically do this, original sin can and does sometimes refer to and is used as Adam and Eve committing the first sin.

That is true. Some theologians will speak of original sin in that way. But more often and more to the point, this idea of original sin means that Adam's sin is the origin of our sin nature.

God explains and locates the problems of sin and evil within us. sin. That is the point, the theological reality of original sin.

Original sin then deals with origin. Where did sin come from? How did sin get to us? How is it that we don't have to have any instruction in how to sin?

[8 : 21] We've said it before, none of you as parents had to sit your kids down and say, alright, today we're going to take an hour and we're going to have sin instruction. You didn't have to do that, did you?

A lot of your time parenting was keeping them from killing each other and that kind of stuff. Whacking each other over the head with things, sneaking around trying to get away with something. You standing there with chocolate icing all over their faces and asking them did you eat that piece of cake?

And then going, nope. Right? But then they get older and older and this is what Greg referred to, then they get older and older and I've had parents say to me, oh I can't wait to get past the toddler thing and it gets better and I say, well it doesn't.

Well, and then they get to the teenage thing, oh I can't wait to get past this attitude teenage thing and it'll get better and they'll become adults and we'll be able to relate and it doesn't get any better.

As they get older they just get more sophisticated in how they do all that. They get more educated in how to get away with it. how to speak their own mind about it in pride and in lust and in greed and all the things that we deal with.

[9 : 35] So we're talking about the origin of sin within. Now this is very important and so I carefully worded this and I want to put it up here so I can work through it with you because it's again laying the foundation for what we'll say throughout the exposition as I take apart some of these verses before us.

The world explains and locates the problems of sin and evil systemically. That is, our problems of evil and wrongdoing come from outside of us and from the breakdown of faulty human systems.

Things like the failure of political systems. If we can just get the right guy in office at any level or whatever. or the right party in office then you know blah blah blah.

Or the failure of social systems designed to remedy racial prejudice or for example poverty. Maybe from the faultiness of cultural stigmas and from other sources which contextualize human maladies like hatred and prejudice and murder as situational societal rather than as spiritual personal.

That's a problem. a big problem. The world doesn't look correctly at sin and its origins. In fact, mankind's diagnoses for why you and I harm and kill each other are explained by factors, functions, and faults of human systems.

[11 : 15] Now, why is that so important? Why is it important for us to understand the foundation of where people come from as they look at this problem of evil? As they see it happening before their eyes and begin to think about it?

Why is this so important that we understand that they see this as a function and faultiness of human systems? This is why. Because they believe that we can eventually, given enough time and effort, correct and perfect through greater efforts at scientific, sociologic, and psychological manipulation and modernization the problem of evil.

That's why. Mankind can and will provide its own answers, its own wisdom to these issues of the human condition. That's what they say.

Well, that's wrong. That's wrong not because I say it's wrong. It's wrong because the Bible says it's wrong. Again, we're talking about our need for a Savior as soon as we mention sin, we have to hasten to say sin is the reason we need a Savior.

Well, the way they define this issue of evil in life brings them to the place where they think they are their own saviors.

[12 : 34] We can psychologize ourselves out of this issue or these issues. We can political our way out of it or whatever. All kinds of answers, all kinds of ideas.

On an individual level, you'll see people turn to alcohol and sex and drugs and all the big items and ideas that help us escape the reality of sin in us.

Not just in society, but in me and in you. And what do we do about it? Well, all of that, as I say, is wrong.

The world struggles to comprehend. The world struggles to confront. death and the world struggles to cure evil because, first of all, they reject the truth of where and how sin, suffering, evil, and death all began.

In other words, they don't locate that beginning in the truth of what God tells us. And so, from the very beginning, they're off-kilter.

[13 : 42] And it just compounds in that mistake as they move along trying to define it and eventually diagnose it and then cure it. Number two, they reject the truth of what the origin of sin issue has done to each of us and in us.

That the issue with sin is it resides in us. We want to locate it outside. We want to blame shift. We saw that in the garden in Genesis 3.

From the very beginning of sin entering into human life, Adam and Eve began to do what? Blame shift. Shift the blame off to someone else or something else.

Anything but to take responsibility for the sin of my life being my issue. It affects you, but you can't cure my sin problem and I can't cure yours.

We had to have someone outside of ourselves do that work in us and continue to empower us in that work. And then number three, they reject the truth for the only cure God alone has provided for us and his son, Jesus Christ.

[14 : 55] Jesus alone is our sin conqueror. That was one of the messages that I preached back as I finished up Genesis chapter 3.

