

THE FIRST QUESTION THAT MAN ASKED

Gen. 4:9

William Barker has suggested that Cain was the first young man to slip into the sub-culture of rootless, restless drifting. His wandering and his lifestyle assured himself that he would pay the price that was so different from everyone else. Why had he left. He could not stomach their hypocrisy. The dullness, and he denounced the piety that was in his home and in his family. He was a young man full of hostilities. And his name means spite. And he used that spite on his brother Abel. He thought his brother was a nuisance. Cain told everybody, I'm going to make it big. I'm going to enjoy the easy life. There is no future in growing sheep. And he went around bragging about his dream. Perhaps, he was going to establish Cain Enterprises. " He was going to incorporate something that was going to be big in this situation in which he farmed.

But Cain's anger prevented him from really listening to what God had to say to him. He just said, I've had it. Abel has got to go. And Cain got himself into a rage.

Hill

Now the first brothers were at home - in that first home that was divinely appointed. That was the choicest blessings that could have arrived. The increase of the human family. The happiness of the race. Even inspite of all of their weaknesses - here were children, being God's gift. And they had been trained to work by their parents. They had been trained to worship by their parents. This was a pious home and it was located outside the garden. But still in Eden. When man finds a home, it should never be very far removed from God! The structure may be very humble. There may be a garden. But it must have the mark of religion. And this is one of the marks of a pious home - that it has an altar to God.

So this was a happy home - I am sure. Surrounded by all the happy foundations that go into a home.

The brothers had worked for this. Now this was necessary. Now God commands man with all of the powers that he has, to go out and conquer the conditions of the earth. Now this is indispensable. No man is born to sit and be idle. Every man has some kind of calling. And God puts it upon each heart, a necessity of toiling for daily bread. He should labor at some occupation for God's glory and for man's good.

Now there are various (divisions of labor.) Different kinds of employment. It would not do well if every man excelled in the same type of workmanship. There is a distribution of talents, and of work, and energies of mankind.

V. 2
It is very useful that many professions and trades be carried on. Now the parents, perhaps, helped these boys select their work. I do not know. But it was very helpful. These brothers worked together in the open air. They had an outdoor employment. They worked in the fields. Now Abel evidently worked with sheep and animals. Cain worked and tilled the soil. Cultivated the land.

Now the parents were wise also that they instructed these brothers to worship. Therefore, they came from the same home. They were educated by the same parents. They were trained to worship the same God. And at the same time, they were instructed to worship at the same altar. And present their gifts to God.

V. 3
Now this is where the division came in of these brothers. When the (offerings) were brought. Cain brought the (fruit) of the ground. Abel brought the (firstlings) of his flock. The one that was bloodless and the other was bloody. Each one offered as he thought in his daily calling.

Now the offerings were measured. Abel's offering unto God was the more excellent. Literally, it must have been a greater sacrifice, than Cain's. Heb. 11:4. Cain brought the fruit - not fruits of the earth. But the offerings with the hands - as many worshippers of God still do. Abel brought of the fattest and the best of his flocks. So should all of God's worshippers reserve for him the first fruits of their years - their powers, their labors, and their increase.

By Faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, & by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Now the elder brother's offering brought an acknowledgement of his dependance upon God and an expression probably of the true God - possibly he recognized God's claim. Now the younger brother declared a consciousness of sin. And a faith in atoning blood. In a hope of divine mercy. Now their worship revealed the state of the heart. And that is the essential thing. In the offerings of the brothers, in faith - trusting in the promises. Looking as Heb. 11:4 - now without faith in the lamb of God, who died for sin, no worship can be accepted. But it was in obedience that Abel worshipped. In the way prescribed - the most costly. It was sincerity. Cain was merely a foremost. But Abel worshipped God in spirit and in truth. Now here is the hypocrisy and the formalism that accompanied the ritual. Prov. 21:27, Isa, 1:13-15, Matt. 6:5.

The offerings and the way of worship was absolutely opposite and not acceptable unto God. Because the first fruits of the ground was not acceptable. So here was a distinction. That we have to understand as we come to man's first great question that he asked.

Let us look into this in three or four different ways. Here is the saddest revelation. Here is a searching investigation. Here is a significant question. And here is sorrowful condemnation which follows.

