

The Metropolitan Tabernacle

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

A Sermon

Delivered by

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

To what a shameful pitch of presumptuous impudence had Cain arrived when he could thus insult the Lord God. If it had not been on record in the page of inspiration, we might almost have doubted whether a man could speak so impudently when actually conscious that God Himself was addressing him. Men blaspheme frightfully, but it is usually because they forget God, and ignore His presence; but Cain was conscious that God was speaking to him. He heard Him say, “Where is Abel thy brother?” and yet he dared, with the coolest impertinence, to reply to God, “I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?” As much as to say — “Do you think that I have to keep him as he keeps his sheep? Am I also a shepherd as he was, and am I to take as much care of him as he did of a lame lamb?”

The cool impudence of Cain is an indication of the state of heart which led up to his murdering his brother; and it was also a part of the result of his having committed that terrible crime. He would not have proceeded to the cruel deed of bloodshed if he had not first cast off the fear of God and been ready to defy his Maker. Having committed murder, the hardening influence of sin upon Cain’s mind must have been intense, and so at last he was able to speak out to God’s face what he felt within his heart, and to say, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” This goes a long way to explain what has puzzled some persons, namely, the wonderful calmness with which great criminals will appear in the dock. I remember to have heard it said of one who had undoubtedly committed a

very foul murder, that he looked like an innocent man. He stood up before his accusers as calmly and quietly, they said, as an innocent man could do. I remember feeling at the time that an innocent man would probably not have been calm. The distress of mind occasioned to an innocent man by being under such a charge would have prevented his having the coolness which was displayed by the guilty individual. Instead of its being any evidence of innocence that a man wears a brazen front when charged with a great crime, it should by wise men be considered to be evidence against him. Well may he seem dispassionate and unmoved who has already been so unfeeling as to dip his hand in blood. If he was so hardened as to do the deed, it is not likely he will display much softness when the deed is brought home to him. Oh, dear friends, let us shun sin, if it were only for the evil effect which it has upon our minds. It is poison to the heart. It stultifies the conscience, drugs it, sends it to sleep; it intoxicates the judgment, and puts all the faculties as it were into a state of drunkenness, so that we become capable of a monstrous bravery, and a blind impertinence, which makes us mad enough to dare insult God to His face. Save us, O God, from having our hearts hammered to the hardness of steel by sin; and daily keep us by thy grace sensible and tender before thee, trembling at thy word.

Now, let us note here that while we are thus heavily censuring Cain we must mind that we are not guilty ourselves; because, if we look at it without prejudice, every kind of excuse that we make to God is a very high piece of presumption. When we are charged with any form of guilt, if we begin denying or extenuating, we are guilty of the sin of Cain as to impudence before God; and when there is any duty to be performed, and we begin to shirk it, or try to make an excuse for disobedience, are we not forgetting in whose presence we stand? Does He charge me with what I have committed, and shall I be so wicked as to attempt a denial? Does He bid me perform a duty, and do I begin to hesitate, question, and ask myself, "Shall I or shall I not?" Oh, bold rebellion! The essence of treason lurks in every hesitancy to obey, and dwells in every attempt to extenuate our fault when we have already disobeyed. You think Cain a monster, that he should dare to face it out with God; yet God is everywhere present, and every sin is perpetrated while He is looking on. Against Him do we sin, and in His presence we do evil; and when we begin to justify wrong doing, or hesitate concerning duty commanded, we are disobeying in the immediate presence of the Lord our God. Since we have, doubtless, been thus guilty, let us humbly confess it and ask the Lord to give us great tenderness of conscience that henceforth we may fear the Lord, and never dare to stand up to question what He has to say.

The very same thing, no doubt, lies at the bottom of objections to Bible truths. There are some who do not go to Scripture to take out of it what is there, but seeing what is clearly revealed, they then begin to question and judge and come to conclusions according to their notions of what ought to have been there. Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? If he says it, it is so. Believe it. Canst thou not understand it? Who art thou that thou shouldst understand? Canst thou hold the sea in the hollow of thy hand, or grasp the winds in thy fist? Worm of the dust, the infinite must ever be beyond thee! There must always be about the glorious Lord somewhat that

is incomprehensible, and it is not for thee to doubt because thou canst not understand, but rather humbly to bow before His awful presence who has made thee, and in whose hand thy breath is. God save us from the presumption which dares to say with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" and from the profane arrogance which replies to the Lord in the spirit of Cain.