It was my final message wrapping Genesis 3 up. Jesus has been sent as our sin conqueror. Now, when you and I try to grasp why we hurt each other in the ways we do, we are confronted with the aged reality of sin's effects on who we really are.

And that can be a very scary proposition for us. It's especially scary for unbelievers, for those in the world, because they don't have an answer for it.

They'll try and they continue to try and they continue to fail. And how scary is that? You know what that feels like, don't you? And I do, too.

I know what it feels like to try to manage my sin. Rather than do what the Bible tells me to do with the desires that are sinful before the Lord, the desires of my heart that give birth to sinful behavior.

[16 : 02] What is what does the Lord tell us to do with that? Mortify them, to kill them, kill those desires that drive idol worship. That's what I'm told to do.

Well, I can't do that in my own power and neither can you. This is why we need the hope and the healing power of the Lord Jesus Christ at work in us through the miracle of a new birth.

Through the miracle of salvation. God coming to live in us. That is that is an astounding and beautiful, beautiful truth.

Please let me then begin, beloved. Please let me begin to help you see God's truthful explanation for the sin within. We've been talking about that.

Even more importantly though, please allow me to help you see God's loving and more powerful remedy for that sin. God's grace is greater than our sin.

[16 : 58] Amen. Amen. Now look, in Genesis 4, we see the progressive, pervasive, and pernicious pattern of sin impacting human beings, look, immediately after the fall.

There's the point. Immediately after the fall. We don't have to have a lot of time. Human beings don't have to practice this. Out of the gate, after being expelled from the garden, Adam and Eve begin to build a family and immediately in the very first family, all of this begins to show up, manifest itself for what it is.

And we have to ask the question, what does this reality point to? What does it show us? What does it tell us? How is it instructive about the origin and nature of sin that is our greatest enemy after all?

The war God promised in Genesis 3.15 hits with devastating effect. And the two sides of the conflict are in clear view.

I don't want to assume that we understand what we're talking about, even for those of us who've been here. So let's go back to Genesis 3.15 and let's be reminded, what are you talking about when you talk about the war God promised from Genesis 3.15 hitting with devastating effect and the two sides being made clear?

[18 : 24] What are you talking about? God says in Genesis 3.15, as he speaks to the issue of this deception that Satan through a serpent put on Adam and Eve.

He says, I will put enmity. That word literally means war. I will put warfare between you, Satan, and the woman, Eve, and between your seed and her seed.

So there is this war coming and that war will take immediate effect in a very personal way against Eve herself. I'm going to put warfare against you, Eve, and your offspring.

And your offspring will battle against Satan's offspring. Now we talked about all of this in great detail in that message. I'm just kind of skimming the surface here.

God says, he shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise him on the heel. And what we came to understand was this is a prophecy, a promise where God is saying there's going to now institute spiritual warfare among human beings.

[19 : 41] On one side of that spiritual warfare will be a satanically driven army that that is going to constantly seek to put down this other side, which is the godly side, the God-fearing side.

And from that God-fearing line of people, I'm going to raise up one capital O in particular, and he will deal a death blow to this enemy of your souls.

He once for all will deal a death blow. The enemy will bruise this one on his heel. But this one will deal a crushing death blow to the one who's trying to harm him.

So now we have set in stone this, and I'll mention this again, this powerful force of evil fighting against this godly line from which this Messiah will come.

Here's the issue, though. Satan doesn't know which woman is going to give birth to that one or when it's going to happen, does he? He's not omniscient like God.

[20 : 45] So what's he going to have to do? He's going to have to cover all of his bases, ladies. And that's exactly what he does. And this is one of the reasons that Peter tells us he's like a roaring lion prowling, looking for prey, whom he can devour.

That's been his M.O. from the very beginning. He is a predator looking for his prey. Those are the two sides of the conflict that come into clear view right away.

So the first thing that we're going to deal with as we look into this passage is this. Obeying God as worship. That obedience to God is a matter of worship.

And a lack of obedience to God is also a matter of worship aimed in a different direction. And we have to understand that.

Very helpful to us. If you'll look with me again at Genesis 4, verses 1 and 2. Now the man knew his wife Eve and she conceived, gave birth to Cain and she said, I've gotten a man with the help of Yahweh.

[21 : 54] And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel in verse 2. Abel was a keeper of flocks. Cain was a cultivator of the ground. Now, friends, Moses writes from the primary perspective throughout this passage of Scripture in chapter 4, from the primary perspective of Cain's life.

And Moses helps us see and understand through Cain's life, early life, how sin, our sin, drives what we want from a relationship with God and from one another.

That's what we're seeing develop here from the very first human beings. How our sin drives what we desire, what we want from a relationship both with God and from other people.

