***Cain and Abel: The Story of My Sin***

**Creation 2023 #3, Genesis 4 February 12, 2023**

***“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.”*Genesis 4:7**

**The vocabulary of sin**

*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.” 2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.*

*Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.*

*6 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 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.”*

Genesis 4

1. Life outside the garden begins with worship which reveals the heart (see 1 John 3)

2. Life outside the garden reveals the essential problem with the human race

3. Sin begins with the language of the curse (see connection to Genesis 3:15-16)

**The first murder**

*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.*

Genesis 4 (note the textual difference between the NIV and ESV)

1. Cain’s attack reveals the true source of evil (see Matthew 5:21-24; James 4)

2. Cain’s attack reveals the power of sin

3. Satan and the curse are behind every attack on the line of the promise

**Curse to grace**

*9 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”*

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

*10 The Lord said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. 11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”*

*13 Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is more than I can bear. 14 Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”*

*15 But the Lord said to him, “Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. 16 So Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

Genesis 4

1. The answer to this question is always “yes” (see passages like Leviticus 19:16-18; Galatians 6:1-9)

2. Cain realizes that his “guilt” is more than he could bear – the first step toward grace

3. The “mark on Cain” (see Genesis 1:14, 9:12) points to God’s grace: special and common

A picture containing diagram

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**Lessons from the blood (of Abel and Jesus)**

*14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many . . . .*

*22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

Hebrews 12

Lesson 1: Don’t be like Cain, who acted out of death not life

*11 This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. 12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. 15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*

*16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.*

1 John 3

Lesson 2: Abel is the first example of righteousness

*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.*

Hebrews 11

Lesson 3: If Abel’s blood calls out for vengeance, Jesus’ blood speaks of grace

Nay, do not run away from the wounds which you have made, but find shelter in them; forget the sufferings of Christ, but rest in them! Your only hope lies in trusting in Jesus, resting wholly upon him. Think much of the griefs of your Lord, and if I might suggest to some of you who will not be coming out this afternoon, perhaps if you could spend an hour or two between services in considering the sufferings of the Saviour, those considerations might be the means of bringing faith to you. Faith cometh by hearing, but it is a thoughtful hearing; and hearing comes by the word of God, but the word must be thought over. Open the Word, read the story of the cross, ask the Master to bless it to you, and who knoweth but through the Divine Spirit some of you may yet hear the voice of that blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Charles Spurgeon’s conclusion in “The Blood of Abel and the Blood of Jesus”

**Resources for the Genesis**

Be sure to check the [Bible Project’s poster](https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/) on Genesis.

[*Bible.org*](https://bible.org/book/Genesis) has some wonderful sermons on Genesis, especially those by Deffinbaugh (see <https://bible.org/seriespage/fall-man-god%e2%80%99s-perfect-plan> ) and Stedman.

Maclaren has a helpful commentary at on many of these passages at [*https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/bible\_book/genesis\_maclaren.html*](https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/bible_book/genesis_maclaren.html)

Many of Spurgeon’s sermons on Genesis are collected at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/scripture-index/genesis/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/scripture-index/genesis/) Spurgeon’s wonderful gospel sermon on Genesis 3:15 is at [*http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols22-24/chs1326.pdf*](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols22-24/chs1326.pdf) . Spurgeon also has a more general sermon on sin from 2 Kings 7 at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-sin-of-unbelief/#flipbook/> . Spurgeon also has a “God’s First Words to the First Sinner” sermon at [*http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols7-9/chs412.pdf*](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols7-9/chs412.pdf)

For more thinking about sin, good places to start are Michael Horton’s “Whatever Happened to Sin” at [*https://wscal.edu/resource-center/what-ever-happened-to-sin*](https://wscal.edu/resource-center/what-ever-happened-to-sin%20%20)  and Plantinga’s *Not The Way It’s Supposed to Be* (Eerdmans 1995).

There are several more good Monergism resources on Genesis 3-4 at [*https://www.monergism.com  
/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/genesis/chapter-genesis/chapters-03-05-fall*](https://www.monergism.com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/genesis/chapter-genesis/chapters-03-05-fall)

Carl Trueman is Doug’s best analyst of the modern condition. See his shorter “Myth of the Modern Self” at <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2022/07/the-myth-of-the-modern-self> or his much longer *Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (Crossway, 2020). His *Strange New World* (Crossway, 2022) is a little easier read.

To dig more into Doug’s “would Jesus still have come even if Adam and Eve hadn’t sinned?” question compare Michael Horton who answers “no” (see [*https://www.monergism.com/fall-humanity*](https://www.monergism.com/fall-humanity)) with John Murray who hints “yes” in his [*https://www.monergism.com/fall-man*](https://www.monergism.com/fall-man)

For more details on the connection between the creation story and other traditions see [*https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/the-bibles-conflict-free-creation-story/*](https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/the-bibles-conflict-free-creation-story/)

Very Poythress has some very interesting thoughts on reading Genesis at [www.frame-poythress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013ChristianInterpretationsOfGenesis1.pdf](http://www.frame-poythress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013ChristianInterpretationsOfGenesis1.pdf) and [*http://faculty.wts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/PoythressVernCorrelationsWithProvidenceInGenesis2.pdf*](http://faculty.wts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/PoythressVernCorrelationsWithProvidenceInGenesis2.pdf)

This “framework” article comes from a theistic evolution perspective, but I appreciate the background work on Genesis 1, at [*https://biologos.org/series/science-and-the-bible/articles/the-framework-view-history-and-beliefs*](https://biologos.org/series/science-and-the-bible/articles/the-framework-view-history-and-beliefs)

Tim Keller has a wonderful series of sermons on the fall at [*Monergism.com*](https://www.monergism.com/) at [https://www.  
monergism.com/paradise-crisis-%E2%80%93-genesis-31-9](https://www.monergism.com/paradise-crisis-%E2%80%93-genesis-31-9) and [https://www.monergism.com  
/paradise-lost-%E2%80%93-genesis-38-24](https://www.monergism.com/paradise-lost-%E2%80%93-genesis-38-24) and for Genesis 4 at [*https://www.monergism.com  
/%E2%80%9C-history-world-nutshell%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-genesis-41-10*](https://www.monergism.com/%E2%80%9C-history-world-nutshell%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-genesis-41-10)

**“The History of the World in a Nutshell” – Genesis 4:1-10**

by Dr. Timothy Keller  
at [*https://www.monergism.com/%E2%80%9C-history-world-nutshell%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-genesis-41-10*](https://www.monergism.com/%E2%80%9C-history-world-nutshell%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-genesis-41-10)

Preached in Manhattan, New York on January 25, 2009

*1Adam 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.” 2Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.*

*The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. 6Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7If 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.”*

*8Now 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.* 9*Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” 10The Lord said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.”* – Genesis 4:1-10

We’re looking at the storyline of the Bible. We’re saying each week that the Bible is not primarily a set of disconnected individual stories, each of which has a little lesson or moral about how to live life, but primarily, the Bible is a single storyline, a single story, that tells us what’s wrong with the human race, what God is doing about it, and how history is going to turn out at the end. We’ve begun to trace out this storyline by starting with Genesis, the first four chapters.

The Bible’s simple answer to the question, “What’s wrong with the human race?” is *sin*. Contemporary people just cringe and wince and get a tic when we use the word *sin* because we don’t like it. Recently I actually read a book review (kind of an older book review but not *too* old) in the *London Times*. It was the *London Times* online. As an offhanded comment, the reviewer said, “You know, we need to retire these words *sin* and *evil*. They’re empty and obsolete.”