I. THE SADDEST REVELATION - V. 1-8.

-4-
This will little
to the hand the
This said it
for me a table
in the ground of
my enemy

V.7
These brothers were adversence. The unjustifiable thing that it caused in the emity that sprang out of religion and their worship is a proof of the corruption of the human heart. It was an occasion through envy - that is the saddest revelation. Cain was wrought up because of his brother. Unbelievers often take offense at believers. Because of the blessings that they receive and of course - the unbelievers despise.

This envy was very much manifested in that he was angry with God. What can be said of envy. The Bible itself ask who shall stand before envy. It is the weapon of little mean men. Envy is a consuming evil. The envious person wants something that belongs to somebody else.

What has man to be envious about in his relationship to other men. God gave one man (five talents) and another man (two). And he give you and me (one). Who are we to be disturbed or concerned in the matter. We can use that one talent that he has given us and not let it go to waste.

V.8
In the story of Cain and Abel, we see how (one sin) - the sad relationship leads to another. Envy led on and on until cold blooded murder was its final outcome. It begets other sins. It multiplies itself. It never stays alone. Sin has many forms and many expressions. And the case of Cain, there was the envy that dominated him. Until he took his brother out in the field and his brother lay dead by the hand of Cain. One can visualize this deed. What can Cain be thinking about now.

Here is the red blood of his brother. The children of the same mother. The same

father. The red blood of one brother stains the earth by the cruel hand of the other brother. What is Cain thinking about. Perhaps he says to himself, this man shall not get ahead of me. He shall not be on top. He is out of the way - he is dead.

But God is not dead! That is a solemn fact that men and women so easily forget. God is not dead. And he came to Cain in that crucial hour - that very time. Cain had invited his brother to go out on his farm. And while they were out in a remote field, the brother was unsuspecting. Cain walked over to him and put his sphere through him. And his brother's life blood soaked into the earth. We can only figure out that Cain dug a hasty, shallow grave. So that it would be unobserved. And pushed Abel, still warm, into the hole and covered it with dirt. And made it look like a recently plowed field.

The first murder was committed through the spirit of persecution on account of religion. And since that time, in every land, streams of blood have flowed from the persecuting spirit. There goes on a war in Ireland. And some of the areas in the far away lands from us. Over beliefs of religion.

The thought is this - whoever does right. Whoever obeys God has accepted God, and received the witness of God by those very facts - condemns the one who does wrong. Sinners hate you as Jesus said to his disciples. As they have hated me, so they will hate you. Thus it was so with Cain. He hated his brother. And this is the saddest revelation - envy and hatred.

But God is not dead.

II. THE SEARCHING INVESTIGATION - V. 9

v. 9A

God is not dead and God comes and says, where is Abel, thy brother. The Lord insisted on checking up, On the good for nothing Abel. The Lord did not say anything about Cain. He came to investigate. But it was for his stupid brother. Now why did God keep dragging in Abel all of the time. Cain was very erked. Where is your brother? And God asked the most searching investigation that God carried on. Cain insisted that he did not know where his brother was. But God reminded him in this investigation, that his brother's blood cried unto Heaven from the ground. Cain, perhaps, thought that he could creep away from God but God knew that the blood was crying from the earth. You remember that bit of poetry about the great avenger.

Twix false systems and the word
 Truth forever on the scaffold
 Wrong forever on the throne
 But the scaffold sways the future
 And behind the dim unknown
 Stands God within the shadows
 Keeping watch above his own.

Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Not in one single case. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. And how terrible sin, my brother - my friend tonight - be sure your sin will find you out. Even the Bible says the stone will cry out of the wall. Yes, it will cry out and reveal the awful secret of sin. The searching investigation that God carries on. You remember then God's first question, don't you. It was, where art thou? And you are responsible to God yourself. And now God asks where is thy brother. You are going to be responsible to God for others. The word brother here, if we take it in the strictest Christian sense, means another Christian brother. We must beware of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man - and making it so weak. But in our text here - it is the nature kinship. It refers too and involves kinship. And this bears to every

other human being. If you are a brother in the Christian sense, it means that you have greater responsibility.

Rom. 9:3 - Paul says, kinsman according to the flesh. When God asked this question, where is thy brother.

It probably happened on the next Sabbath day. After Cain had murdered Abel. Here before, they had appeared before God. And now Cain comes alone. In his hands, he probably had some offering. But also, his hands were covered with his brother's blood. Therefore, before he could present an offering - he had to give an account. Of his brother's absence - where is Abel, thy brother.