So this chapter, please notice with me, is bookended. What's it bookended by? Well, look with me again. Look at chapter 4, verse 3. So it happened in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground.

Abel in verse 4, on his part, also did what? Brought an offering. What? Of what? The firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. Yahweh had regard for Abel in his offering, but for Cain in his offering he had no regard.

[23 : 21] Well, what do we see happening here? Well, this is the theme of worship, isn't it? If you drop down to the last verse in what we call chapter 4, verse 26, at the very end of the verse, then men began to call upon the name of Yahweh.

So right at the beginning of chapter 4 and then closing out chapter 4, we have the bookend theme of worship. Worship, that's important.

Everything in between is helping us better understand how we're seeing this worship play out in the lives of these people.

What has sin done to worship? When we talk about worship, we're talking about how we relate to God and how relating to God helps us relate to each other.

Or, we could put it this way in a negative sense, how our lack of a pure relationship with God negatively impacts the way that we relate to each other.

[24 : 32] Right? It's one or the other. But what does all of that depend on? It depends on my relationship with the Lord. Whether that relationship is a relationship of me being in worship of Him, submitted, yielded, my heart given to Him, or not.

And we're going to see that back and forth through this. And then it's really going to come out in chapter 5. So this is what we're dealing with is the theme of worship bookended in chapter 4.

Remember, God created us to express our worship exclusively through our relationship with Himself. Did you hear what I said now? God actually created human beings to express worship exclusively through our relationship with Himself.

So if we ask ourselves, how is our worship to be directed? We would have to say this. God created our worship to be directed by Him, through Him, to Him.

Any part of that that removes Him, what happens to our worship? It goes somewhere else. Are you sure? Yeah, it goes somewhere else because of this.

[25 : 52] You were created to be a worshiper. You can't help it. You are going to worship. Every moment of every day you're worshiping. The issue is always who?

What? Why? Always. This is the reality that we live with as human beings. This is what's being put before us right here as Adam and Eve are put out of the garden and said, alright, now, go do what I created you to do.

Go make what your life is about worshiping Me. What happens? That's what we're being shown.

That's what we're being shown. Look what we're dealing with. Corrupt worship or idle worship, we call it, seeks to express our worship through a relationship apart from or in addition to God.

So that our worship is toward a person. It's toward an object, an idea, a desire. Some of us won't factor God out all together. Some do and they just worship in a pagan way all together.

[27 : 02] But some of us want to worship God and bring in other things that we can worship too. That doesn't work either because God told us you can't serve two masters like that.

That's not the way allegiance to the Lord works. Israel found that out, didn't they? And remember who's reading this now? The exiles. Those who have been taken out of Egypt and wandering and now Moses is writing this and these people are reading this and this is setting the tone for who they'll be as God's people.

You can't serve what you were in Egypt as you tried to bring in Egyptian gods. What did they do almost immediately when they got out and got below Mount Sinai?

What did they make? And what did they make it in the image of? What they knew in the way of an idol. That's the human heart gravitating toward those kind of things.

That's what we do. But we were not created to worship people. We were not created to worship things or ideas or desires or hobbies or any other created thing in this world.

[28 : 18] So at the core of who we are, friends, at the core of who we are, we are worshipers. God designed us so that our worship shapes who we are and what we do.

That will always be the case while you're breathing on this earth. Genesis 4 shows us what sin and what salvation do to our worship in relationship to God.

In verse 1 then, we need to see godly worship through, listen, human sexuality. don't run away from that. It's beautiful. We need to see worship being expressed, worship to God, true worship, being expressed to God through human sexuality.

Now that shouldn't be any great surprise to us. God created us male and female, made a big, big deal about that because I slowed it down given the situation in our culture today with human sexuality.

Boy, it's all over the map, isn't it? people are so deceived and confused about the beauty of human sexuality, about being male and female. What it means when a male and a female come together in the beautiful intimacy of what God made that to be as a, hear me, worship experience.

[29 : 30] When the angels sing because that's what God designed it to be. And we won't retreat from that, will we, beloved? We will not retreat from the beauty of what God made human sexuality to be.

We shouldn't be. It's not embarrassing. It's something that God made for us and we are to celebrate it in great joy. Now look, on the heels, think about this with me, on the heels of their failure and in the shadow of their guilt, their shame, their sin, of being expelled from the garden that God made exclusively for them, the couple, Adam and Eve, is now reassured of God's favor in and on their marriage.

How does He do that? Well, this intimacy being described in verse 1, this intimacy, this marital intimacy, expresses something so beautiful and so sacred, created by God and given to us as a powerful blessing of His love for us.

