

Cain

"In the Beginning"

Then the LORD said to Cain,
"Where is your brother Abel?"
"I don't know," he replied. "Am
I my brother's keeper?"

Genesis 4:9

"Am I my brother's keeper?" has a very sarcastic tone here, but it can be a wonderful question for us to ask ourselves each day. If we are our brother's keeper, we will only wish the best for him and want him to know our Lord and Savior as his own. Over the years many organizations have been formed to help our brothers, whether at home or around the world. This help may come in the form of food, love, clothing, or particularly vaccinations or inoculations against disease which is not always available to those less fortunate than we are. I get the impression that Cain wouldn't have cared about any of this but that is our mission according to the Lord. Cain didn't seem to be interested in his brother and told God that he didn't care.

Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, is really only talked about in Genesis 4. If we stop to think about Cain, we realize that he was the first person ever born! Adam and Eve were created. His whole story is contained in just a few verses.

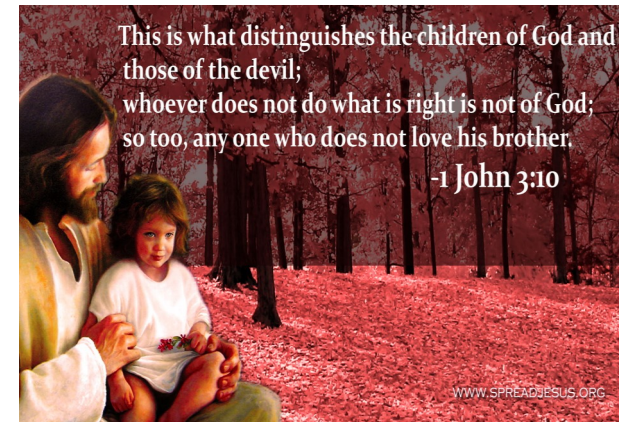
Abel, his brother, became a herdsman. Cain was a farmer, a tiller of the soil. As time went on the brothers brought a

sacrifice to God. Abel took the firstborn animals of his herd, the choice cuts of meat. God accepted the sacrifice of Abel. Cain took his offering, but we are not told exactly what he took. We do know that God did not accept his offering.

Cain began to sulk and God spoke to him and warned him about his attitude. Cain had a definite anger management problem. God told him that if he did well, he would be accepted. God also told him that if he did not do well, sin would be waiting to take over his life. The choice had to be made by Cain. We need to remember that he was given a chance to do right. He had free will to choose. The choice had to be made by Cain. We need to remember that he was given a chance to do right. He had free will to choose.

Cain became even more jealous. While the brothers were out in the field, Cain killed Abel. God came to Cain and said *"Where is Abel your brother?"* Cain responded, *"How should I know? Am I my brother's keeper?"* Cain knew where his brother was. He knew what he had done, but he didn't want to answer God. He was guilty of murder; he was guilty of lying. One sin just led to another one. Cain couldn't blame anyone else.

Many stories and theories have been written about this first murder. Many have ideas on why the sacrifice Cain took was unacceptable. Many have tried to blame the unacceptable sacrifice on his attitude at the time of the sacrifice. The Bible does not answer that question. We do know that we can



have forgiveness if we will just ask. It appears to me that Cain was unable to ask for forgiveness and was doomed to be a wanderer for the rest of his life. We also know that he did not do his best for the Lord.

Even in our work, God doesn't demand perfection, but God does ask us to do our best. It is interesting that this song really talks about youth. There are so many decisions to be made in those years.

An old song, "Give of your best to the Master" words by Howard Grose in 1902 puts it this way.

*"Give of your best to the Master; Give of
the strength of your youth;
Throw your soul's fresh, glowing ardor
into the battle for truth.
Jesus has set the example. Dauntless
was He, young and brave;
Give Him your loyal devotion; Give
Him the best that you have.*

*Give of your best to the Master; Give of
the strength of your youth;
Clad in salvation's full armor, Join in
the battle for truth."*

Sometime we do well in our choices. Sometime it takes longer for us to realize what we should have done and know the true meaning of life, and how we can give to the Master. We certainly need salvation's full armor all during our life.

God knows there will be differences of opinions and decisions because God created us, and expects us to use the talents that we have been given. God will help us to do our best.

However, it would be wrong to leave the story without considering the role of attitude. As God evaluates our offerings, He looks at the talents He has given to us, and the attitude that we give and receive. Those are all part of the total picture that God uses in judging us every day. He has given us all talents as He did to Cain and Abel. How we use them is our decision.

There is a song in Oklahoma, "The Farmer and the Cowman" by Rodgers and Hammerstein that talks about this struggle between the herdsman and the farmer as our ancestors were moving out west. Each wanted the land for his particular interest.

"The farmer and the cowman should be friends.

Oh, the farmer and the cowman should be friends.

*One man likes to push a plough, the other likes to chase a cow,
But that's no reason why they can't be friends."*

I wonder if this concept would have made a difference in the lives of Cain and Abel. Is this story telling us that we can work

together for good, or struggle because we are unable to work with our neighbor. There is much more to this story than just two brothers fighting. The picture is huge in today's world just as it was then. James tell us how to work with our brother and there are many examples of the power of prayer in the Bible and in our own everyday lives. It is so powerful that we cannot ever begin to measure that power or love from God.

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

James 5:16



"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Ephesians 4:31-32



Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have given so much to each of us, and yet we sometimes feel that we don't have sufficient to be like others. Help us to realize that all You ask is that we do the best we can with what You have given us. Amen.

1. Unfortunately we set a standard in school, at home, and on the job, that we think all should achieve. How can we help people to know that we only expect them to do the best they can?
2. How can we answer with love? How can we help build self-esteem?
3. Can we cause problems when we compare? Remember God gave Cain a chance, and only asked him to do his best.
4. Do we compare children? Friends? Workers? Personal belongings? Prayers?
5. Is it possible that Cain and Abel could have worked together with one providing the food for the animals of the other, and the one providing meat to feed the other? Can we learn from this?
6. Are we to work for one goal in the church? At home? In the workplace?
7. Have we asked ourselves lately who is really our brother?

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**When we have
nothing left
but God,
we discover that
God is enough.**