Now this is something that is very stirring - like Jesus in Matt. 5:23. When he talks about the need of a man coming to worship without envy in his heart. Therefore, if thy bring thy gift to the altar and remembereth that thy brother has ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way. First, be reconciled to thy brother. And then come and offer thy gift.

Amos, the prophet, in the 5th chapter says - V. 21, 24, I hate your feast days - though you bring me burnt offering and meat offerings, I will not accept them but let justice run down as waters. And let righteousness become a mighty stream. The Israelites came to their appointed places of worship. Bearing gifts in their hands - but their hands were bloody by their oppression. Their neglect of the poor and not taking care of their brothers.

This was empty worship. And there are millions of people in the earth who exist today in the same way. They need the bread of life.

By Man - 1st asked ->

III. THE SIGNIFICANT QUESTION - V. 9

V.9B

Am I my brother's keeper? The significant question. This follows the investigation of God. Cain replied, I know not! On the surface, it was evident that it was a lie. Cain did know where his brother was - he had murdered him. He was buried. And to the sin of murder - he added the sin of lying. And the first sin was against his fellow man. The second sin was against God.

How up to date is this lie that Cain threw into the face of God. Even while Abel's blood cried to God. Cain denied that he had any knowledge of his condition. Abel cried to God. And here is man - pretending no knowledge of his fate.

The significant question - Cain charged God with folly. He says, am I my brother's keeper. He would have been wise if he had said, I am my brother's murderer. He charged God with the idea that he had no responsibility for his brother. Abel's fate was God's responsibility and not his.

Moffett translates this question - how do I know. Am I a shepherd to my brother. In short, he can take care of himself. Or you should look after him. Why should I bother with him.

Is that somewhat the attitude today. Am I my brother's keeper. Do I have to play shepherd to this sheep. Why should I have to give an account of myself regarding my brother's welfare. Is this your attitude - that everybody has his own religion today. So let him practice his own religion. And we'll practice ours.

Did you know that the conditions in the world had gotten so today that men try

to meet it on the surface and they never try to seek to fulfill the desires of their souls. They grab Communism and they say that is our religion. They take hold of atheism as old David Lord George said, it is Christ or caos.

And the old prophet said, to Israel and Judah, 2700 years ago - either you will serve me. Or else I will allow you to go into captivity. God meant that. Am I my brother's keeper. He made an attempt to evade all responsibility for his brother's whereabouts. The fact that human responsibility is everywhere a scene in the Bible. And is very much in the same way enforce today. Man's responsibility of one human being for another is every where a fact in God's word.

We are bound up together in the matter of life. We must not ignore this relationship. No member of society can dare say, to another member of society - or to another race, or one country say to another country - I have no relation to you and I go on my way ignoring you. People everywhere assumes that we have the human responsibility.

I am my brother's keeper. That is the significant things about this question. If you go to the foreign country and try to land at their port - they will ask you for your pass port. Many times, they demand that you have a Doctor's certificate saying you have had your shots for small pox and certain fevers. If you cannot show that certificate, you cannot enter that country. In that way, they are responsible for their brother's keeper.

In the olden days in Palestine they had flat roofs on the top of the houses. And people sat on their roofs to get the fresh air and a fair view. The law required that the homeowner build railings around the roof. For fear someone would fall off - especially a child. The law was for the protection of the people. In the Old Testament times, it was the law of the reapers in the harvest field, that they should leave the stray heads of wheat in the fields - so that poor people could come

in and gather up the heads of wheat, for their own use. That was why Ruth was able to glean in the field of Boaz. The well to do must think of the poverty stricken, the needy. The strong must think of the weak. We are our brother's keeper.

Think about the parable of the Good Samaritan. One man a priest, passed a man bruised and bleeding along the roadside. Went on his way. Another man, a Levite came and looked on and hurried on his way. And the third man, a Samaritan, looked at the injured man - and had compassion. Dressed the victims wounds and put him on his own beast. And took him to an inn. And stayed with him through the night. And said to the inn keeper, I will pay this man's bill whatever is necessary. And I will pay whatever care you give him when I come again. This man has nothing, he has been robbed - I will pay his bill. Now which of the three, thinketh thou, said Jesus - was his neighbor? The one who looked after the needy man was answered. Yes, said Jesus, go thou and do likewise. The third man felt that he was his brother's keeper. That is the law of God. That is the moral government of Heaven. We may not, must not, dare not be indignant to any human being anywhere in all of this great world of ours.