Adam and Eve, according to verse 1, now the man knew his life. Most of you understand what that euphemism refers to. Adam and Eve were intimate. They were physically intimate as an expression of their worship of God.

Did you hear that? What do you mean, Jeff? They're being obedient to God as they enjoy and express their spiritual intimacy through God's gift of physical intimacy, reserved for marriage.

[31 : 07] What did God say? Hey, I'm marrying you guys. You guys are going to be joined together. Now I want you to go out and be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth.

How do you think they're going to do that? This is the joy of obedience. This is a couple worshipping their God. This is faithful. And it's a beautiful thing.

And I want you to take a moment to celebrate it in the Lord and say thank you, God, for making it clear that you designed this. It's not something that was designed to be dirty and awful and greedy and individualistic.

This is all about two people coming together as a man and a woman and honoring your wisdom and your design and your perfection for one soul union.

Boy, only God can accomplish that. Amen? Only God can pull off something like this. sin's the reason that we cheapen it. Sin's the reason it becomes an issue of individuality instead of one's soulless.

[32 : 15] Thank the Lord that God did something about that. So all I'm saying is this. This is worship celebrating the goodness of God giving us love, joy, and life by His infinite, superabundant grace.

So in the warm, warm blessing of God's forgiveness, listen to this, the first woman becomes the first mother. I know it's Daddy's Day. We'll get to that.

The first woman becomes the first mom. Eve's name means life or of the living. So the first human ever born, Adam and Eve, remember, they weren't born.

the first human ever born, she names Cain. Now we've come to understand the name Cain as something negative and derogatory. And the Canaanites are defined in Scripture as those people who are pagan and hate God and worship in filthy ways.

Well, Cain's name sounds like the Hebrew verb for create. It's a sound-like word play. Eve is making a word play on the name of her son.

[33 : 27] And this is important. It comes out in Eve's joy and excitement. So as we read this in verse 1, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, I have gotten a man with the help of Yahweh.

That is an expressive, explosively joyful statement that is coming out of Eve's mouth in the original Hebrew. truth, a word play, an excitement.

What she says in effect actually is this. She says that Cain is someone that she has created and that created one is the one God promised to come and deliver mankind from Satan, sin, and death.

That's what she thinks. Martin Luther translated this verse as this, I have the man, the Lord. I have the man, the Lord.

Eve understood God's promise in Genesis 3.15. So she thinks that she's given birth to the Savior, the one that God promised.

[34 : 39] Why wouldn't she? Right? Right on the heels of this, she has this human being. This is the first human being ever born, and it's a guy. Right? And she thinks, oh boy!

I have created the one! And she's ecstatic. Oh boy. And then something happens. What happens next? Yeah, one of them takes the other one out.

And she's thinking, nope, not so much. I got that one wrong. What? I can't even imagine what that must have felt like for these people.

See, we need to get into this so that that impacts God's promise comes and hits us in the way that I think it probably hit them. You can see how this hope and this thought would be short-lived given what the text tells us.

Luther, however, Martin Luther goes on to point out that Isaiah, about 3,300 years later, is going to prophesy that God's promised one will be born of a virgin.

[35 : 40] Wow, now wait a minute. That changes everything. The deliverer will not come from the union of a human man and a human woman, will he? That's not going to happen, is it?

No. And so you say, well, Jeff, what's the point in all of that? Why bring that out from the Hebrew? Here's why. God will keep His promise from Genesis 3, 15.

He will provide the Savior. He'll do it supernaturally. He will do it in His perfect timing and He will do it in His perfect way.

Now is not that time. This, right now, is the emphasis for being a time of war. War. Jesus, when He came, said, I didn't come to bring a sword.

What did He come to bring? Peace. That's the word. Jesus came to reconcile and to bring peace. There will come another day when Jesus will show up and all judgment is going to break loose.

[36 : 45] But Jesus said, no, this time I came to offer myself so that I can bring reconciliation, bring together. I can minister peace among people.

I can make them right with their God. Right now, though, this is a time of war. So what do we have? Alright, look.

Moses is demonstrating how the spiritual warfare between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan will develop and play out in the godly line of Savior worshipers and in the ungodly line of Satan worshipers.

That's what we need to hold on to. Right here, in Cain and Abel, we are seeing the establishment and the working out of these two clear lines of people.

There will be a people who will worship God because they will believe in God's promise of the Savior. The one who will deal this death blow and be a deliverer for you.

[37 : 47] And then we have another line of people who will be the seed of Satan. That is, they will be owned by him in their souls and they will be used of Satan to fight against that other line of people.

And you will see this throughout the Bible now. What will Israel represent? They will represent that godly line. What do all the other nations represent? The ungodly line. What will Israel do?