Now, let us look quietly at what Cain said. He said to the Lord, "Am I my brother's keeper?" May the Holy Spirit guide us in considering this question.

I. First it is to be noted that **MAN IS NOT HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER IN SOME SENSES.** There is some little weight in what Cain says. Generally some amount of truth clings to every lie; and even in the greatest possible profanity there is, usually, something or other of truth, though it is grievously twisted and distorted. In this atrocious question of Cain there is some little measure of reason. In some senses no man is his brother's keeper.

For instance, first, *every man must bear his own responsibility for his own acts before Almighty God.* It is not possible for a man to shift from his own shoulders to those of another his obligations to the Most High. Obedience to the law of God must be personally rendered, or a man becomes guilty. No matter how holy his father, or how righteous his mother, he himself will have to stand upon his own feet and answer for himself before the judgment-seat of God. Each man who hears the gospel is responsible for the hearing of it. No one else can believe the gospel for him, or repent for him, or be born again for him, or become a Christian for him. He must himself personally repent of sin, personally believe in Jesus Christ, personally be converted, and personally live to the service and glory of God. Every tub must stand on its own bottom. There have been idle attempts to shift the responsibility to a certain order of men called priests, or clergymen, or ministers, according as the case may be; but it cannot be done. Each man must seek the Lord himself — himself lay his load of sin at the foot of the cross, and himself accept a personal Saviour for himself. You cannot do with the matters of your soul as you do with the business of your estate, and employ a priest in the same way as you engage a solicitor to represent you. There is one substitute and advocate who can plead for us, but no earthly sponsor can avail with heaven. God demands the heart, and with the heart man must believe unto righteousness, and with his own heart, too, for none can take his place. Personal service is required by the great King, and must be rendered on pain of eternal destruction. No man can be his brother's keeper in the sense of taking upon himself another man's responsibilities.

And again, *no one can positively secure the salvation of another,* nay, he cannot even have a hope of the salvation of his friend, so long as that other remains unbelieving. O unconverted people, we can pray for you, we can ask the Lord to renew you by His Spirit, but we can do nothing with you ourselves, neither will our prayers be answered until you yourselves make a confession of your sin, and fly to Christ for salvation. It is, no doubt, a very great blessing to have friends who bear your names upon their hearts before God, but, oh, do not have any confidence in other people's prayers while you are

prayerless yourselves. We ought to be very thankful that other people can pray believingly for us, but we shall never be saved if we remain unbelieving ourselves. Now, since we cannot convert other people, we are not responsible to do what we cannot do, and hence we are not our brother's keeper so fully as to be responsible for his acceptance or reception of Jesus.

And here let me say, in the next place, that *those do very wrongly who enter in to any vows or promises for others in this matter*, when they are quite powerless. To me it always remains a riddle, which I cannot explain except by the utter heartlessness and godlessness of this age, that men and women are to be found to come forward to solemnly promise concerning a little child, as yet unconscious, that it shall keep all God's holy commandments and walk in the same all the days of its life, and shall renounce all the pomps and vanities of this present evil world. I dare not stop short of saying that you lie most frightfully if you make any such promise. You go further than that: you are guilty of perjury before Almighty God. With what wrath He must look down upon persons who in an edifice, which they think to be sacred to His honour, in the presence of those who wear vestments which are supposed to mark them out as peculiarly the messengers of God, dare to say that they will do that which is quite out of their power. You cannot do it, and you know it. You have, perhaps, not renounced the pomps and vanities of the world for yourselves; certainly you have not kept all God's holy commandments. How then can you do it for another? If you stood up there, and promised before God that the child should grow eight feet high, that its hair should be of a yellow colour, and that its eyes should be green, you would be quite as much justified in making such a vow as in promising that which is prescribed in the Prayer Book, only there would be a touch of the ludicrous about that; but in this there is nothing that I can see to smile about, but everything to mourn over. It is sad that the human mind should be capable of such a use of words that it should dare to pronounce a lie as an act of worship, and then go calmly and quietly home as though everything had been done to please God. No, ye cannot be other people's keepers. Do not, therefore, put yourselves into the awful position of promising that you will be.