This question is a significant question because we need to practice this among all humanity. If there were no religion anywhere, if we did not have to give an account to God, but the command demands. If we find a man by the roadside, bruised, bleeding and helpless - we ought to help him. We are not to pass by on the other side. If people who are too sick to care for themselves, too poor to care for themselves, care must be provided. If there are men and women who are under-privileged, we cannot ignore that situation.

We have the example and the deed of Jesus to help us at all points.

Jesus went about doing good. The son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and give his life a ransom for many. As my father has sent me into the world, said Jesus, even so - send I you.

Even when Jesus was dying on the cross, if he had saved himself - he would not have been adequate to save you and me. We would have no atoning or sin bearer, or redeemer. Jesus everywhere pictures the unceasing careful concern that he has for the need of humanity.

This same principle governed Paul when he said, I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians. I am debtor to all men - to the last limit of my power to help. Paul said. And Paul gave the example for us - to serve mankind was a test of his faith. And he talked about service in this way. This is the way of happiness, usefulness, and joy in a person's life. Here is a significant question - where is he. I do not know. If I did - what have I to do with him.

Suppose I fail to regard my responsibility and relation to him - then what?

And that's where we come to our fourth point.

IV. SORROWFUL CONDEMNATION

V. 10 - The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me. Blood cries. God said, here is the condemnation. V. 10-11. And thy brother's blood, he says, is upon thy hands. What a solemn fact, what an inescapeable condemnation. That was reaped out upon Cain.

V. 11 God was telling Cain that he had a prominent responsibility to others. And Cain had shrugged his shoulders of this - he had thought he would soon be clear of all of this.

But the earth cries first because of that blood. The earth cries - and what a fact. Whenever the ground is soaked with human blood - the earth cries out.

The home cries out because of this blood that was shed. Think about this. The home cries out. Here was a happy home - a family - a mother and father. And here was a home that was crushed because of the brother's blood cries unto them because of what has happened in this home. Cain was unfaithful, to his brother - to the point of his murder.

Did you know today that parents can do the same thing to their children. Just forget their children. Become so busy in their work and in society, that they trifle with the sanctity of the home even. Without knowing the judgement day is down the road. Oh that men would realize that there is a judgement day. And this home, this institution had been trifled with. The great basic unit that God had set in the world. And this was to achieve and work for God.

V. 12 Vegebond.

I wonder what you are doing about your home. Is your wife a believer in Christ. Is your husband.

These are great eternal matters as we think about the relationship in our home. And what a tragedy here that even the home cried out over this shed blood.

The whole community cried out. Because this man was not concerned about another. He was not his brother's keeper. And we should know that all of the government we have in our city - all kinds of evil has sprung up and decay will come. And it will destroy things. But every person in this city should take an interest in the welfare of the city. And just think of what is involved and help your city. Become your brother's keeper in your city. And do what you can to help your city.

Do you remember the parable of the trees told in the book of Judges. Things going from bad to worse, in the city. And the people called unto God's prophet and asked what was the meaning of the down hill trend in their city. And the explanation - do you remember what he told them. He told them a parable. And it led them to discover the revelation. He told them how the trees of the forest got together and said to the olive tree - come thou and reign over us. The olive tree said, I cannot, I must bear olives. Then all of the trees turned to the fig tree, and said - come thou and reign over us. And the fig tree said, no, I must bear figs. Then all of the trees came to the vine and said, oh, reign over us. And the vine said, I must bear grapes. There must be wine for people. I cannot rule over you. Then all the trees of the field turned to the bramble and the bramble does not bear fruit nor give shade. It was of no use to the community. So all the trees turned to the bramble and said, come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said, very well, come and trust in my shadow. I will be your ruler.

The failure in America is that people do not give worthy attention to their cities. We can have the best men in our cities that hold office, or in our state, and everywhere. And this is a great matter. We should not let the bramble rule over us. I think America is being afflicted by citizenship that is bad. Even by good men. That they insist. Well, what is the affairs of Chesapeake to me, they say.

It ought to mean a great deal to every citizen - in this great city of ours. Your relationship. Every man and every woman ought to be filled with pride. I am going to do my best for this city. I will make it a clean place, to live in. By God's help - I'll do what I can.

The brother's blood cried out against the society. Am I my brother's keeper. Of course he is.