Okay, then what vocabulary *will* you use to talk about war atrocities or massive corruption in government and business or slavery or violence? What will you use? What language will you use? Will you use the language of technology or sociology or psychology? Will you talk about maladaptive behavior or dysfunction? That’s not sufficient.

The language we have in those disciplines isn’t profound enough and rich enough to deal with the realities of what’s really going on in the world and what’s wrong with the world. We have to recover the vocabulary of sin. That’s one of the things we’re doing as we look here at Genesis 3 and 4.

Tonight we learn more about what the Bible means by this term *sin* by looking at this sad and poignant narrative, famous story of Cain and Abel. Let’s look at three new things we learn tonight about what the Bible says is wrong with us and, therefore, three new things about sin. Let’s notice the *potency* of sin, the *subtlety* of it, and we see a foreshadowing of the *victory* over it. So let’s notice the potency of it, the subtlety of it, and our eventual victory over it (all in this text).

**1. The potency of it**

In verse 7, God, in speaking to Cain, uses a remarkable image. He says, “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.” It’s a remarkable image. It’s the image of a leopard or a tiger, a predatory animal, crouching in the shadows, coiled and ready to spring and kill.

God says that’s sin. Sin is predatory. Sin has a deadly life of its own. How is that? Here right away we’re going to see why there is no other set of vocabulary words that we have that deal with the reality of what sin is. How so? First of all, when God uses this image, it’s telling us that sin has an abiding, growing presence in your life. If you commit sin, sin is not over. Sin is not simply an action. It’s a force. It’s a power.

When you do sin, it’s not now over, but it actually becomes a presence in your life. It takes shape, a shadow shape, and stays with you and begins to affect you. Eventually, it can just take you out. You say, “Well, how could that be?” Well, you can start with the psychological concept of habit. You can start there, but you can’t end there. You can start by noticing the things we do become easier to do again and easier to do again and easier to do again and harder to stop doing.

C.S. Lewis some years ago wrote this passage in one of his chapters of *Mere Christianity*. He says, “That explains what always used to puzzle me about Christian writers; they seem to be so very strict at one moment and so very free and easy at another. They talk about mere sins of thought as if they were immensely important: and then they talk about the most frightful murders and treacheries as if you had only got to repent and all would be forgiven.

But I have come to see that they are right. what they are always thinking of is the mark which the action leaves on that tiny central self which no one sees … but which each of us will have to endure—or enjoy—forever. One man may be so placed that his anger sheds the blood of thousands, and another so placed that however angry he gets he will only be laughed at.”

Do you hear that? Here are two people. They both get angry. One of them, because of the conditions, has the power to kill people with it. The other person, no matter how angry he gets, people just laugh at him. Each has done a little mark on the soul. It’s pretty much the same case in both men.

“Each has done something to himself which, unless he repents, will make it harder for him to keep out of the rage next time he is tempted, and will make the rage worse when he does fall into it. Each of them, if he seriously turns to God, can have that twist in the central man straightened out again: each is, in the long run, doomed if he will not. The bigness or smallness of the thing, seen from the outside, is not what really matters.”

There’s another place, by the way, nearby in *Mere Christianity* where Lewis makes the interesting observation that first, the Nazis killed the Jews because they hated them. After awhile, they hated the Jews because they had killed them. Here’s the point. When you sin, the sin doesn’t just go away. The sin becomes a presence in your life. You start by doing sin, but then sin does you.

You can decide, “I’m not going to forgive my mother, I’m not going to forgive my father, for what he or she has done.” Okay, you’ve done it, but then it will do you, because that will poison your relationships with other people, certain people in all kinds of ways you don’t even see. It will harden you. Do you see the difference already in this family? When God comes to Adam and Eve (remember last week if you were here) and God says, “What have you done,” at least they’re kind of abashed and sheepish.

Adam is saying, “My wife made me do it.” The wife says, “The Serpent made me do it.” But here God comes to Cain and says, “What have you done?” He says, “Do you think I’m supposed to keep tabs on that guy?” There’s a hardening. First, you start to do sin, and then sin does you. It becomes a presence in your life.

See, it’s not just inside. It’s not just that you … This is the reason why legal terminology is not enough just to say, “We’re violating God’s norms,” nor is psychological terminology quite enough to say, “Well, it creates bad habits or psychological problems.” No, let me go a little further. When it talks about sin as a crouching tiger (or hidden dragon), when it talks about sin like that, it says, for example, in Galatians 6, sins will find you out. You reap what you sow.

Do you know what that means? Sin also creates a presence not just in you but around you. Why? It sets up strains in the fabric of things, the way God made the world, especially in the human community. Haters tend to be hated. Cowards tend to be deserted. He who lives by the sword will die by the sword. What is all that?

When you sin, that sin becomes a presence in your life. It takes shape in and around you, and it will take you out. Therefore, you should avoid sin like the plague, because it is a plague. Somebody says to you, “You know, you have a cancerous tumor growing in this part of your body.” You say, “Well, one of these years I’ll get to it.” You don’t do that. For somebody to come along and say, “You have an abrasive spirit,” or, “You can’t control yourself in this area,” or, “You have this,” or, “You have that character flaw,” you don’t say, “Well, yeah.”

Don’t you dare, because that’s the second aspect of potency we see in this image. The idea of sin crouching at the door not only tells us it’s coiled to spring (it’s a presence in your life that when you sin, you create a presence in your life that then can take you out), but also the image gets across the fact that sin hides.

See, the lion, the tiger, the leopard is crouching. That means down away out of your sight. Why? Because if you see a crouching tiger, you have a chance. You can get a couple of steps on it, but if you don’t see a crouching tiger, you’re dead. If you don’t see it well or you don’t know quite where it’s located … The less aware you are of the location or the reality of the crouching animal, the more vulnerable you are, and the more likely you are to die.

What that means is the worst things in your life, the character flaws and the sins in your life that are most going to ruin you or are ruining you or are going to make the people around you miserable are the things, the character flaws, you least will admit. They’re the ones you’re in denial about, you rationalize, and you minimize. Whatever the consequences happen to you, when somebody brings them up, you rationalize them.

By definition, those are the crouching sins in your life (the ones that are going to take you out). As long as you look at workaholism as conscientiousness, as long as you look at your grudge as moral outrage, as long as you look at materialism as ambition or arrogance as healthy self-assertion, as long as you look at your obsession with looks as good grooming, you’re vulnerable. You’re in denial.

What are the crouching sins in your life? Do you not have a short list of character flaws you know have power over you but you always tend to rationalize, you always tend to minimize? You know, many of us get at least to this spot. We know we’re bad at that. We know that’s a problem for us, and yet when anyone ever brings up an actual particular case of it, “Oh no! You don’t understand.”

At least you know there’s a crouching tiger in there somewhere. You just don’t quite know where. Do you know what your sins are? Do you know what your besetting sins are? Do you know what your crouching sins are? If you don’t even have a list, then you’ve been mastered. So see the potency of sin. See how deadly it is. See why it’s nothing to take lightly. It’s nothing to be trifled with. Okay, now secondly, let’s notice …

**2. The subtlety of sin**

This brilliant narrative shows us how subtle it is, because here you have Cain, and here you have Abel. We have Abel being accepted by God and Cain being rejected. So what do they represent? They represent the people who call on God’s name and find favor with God and then the people who God rejects.