It is proper here to say that the most earnest minister of Christ must not so push the idea of his own personal responsibility to such an extreme as to make himself unfit for his work through a morbid view of his position. If he has faithfully preached the gospel, and his message is rejected, let him persevere in hope and not condemn himself. I remember years ago, when I laboured to feel the responsibility of men's souls upon me, I became very depressed in spirit, and the temptation arose out of it to give up the work in despair. I believe that responsibility should be duly felt, neither do I wish to say a word to excuse any who are unfaithful; but in my own case I saw that I could harp on one chord of my nature till I destroyed my power to do good, for I became so unhappy that the elasticity of my spirit departed from me. Then I recollected that if I had put the gospel faithfully before you and pressed it upon you, if you refused it I had nothing more to do with the matter except to pray over it: if I earnestly entreated the Lord to send a blessing, and tried again and again to plead and urge with your consciences that you would be reconciled to God, and if still I failed, I remembered that I should not be

held responsible for not doing what I could not do, namely, turn hearts of stone to flesh and quicken dead sinners into life. Our responsibility is heavy enough without our exaggerating it; we are not men's sponsors, and if they reject our Saviour whom we faithfully preach their blood must be upon their own heads. Our Lord did not always weep over Jerusalem, He sometimes rejoiced in spirit: no one thought must exclusively occupy our minds or we shall be good for nothing in practical life. We are not the keepers of other men's souls in a boundless sense, there is a limit to our responsibility and it is foolish to allow an excessive sensitiveness to burden us into semi-lunacy.

There is, however, a sense in which we *are* our brother's keeper, and of that I am now going to speak. You will bear my caveat in mind, and it will not weaken the force of what I say, but it will increase its weight, because you will feel that I have looked at the subject all round.

II. So now, secondly, **IN A HIGH DEGREE WE ARE, EACH ONE OF US, OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER.** We ought to regard ourselves in that light, and it is a Cainish spirit which prompts us to think otherwise and to wrap ourselves up in hardheartedness and say, "It is no concern of mine how others fare. Am I my brother's keeper?" Far from that spirit let us be.

For, first, *common feelings of humanity should lead every Christian man to feel an interest in the soul of every unsaved man.* I say, 'common humanity,' for we use the word 'humanity' to signify kindness. Such a man, we say, has no human feeling. I am not quite certain whether human feeling is always so humane as the words would seem to imply. Humanity over yonder there, at any rate, in Russia and Turkey,* does not seem to be a flower worth cultivating, but we might pray to be delivered from such humanity. The most horrible beast in those regions appears to be a man.

Humanity in Bulgaria!* God save us from such humanity. Yet still I trust among us the expression may be used that common humanity leads us to desire the salvation of others. I am sure, my dear friends, if you saw a man perishing for lack of bread, you would wish to share your crust with him.

Will you let souls perish for lack of the bread of life without pitying and helping them? If we saw a poor wretch shivering in the winter's cold we should be ready to divide our raiment that we might clothe him. Shall we see sinners without the robe of righteousness and not be anxious to speak to them of Him who can clothe them in fair white linen?

*During Spurgeon's lifetime, the nations of Russia, Turkey and Bulgaria had a terrible reputation for cruelty, tyranny and inhumanity.

When a person is in jeopardy through accident, we rush anywhere and use every exertion if by any means we may rescue him; and yet this life is trivial compared with

life eternal, and for us to be indifferent when men are perishing, — indifferent to the dreadful woes which come upon impenitent sinners throughout eternity, is to act as if all brotherly compassion had fled our bosoms.

Christians, I charge you, even upon so low a motive as this, because ye are men, and men are all your brothers, born of the same stock, and dwelling beneath the arched roof of the one eternal Father, therefore care for the souls of others and be, each one of you, his brother's keeper.

