**“Am I My Brother’s Keeper?”**

***“Am I my brother’s keeper?”***  Genesis 4:9b

This is the question Cain asked the LORD when the LORD asked him where his brother Abel was to be found. It’s a good question for us to ask. What responsibility do we have toward our brothers and sisters? The following is found in Barnes’ Notes on the Bible,

***“Am I my brother’s keeper?” There is, as usual, an atom of truth mingled with the amazing falsehood of this surly response. No man is the absolute keeper of his brother, so as to be responsible for his safety when he is not present. This is what Cain means to insinuate. But every man is his brother’s keeper so far that he is not himself to lay the hand of violence on him, nor suffer another to do so if he can hinder it. This sort of keeping the Almighty has a right to demand of every one – the first part of it on the ground of mere justice, the second on that of love. But Cain’s reply betrays a desperate resort to falsehood, a total estrangement of feeling, a quenching of brotherly love, a predominance of that selfishness which freezes affection and kindles hatred. This is the way of Cain Jude 1:11***.[[1]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2017/09/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1)

Barnes’ statement makes being my brother “keeper” two sides of the same coin. One side is that of justice, and the other side is love. But when we consider what he means by justice, justice is but another aspect of love.

In the week prior to his crucifixion Jesus was asked, “Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?”

Jesus said to him, **“*‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.* This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second *is* like it: *‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’* On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”**[[2]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2017/09/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2)

Love is the sum of God’s commands. If we love God AND our neighbor as ourselves, we have kept the Law and the Prophets. Cain did not love his brother Abel. He thought only of himself and that God had not accepted his grain offering. Cain’s offering did not please the LORD because Cain’s heart wasn’t right. His love for God was lacking. His lack of loving God spilled over into his attitude toward his brother. Such is ALWAYS the case! Love for God and love for one another are tied together. John writes, ***If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.***[[3]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2017/09/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn3)

When we grasp how all encompassing love truly is, then we can understand not only how we can in a sense be our brother’s “keeper” but also what Paul meant when he wrote, ***“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual,*** ***restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ…. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.***[[4]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2017/09/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn4)

[[1]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2017/09/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1) http://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/genesis/4.htm

[[2]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2017/09/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref2) Matthew 22:36-40

[[3]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2017/09/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref3) 1 John 4:20-21 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

[[4]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2017/09/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref4)  Galatians 6:1-2, 9-10 NASB