When you actually read through the narrative, it’s difficult to know why, isn’t it? See, that’s part of the brilliance of the narrative, because we don’t have … Look. Liberals and conservatives basically … When they divide the world into good and bad people, they have this nice, bright line. I think the traditional idea is good people are the people who uphold moral values, and bad people are the people who don’t believe anything, and they live any way they want.

The liberal bright line is good people are the people who are working for inclusion and who are working for a pluralistic society and equality. Bad people are the intolerant people, the fundamentalists, the bigots. I mean, they have these nice lines, but here you have … Look. You don’t see Cain and Abel … One of them is running around boozing it up and womanizing, and the other one is going to church and bringing their offerings.

You don’t see one person working hard, and the other person a ne’er-do-well living off welfare. That’s not what you have. What do you have? The only difference is one seems to be a farmer and one seems to be a rancher, from what we can tell. One is raising animals. To make an offering to God, you bring the firstfruit of the new animals born to you this year, because that’s your income. The other one is a farmer. What you do is you bring some of the produce of your field because that’s your income.

Well, they’re both offering up to God, are they not? They’re both doing God’s will. They’re both seeking God. So what’s the problem? All we’re told is God blessed and showed favor to Abel, which probably almost certainly means he prospered him and made him successful and let things go well in his life, and he didn’t favor Cain. Why? What’s going on? It’s subtle. It’s supposed to be subtle. It’s supposed to be a matter of the heart.

That’s how the narrative gets you to start to investigate. Here are some clues to the answer. The first clue is this. Do you see what it says? It says, “Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering … But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.” Here’s what’s interesting. Every year, the income of a rancher basically is how many more calves and colts and lambs and that sort of thing are being born.

If you want to be really cagey, you wait and give the Lord his offering after you see how many animals are being born to you, right? I mean, if you’re going to have 12 animals born, then, “Oh, I’ll send the Lord one or two.” You know? “I’m a tither. I’ll send three, a little more than a tithe.” Here’s the danger. If you send the first one born, what if there are only two this year? What if there are only three? “I don’t want to give God 50 percent. That’s kind of exorbitant, don’t you think?”

Therefore, there’s a kind of person who is pretty calculating and is “absolutely making sure I give God just what I have to.” Then there’s a kind of person who is openhearted. They’re not calculating. There’s a joy. There’s an abandon. There’s a trust. So we see that in Abel. Do you recognize that? We see a different kind of spirit there, a different level of commitment, a kind of joy, a kind of freedom. You don’t see it in Cain.

Well, where was that? Why? Okay, secondly, Hebrews 11, looking back on this passage … In Hebrews 11, we’re told Abel made his sacrifice and offering in faith, but Cain did not. Well, what the heck does that mean? That’s a little difficult to understand. Why? Well, when you and I think of faith in God, are we saying Cain didn’t have faith in God? You don’t think Cain believed God existed?

I think he believed God existed. He is talking with God here, so that’s not a problem. He really knows God exists. What’s going on? You have to remember from last week God hasn’t given this first family a whole lot of information yet about how he is going to save the world. He has just given them one verse. It’s Genesis 3:15. In Genesis 3:15, God promised one of the descendants of Adam and Eve is going to crush the Serpent’s head, is going to destroy sin and death.

Therefore, God promises to save the world. That’s all we know. It’s pretty vague. It’s awfully rudimentary, but this is what I want you to consider. There are only two reasons you can possibly bring an offering to God. There are only two reasons to put money in the plate. There are only two reasons to bring a lamb or an offering in the Old Testament and New Testament. It doesn’t matter. There are only two reasons to give God an offering.

One is to give God an offering in response to salvation, in gratitude toward salvation. The other reason is to do it as a means of salvation, as a way of getting God to bless you, as a way of getting God to reward you, answer your prayers, take you to heaven. There are only two possible reasons. Even in the rudimentary form that the gospel existed in Abel’s mind, Abel, in some way, was putting his trust in God’s promise of salvation.

As a result, there was an openheartedness about him. There was a lack of calculation. Here’s what happens with Cain. Do you not remember (if you were here in the fall) the parable of the prodigal son and the elder brother and what the elder brother’s heart was like? We said back then … If you weren’t here, don’t worry. I’ll give you the nutshell version of it. If you believe you’re a sinner saved by grace, then everything is gravy. You believe God has saved you in spite of your merits, and everything God gives you is gravy. Everything is icing.

But if you’re an elder brother, if you believe, “God owes me because I’ve worked so hard, and I’ve served my father, and I’ve obeyed the Bible, and I’ve done everything right. God owes me it,” if you believe you’re saved by works, if you believe you’ve put God in your debt … The way you know you’re a sinner saved by grace or an elder brother saved by works is that when God doesn’t let your life go the way you think it ought to go, when God is not blessing you and prospering you and having things go well, the elder brothers get absolutely furious.

Why? It proves they actually believe God owes them because of their good works, because of their offerings. When you see Cain looking first at Abel and seeing Abel being blessed over himself, he is murderously angry, and he is angry at God. He is so angry at God, he is willing to say, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” “Get out of my face.”

What do we have there? You don’t see the difference between Cain and Abel on the surface, do you? They’re both hardworking. They’re both going to church, as it were. They’re both trying to do God’s will, but what is the fundamental trust of their heart? Are they looking to other things or themselves for their salvation, or are they looking to God? That makes all the difference between whether you’re a grumpy, angry, furious Cain, always mad with how the world is going, always upset because somebody is getting ahead of you, competitive, looking at the Abels around …

“Why are they getting ahead? They don’t deserve to be ahead. What’s going on here?” Do you want to be a Cain, or do you want to be an Abel? See, Cains hate Abels. Abels don’t hate Cains. Cains denounce. Cains demonize. Cains are always comparing. Cains are always grumpy. Cains are always anxious. It all has to do with what are you looking to as your salvation? What is your heart’s fundamental trust?

Do you see the subtlety of it? That’s the very essence of whether sin is mastering you or whether you are mastering sin. There’s the potency of sin, and there is the subtlety of sin. Is there any hope? “Preacher, is there any hope?” Well, you know, it’s a sad story. Of course, the story seems to end … There’s no happy ending.

“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ […] The Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.’ ” Yet because this is such a brilliant narrative, it’s such a brilliant text, because the author ultimately was the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is an incredible storyteller, we have foreshadowing. Right there at the very end, you actually have the basic furniture for …

**3. The eventual victory over sin**

What do you see? You see two things about God. One is his *grace*, and one is his *justice*. First of all, notice his *grace.* He is asking questions. Again! Remember last week, if you were here? Last week, God does not show up after Adam and Eve sinned and say, “How dare you do what I told you not to do!” Instead, he comes and says, “What have you done? Where have you been? What’s going on?” Even here, he shows up even after the murder and says, “Where is your brother Abel?”

Now look. When God asks you a question, I can guarantee one thing. He is not looking for information. If God is asking you a question, he is not trying to understand your heart. He already understands your heart. He is not trying to figure out what’s going on. He already knows what’s going on.

If God asks you a question, he is trying to get *you* to understand your heart. He is trying to bring *you* along. I think in Genesis 3 and 4 one of the most moving things as I’ve meditated on these texts for years now is that God does not show up and say the first time to Cain, “How dare you question who I bless and who I don’t bless! I mean, don’t you know who I am? Who do you think you are? I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” He doesn’t do that.

