

Hebrews Chapter 12 v 22 -24

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] and chapter 4, so that's right at the beginning of the Bible, Genesis and chapter 4. We're going to read from verse 1 through to verse 16.

Genesis chapter 4, beginning at verse 1, reading through to verse 16. Here is a faithful word. This is true. This is historical. This really happened, and it has something to say to us today.

Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, with the help of the Lord, I have brought forth a man.

Later, she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time, Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord.

But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.

[1 : 16] So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, but you must master it.

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, Let's go out to the field. While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain, Where is your brother Abel? I don't know, he replied. Am I my brother's keeper? The Lord said, What have you done?

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

[2 : 20] When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth. Cain said to the Lord, My punishment is more than I can bear.

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.

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.

So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden. If you'd like to have your Bibles turned to Hebrews and chapter 12, we will be going back to Genesis 4 as well.

That event which is so well known, the murdering of Abel by his brother Cain. But I'm going to read from Hebrews and chapter 12, from verse 22.

[3 : 42] From verse 22, Hebrews 12. But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God.

You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 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, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

We're told that money talks, that actions speak louder than words, and a picture is worth a thousand words.

In each one of those phrases, nothing is actually said, no sound is actually heard. But in the Bible, there is something else we're told that speaks, but we cannot hear it, but God can.

Here in Hebrews 12, 24, the blood of Jesus and the blood of Abel are both spoken of as speaking unto God.

[5 : 07] The question, of course, is, well, what do they say? And since Jesus' blood, we're told, speaks a better word than Abel's, what especially does the blood of Jesus have to say to us this morning?

We're going to be celebrating in a few moments what we might call the Lord's Supper or communion, when we think about the death and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, again, in a way of focusing our minds upon what we're doing, we're going to be thinking about particularly this verse, where the blood of Jesus speaks, speaks a better word than Abel's.

Now, the whole of the New Testament, as I'm sure you're aware, is something like a glass-bottomed boat giving clarity to the things that are otherwise hidden and unseen within the surface, beneath the surface of the Old Testament.

And particularly the book of Hebrews reveals to us the very spirit, the heart of the Old Testament. It takes off the wrappings, as it were, of the things that we read about, brings out good gifts for us to enjoy by faith.

And in Hebrews, in several different places, the writer points to events in the Old Testament as showing and revealing something of the Lord Jesus Christ, revealing something of his work, his character, his person, and his ministry.

[6 : 35] And here, of course, in Hebrews 12, verse 28, he is pointing to that tragic event in the lives of Cain and Abel.

And he elevates that event to bring more light, particularly to the death of Jesus Christ. We read there from Genesis 4, 1 to 16, where we're told that Cain murdered his brother Abel in a fit of jealousy.

He commits his sin out in the field, away from his parents, away, he thought, from the eyes of God. But God confronts him, because no sin is ever hidden from God, no matter how we lock ourselves away or secrete ourselves away.

God tells Cain and confronts him with the truth that the blood of Abel has cried out to him from the ground on which it was shed and that its voice has reached up to heaven itself.

He says there to Cain, Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

[7 : 52] Hebrews 12 tells us that the blood of Jesus cries out in a similar way to that of Abel's, but that it speaks better things.

So let's just compare, let's just look for a moment this morning about what the blood of Abel cries for and what the blood of Christ cries out for and how is the blood of Jesus' voice better?

What word does it speak to us which is better than Cain's, than Abel's rather? Well, if you read the story as we did, you see that Cain murdered Abel in cold blood.

He wasn't provoked. Abel didn't attack him. It wasn't self-defense. In fact, it was premeditated murder because he says, let's go to the field together. So he thought about what he was going to do.

It wasn't just that he flew off the handle. It wasn't just, in one sense, an accident maybe where he thumped his brother and he fell. No, clearly he killed him and killed him quite violently by the fact that his blood was shed.

[8 : 54] In some way, he put him to death. And he murdered him, ultimately, the Bible tells us, because Abel was a righteous man. In other words, he was a man that pleased God, a man who loved God.

This is what we read in Hebrews 11. By faith, Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain. By faith, he was commended as a righteous man when God spoke well of his offering.

Abel was the first martyr, the very first person who was killed for his faith. You think of Stephen in the New Testament as the first martyr, but no, Abel was the first martyr.