It will fight sin and turn away from God and turn away from God and turn away from God but God will preserve a godly line. And through that godly line in supernatural, unlikely ways as you read the Bible, God will raise up people and preserve that line against the attempts of Satan to destroy it and Messiah will come.

God be praised. He'll come. And no power in the universe to include the power of Satan can keep God from bringing His deliverer to humanity.

And this is what we celebrate. This is the symbol of death leading to life. This is the symbol of God keeping His promise. And it's why it's precious to us.

[38 : 54] For Eve, Cain is the man, the Lord. Because she believed God for His promise to send a Savior.

So why wouldn't she believe when she had this baby that here's the one? God said He was going to do this. Here He is. We're going to get this thing out of the gate. We're going to get it solved. Oh, thank You, Lord.

We're so sorry that we did this. Our hearts are broken over what we've done. Everything about what we have in our life right now reminds us of our failure in the garden.

We're not even there anymore. This isn't paradise. God, we're so sorry. Now she has this baby. Oh, Lord. Here's the sign. Ugh. Ugh.

No, I can't tell you for sure. But I wonder because of the deceitfulness of sin, if Eve, even for a moment, was tempted to put her faith in pain.

[39 : 53] I wonder if that was a struggle for her. I know that as I raised my three kids, there were plenty of times when I was confronted with do I love the Lord more than I love my kids?

How will I ever know? Right? You love your kids so much. You love the Lord so much. You never want to be put in a position where you feel like you have to be tested.

Was Abraham tested? Did he pass? Who did he love more? God saw that in his heart. I don't know.

It's something that I just wondered about as I thought through this. Eve is looking to God. She's trusting God for that promised Savior. And so why do I point this out?

Well, listen, just a footnote. When we wonder or when other people might ask us given the interest in the New Testament on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ when we wonder how were people in the Old Testament saved from their sins?

[41 : 02] I mean, come on. They didn't have Jesus with them. They specifically didn't know it would be Jesus Christ of Nazareth who would be there.

We know him now. We can look back. The scripture tells us all about his life and what he did and said and where he went and who his friends were and all that kind of stuff. They didn't know that. How were they saved when they didn't know all that stuff?

Well, here it is. Eve's faith in God shows us that from the very, very beginning each person is saved from sin by God's forgiveness through their faith in whom?

God's Son Jesus Christ God's promised one. They didn't have to know all those details at that time. They knew that God promised the Deliverer and they were putting their faith in God to make good on his promise.

The Deliverer will come. We're hoping in him. We're putting our faith there not in ourselves. You see everyone who's ever been saved Old Testament and on has been saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[42 : 09] Everybody. Nobody gets to heaven apart from the grace of Almighty God if they put their faith in Jesus. Alright, you settled on that? You with me? You don't? If you're not, come and see me after the service or better yet, go see Grace.

You can handle it. I know you can. Well, the text tells us and I'll hasten on. The text tells us that Abel was born next and again she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Abel was the keeper of flocks. Cain was the cultivator of the ground. Abel's name actually means vanity, vapor, or breath.

Like wind. It's the same root word Solomon uses in Ecclesiastes when he said all is vanity.

Vanity of vanities. All is vapor. All is breath. And then it's gone. It's a prophecy. Sure enough, what do we see about Abel? His life was a vapor here and gone.

[43 : 14] That's what it meant. Each brother, notice the text tells us, pursued differing labors in life. What was Abel? He was a shepherd. What was Cain? He was a farmer.

Now, both occupations are honorable. So, their occupations being honorable are not the issue behind things unraveling.

Don't do that. Don't think that, well, Jesus was a shepherd. And so, Abel was a shepherd. And so, obvious, no, no, no, no. That's reading in. All we're told is that both of these guys had honorable occupations.

That's not the issue. That brings us to the issue, though, as we move along. Now, we're going to contrast true and false worship as we see it expressed to us in these next few verses.

Beginning in verse 3, So, what happened in the course of time, Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground. Okay, that's fine. That's fine.

[44 : 14] Abel, on his part, also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. Now, notice, Yahweh had regard for Abel and for his offering.

But for Cain and his offering, he had no regard. And so, Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Now, the issue here is not in the differences between flock and fruit offering.

Nope. The issue is in the difference between the brothers themselves. There is a problem with Cain's offering, but it's only because there's a problem with Cain's heart in making his offering.

Abel's worship is true. Cain's worship is false, counterfeit, hypocritical. Alright, so we want to ask the question because this becomes relevant for us as worshipers.

We want to ask the question then, what was wrong with Cain's offering of worship and what was right about Abel's offering of worship? How are we going to deal with this? Well, the first thing I want you to notice is this.