He says to Cain, “I see you’re downcast.” Literally, by the way, God says, “Your face has fallen,” which is actually a Hebrew idiomatic expression for depression. He is coming, and he is counseling a depressed man. He is asking him questions. He is pursuing him, and he is trying to get him to understand his own heart. Look at the tenderness of it.

What amazes me is how, even though he is telling him the truth, he says, “Look, Cain. It’s not Abel’s fault you’re depressed, and it’s not my fault. It’s your own actions and your own attitudes.” Yet he says, “But sin is going to master you. I don’t want it to master you.” Isn’t that amazing? He is coming after Cain. He doesn’t want to see him perish. So there we see the grace of God. There we see the love of God, but at the very same time, in verse 10, we see something.

It’s always kind of spine tingling to me when he says, “Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.” What does that mean? All through the Bible, there are places where God says, “The innocent shed blood is crying to me from the ground.” What does that mean? God is a God of justice. It means when injustice is done, it cries to God, as it were. There’s an outcry.

When there’s violence in Sodom and Gomorrah, he comes by in Genesis 18, and he says to Abraham, “I’m on my way down to Sodom and Gomorrah because of the outcry, the cry of the oppressed, because of the violence, and because of the terrible things that are happening there.” God can’t shrug at sin. He just can’t let it go. He is a righteous God. He is a just God. Injustices cry to him all the time. Innocent shed blood always cries to him for rectification, for making it right. He can’t deny that. He can’t just turn away from that.

Here you have an absolutely just God, and yet an absolutely loving and gracious God. How in the world can a just God save us? He wants to save us, but he is just. How will he ever be able to make good on his promise of Genesis 3:15 to save the world, to save us like this? Here’s how he can be both just and gracious.

Years later, another Man showed up who was a lot like Abel, because he came into a world, he came into a nation, filled with Cains, people who were religiously very observant, who were always bringing their offerings, honoring the sacrificial system, and yet they hated his Spirit, and they slew him. The book of Hebrews says when Jesus Christ shed his blood, an innocent victim of injustice, his blood cried out, but in a new way.

See, this is in Hebrews 12. The writer to the Hebrews says, “You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” That’s interesting. What is that talking about? Here’s what it’s talking about.

Jesus Christ was, in a sense, the ultimate Abel because he was the only person who was truly innocent who came into this world. He was not a grumpy Cain. He was beautiful. He was gorgeous. He was loving. The Cains couldn’t stand it, and they killed him. But he didn’t die only as a victim of injustice. He also died by design. He died in our place. He died to pay the penalty for our injustices.

Do you know what that means? Let me be as personal as I can possibly be. In the first three or four years of my Christian life, every time I went to God to ask for forgiveness, I was nervous. In fact, when I got up off of my knees when I was done confessing my sins, I was still nervous because I would take 1 John 1:9, where it says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” and I’d say, “Okay. I’ve sinned, and so I’ll kneel down, and I’ll ask for God’s forgiveness.”

But do you know what? I would sin, and I’d say, “I’ll never do this again.” A few days or weeks later, I had done it again. I’d get down on my knees. A few days or weeks later, I’d done it again. I’d get down on my knees. Every time I would say, “Please be merciful. Please be merciful!” There was something in the back of my head that kept saying, “Okay. You’re in your early twenties. What if you’re still doing this in your early forties, your early fifties? Where will God finally say, ‘Hey, I’m under no obligation to be merciful to you infinitely’?”

Every time I would get up, I would wonder, “Will he be back in my life? Will he bless me?” Then one day I understood what Hebrews 12 was talking about when it says Jesus Christ’s blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Jesus Christ’s blood, like all innocent blood, is crying out for justice, but now what is it saying?

In a sense, Jesus Christ is standing before the throne of his Father and saying, “Father, your law demands justice. These people here have sinned. The wages of sin is death. But for all the people who believe in me, I have paid for it. There is my blood crying out for justice.” Here’s how it cries now. “Justice demands that you never condemn my brothers and sisters.”

Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ and who says, “Father, forgive me because Jesus Christ has died in my place,” do you know what that means? God can never condemn us. Why? Because that would be to get two payments for the same sin, and that would be unjust. That’s the reason why 1 John 1:9, does not say, “If you confess your sins, he is faithful and *merciful* to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.” It says, “… he is faithful and just …” What does that mean?

A life-changing sermon for me was a sermon by David Martyn Lloyd-Jones that I read years ago on 1 John 1:8 and 9. Here’s what he said: If Jesus Christ has shed his blood for you and you have asked God to forgive you because of Jesus Christ’s shed blood, God could never, ever, ever condemn you, because that would be to get two payments, and that would be unjust. Therefore, the justice of God now demands that there is no condemnation for you as long as you live and that you will never perish.

Jesus Christ, in a sense, is not standing before God interceding for us by asking for mercy, because, you see, Jesus is not actually getting up there saying, “Here’s Tim Keller, and he sinned again. So, Father, give him one more chance. Please be merciful one more time.” God is up there saying, “Well, all right.” No wonder I never felt good when I got up off my knees. Now I realize what Jesus Christ essentially is doing.

He is saying, “Tim Keller sinned again, but I’m not asking for mercy. I’m not asking for mercy. I’m demanding justice. Embrace him. Cleanse him. Open his eyes. Come into his life.” The justice of God is infallible. The justice of God is like the mountains. The justice of God and the righteousness of God cannot be gainsaid. Now it’s on our side if you believe in him. See, now the blood of Jesus Christ cries out for justice, but the justice is not *against* us anymore. It’s *for* us … all of it.

If you really know you’re that secure in his love, if that moves you to the depths, it shakes you to the depths and it moves you to tears, you’re not going to be a grumpy Cain anymore. You’re not going to always be comparing yourself to other people. You’re not going to be angry because somebody is getting ahead of you. Your identity is not based on your performance anymore and all that kind of thing.

There will be a security. There will be a poise. You’ll become a sweet, loving Abel, not a grumpy, condemning, self-righteous Cain. Don’t you want that? The world needs a lot of Abels. The Cains are out there killing each other, exploiting each other, lying about each other, elbowing each other out.

They’re as miserable as can be. Sin is mastering them, but use this potent gospel of the grace of God to deal with the potent sin in our lives, in your life. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all unrighteousness. Go and learn what that means. Spend the rest of your life learning what that means. Let’s pray.

*Father, we thank you that you have given us this great gospel. As sad as it is to see the blood of Abel crying out from the ground for justice, how remarkable it is that it points us to the blood of Jesus Christ crying out that now there can be no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Oh my! Would you give us a sense of our security? Would you give us a glorious sense of it? Let that reality be the one that controls us. Let it turn us more and more into the Spirit and the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, who did all this for us. It’s in his name we pray, amen.*

[Charles Haddon Spurgeon](https://www.spurgeon.org/multi_author/charles-haddon-spurgeon/)   
September 2, 1866   
Scripture: [Genesis 4:10; Hebrews 12:24](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/scripture-index/genesis/)   
at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-blood-of-abel-and-the-blood-of-jesus/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-blood-of-abel-and-the-blood-of-jesus/%23flipbook/)

