

***Genesis 4:3-12***

*And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.*

*So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.*

*Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.*

*"So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. "When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."*

**MY BROTHER'S KEEPER**

After killing his brother, Cain attempted denial of any guilt. His response to God's inquiry: "Am I my brother's keeper?", marks the essence of human depravity. Man, having denied God, is at the very heart, full of self-interest at the cost of others. Scripture describes man's heart: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9).

One of the beautiful things about trusting in Christ as personal Savior is the newness this faith affords: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The new believer, being dwelt within by the Holy Spirit, begins to go through God designed changes: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23a).

This newness places God's own, self sacrificing love within. This expresses itself in true care of others: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). It is to this end that Christians are urged to care for one another: "And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else" (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15).

The Christian "law of care" is three fold: Love cares enough to "Admonish the Disorderly." This involves gently correcting those fellow believers who are out of step with God's will by the obvious neglect of spiritual duty, or who are purposefully creating disharmony. Love cares enough to "Encourage the Fainthearted." This involves consoling those fellow believers who are discouraged. This is a ministry of tenderness and compassion to the shaken. Finally, love cares enough to "Support the Weak." Here is a word picture of the strong soldier carrying the wounded comrade.

In his autobiography, Booker T. Washington writes: "The most trying ordeal that I was forced to endure as a slave boy ... was the wearing of a flax shirt... I can scarcely imagine any torture, except for perhaps, the pulling of a tooth, that is equal to that caused by putting on a new flax shirt for the first time. It is almost equal to the feeling that one would experience if he had a dozen or more chestnut burrs, or a hundred small pin-points, in contact with his flesh ... But I had no choice. I had to wear the flax shirt or none ... My brother John, who is several years older than I am, performed one of the most generous acts that I ever heard of one slave relative doing for another. On several occasions when I was being forced to wear a new flax shirt, he generously agreed to put it on in my stead and wear it for several days, till it was "broken in".

God's call is for each believer to be His brother's keeper!

***What is my response:***

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