A second argument is drawn from the fact that *we have all of us, especially those of us who are Christians, the power to do good to others*. We have not all the same ability, for we have not all the same gifts, or the same position, but as the little maid that waited on Naaman's wife had opportunity to tell of the prophet who could heal her master so there is not a young Christian here but what has some power to do good to others. Converted children can lisp the name of Jesus to their sires and bless them. We have all some capacity for doing good. Now, take it as an axiom that power to do good involves the duty of doing good. Wherever you are placed, if you can bless a man, you are bound to do it. To have the power and not to use it is a sin. In withholding your hand from that which you are able to do for the good of your fellow-man you have broken the law of love. You do not want a special call to tell a sinner about Jesus. You want no special call to take a little child and tell it of the Saviour's love. You want no revelation by angels from heaven to tell you that what has benefited yourself will benefit your fellow men. All your knowledge, all your experience, all that you possess that grace has given you, demands a return in the form of service rendered to others. The Jews were God's elect nation, — elect to keep the oracles of God for all the nations; but they failed because they never cared for the bearing of those great truths upon the Gentiles, but fancied that they had received them for their own especial benefit. The selfish spirit so grew upon them that when God's grace to the heathen was mentioned it made them mad with rage. And, you saved ones, you owe much to God, but do not think that you are saved for your own especial benefit alone. It is a great benefit to you, but grace is bestowed upon you like light, that you may give it to others who are in darkness; bestowed upon you as the bread that was given by our Lord to His disciples in the desert, that they might break it among the multitude, that all might eat and be filled. Do think of this — that the power to do good involves the responsibility to do it wherever that power exists; and so, as far as you have any ability, you are by that very fact constituted your brother's keeper.

Another argument is very plainly drawn from *our Lord's version of the moral law*. What is the second and great commandment according to Him? "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Now since we have loved ourselves so well that through God's grace we have sought and found forgiveness of our sin, should we not love our neighbour so well as to desire him to know his sin and to seek forgiveness too? It was right of us to secure our highest interests by laying hold upon eternal life; but if we are to love our neighbour as ourselves, should we give ourselves any rest while multitudes are despising Christ and refusing salvation? Nay, brethren, we have never come up to

the standard yet; but in proportion as we do begin to love our neighbour as ourselves we shall certainly feel that God has made us, in a measure, to be our brother's keeper.

Yet again, *without looking to other men's souls we cannot keep the first of the two great commands* in which our Lord has summarised the moral law. It runs thus: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"; but this we cannot possibly do unless we have a love towards our brother's soul, for well does the apostle ask: "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" It is all very fine to stand up and sing about your love to God and let the missionary box go by while your eyes are gazing into heaven, but if you do not care for the heathens' souls, how care you for God after all? It is all very pretty to be enamoured of Christ and to have a sweet experience, or to think you have, and yet poor wretches in London are dying without the knowledge of the Saviour, and you can let them die and let them sink into hell without emotion. May God save us from such piety. It is very pretty to look at, like the gilt on the gingerbread in the old fairs, but there is no gold about it at all. A loveless religion is good for nothing. He who does not love his fellow-man enough to desire his salvation, and aim at it with all his might, gives no proof that he loves God at all. Think of these things, and weigh my arguments with candour.

Once more. To the Christian man perhaps the most forcible reason will be that *the whole example of Jesus Christ, whom we call Master and Lord, lies in the direction of our being the keeper of our brother*; for what was Jesus' life but entire unselfishness? What was said of Him at His death but that "he saved others: himself he could not save"? The very fact that there is a Christ at all means that there was one who cared for others, and that our Lord became a man means that He loved His enemies and came here to rescue those who rebelled against His authority. If we are selfish — if we make our own going to heaven to be the one end of life, we are not Christians. We may call whom we please Master, but we are not following Jesus Christ. Tears do you shed? But do you weep over Jerusalem? Tears for yourselves are poor things if there are never any for others. You pray and agonize: but is your grief ever caused by bearing the burden of other men's souls? Otherwise, are you like to Him with whose name Gethsemane must ever be connected in our memories?

Oh, though we gave our bodies to be burned, yet if we had not love for mankind it would profit us nothing. We may go a long way, and apparently all the way, in the externals of the Christian religion, but if the heart is never warm with a desire to benefit mankind, we are still aliens to the commonwealth of which Jesus is the great head. I am sure it is so. I speak not my own mind, but the mind of Christ. If He were here what would He say to any one who called himself His disciple and yet never lifted his hand or moved his tongue to snatch the firebrand from the flame or save the sinner from the error of his ways? It must be so, then: we must be our brothers' keepers.