## The Blood of Abel and the Blood of Jesus

##### “And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.”— Genesis 4:10.

##### “And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”— Hebrews 12:24.

THE first shedding of human blood was a very terrible experiment. Whether Cain’s murderous blow was premeditated or not, the sight of a bleeding human corpse must have been a terrible novelty to him. He had not been hardened by reading details of warfare, or listening to tales of murder; killing and slaying were new terrors to mankind, and he who was the ringleader in such violence must have been filled with mingled astonishment at the result of his blow, and apprehension as to its consequences. I think I see him standing there by the corpse, for a moment stiff with affright, awe-struck at the sight of blood. Will the skies dart malignant fires upon him? Will the sodden earth produce speedy avengers from her astonished soil? What questions must have flashed through the murderer’s mind! But lo! the warm lifeblood flows in a crimson stream upon the earth, and some ghastly comfort arises to the mind of the guilty wretch as he observes the earth soak in the blood. It stands not in a pool, but the earth opens her mouth to receive and to conceal his brother’s blood. Sad memorials bespatter the herbage and crimson the soil, but still the dreadful flood is drying up, and the murderer feels a momentary joy. Perhaps Cain went his way dreaming that the terrible matter was all over. He had done the deed, and it could not be undone; he had smitten the blow, ridden himself of the presence of one who was obnoxious to him; the blood had been swallowed up by the earth, and there was an end to the business which need cause no further thought. There was no machinery in those days of police, and law, and judges, and gallows, and therefore Cain had little or nothing to fear; strong and hale man, with no one to punish him, and nobody to accuse or upbraid him, except his father and his mother, and those, possibly, too bowed with grief and too mindful of their own offence to show much resentment toward their firstborn. He may therefore have imagined that the deed was speechless and silent, and that now oblivion would cover his crime, so that he might go his way as though the deed were never done. It was not so, however, for though that blood was silent in the seared conscience of Cain, it had a voice elsewhere. A mysterious voice went up beyond the skies; it reached the ear of the Invisible, and moved the heart of Eternal Justice, so that breaking through the veil which conceals the Infinite from man, God revealed himself and spoke to Cain: “What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground." Then Cain knew that blood could not be idly spilt, that murder would be avenged, for there was a tongue in every drop of the vital essence which flowed from murdered manhood, which prevailed with God, so that he would interpose and hold a solemn inquest thereon.

     Brethren, that was a more terrible experiment still which was tried at Calvary, when not the first man was slaughtered but the Son of God himself; he who was man but yet was more than man, God manifest in the flesh; it was a dread experiment when having dragged him before the judgment seat and falsely condemned him, having shouted, “ Away with him, away with him,” they actually dared to take the nails and fasten the Son of God to the accursed tree, to lift up his body between earth and heaven, and there to watch its griefs till they ended in his death, when they pierced his side, and forthwith flowed thereout blood and water. No doubt Pilate, who had washed his hands in water, thought that no mischief would come of it. The Scribes and Pharisees went their way, and said, “We have silenced the accusing voice. There will no more be heard in our streets the cry of him who said, ‘Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.' We shall no longer be disturbed in our hypocrisy and formality by the presence of a pure and holy being, whose simple honesty shall be a stern rebuke to us. We have murdered him, we have put him to death without just reason, but there is an end of it. There will be no voice to that blood.” Little did they know that up to heaven the cry of Jerusalem had already gone, “His blood be on us, and on our children,” was registered in the tablets of justice, and ere long Jerusalem became the treasure house of woe and a den of misery, so that the like to her destruction hath not been, neither ever shall be, upon the face of the earth. Far more delightful is the fact that another and more melodious cry went up to heaven from the cross of Calvary. “Father, forgive them,” resounded from the wounds of Immanuel. The blood of Abel was not voiceless, and the blood of Jesus was not dumb; it cried so as to be heard amid the thrones of heaven, and blessed be God, it spake for us and not against us; it spake not worse things, as it might well have done, but better things than that of Abel. It did not demand fiercer vengeance than that which fell upon Cain, it did not ask that we might be driven vagabonds and fugitives upon the face of the earth, and to be at last banished from God into hell for ever, but it cried, “Father, forgive them,” and it prevailed, and the curse was taken away, and a blessing Came to the sons of men.

     This morning we propose to keep our discourse to the subject of the voice of the blood of Abel and the voice of the blood of Jesus, as standing in comparison the one with the other. They both spake. That is evident. Abel being dead yet speaketh, saith the apostle, and we know to our abiding comfort that the blood of Jesus pleads before the eternal throne. All blood has a voice, for God is jealous of its preservation, the blood of excellent and just men has a more heavenly speech still, but the voice of the blood of Jesus far surpasses all, and among ten thousand voices it bears the palm.

     I. In the first place, JESUS BLOOD SPEAKS BETTER THINGS IN GENERAL.

     What did the blood of Abel say? Was it not the blood of testimony? When Abel fell to the ground beneath his brother’s club, he bore witness to spiritual religion. Cain was the lover of a merely outward worship, in which faith had no place. He loved a worship of show and pomp, he garnished the altar with fruits and decked it with flowers; his was a religion of taste and elegance, a religion of his own devising; but it was devoid of a humble, believing, spiritual reference to the promised Deliverer. Abel stood there the professor of an ungarnished religion of faith in the promised sacrifice. On the altar was a lamb, bleeding from its death wound, and laid in order for burning; a ghastly spectacle not to be delighted in by taste, a thing from which the lovers of the beautiful would turn away. Abel had chosen such an offering because God had chosen it, and because it was the fit means for leading his faith to its true object, the Lord Jesus. He saw by faith in the bleeding lamb the memorial of the Lord’s great propitiation for sin, which could not be seen in Cain’s offering of the fruits of the earth, however tasteful that offering might be. Abel stands forth before us as the first in a cloud of witnesses, bearing brave testimony, and prepared to seal it with their lives. He died a martyr for the truth, the grandly God-like truth that God accepteth men according to their faith. All honour to the martyr’s blood which speaks so effectually for precious truth. Our Lord Jesus Christ, being also a testifier and witness for. the faith of God, spake better things than Abel, because he had more to speak, and spake from more intimate acquaintance with God. He was a fuller witness of divine truth than Abel could be, for he brought life and immortality to light, and told his people clearly of the Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ had been in the bosom of the Father, and knew the divine secret; this secret he revealed to the sons of men in his ministry, and then he sealed it by his blood. It is not to be forgotten that though the death of Christ was in chief an atonement for sin, yet it was also a testimony to the truth, for he is said to be a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people, and as a dying, bleeding martyr, it will be clear to you that this blood testifies to fuller, brighter, and more glorious truth than did the blood of Abel.

     Moreover, the blood of Abel spake good things in that it was the proof of faithfulness. This dear servant of the Great Master was faithful under his brother’s opposition; yea, faithful unto death. It could not be said of him as the apostle said of certain others, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” He resisted sin even unto blood; he was faithful in all his house as a servant; he turned not from his integrity, but counted not his life dear unto him. His blood as it fell to the ground spake this good thing; —it said, “Great God, Abel is faithful to thee.” But the blood of Jesus Christ testifies to yet greater faithfulness still, for it was the sequel of a spotlessly perfect life, which no act of sin had ever defiled; whereas Abel’s death furnished, it is true, a life of faith, but not a life of perfection. The faithfulness of Jesus was complete from the day of his birth to the hour of his death; and inasmuch as he needed not otherwise to die, his voluntary yielding up of life was all the more an act of obedience, and the better proof of his fidelity to his trust.

     Moreover, we must never forget that all that Abel’s blood could say as it fell to the ground was but the shadow of that more glorious substance of which Jesus’ death assures us. Jesus did not typify atonement, but offered it; he was not the representative of sacrifice; he was the great Sacrifice itself, and inasmuch as the substance must ever excel the shadow, the blood of Jesus Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel.