The first person ever killed in the Bible is the first person who was killed for their faith. So it's a pattern all through the Bible and all through history as we thought last week.

And so, therefore, we would think rightly, and as the hymn writer sort of speaks of there in the hymn we sang for that reason, the blood of Abel must cry out to God for judgment, must cry out to God against the one who so wickedly killed him, must cry out for vengeance for his death, that the other who killed him should die as well because he had killed a righteous, a good man.

[10 : 18] But if the blood of a righteous man, Abel, cries out to God for judgment, what must the blood of the perfect, sinless God, man, Jesus Christ, call out for?

Surely his blood, which was shed so wickedly, must call out for something of greater judgment, judgment against the whole of humanity, perhaps, God's destructive power against every single person, that the Son of God, the perfect Son of God, was murdered.

When Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost, he points to the religious leaders and the people who were there and he says to them, you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Surely, in one sense, bolts of lightning should come from heaven, earthquakes should open, floods should come, judgment should come. If the blood of Jesus is shed compared to the blood of Abel. But wonderfully, amazingly, marvelously, that's not what the blood of Jesus calls for. In fact, we know, of course, what the blood of Jesus calls for because we've heard it from the very lips of the one who suffered on the cross as he was being put to death by those wicked and cruel hands, as he was being nailed to that wood, as he was being lifted up to suffer and die, the most awful death, he speaks from his lips.

[11:47] Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. The blood of Jesus speaks not judgment, but grace. Yes, Abel's blood calls out to God and is heard concerning the one who spilt his blood, the one who was the cause of the bloodshed.

But who were those who caused the death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Who were those who brought about his death?

Well, ultimately, not just the religious leaders who cried out and stirred the crowd to say, crucify, crucify. Not the crowd themselves who were swept along.

Not Pilate who washed his hands. Not the Roman soldiers who drove in the nails or whipped and scourged him. Surely the Bible makes it clear that ultimately it was because of us that Jesus Christ died.

Ultimately, it was because of our sin that he was suffered on the cross and was put to death. Here's Romans in chapter 5. Paul says, while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

[12:57] It was us who shed his blood. Ephesians 1, verse 7, in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

The blood of Jesus Christ calls for us to be forgiven. It calls to God to forgive us and not to count our sin against us.

It calls for God to pardon us. Pardon us not just for all of our sins, but particularly for that sin which was called for the necessity of his death in our place.

The blood of Jesus calls for vengeance. Sorry, the blood of Abel calls for vengeance. The blood of Jesus calls for mercy and forgiveness. That's why it's so much better.

One of the great tragedies that happens around the world, particularly in the East, is that when a family member is killed, the rest of the family have to seek vengeance. There was a case just a few years ago in Albania where a Christian pastor was murdered by a member of another family not because he had done anything, not because he had acted in any ungodly way, but simply because he was a relative of somebody else who had murdered one of the other man's relatives.

[14:25] But Jesus' blood does not call for that vengeance, but forgiveness. We see as well that the blood of Abel says, go.

Genesis 4.14, Cain understands quite rightly what God has said to him. Today you are driving me from the land and I will be hidden from your presence.

I'll be a restless wanderer on the earth. Cain understood that God's curse against him, the vengeance that was against him meant that he was to be separated from God forever.

And we see in verse 16 how the writer Moses puts it, so Cain went out from the Lord's presence. He was driven out. The blood of Abel drove him out, called for him to go, called for him to be rejected from God and depart from God.

And that's exactly what happened to him, so that he never returned into the presence of God. He never enjoyed God's favour again. He didn't seek forgiveness, no forgiveness was given.

[15:36] But the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ far from rejecting and ejecting us from God's presence draws us to him with wonderful words of invitation.

Earlier in Hebrews in chapter 10 we're told this, therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, verse 22, let us draw near to God.

The blood of Jesus ushers us into the very place where God dwells. The holy place means where God is. Sin blocks us from coming to God.

Sin puts up a great impenetrable wall between us and God. Sin keeps us wandering restlessly through life as Cain did.

Alienated, unable to come to God. But Jesus' blood has removed that wall of hostility from us. Removed that wall of hostility between us and God so that rather than being separated from him, his blood leads us into the very everlasting presence of God.