[45 : 26] Notice that verse 3 tells us that Cain brought an offering to God of the fruit of the ground. Whereas, in verse 4, Abel brought the firstborn of his flock.

And here is how we would understand that Hebraically from the Hebrew perspective. Abel gave God the best of what he had to offer. Cain did not.

That's the point. You say, Jeff, was it wrong for Cain to bring a produce offering, grain through the produce of the land?

Absolutely not. In fact, Israel will be told you can do that. Bring of the first fruits of your grain offerings in your harvests, right? From the vine or whatever it is. That's fine.

But what does God say to do about that? In what way? He says, bring the best. Don't bring your leftovers and all the bruised fruit, rotten stuff, and uh-uh.

[46 : 23] Why? Because that reflects something about this. It's about your heart. So what we have here is we have Cain bringing an offering to the Lord, probably something he had done a number of times.

But here, he's not bringing the best and laying it before God. And Abel is. Abel's bringing the first fruits and the fat portions, which mean he had to kill some animals.

And God had regard for Abel's offering but not for Cain's. This is comparable to what Israel is going to be taught and will need to do by giving the first and best of their flocks and their produce.

Remember how the Bible describes it. The unblemished. The highest quality of what the Lord blesses them with, they are to give back.

You and I are not about giving the leftovers to God. That is something that our hearts are constantly drifting toward. God getting the leftovers of time, energy, and other resources.

[47 : 33] And then of course our money, which is really His money. And so we give Him the leftovers. He gets whatever's left. We give our hearts and we give our lives and we give our resources and our energies and everything else to all these pursuits and then God, you can have whatever's left over.

Good luck with that. And this is what Cain did. And God did not receive from him His offering. This is what Israel needs to understand. And this, beloved, this is why Jesus Christ, God's, here now, unblemished, sinless, spotless, perfect Lamb, was the only acceptable sacrifice who could be offered to God on our behalf.

Where else are we going to find one of those? Where else are we going to find a human being who's spotless, unblemished, in the sight of the Lord? Where are we going to find one of those? We're not.

So God had to send one in His own Son. See, this is beautiful, isn't it? And I'll tell you, only the wise God of the universe could have thought this up.

And we love Him for it and worship Him for it. And then I'll just give you one more. Notice also, if you would, beloved, from the latter part of verse 4 and the beginning of verse 5, that God looked on both the giver and the gift.

[48 : 57] He doesn't just say that He looked on what they brought to Him. He mentions each one of them by name. God looked on Abel and His offering. God looked on Cain and His offering.

God is looking into the hearts of worship behind the hands of worship. He always does this. It's why you and I are told that we are to worship God in spirit and truth.

Spirit and truth. That's right. What God saw in Abel's worship was a heart of faith. That is what is lacking in Cain and that is what made Cain's offering unacceptable to God.

You're not offering it to me in faith, Cain. This is not about you worshiping me. It's something else. But it's not that. And so, no thanks.

But now your brother over here on the other hand, his heart is for me. He's bringing his offering and he's laying everything out because he loves me.

[50 : 04] That kind of thing. We know this if you look at Hebrews. Go to Hebrews 11.4 if you want.

You can read along with me. We don't have to guess about whether or not our interpretation here is accurate because God tells us in Hebrews 11.

In the hall of faith as he's recounting what faith is, what spiritual faith in Christ is, he comes to verse 4. By faith, Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain through which he was approved as being righteous.

You see, so already the verse is telling us that God saw Abel as righteous. That can only happen through faith. God approving his gifts, Abel's gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

So Abel had faith in God where Cain did not have faith in God. Abel's true worship sprang from a heart of faith in God's promised Savior.

[51 : 25] Now look, what we offer right here at the bottom of the screen, what we offer God in the worship of our lives is only acceptable to God because we offer it in faith through our relationship of love and obedience to Jesus Christ.

Otherwise, it's unacceptable. What in the world does someone like me, a sinner in need of salvation, have to offer God other than my sin? That's all I bring to the table is sin.

Until God imputes, charges to me, credits to me, the righteousness of another outside of me. I don't have any of that. I need God to give it to me.

God, can I borrow on that for someone else? Oh, no, no, no. I'm not going to let you borrow on it. I'm going to give it to you for eternity. And then I spend the rest of eternity praising God for that gift so undeserved, so undeserved.

And I have a changed life as a result. This is the beauty of what God is doing in this relationship. So I can say it this way.

[52 : 37] This relationship with God's Son defines us. The relationship does. The person of Jesus defines us.

This relationship with God through His Son establishes the way of life for the godly line of people who are coming that God will raise up to Himself.

