

***Fanning it into Flame***  
**Sunday, April 10, 2011**  
**A New Creation (part 2)**  
**Am I My Brother's Keeper?**

Being a new creation in Christ has many different aspects to it. As we considered last week, we are not called to try to mimic the Lord's actions by our self-effort, but rather see that we are a new creation in Christ. His life is now our life. His abilities are our abilities. This is God's gift of life to us through the cross. And while I want to meditate on all the exciting aspects of life that are now made available to us, we must always keep the heart of God at the center. That is his love. Jesus said that you would know his disciples by the love they had for one another. The fall of man in the Garden of Eden was the breaking of relationships.

The first relationship that was broken was with God which produced death. While this death may not be apparent to the casual observer because bodily functions and the ability to think, speak, and act were left intact, the essence of life, that is, the Spirit of God, was removed from man. This separation was death. Life the way it was intended was gone. It also caused a second broken relationship: with one another. When Adam was confronted by God regarding what he had done, he immediately threw his wife under the bus: *"The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."*(Genesis 3:12) Love doesn't do that.

While the major emphasis of this message is our need to partner together using our gifts and talents to walk in love as the body of Christ, there is another relationship that was broken, albeit a little off the beaten path. It is nestled within another display of the second broken relationship which gave me the subtitle for this message. In Genesis 4:9-12 God confronts Cain about the whereabouts of his brother Abel to which he replies, *"Am I my brother's keeper?"* Then God goes on to say, *"What have you done? Listen! **Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.**"*<sup>11</sup> *Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.*<sup>12</sup> *When you work **the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you.** You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."* It's interesting that the ground is personified here as well as in Romans 8:19ff *"**The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.**"*<sup>20</sup> *For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope*<sup>21</sup> *that the **creation itself** will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*<sup>22</sup> ***We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.**"* The third relationship was with the ground. Even the earth is waiting for us to become who God always intended us to be. We should ask the Lord how we can take authority in this area and be part of the liberation being alluded to. But let's get back to our main point of being our brother's keeper.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians provides a powerful look at who we are in Christ. Chapter one tells us that we have been blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ and that we are part of the church that is his body of which he is the head. He wants to glorify the Father through our participation in doing his works. Ephesians 2:10 *For we are God's workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*** Even rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms are observing who we are in order to learn the manifold wisdom of God.(Ephesians 3:10-12) **Ephesians 4:11-16** *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,*<sup>12</sup> *to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up*<sup>13</sup> *until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, **attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.***<sup>14</sup> *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*<sup>15</sup> *Instead, speaking the truth in love, **we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.***<sup>16</sup> ***From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*** We are all our brothers' keepers. We are the family of God and need to get involved in the life of the church so that it can become all that God intended it to be. There are no excuses! We all have our part to do. Have you embraced yours? Are you making yourself available to build up the body? Let's do it!