

## PROVERBS 24

## ARE WE OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER?

**Are we our brother's keeper? (verses 11-12)**

*"If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"*

The principle that our heavenly Father counts every one of us as his brother's keeper pervades the Scriptures; and here, in vivid language, it is expressly affirmed and defined. From the beginning of time, this was established. Cain's sullen denial after his murder of Abel revealed a carnal mind that was in violent enmity against God; but in the lie that flashed back from his guilty conscience, we may see how this heavenly truth was touching and tormenting him. However, at the end of the Book of Revelation, we find a contrast to the murderer of Abel. Truly, this principle of being "our brother's keeper" is embodied in the last Words of inspired Scripture. The One Who speaks at the conclusion of the Book is in the very act of stretching out His hands to save a brother who is ready to perish: "Let him that heareth, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!" (Rev. 22:17) Prophets, Apostles, and Jesus Himself all taught – by their lips and by their lives – that a person neither lives nor dies to himself. As the children of God, we bear our Savior's name and trust in His love; we are not our own, for we have been bought with a price. We have talents to lay out, work to accomplish, a Master to serve, and brothers and sisters to save!

There may be no other point in the whole circumference of duty, upon which the human mind makes a more obstinate stand than here, against the authority of the Lord. The determination to be his own master, and to do what he likes with himself, seems to have been the very essence of the sin which constituted man's Fall – and which still drives the nature and desires of the fallen. Even if a person actually maintained the neutrality which he professes toward his fellow human beings, it would avail him nothing. Under God as the Supreme Ruler, and by His law, we owe love to every human; and if we fail to render it, we are guilty debtors.

By looking unto Jesus, we may learn this lesson better than by listening even to His own words. Where would we have been now, if He had satisfied Himself with a mere abstinence from inflicting injury upon a fallen world? He did not leave us alone in our extremity; and since we desire to be like Him, we should not desert our brothers or sisters in their need, either. Jesus bids us to do good, and He Himself has shown us the way to do it.

The death into which our brother or sister is gliding may be the death of the body, the death of the soul, or both. The example of Christ and the precepts of Scripture concur in teaching us to acknowledge either danger, and to render

aid to both. A deaf ear, a blind eye, a palsied arm, or a breaking heart – all of these, Jesus instantly acknowledged as claims upon His compassion; but He was grieved when people went away from Him with a healed body, but seeking no life for their souls. We must go and do likewise. Suffering, disease, and poverty are indeed valid claims for help, but we must not count the cure complete when those external needs have been relieved.

When a poisonous serpent plunges its sting into the flesh and blood of a man, he may still live for a little while. The poison mingles with the blood, and thereby permeates his whole body. The serpent's venom takes hold of the man's life; and slowly but surely, it draws him to death. Our spiritual life is very much like this uneasy interval, until our lives are made new in Christ. The old serpent – the devil – has gotten a strong grip on us, and he will not let go until his head is crushed by the One Who is stronger than him. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15). If we beheld a group of captured human beings being driven to a market so that they could be sold into slavery, there would not be a dry eye among us as the sad procession passed before our eyes. Their chains and the death in which their slavery would end are things which we may physically see. But there are captives more numerous, and more firmly bound, who are daily being dragged through our own streets to an even more terrible death! If we had the spiritual perception to rightly estimate the distress, our compassion would not be shut up within our own hearts!



The law under which we live is the law of love; and whenever any doubt arises as to practical details, we have the Redeemer's words as our Pattern to show us an example: "Love one another as I have loved you!" The excuse that "we knew it not" will not avail us. "Seek, and ye shall find" does not merely apply to benefits which we may obtain for ourselves; it also applies to opportunities of saving those who are ready to perish. The conclusion of the whole matter may be expressed in these words of the Apostle: "Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:9-10). The two limits are "opportunity" on the one side, and "all men" on the other. Between these two lies the ample exercise-ground for a Christian – upon which he is expected, like his Master, to go about doing good. Our heart's compassion should acknowledge no limit short of the world's boundary! And our helping hand should have no limit except the opportunity and the power.

*Lord Jesus, we pray for grace so that we may find ample opportunities of imitating You and showing Your love to our brothers and sisters in need, both physically and spiritually! Amen.*