Every creature needs to realize this. That he is his brother's keeper. And what a tremendous responsibility that the prophet demanded of God. Because God said I have made thee a watch dog. And if thou art not faithful in thy word and testimony among the people, I will require thy safety at thy hand. Therefore, we must teach the word of God.

This is a sorrowful condemnation because pain is marked by unfaithfulness. God appointed a sign in V. 12, 13, 16. He says you are going to till the ground and it is not going to yield. You are going to be a vagabond. And Cain says my punishment is greater than I can bear.

V. 16 - I think this is one of the sorrowful things in the whole story here. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord. What a sad sad commentary on a man's life. God had told Cain that he was going to not have a permanent place - his life was going to be that of a wanderer. He refused the responsibility for others. And Cain had shrugged off this responsibility - he was going to get clear of it. And many things worried him. Cain thought someone would murder him. Somebody was going to evenge that day. And there were going to be people who did not care if he lived or died.

But God promised him that he was going to protect him. But he existed in a life of restlessness, unable to be at home anywhere. V. 16. And somebody has well said that Cain became the world's first hippy. Because of his uneasy, wanderings, his vain imaginations, his restlessness.

And this was a sad condemnation.

Think about this tonight. Here is a sad revelation. A man with envy. And God comes with a searching investigation - where is your brother. And Cain poses that significant question am I my brother's keeper. And it results in a sorrowful condemnation.

judic 11 - "Woe unto them! for they have gone the way of Cain & ran greedily after the error of Balaam - clouds that are without water, trees whose fruit withereth without fruit, flying sea - wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever!"

Think of that tonight in your own heart. Imagine one of you tonight saying, preacher, I am not my brother's keeper. I have no responsibility toward him. I am looking out for number one. You can count on that. But here are these earthly relationships that involve the daily duty. That afford us the opportunity to discharge our responsibilities to God. The spirit leads us in this way.

Think of a deacon tonight. - imagine a deacon saying, that a Sunday night service is not for him at all. Imagine him saying that prayer meeting is not for him. A deacon in the church of God. In the one institution fashioned by our divine Lord. Ignoring any public duty, or responsibility to the administration, the witness, and the work of the church of God.

Then why not consider also the Sunday School teacher who thinks that I have accomplished my whole mission - I get together a little group on Sunday morning

for 30 minutes and I give them what I have thought about. And then I let them go until next Sunday without any regard for the fact that example will do far more to stabilize people in the way of righteousness than any 30 minute teaching that he can do.

Think about Christians, what did Jesus say. He said, ye are the light of the world. In you, how great is the darkness. Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its savor, wherein shall it be salty. It is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men. Ye are living epistles of Christ - known and read of all men. Seen of all men. Your example and faithfulness, the usefulness, the high principle of it are worth far more than all of the talk that can come from your tongue.

Dr. Russell - went China Border - Miss - looked around - My home - told ch. is strong today - they faithful - why is that? "This isn't a Hypocrite left" - Pressure is on - men playing church will get out! Not by Power or might but by spirit.

Yes, the voice of thy brother's blood - maybe thy sister's blood. May be crying tonight because of your bad example. Because you have not been your brother's keeper. How serious it is. And how careless we are concerning our testimony for Christ. You need tonight, to say with God's help - "I will live a more consistent Christian life" By word and by deed.

There are Christians who have been pulled down because of the inactivity of Christians who lose fellowship with Christ. They lose contact with the church. They lose the joy of service. Do you know an (inactive) Christian? If so, that one is your responsibility. We are the keepers of our brothers and sister. Look about us and find the inactive, and backslidden Christians. It is within our power to restore them to active life in the church. We can ask them - how will you face your Lord. Is the careless force defensible. Is it helpful. Is the course that you are taking going to glorify God. Is the course you are following going to

magnify the church. Is the course that you are taking - will it challenge sinners to say that that person has been with Jesus. Is it a way of life that will help humanity understand Christianity.

Heb. 12:24 " Jesus The mediator of The New Covenant, & to The bloody sprinkling,
That speaketh better things than that of Abel."

There are times when we need re-committment. As active Christians.

Is there someone who will say I am the inactive one - I will come back into the line of duty tonight. Is there someone who will say I have never come and taken a stand for Christ. I know that this is right. I'll give that my attention at this moment. I invite you - even this day, to surrender to Christ. Will you say, I yield, I choose, I desire. I'll give my life. And listen, Jesus says that him that cometh to me will in no wise be cast out.