



Keepers

The world treats acts of kindness as extraordinary happenings. Whenever someone comes to the rescue of another immediately it has the potential for becoming part of the evening news and, may even become the basis for a television series. So infrequent are these compassionate events that some suggest that we should do “random acts of kindness”. Most of the time, the needs of others, which we are confronted with daily, are so staggering, that we tend to dismiss them as beyond our ability to address. Further we hope some agency of government or at least another person takes care of the need. This all makes us numb to needs and desensitizes our compassionate nature. The devil tells us it is all too big and way beyond us.

If we couple the above thought with a fear for ourselves and a concern that we must take care of ourselves because no one else will, then we end up with every man for himself. The first time this was expressed was by Cain who slew Abel. When he was confronted by God about Abel’s whereabouts, he curtly responded with “I don’t know, am I my brother’s keeper?” Genesis 4:9.

What came out of him was an expression of his fallen nature and not the nature of one born of the Spirit. He said essentially, *I am not responsible*, and with that, *I really don’t care*. Both of these thoughts come against the power of a compassionate life. Such a life is one that can be used by God to release His love, His gifts, His blessings and His miracles.

The word *keeper* has some very special meanings. Its basic root idea is to exercise great care over something. It expresses careful attention to covenant keeping and its laws. It also is used to mean tending things like flocks, households, and even people. It strongly implies protection and provision. This was understood by Cain. But what he did was dismiss any responsibility for, and care of, his own brother. We won’t at this time digress into the deep jealousy of Cain, only his expression of contempt for someone he should have loved.

We were made to be *Keepers* of one another. In Isaiah’s prophetic word from the Lord, we are “not to turn away from our own flesh and blood” (our family is the body of Christ, too). Even our light (the brightness of Christ) will break forth and even our own healings will quickly come. Our righteousness will go before us and the glory of the Lord will guard us, Isaiah 58:8. I hear of anonymous giving to those in need. These wonderful acts are the expression of those who know they are keepers of one another. But what is practiced by a few is to be the normal for us all.

Stephen and Philip were deacons in the early church. They practiced being keepers of their brethren by tending to the needs of widows. Both were later found being used mightily and supernaturally. Compassion is often a doorway to the supernatural and miraculous. Jesus found his supernatural life grounded in compassion. As the Great Shepherd, He was the first Keeper. We are of Him and like Him we shall be, Keepers of one another.

We are in a season when economic fears are rising and the tendency of many is to hoard and take care of oneself. This fear along with the greed that drives this nation’s economy squeezes the believer into a narrow place. It is precisely in times like these that the body of Christ is given its opportunity to distance itself from the world in how it responds to the pressure. We can either hoard and take care of ourselves or be like the widow woman whom Elijah went to in Sidon. Her last meal was about to be prepared when Elijah came to her and asked that she make him a cake first. Little did she know her act would open the door of provision during the famine in the land and for about two years she, her son and Elijah ate while others no doubt starved to death. See 1 Kings 17:1-16.

The early church had opportunity to be keepers of each other when a famine struck most of the Roman Empire during the reign of Claudius. All the churches entered in the support of the Judean brethren who were suffering the most. While the Corinthian body was slow to make good on their gift they finally came through. Paul had to encourage/chasten them and penned this word on giving that is a sure way of seeing the supernatural provision of God take over.



2 Cor. 9:6-10 reads: *But this I say, He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have abundance for every good work. As it is written: He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the*

poor; his righteousness endures forever. Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

Before revival comes, or should I say on the way to a revival, we will have some among us who do not fare as well as others. These could be individuals or whole congregations. Our faith will be issued a summons to report for duty. Our compassion will be asked to open up its heart of love and our giving will be called on in the midst of some personal need. This is however the way Christianity works.

Greg Manalli (3/5/08)