Israel will be that people for a time. In contrast, you have Cain's false worship and it's satanic at its root.

It establishes the way of life of unbelievers who worship sin and self. And Paul says this to the people he writes to when he talks about this. He says, and such were some of you.

Lest we be looking down our noses at people who are still in unbelief. We were those people, weren't we? Remember what God told Israel?

[53 : 39] I didn't choose you because you were the most. I didn't choose you because you were the mightiest or the best. I chose you out of the kind intention of my own will and you'll serve my purposes.

So what we see here is the root of all sin which Adam and Eve fell to. We see Cain is doing what is right in his own eyes from a heart formed by his worldly desires and his worldly pursuits.

Cain is all about the world. If you look at what follows from that heart of self, it becomes very evident. So let me add this last point here.

False worship is death producing. So verse 4 tells us that Abel on his part brought the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. Yahweh had regard for Abel in his offering.

But for Cain and for his offering, God had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then Yahweh said to Cain, well why are you angry and why has your countenance fallen?

[54 : 46] Now we'll stop there. Does God know why Cain is angry? Alright, so this is the same thing he's doing here that he did with Adam, isn't it? He's drawing him out.

He's just drawing him out. I'm going to confront you. Alright, he says in verse 7, now he gives him the prescription here. If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?

And if you do not do well, sin, sin is lying at the door, that's your problem, and its desire is for you, that you must rule over it.

Then Cain spoke to Abel his brother, and it happened when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and he killed him. And then Yahweh said to Cain, where is Abel your brother?

And he said, I do not know. What a liar. Am I my brother's keeper? Remember, notice that the text tells us what the issue is.

[55 : 45] Cain became very angry, and his countenance fell. Then Yahweh said to Cain, why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? You know, in our modern times, we're tempted to read our scientific, psychological prowess back into the text of Scripture and say, well, poor Cain, he's just overwrought, he's severely depressed, he has some DSM 5 issue or whatever, diagnosis.

No, no, no. The Bible tells us what's wrong with it. The man is angry to the core. The Hebrew here, if you translate it literally, says he is burning. He's burning.

This is a terrible, terrible thing. How many people have been harmed and killed and abused because of angry people?

Alright, so what's the issue in Cain's heart? Let's clarify it. This is a heart issue. The issue is burning anger or malice. What is that?

The Bible speaks a lot about malice. It's the desire to do evil harm to another. This isn't you wanting to hurt someone. This is you wanting to do an evil hurt to them.

[57 : 01] You want them to suck. You want to put it to them. that's malice. And what's it stemming from in Cain's life?

Pride. He wants his life governed by his own rules and not by God's rules for their relationship. And this comes out as we work our way through this last part here.

Cain, by the attitudes and actions of his life, he's not trying to serve and please God. No, no. For Cain, this isn't about a relationship of loving God.

This isn't about obeying God because Cain is so thankful to God. No, no. Cain is focused on what God can do for him and on what he can do for himself.

So this is self-deceiving focus. And what it's doing is it's closing, it's closing Cain's spirit against the Lord.

[57 : 59] his heart is so calloused to what God tells him in verse 7. In verse 7, if you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?

And if you do not do well, sin is lying at the door and its desire is for you, but you must rule over it. There's the prescription, folks. There's the out. That's the out clause and Cain won't hear it because his heart is so calloused over.

The text bears out this reality. Cain is scowling mad. Here's what you need to see. This is how the grammar brings this out in telling us that his countenance has fallen several times.

Why is your countenance falling? Your countenance is falling if you want your countenance to be lifted up. All about countenance. What's that mean? This is Cain. And when God talks to him, that's Cain.

God's talking to him and Cain is yes, whatever. You think I want to listen to you? You are why I'm in this mess.

[59 : 07] You like him, you love him, you choose him, oh Abel, Abel, Abel. Fine. I got an answer for that. You see, you're fine.

Why'd I have to marry her? Why'd you give me him? How come I got to be in this job? That's us.

That's who we are. The world looks at that and puts a diagnosis on it outside of you. Labels you and then tells you what you need to do is learn to cope. But that's not how the Bible remedies stand.

Jesus didn't come to help us cope. This is what we're seeing in the life of this scowling, mad human being.

He wears it all over his countenance. And so what God is identifying here is an outward issue that points to an inward problem. God is aiming at Cain's heart through his conscience.

[60 : 13] God is saying, Cain, sin is at your door. It is actively seeking an opportunity to manifest itself through your life. Don't give it this opportunity.

sin wants to own you. Sin wants to define you. Sin wants to use you as its tool against another person.