     It is well to add that our Lord’s person was infinitely more worthy and glorious than that of Abel, and consequently his death must yield to us a more golden-mouthed discourse than the death of a mere man like Abel. He who dies at the hand of Cain is but one of our race, testifying to truth and righteousness, testifying by faith to a sacrifice to come; but he who died at the hand of Herod and of Pilate was divine, and came upon no common errand, with no ordinary message to deliver. When the glorious Son of God bowed his head and gave up the ghost, the voice that arose from his blood must necessarily have been louder, sweeter, more full, and more Godlike than the voice of the martyred Abel’s gore. We understand then, before coming to details, that on general principles we may be pretty clear that the blood of Jesus would speak better things than that of Abel.

     II. Now we will enter the very heart of our text, while we remember that THE BLOOD OF JESUS SPEAKS BETTER THINGS TO GOD than the blood of Abel did. The blood of Abel cried in the ears of the Lord, for thus he said to Cain, “The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.” That cry did not go round to seek a mediator, but went directly to the judgment-seat of God, and laid an accusation against the murderer. Now what did Abel’s blood say to God? Standing by the spot where Abel fell, and marking the ground all crimson with clotted gore, what would the blood seem to you to say? What would be your own reflection? What would you conceive that the blood said to God? It said just this, “O God, one of thine own creatures, the product of thy matchless skill, has been dashed in pieces, and barbarously destroyed. A living, sensitive body formed by art and skill, such as only thou couldst show, has been wantonly broken. The potter will not bear, that the vessel which has been fashioned upon the wheel with much cost and labour should be wantonly broken, but here is a body far more costly, far more wonderful than anything which human art could create, and this has been destroyed. Great God, the Creator of all things, wilt thou look on this with patience, wilt thou bear to see the work of thine own hands most cruelly destroyed?” Was there not much in this cry? Then that blood would plead still further, “O God, thy creature has been destroyed without cause. No just reason of provocation has been given, no offence has been committed which could deserve so terrible a stroke; but one of thy feeble creatures who has a claim upon thy kind protection has been wantonly and needlessly slain: — his blood appeals to thee! Thou Judge of all the earth, wilt thou let the weak be trodden down by the strong, and wilt thou suffer the innocent to be smitten by the fierce hand of the wicked.” You see the cry gathers force. At first it is, “O God, thy creature has been destroyed;” next it is, O God, thy subject has been maltreated by one of his fellow-subjects, by one who has become thine enemy: wilt thou not interfere?” Yet the blood of Abel said more than this; it said, “O God, the blood shed here was shed for thee.” It seemed to say, “If it were not for love of thee this blood had not been shed! If these drops had not been consecrated by devotion, if this blood had not flowed in the veins of a man who loved God with all his heart it had not been poured out upon the ground. O God,” cries every drop, “I fell upon the ground for thee— wilt thou endure this? Shall a creature that thou hast made yield up its life with pain and anguish for thee, and wilt thou be like a cold, motionless, unmoved, immovable statue, and look on without emotion? Wilt thou not bestir thyself, O God? Shall blood be shed on thine own behalf, shed unjustly too, the blood of thine own loving, righteous creature, and wilt thou not interfere?” What force there is in such a voice! Yet the blood added to this, “O God, I have been shed in defiance of thee,” for the stroke which came from Cain’s hand was not merely aimed at Abel, it was in spirit aimed at God, for if Cain could have done the same to God as he did to his brother Abel, he doubtless would have done it. He was of that wicked one, and therefore slew his brother, and the wickedness which was in him was Deicidal; he would have slam God himself if it had been in his power, and so the blood cries, “O God, here is the gauntlet of defiance thrown down to thyself. Cain defies thee. He has struck the first blow at thyself, he has smitten down the vanguard of the army of thine elect. Wilt thou look on in quiet? Wilt thou take no vengeance? Wilt thou have no regard? Shall there be silence in heaven when there are groans and cries on earth? Shall heaven’s heart be cold when the heart of the enemy is hot with rage and fierce with rebellion? O God, wilt thou not interpose? Surely this is a heaven-piercing cry, but this is not all. The blood of the proto-martyr added to all this such an appeal as the following: —"O God, this is the first of human blood that has been murderously shed, and shed by an unnatural brother’s hand. Wilt thou pass this by? Then how canst thou be just? Did not this blood challenge the very existence of justice in God? O God, if thou do not punish this first barbarous man-slayer, who kills his brother, then all adown the ages men will riot in blood and wanton in murder, and they will say, ' How doth God know?’ He that sitteth in the heavens regardeth not, he will not so much as speak? It were as though God should issue a licence for man to shed each other’s blood, and give permission for red-handed murder to lord it over the whole creation, if the first murder should pass unnoticed by the great Judge of all. Do you hear, my brethren, what a cry the blood of Abel must have had, and with what power it arose to heaven? But we are not left to conjecture as to the power of that cry, for we are told that God heard, and when he heard it he came to reckoning with Cain, and he said, “What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth to me from the ground.” Then came the withering sentence of it. The ground which had drank in the blood became accursed to Cain, so that delve it as he might it could not yield him a bounteous harvest, plough it as he would, with all his skill and craft, it never could yield its strength to him. The original curse of the thorn and the thistle, which had fallen upon it when Adam survived, was now doubled to Cain, so that he reaped but handfuls and gathered scanty sheaves. This would be a constant bitter mingled with his daily bread, while over and above that, he received unto his heart a curse which made him the slave of his own dreads. He served fear and trembling as his gods, and went about the earth with darkness within him and darkness round about him, never more rejoicing, but wearing the mark of reprobation fixed upon his brow. His life was doubtless hell upon earth, and at last he was driven for ever from the presence of the Most High God. Blood has a voice in it, and when it is heard against a man it brings upon him a curse untold.