Let the thought next rise in our minds that we are certainly ordained to the office of brother-keeper because *we shall be called to account about it*. Cain was called to

account. "Where is Abel thy brother?" I would to God, dear friends, and especially you, the young men of the College, who asked me to speak about missions tonight, that you could now hear the Lord speaking to you and saying, "Where is Abel thy brother?" Take first those who are united to us by the ties of the flesh, who come under the term, 'brethren,' because they are born of the same parents, or are *near of kin*. Where is John? Where is Thomas? Where is Henry, thy brother? Unsaved? Without God? What have you ever done for him? How much have you prayed for him? How often have you spoken to him seriously about his state? What means have you used for his instruction, persuasion, conviction? Dear sisters, I must not let you off. Where is your brother? You sisters have very great power over brothers, more power than brothers have. Where, dear mother — let me put the question very tenderly to you — where is your child, your son, your daughter? Not all that you could wish, you say. But can you say if your dear child were to perish that you are clear of his blood? Father, the boy grieves you; are you quite clear that you did not help to sow in him the sins which are now your trial? Come, have you done all that should be done? If in a week's time you had to follow in mournful procession your son's body to the grave, are you quite clear? Quite clear? Relatives, I put you all together, are you quite clear of the blood of relatives? For the day will come when the question will have to be put very plainly, "Where is Abel thy brother?" You cannot help it, I know, that such a one lives in sin, and has become an unbeliever or a scapegrace. You cannot absolutely help it, but still have you done all that you should have done towards the preventing of the sin by leading that soul into the way of life and peace? I pause for a moment to let that solemn enquiry go home to every one. The proverb says, "Charity must begin at home," and certainly Christian love ought to begin there. Are our own houses swept? Our own children, and servants, and brethren, and sisters have we as much as lieth in us sought to win them unto Christ? For my part, I deprecate the spirit which takes a Christian mother from her children to be doing good everywhere except at home. I dread the zeal of those who can run to many services but whose households are not cared for; yet sometimes such is the case. I have known people very interested in the seven trumpets and the seven seals who have not been quite so particular about the seven dear children that God has entrusted to them. Leave somebody else to open up the Revelation, and look you to your own boys. Mind where they are in the evenings! And see to your girls, that they know, at least, the gospel; for indeed there are some households where there is ignorance of the plan of salvation, albeit that the parents are professedly Christians. Such things ought not to be. Where is Abel thy brother? Thy son? Where is thy daughter, thy sister, thy father, thy cousin? See to this, that ye begin at once earnestly seeking the salvation of relatives.

But, beloved, we must never end there, because brotherhood extends to *all ranks, races, and conditions*; and according to each man's ability he will be held responsible about the souls of others whom he never saw. Where is Abel thy brother? Down in a back street in London. He is just going into the public-house. He is half drunk already. Have you done anything, friend, towards the reclaiming of the drunkard? Where is your sister? Your sister who frequents the midnight streets? You shrink back and say, "She is no sister of mine." Ay, but God may require her blood at your hands, if you thus leave her to perish. Have you ever done anything towards reclaiming her? She has a tender

heart despite her sin. Alas, many a Christian woman, many a Christian man who comes across the path of such will draw themselves up with a kind of Pharisaism, shake the dust off their feet, and feel as if they were contaminated by their very presence. Yet Christians ought to love the erring and the sinful, and if we do not we shall be called to account for it. If we have an opportunity of doing good, even to the vilest, and do not use it, we shall not be guiltless.

Some of you who get rich in London go and live out in the suburbs directly, and I cannot blame you. Why should you not? But if you leave the heart of London, where the working people are, without any means of grace — if you are content to hear the gospel yourselves and withdraw your wealth from struggling churches among the poor, God will one day say to you, “Where is Abel thy brother?” City merchant, where are the poor men that earned your wealth? Where are they, who after all were the bone and sinew that made you rich, from whom you fled as though they were smitten with the plague, and whom you left to die in utter ignorance? Oh, see to this, ye rich men, ye persons in responsible positions, lest the blood of the poor of London be demanded of your souls at the great day of account. Ay, but London is not everywhere, nor is this little isle of England everything. Look if you can across sea and land to India, where your fellow subjects live, and, alas, die at this hour of famine. The day will come when God will say to English Christians, “Where is the Hindu your brother? Where is the Brahmin your brother? Where is the Soodra your brother?” And what answer will be given by the men who ought to be there and have the ability to be there? What answer will be given by rich men who ought to help to send missionaries there, but suffer the millions to perish without a knowledge of Christ, not lifting their hand to help? And further still lies China. That does not bear thinking of, with its teeming millions — millions who have never even heard the sound of Jesus’ name. Their destiny we leave with God, but still we know that to be ignorant of God and of His Christ is a frightful thing; and every man who has light, unless his duty lies at home, should gird up his loins and say in God’s name, “I will not have the blood of India streaming down my gory skirts, nor the blood of China pouring a curse upon my head.” The Lord grant to all Christians to see their relation to mankind, and to act a brother’s part to all races.