[16:49] It's what Paul writes in Ephesians 2.13, now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. That's why we have confidence to come to God in prayer.

That's why we have the assurance of his promise which is given to us in Hebrews 13, never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. God draws us to himself, he brings us to himself, the blood of Jesus brings us to that place of knowing him.

And wonderfully the blood of Jesus does not only cry out to God, but it also speaks to our own hearts. We sang that hymn at the very beginning of our service didn't we?

It says this line, when Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin.

The truth is of course that we know that we continue to sin against God. And the devil quite rightly tells us that we are sinful and wicked people.

[18:01] But quite wrongly he tells us, God will never accept you. You can't possibly be a Christian if you sin in that way, or have those thoughts, or say those words.

The devil wants us to despair of the love of God. He wants us to doubt the promises and the faithfulness of God. He wants us to doubt that Jesus has taken all of our sins away, and so he tells us again and again that we are unworthy.

But the blood of Jesus speaks peace to our hearts and tells us that we have peace with God. It tells us that we are loved by God.

Hebrews in chapter 9 and verse 14, it says this, How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences?

It's into the conscience that Satan speaks. It's into the conscience that doubts arise. But the blood of Jesus assures us and cleanses our consciences to say that yes, though we are sinners before God, though we continue to fail him and let him down, yet he has forgiven us and will always forgive us.

[19:23] The very cross of the Lord Jesus, of course, is the absolute guarantee of the love of God for us. Romans 5, 8, God demonstrates or manifests, make known his own love for us in this.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Dear Christian, we can never be unloved. We can never be unsaved. We can never be unforgiven.

the blood of Jesus speaks more clearly and powerfully to us than all the words of all the people in all the world. And the blood of Jesus assures us that we are heaven bound and that awaits us an eternity of joy and peace.

The blood of Jesus speaks better words than those of Abel, for it speaks forgiveness, it speaks come, it speaks to our hearts and to our minds.

And finally, the blood of Jesus Christ still speaks. Abel's blood cried out once and for all, but now it's silent.

[20:40] It cried out for vengeance, it called out for justice, and God heard unanswered.

Vengeance and justice were meted out against Cain.

He was driven from the presence of the Lord, and he was marked out by God. All the work of the blood of Cain has been done.

It has finished its ministry. It has accomplished what it cried out for. Abel still speaks to us himself as a person, because he's an example of someone who lived a godly life, but was persecuted.

But his blood has no more to say. But the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, though shed once, is still active, still ministering, still speaking for us.

in 1 John in chapter 1, John assures us that if we walk in the light and have fellowship with God, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

[21:47] 1 John chapter 1 verse 7. But more than that, we're told that the Lord Jesus still speaks on our behalf before God when we sin. 1 John chapter 2, if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense, Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

The blood of Jesus cannot be silent until everyone for whom it was shed has been brought under its cleansing power. The blood of Jesus cannot cease to be active until every single person for whom Jesus died is brought into God's family and reconciled to God.

The blood of Jesus still speaks that God is willing to forgive. God wants to receive and God wants to save.

Let me ask you this morning, have you obeyed the voice of Jesus' blood? Have you heard him calling to you the need for your forgiveness and is willing to cleanse you?

Will you put your faith in the blood of Jesus and what it has accomplished on your behalf?

Something that you could never ever do for yourself? Will you believe that Jesus died for you and that that alone is all that is needed for you to be right with God and to enjoy his forgiveness and life?

[23 : 24] will you simply receive the full forgiveness that the blood of Jesus has purchased for you?

And will you forever therefore sing his praises and rejoice in and give thanks for the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ who died for you?

We're told in Revelation of what goes on in heaven at this very moment, that there there are those who are singing, worshipping, adoring, praising Jesus and this is what they're singing, worthy is the lamb who was slain.

They're still singing of the cross, they're still singing of the blood, they're still singing of the sacrifice of the one and only son of God who shed his blood for them and for us and we shall join them in singing the praises of the lamb of God who died for us.

But will you be there? Is that song of thanksgiving on your lips now because it cannot possibly be on your lips then? Because the judgment of God is this, that we who have sinned must be judged.

But that our judgment has been taken at the cross and the fullness of the anger of God against our sin has been paid for there.

[25 : 08] Jesus' blood speaks better words than that of Abel's. God Well