     Well now, brethren, it is a very sweet task to ask you to turn your minds away from the blood of Abel to the blood of Jesus. I feel persuaded that you did just now recognise the voice of Abel’s blood, and I want your minds to hear with equal distinctness the voice of Jesus Christ’s blood, for there are the same reasons for its loudness, but they are all far more emphatic. Can you stand at Calvary now and view the flowing of the Saviour’s blood from hands, and feet, and side? What are your own reflections as to what that blood says to God? Think now at the cross-foot. That blood crieth with a loud voice to God, and what doth it say? Does it not say this? “O God, this time it is not merely a creature which bleeds, but though the body that hangs upon the cross is the creature of thy Holy Spirit, it is thine own Son who now pours out his soul unto death. O God, it is thine only-begotten One, dear to thyself, essentially one with thee, one in whom thou art well pleased, whose obedience is perfect, whose love to thee has been unwavering, — it is he who dies. O God, wilt thou despise the cries and the tears, the groans, the moans, the blood of thine own Son? Most tender Father, in whose bosom Jesus lay from before the foundations of the earth, he dies, and wilt thou not regard him? Shall his blood fall to the ground in vain? Then, moreover, the voice would plead, “It is not only thy Son, but thy perfectly innocent Son, in whom was no necessity for dying, because he had no original sin which would have brought corruption on him, who had moreover no actual sin, who throughout life had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. O God, it is thine only begotten, who, without a fault, is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and stands like a sheep before her shearers. Canst thou see it, thou God of all, canst thou see the infinitely holy and just Son of thy heart led here to die— canst thou see it, and not feel the force of the blood as it cries to thee?” Was there not added to this fact that our Lord died to vindicate the honour of his Father? “For thee, O God, for thee he dies! He who hangs on Calvary hangs there in deference to thine own decree, in fulfilment of thine own purpose, in vindication of the honour of thy law, that thou mayest thyself be glorified, that thy justice may have full scope, and thy mercy may have illimitable sway. O God, the sufferer, pale in death, whose wounds are torn open with the cruel nails, and whose soul is racked with pain unutterable, dies for thee. If there had been no God he need not die. If there were no law to vindicate, no truth to defend, no honour, and majesty, and justice to which to pay homage, it need not that he died. If thou wert content to stain thine honour or to restrain thy mercy, there were no need that he should give himself. But it is for thee, for thee each pang, for thee each groan, for thee each drop of blood, and wilt thou not be moved thereby?” Brethren, is there not power in this voice? Yet over and above this the blood must have pleaded thus with God: — “O God, the blood which is now being shed, thus honourable and glorious in itself, is being poured out with a motive which is divinely gracious. He who dies on this cross dies for his enemy, groans for those who make him groan, suffers for those who thrust the dart into his soul, and then mock at the agony which they themselves have caused. O God, it is a chain for God in heaven which binds the victim to the horns of the altar, a chain of everlasting love, of illimitable goodness.” Now, dear friends, you and I could not see a man suffer out of pure benevolence without being moved by his sufferings, and shall God be unmoved? the perfectly holy and gracious God, shall he be indifferent where you and I are stirred to deep emotion? The sight of blood makes some of us shudder; the sight of blood shed from an innocent person— shed by the hand of violence — would make our very souls chill within us; but the thought of that blood being shed with a motive so marvellous, because of a disinterested affection towards undeserving criminals— this would move us indeed; and do you dream that it did not move the heart of God? Blessed be his name, we are not left to conjecture here; it so moved our heavenly Father that to this day God has come to man, and speaking to us through that blood he has said, “What hast thou done? Whatever thou hast done, however black and filthy thy sin may have been, the voice of my Son’s blood crieth unto me from the ground, and now from this day forth I have taken off the curse from the earth for his sake, neither will I curse it any more. Ye shall be blessed in your basket and in your store, in your going out and in your coming in. I have forgiven you your iniquities; I have set a mark upon you, and no man shall hurt you, neither shall justice smite you, for in the person of my dear Son I have received and accepted you, guilty as you are. Go your way, and live happily and peaceably, for I have taken away your iniquities and cast your sins behind my back, and the day has come in the which if thy sins be searched for they shall not be found, yea, if they be sought out they shall not be, saith the Lord, for I have pardoned them whom I have reserved.” Abel’s blood had mighty prevalence to curse, but Jesu’s blood has prevalence to bless the sons of men.

     I want you to stay a little over this thought to digest it. I wish I had the power to send it home; only the Holy Ghost, however, can do that. I want, however, just to dwell on it, that you may get into the soul of it. Observe that the blood of Abel spoke to God long before Cain spoke. Cain was deaf to the voice of his brother’s blood, but God heard it. Sinner, long before you hear the blood of Jesus, God hears it, and spares your guilty soul. Long before that blood comes into your soul to melt you to repentance, it pleads for you with God. It was not the voice of Cain that brought down vengeance, but the voice of Abel’s blood; and it is not the cry of the sinner seeking mercy that is the cause of mercy, it is the cry of that blood of Jesus. I know you will tell me you cannot pray; oh what a mercy it is that the blood can, and that when you cannot plead so as to prevail, the blood pleads. If you are to win mercy from God and get forgiveness, it will not be by the efficacy of your prayers and tears, but through the efficacy of that blood of God’s dear Son. Cain did not ask for vengeance, but it came unsought through the blood; and you, though you feel as if you hardly dare look for mercy, yet shall find it if you can trust the blood of Jesus which speaks for you. The blood does not need your voice to increase its power with God; he will hear your voice, but it is because he hears the blood of Jesus first of all. It is a mercy for us that the blood of Jesus Christ speaks for the guilty, even as the blood of Abel spoke against the guilty. Jesus’ blood pleads not for the innocent, if such there be, they need no plea from an atoning sacrifice. Jesus pleads for the rebellious that the Lord God may dwell among them; for you that have broken his laws, and despised his love, and fought against his power; the blood of Jesus pleads for such as you, for he came into the world to save sinners. “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

     The precious blood speaks constantly. Did you notice that word in the text? “which speaketh,” not “which did speak,” but “which speaketh.” The blood of Jesus pleaded for the thief upon the cross, but it

" Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransom’d church of God  
Be saved to sin no more.”

Brother, when prevailing sin oppresses the conscience, it is a thousand mercies to know that we have even now a prevailing Saviour. Years ago some of us came to Christ and we found pardon; but our faith occasionally faints, and our doubts grow strong. Come, let us go afresh to the fountain, let us look anew to the cross, for the blood speaks still. Still in effect our Lord Jesus bleeds to-day as much as he did eighteen hundred years ago, for the blood is just as certain in its power with God at the present moment as when the thief said, “Lord, remember me.” Let us think of this and rejoice in this. My soul, when thou canst not plead with God, when thou darest not, when thy tongue is silent, and despair gags thy mouth, even then Jesus pleads. Now lay thou hold upon the intercession; come and cast thyself upon him; rest wholly in him, he must prevail though thou canst not, he must succeed though thou hast no power whatsoever. Come then, and link thyself with the infallible prevalent plea of the precious blood, and it is all well with thee, all safe with thee, and safe for ever. God grant us grace to do this, each one of us, and his be the praise!

     III. Furthermore, JESUS BLOOD SPEAKS BETTER THINGS TO US IN OUR OWN HEARTS than the blood of Abel.

     I suppose most of you read the account written by the newspaper correspondents who have passed over the battle-fields of Königgratz or Sadowa. How it thrilled one to read of ditches filled with blood, and of the smell from putrid corpses being so intolerable that the travellers were fain to leave the battle-field in haste. I would not like to be Bismarck, nor the Crown Prince of Prussia, nor the King, nor any one who had a hand in a war so sanguinary and so unjustifiable. I suppose that wholesale assassins grow used to such things; I suppose that they can read of thousands mangled by shot and shell without emotion, and even see the heaps of corpses without a shudder, but I am certain of this, that it would drive me mad. Ah! to have the blood of one person knowingly laid at my door would be enough to dash all comfort from my life; but to have the blood of tens of thousands poured out to gratify my ambition, I think must make reason reel at once. It must be an absence of conscience which makes reason to keep her throne when men have been wading through their fellows’ blood for mere purposes of selfish gain. Seeing that there had been no wars in Cain’s day, and that the human heart had not been brutalised as it now is, so as to speak of war as we now do in such gentle terms, surely if he had had any conscience at all, it must have been a horrible thought to him that he had killed his brother. “I have killed a man, I have shed his blood.” Surely it •made him start in his sleep. How could he be quiet upon his lonely couch? That red-handed man! Guilt, a grim chamberlain, with fingers bloody red would surely draw the curtains of his bed. Would not the spectacle all come up before his mind? The talk in the field, the sudden impulse, the blow, the blood, the look of his victim as he cried for pity as one cruel stroke succeeded another; and then the sight of the ghastly body and the streaming blood, and the crimson marks on the soddened earth. Oh, it must have been a remembrance clinging like a viper around the murderer wherever he might be! He might well build a city, as we are told he did, in order to quench these fiery remembrances. Then would the thought come upon him, “You slew him though he was your brother.” “Am I my brother’s keeper?” said he, but men can talk sometimes more braggingly than their heart talks in secret. The horror of brother-killing must have haunted Cain: “I slew my brother, I, the first that was born of woman slew the second born.” And then it would be suggested, “And wherefore did I slay him? What evil had he done me? What if he did offer a different sacrifice from mine, and what if God did accept him and not me, yet what hurt had he done me?” The innocence of his victim, if Cain had any conscience, must have increased his uneasiness, for he would recollect how inoffensively he had kept those sheep of his, and had been like one among them, so lamblike, that shepherd man himself, a true sheep of God’s pasture. “Yet,” would Cain say, “I slew him because I hated God, the God before whose bar I am soon to stand, the God who set this mark on me.” Can you picture the man who had thus to be daily schooled and upbraided by a brother’s blood? It needs a poet’s mind to teach him. Think how you would feel if you had killed your own brother, how the guilt would hang over you like a black cloud, and drop horror into your very soul.