One thing more upon this calling to account. *The more needy, the more destitute people are, the greater is their claim upon us;* for according to the account book — need I turn to the chapter? I think you recollect it — they are the persons for whom we shall have mainly to give an account: “I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not; naked, and ye clothed me not.” These objects of charity were the most destitute and poor of all, and the great question at the last day is about what was done *for them*. So if there be a nation more ignorant than another, our call is there first; and if there be a people more sunken and degraded than others, it is concerning them that we shall have to give a special account.

Now, I close this second head about our really being our brother’s keeper by saying this — that there are some of us who are our brother’s keeper voluntarily, but yet most

solemnly, by the office that we hold. We are ministers. O brother ministers, we are our brother's keepers. "If the watchman warn them not they shall perish." That is an awful sentence to me — "They shall perish." The next is not so awful sometimes to my heart, but it is very dreadful — "But their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." You cannot enter the Christian ministry without standing where you will want almighty grace to keep you clear of the blood of souls. Yes, and you Sunday School teachers, when you undertake to teach that class of children, you enter under the most solemn responsibilities. I may add that all of you who name the name of Jesus, by that very fact come into your measure of responsibility; for Christ has said, not of ministers, nor of Sunday School teachers only, but of all, "Ye are the light of the world." If ye give no light what shall be said of you? "Ye are the salt of the earth"; and if there is no savour in you what will become of you but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men?

III. My time quite fails me. I wanted much more, but if I leave those thoughts with you I shall be well content. However, I must occupy a little longer space while I speak awhile on the third head, namely, that **IT WILL BE HIGH PRESUMPTION ON OUR PART IF, FROM THIS NIGHT FORWARD, WE SHIRK THE DUTY OF BEING OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER.**

I will set it very briefly in a strong light. It will be denying the right of God to make a law, and to call upon us to obey it, if we refuse to do as we are bidden. God has so organized society that every man receiving light is bound to spread it, and if you decline the blessed service you will practically deny the right of God to require such service of you. You will be judging your Judge, and godding it over your God. High treason lies in that.

Notice, next, that you will be denying all claim on your part to the divine mercy; because if you will not render mercy to others, and if you deny altogether your responsibility to others, you put yourself into the position of saying, "I want nothing from another" — consequently, nothing from God. Such mercy as you show, such mercy shall you have. The question is not what will become of the heathen if you do not teach them; the great question is what will become of *you* if you do not do it? If you let sinners die, what will become of *you*? There is the point. You put yourself out of the reach of mercy, because you yourself refuse to render it. When you bow your knee in prayer you curse yourself, for you ask God to forgive your debts as you forgive your debtors, and thus in effect you ask him to deal with you as you are dealing with others. What mercy, then, can you expect?

Indeed, there is this about it too — that your act is something like throwing the blame of your own sin upon God if you leave men to perish. When Cain said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" he meant, probably, "You are the preserver of men. Why did you not preserve Abel? I am not his keeper." Some throw on the sovereignty of God the weight which lies on their own indolence. If one soul perishes without being taught the gospel, you cannot fling the weight of that fact upon divine sovereignty until the Christian church has done her utmost to make the gospel known. If we had all done all that could be done — I mean all of us who are believers — and yet souls perished, the blame

would lie with men themselves; but wherein we fall short, to that degree we are our brother's keeper, and we must not accuse the Lord.

And again, there is to my mind an utter ignoring of the whole plan of salvation in that man who says, "I am not going to have any responsibility about others," because the whole plan of salvation is based on substitution, on the care of another for us, on the sacrifice of another for us; and the whole spirit of it is self-sacrifice and love to others. If you say, "I will not love" — well, the whole system goes together and you, renounce it all. If you will not love, you cannot have love's benediction. If you will not love you cannot be saved by love; and if you fancy that the Christian faith leaves you unloving and selfish and yet takes you to heaven, you have made a mistake. There is no such religion propagated by the word of God, for the religion of Jesus teaches that since Christ has so loved us we are henceforth to love one another, and to love the ungodly so as to endeavour to bring them to the feet of the Saviour. God grant that these words may have a salutary effect by the Spirit of God applying them to your souls.