You see, God knew what was in his heart. And what did the Lord say? You must rule over it. How? How? How must I rule over it? What is missing in Cain? Saving faith. God isn't telling him to pick himself up by his bootstraps, tough it out, make it work, make it happen, believe in yourself.

How about a little positivity here, Cain? Nope. That's not what he's saying. Saving faith expressed in the true worship of God. You see, the Lord is pointing out to Cain, the whole issue is your worship, Cain.

Your worship is wrong. You're worshiping you. And that's why you're in the position you're in now. And here's where it's going to lead. It wants to own you and define you.

[61 : 21] It's going to take you to a dark, bad place. You must rule it. Turn in faith to me. This is the appeal. This is the appeal. Verse 8 tells us that Cain spoke to his brother Abel.

I'm not exactly sure what that's about. I'll be frank with you and I wasn't satisfied with some of the things I read. Cain spoke to his brother Abel. I don't know. They just went out in the field and Cain probably told him some of this stuff.

And the more that Cain talked about it, the madder he got, until he finally just boiled over premeditatedly. They were in the field and he rose up against them and he killed him.

He just killed him. Cold-blooded murder. Folks, this is war. This is sin. This is death. And look, let me put it up here and I'll just read it with you for the sake of time.

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother.

[62 : 27] And for what reason did Cain slay Abel? Because his deeds were evil and his brothers were righteous. That's it. You say, Jeff, what in the world is that? This is what it is.

There is no deeper reason for sin than sin. There is no deeper definition for sin than sin. We don't have to sit you down on the couch and talk about your mama or your daddy or your dysfunctional home.

What we need to do is sit you down and talk about the sin in your heart and what God has done to remedy that sin through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This blame shifting that we've done and become so adept at it and put labels all over it and justified it so that lots and lots of people make billions of dollars doing that with us is no help.

It's no help. Yes, I get angry about it because all it does is enslave people even more in the sin that's ruining their lives. And I know we sound so unsophisticated when we point to things like this and say Jesus Christ is our answer.

I understand that. I've been living that 35 years. But verse 9 gives it the clarity. Yahweh said to Cain, where's your brother?

[63 : 43] I don't know. I don't know. My brother's keeper? It's not my problem. You find him. I could care less. It's just like the Lord did with Adam.

God seeks Cain out and confronts him with his sin. Why? So that Cain can repent. God's already told him in verse 7, here's how you can handle this. Where's your brother? What'd you do?

I know what you did. You didn't listen. You didn't follow. You didn't repent. You didn't believe. You want to be your own God, don't you? Go ahead. Do what's right in your own eyes.

See where that gets you. Cain lies to God. He doesn't repent. He compounds his sin with his question.

So consumed with his hatred, his selfishness, his contempt, Cain bitterly asks, am I my brother's keeper? Go away.

[64 : 42] Leave me alone. Friends, only a hard heart asks that. That's a hard heart. only a heart owned and defined by sin, self, and Satan asks a question like that.

But we ask it all the time. We ask it every day. Am I my brother's keeper? Am I my brother's keeper? Well, Jesus answered Cain's question and he answers it for us.

I'm going to read it to you and then I'll say it.

But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together and one of them, a scholar of the law, asked Jesus a question trying to test him.

Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? And Jesus said to this man, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

[65 : 47] This is the great and foremost commandment. But the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophet.

Yes, Cain, according to Jesus, you are your brother's keeper. And the Lord Jesus went to the cross to open God's way of sacrificial love to us.

It's why we care. It's why we serve. It's why we sacrifice and why we give. Our true worship of Jesus compels us to sacrificially serve each other.

But it starts with our worship of the Lord, doesn't it? And that's the way it was designed. And chapter four in Genesis is telling us we have a big problem and the only one that can solve it is God and he does it by solving it inside of us.

Praise be to Jesus. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you, Almighty God, for being our gracious Father. Thank you for revealing to us the truth of our need for Jesus from the very beginning of the Bible as you tell us you are our creator and our God.

[67 : 01] We should be looking to you and not the things of your creation. that you have made us worshippers and we are to be worshipping you and not the things of creation. That God, we have a problem and that problem is sin and the things of creation cannot cure that problem and so we should be looking to you.

Let Cain and Abel be a lesson to it that you have given us in Jesus Christ the hope, the peace, the wisdom, the salvation, the regeneration, all that we need to be in right relationship with you.

And I pray that out of love for you, we will then turn to love one another knowing that we are our brother's keeper. Thank you for your goodness and grace to us, Lord.

Thank you for seeking us out and bringing us the gospel. Help us to be warm-hearted, patient, and tender people as we move about our lives this week. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen. Amen.