     Now, brethren, there is more than equal force in the cry of the blood of Jesus, only it acts differently, and it speaketh better things. Let it be remembered, however, that it speaks those better things with the same force. Comforts arise from the blood of Jesus as powerful as the horrors which arose from the blood of Abel. When the sinner looks to Jesus slain, he may well say, “ If I did not know that all this blood was shed for me as well as by me, my fears would multiply a thousand fold; but when I think that that precious blood is blood shed instead of mine, that it is blood which God planned and ordained should be shed for me from before the foundation of the world, when I think that that is the blood of God’s own dear Son, whom he has smitten instead of smiting me, making him bear the whole of his wrath that I might not bear it, O my God, what comforts come streaming from this blessed fountain! Just in proportion as thought of murder would make Cain wretched, in the same proportion ought faith to make you happy as you think upon Jesus Christ slain; for the blood of Christ, as I said at the beginning of the sermon, cannot have a less powerful voice; it must have a more powerful voice than that of Abel, and it cries therefore more powerfully for you than the blood of Abel cried against his brother Cain. Oh, then, my clamouring sins, I can hear you, but I am not afraid of you, for the blood of Jesus speaks louder than you all. Oh, then, conscience, I can hear thine accusation, but I am not alarmed, for my Saviour died. I come before God with perfect confidence, because sprinkled with the blood of my Substitute. If the horror of Cain with an awakened conscience might be unendurable, so the peace which comes to me through the precious blood of Jesus is indescribable and unutterable, a peace like a river, a righteousness like the waves of the sea. Sweet peace have all they who hear the blood speaking in their souls, telling them that sin is forgiven, that God is reconciled, that we are accepted in the Beloved, and that now we are preserved in Christ Jesus, and shall never perish, neither shall any pluck us out of his hand. I trust you know, I know many of you do, the sweet power of this peace-speaking blood. Such innocent blood, ordained on purpose to give peace, is precious beyond all price. O my soul! never look for peace elsewhere, and never be afraid of finding peace here. If to-day, O Christian, you have lost your confidence, if to-day you are conscious of having been false to your Lord, and of having done despite to his Spirit, if to-day you feel ashamed of the very name of a Christian because you have dishonoured it, if to-day despair is ready to strangle your hope, and you are tempted to give all up, yet come now, even now, to this precious blood. Do not think that my Saviour can save merely the little sinners; he is a great Saviour— mighty to save. I know your sins speak very loudly— ah! well they may; I hope you will hear their voice and hate them in the future— but they cannot speak so loudly as the blood of Jesus does. It says, “Father, Father, shall I die in vain? Father. I paid my blood for sinners, shall not sinners be saved? I was smitten for the guilty, shall the guilty be smitten too?” The blood says, “O God, I have vindicated thy law, what more dost thou demand? I have honoured thy justice, why shouldst thou cast the sinner into hell? O thou Divine Benignity! canst thou take two exactions for one offence, and punish those for whom Jesus suffered? O Justice! wilt thou here avenge? O Mercy! when the way is cleared, wilt thou not run to guilty sinners? O Love Divine, when the pathway is opened for thee, wilt thou not show thyself to the rebellious and the vile? The blood shall not plead in vain; sinners shall be saved, and you and I, I hope, among them to the praise and glory of his grace.

     IY. Two or three words to close with. JESUS BLOOD, EVEN IN MY TEXT, SPEAKS BETTER THINGS THAN THAT OF ABEL.

     It speaks the same things but in a better sense. Did you notice the first text? God said unto Cain, “What hast thou done?” Now that is what Christ’s blood says to you: “What hast thou done?” My dear hearer, dost thou not know that thy sins slew the Saviour? If we have been playing with sin, and fancied it to be a very little thing, a trifle to play with and laugh at, let us correct the mistake. Our Saviour hangs on the cross, and was nailed there by those sins of ours; shall we think little of them? Looking from the cross, Jesus says to us, “What hast thou done?” O my hearer, what hast thou done? Thou hast slain thy best friend and ruined thyself! Let me come home personally to every one. Make an inventory now of your sins. Go over the black list from your childhood till now. What hast thou done? Ah! Lord, done enough to make me weep for ever if it were not that thou hast wept for me. Drops of grief can never repay the debt which is due to thy blood. Alas! I have done evil, Lord, but thou hast done good to me. What hast thou done? What hast thou done? was a dreadful accusation to Cain, it might have gone through him like a dart; but to you and to me it is the soft enquiring voice of a Father’s love bringing us to repentance. May it bring us now!

     What I want mainly to indicate is this. If you notice in the second text, this blood is called “the blood of sprinkling.” Whether Abel’s blood sprinkled Cain or not I cannot say, but if it did it must have added to his horror to have had the blood actually upon him. But this adds to the joy in our case, for the blood of Jesus is of little value to us until it is sprinkled upon us. Faith dips the hyssop in the atoning blood and sprinkles it upon the soul, and the soul is clean. The application of the blood of Jesus is the true ground of joy, and the sure source of Christian comfort; the application of the blood of Abel must have been horror, but the application of the blood of Jesus is the root and ground of all delight.

     There is another matter in the text with which I conclude. The apostle says, “We are come to the blood of sprinkling.” He mentions that among other things to which we are come. Now, from the blood of Abel every reasonable man would flee away. He that has murdered his fellow desires to put a wide distance between himself and the accusing corpse. But we come to the blood of Jesus. It is a topic in which we delight as our contemplations bring us nearer and nearer to it. I ask you, dear Christian friends, to come nearer to it this morning than ever you have been. Think over the great truth of substitution. Portray to yourselves the sufferings of the Saviour. Dwell in his sight, sit at the foot of Calvary, abide in the presence of his cross, and never turn away from that great spectacle of mercy and of misery. Come to it; be not afraid. Ho, ye sinners, who have never trusted Jesus, look ye hither and live! May you come to him now!

“Come, guilty souls, and flee away,  
Like doves to Jesus’ wounds.”

Nay, do not run away from the wounds which you have made, but find shelter in them; forget the sufferings of Christ, but rest in them! Your only hope lies in trusting in Jesus, resting wholly upon him. Think much of the griefs of your Lord, and if I might suggest to some of you who will not be coming out this afternoon, perhaps if you could spend an hour or two between services in considering the sufferings of the Saviour, those considerations might be the means of bringing faith to you. Faith cometh by hearing, but it is a thoughtful hearing; and hearing comes by the word of God, but the word must be thought over. Open the Word, read the story of the cross, ask the Master to bless it to you, and who knoweth but through the Divine Spirit some of you may yet hear the voice of that blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel. The Lord bless every one of you for his name’s sake. Amen.