Last of all, it may turn out — it *may* turn out — that if we are not our brother's keeper we may be our brother's murderer. Have any of us been so already? When were you converted? Will you kindly look back to your sins before conversion? He must be a very happy man who did not before conversion commit sins which injured others; and there are some persons whose lives before they turned to Christ were frightfully blended with the career of others whom they have left in the gall of bitterness to perish. I have seen bitter tears shed by men who have been of ill lives when they have recollected others with whom they sinned. "I am forgiven: I am saved," one has said to me. "But what about that poor girl? Ah me! Ah me!" One man has been an infidel and he has led others into infidelity, and he has been saved himself but he cannot bring those back again whom he tutored in atheism. Before conversion you may have committed many a soul-murder. Ought not this to stir you up to seek now, if possible, as much as lies in you, to bring those to Christ whom once you led away, and to teach the living word since once you taught the deadly word which ruined souls? Much solemn thought ought to arise out of this. Pray for the power of the Holy Ghost to work by you to the salvation of those whom your evil influence drew towards the pit.

But what shall be said of our conduct since we have been converted? May we not have helped to murder souls since then? I tell you a cold-hearted Christian makes worldlings think that Christianity is a lie. Inconsistent Christians, and there are such, woe, woe that it should be so — bad-tempered, covetous people, cross-grained, sardonic, snarling persons, who we hope may be the Lord's people — what shall we say of these? How little they are like their Master, they are the propagators of death. I do believe that nobody is more mischievous than a professor who is barely a Christian, or almost a Christian, and continually shows his ill side to the world while yet he boasts of his piety. He disgusts the world with the name of Jesus.

Perhaps some of you have backslidden since your conversion and you have committed acts which have made the enemy to blaspheme the name of Christ. I charge you by the

love of God repent of this iniquity. Look at what you have done. Look at how you have led others astray. Oh see to it at once. You know that when David had sinned with Bathsheba he repented and was forgiven, but he could never make poor murdered Uriah again live. He was dead. You may have gone astray and damaged a soul eternally, but you cannot undo the deed. Still, if you cannot revive the slain, you can mourn over the crime. Awake, arise, ye sluggish Christians, and ask the Holy Ghost to help you to be henceforth your brother's keepers to the utmost of your power.

And do you not think that we may have been seriously injurious to others by denying them the gospel? If you want to murder a man, you need not stab him: starve him. If you want to destroy a man you need not teach him to drink or swear: keep back the gospel from him. Be in his company and never say a word for Christ. Be where you ought to speak and be sinfully silent, and who knows how much blood will be laid to your door. Do you not think that to deny a cup of cold water to a man and let him die of thirst is murder? To deny the gospel, to have no word to say for Jesus — is not this soul-murder? God accounts it so. "Well," say some, "I could not speak or preach." No, but do you pray for the conversion of others? Some people also have money entrusted to them: they cannot go to India or China, which I have been speaking of, but many other men are ready to go, and they ought to assist in sending them. I have men in the College ready to go, but I have no power to send them. The Missionary Society is in debt; they cannot send out all they would, and yet here are people in England with thousands of pounds that they will never want, and yet the heathen may die and be lost before they will part with their gold. Is there no crime in all this? Does not the voice of your brother's blood cry unto God from the ground? I believe it does. You are not to do what you cannot do, but what you *can* do; and surely there cannot be any question about such a matter as this, because if you were once to see persons in peril — if you stood on the beach, and saw a good ship breaking up, if you were able to hold an oar, you would want to be in the lifeboat. There is not a woman among you but would be willing to spare her husband for such a task, or lend her own hand to push the boat down over the shingle till it was launched upon the wave. For life — for the precious life of our fellow men — we would do anything; but if we believe, as we do, that there is a world to come and a terrible hell, and that there is no way of salvation except by Jesus Christ, we ought to feel tenfold ardour for the rescue of the souls of men from the wrath to come.

If some shall be stirred by these words, my heart will greatly rejoice; but if you are aroused do not promise to make an effort in your own strength, but pray to God about it. Commit yourself to God, and ask the divine Spirit to lead you into ways of usefulness, that ere you go hence you may have brought some souls to Jesus; and to His name shall be the glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*