
Abel: Worshipping by Faith

Hebrew 11:4

“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: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

INTRODUCTION:

- **The book of Hebrews is primarily written to call Jewish people who have been closely associated to the claims of Christ to completely embrace Him as their Savior and Lord**
- **They are intellectual believers—they are convinced that the claims of Christ are true**
- **But the costs to follow Christ—is not what they are willing to pay**
 - **They have been brought in close association with Christ and His people—but yet they were not ready to pay the high price of being a believer**
 - **And Paul warned them in chapter 10—to spurn the knowledge that they had been given of Christ (to be brought so close and yet not embrace Christ completely—but instead turn from it to cling onto that which could not save)—would not only cut them off**

from ever being truly saved—but it would invoke God’s severest wrath

10:29-30—*“of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.”*

- **Because such an action—is to spurn God at the highest level**
 - **To reject His Son**
 - **To reject His sacrifice**
 - **To reject His Spirit**
 - **To take God’s Word lightly**

Vs. 31—*“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

- **At the end of chapter 10—Paul points these “*on-the-wall*” Hebrews to the “entry way” to this New Covenant (that he has been pointing them to through the whole book)**
- **Paul quotes an OT passage that they would have been familiar with—Habakkuk 2:4**

“Now the just shall live by faith”

- **The “entry way” into this covenant is by faith**

- Paul's quotation emphasizes a couple things:
 - That a person is made "just" (right with God) by faith
 - And secondly a person who is truly justified (righteous) will continue to live in this "faith"

- The mark of true Christianity is that they walk by faith and not by sight
 - That they don't live a life based on the ups and downs of the world
 - *"I'll be faithful when everything's easy."*
 - *"I be AWAL when cost gets too high."*
 - They don't follow Christ only when it is easy—they follow Christ even when it's hard
 - Because, most assuredly it will get hard to be a follower of Christ
 - And the only life that can sustain them through the hardships of following Christ—is a life of faith

ILLUSTRATION: On Tuesday nights we have been learning how to tell people about Christ. And one of the main points that they have been making is calling people to embrace Christ from a right motive.

If we tell people that Jesus wants to give people a better life (love, joy, peace, fulfillment) in order to draw them to Christ—then we are giving them a wrong motive to come to Christ. The right motive is not Christ giving them a better life—but fear because of God's anger that will be poured out upon all sinners.

And then they gave an illustration.

The 2 men on the plane—given the parachute for 2 different reasons: the first for a better flight; the second for the jump to come.

Then he tells a new waitress spills the hot coffee on the second man—and how he doesn't respond. He didn't put the parachute on for the false reason of a better flight. He put it on to save his life

NOTE: If we sign on to be a believer in Christ only because of the "benefits" that we think we are going to get from it—then we will most assuredly fall away.

Christ didn't promise us a life of ease and contentment if we choose to follow Him. He said difficulties would surely come—that we should expect it.

Matthew 10:16-22—*"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. 17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18 and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against*

them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Vs. 34-39—*"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. 37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."*

- **And so Paul is calling these on-the-wall Hebrews to not be disillusioned about the life that they are entering into**
- **But he's also telling them how they can endure the hardship that WILL COME**
- **And that is through FAITH**
 - **He is calling them to get their eyes off the circumstances and look by faith to**

Christ—who is greater than all the costs

- **He will sustain you—if you choose to embrace Him by faith**

Hebrews 10:35—*"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward."*

Vs. 37—*"For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."*

- **And in chapter 11 of Hebrews—Paul points these unbelieving Hebrews to their own forefathers who embraced Christ by faith who...**

"...having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:"

- **They never even got to see Christ come—but they looked to Him by faith—and were justified**
- **And through faith in the coming Messiah they endured through great trials of affliction and saw God's provision through it**

Vs. 33-38—*"through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds*

and imprisonment: 37 they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

- **But it was their faith in the coming Messiah that God used to help them endure through such hardships**
- **The first forefather that Paul gives as an example—who is the very first man of faith in the Bible—is Abel**

“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: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

CIT: What Did Abel’s Faith Do?

I. Abel’s Faith Made His Offering Acceptable to God

(vs. 4a)—*“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain”*

A. “By Faith”

1. That is a common phrase that we see used all the way through this chapter

- a. “By faith Abel”
- b. “By faith Enoch”
- c. “By faith Noah”
- d. “By faith Abraham”
- e. “By faith Sarah”
- f. “By faith Moses”

2. It is a phrase that I think we should really look into for a moment

a. What is faith?

i. Last week Paul gave us the definition of how faith behaves

Hebrews 11:1—*“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*

- Faith acts a solid platform or foundation in which in which the person who is living by faith can stand securely on
- It gives great supernatural confidence upon which the believer can act upon his faith
- That is why “by faith” all these elders of Israel did what they did
- But that doesn’t explain WHAT FAITH IS

ii. Faith does exist in the world on many levels

- With almost anything we do—we do it with some level of faith
- But that’s not the kind of faith that Paul is dealing with
- Here’s the Biblical definition of SAVING FAITH:

Romans 10:17—“*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”

- Faith is hearing and obeying the Word of God
- So if we take that and apply it to all of the forefathers it would look like this:
 - Not some blind—stepping out—without knowing what they were doing
 - Not some pie-in-the-sky dream that they were following that had no basis in reality or truth
 - It all revolved around WHAT GOD SAID

- Abel’s faith was based on God’s Word
- Noah’s faith was based upon God’s Word
- Moses’ faith was based upon God’s Word
- And the list is the same all the way through
- And it wasn’t just anything about God’s Word
- Their actions all revolved around the promise of the coming Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ

B. Abel’s Offering—“*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain*”

1. The Background

a. Adam and Eve—as we all know—were the first human beings that the world ever saw

i. They were created in a perfect world and were given a perfect home to live in

ii. God gave the responsibility to Adam and Eve—to subdue the creation and have dominion over it

- They were to take care of all of God’s creation
- They were to act a faithful stewards over the creation
- And in that time—the job to rule over the creation would not have been as difficult as it is today
 - Because the world was perfect
 - It was without the curse of God

iii. And in that perfect world—God gave one prohibition to the man and woman

- They were not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
- God told them that in the day they eat of the tree—they would die

iv. Well, they eventually both ate of the tree that God told them not to eat of

- But God in His mercy, did not immediately put them to death for their willful rebellion against Him
- But He cast them from the Garden—out of His presence
- And cursed them and the world that they would now live in
- And over a period of time—because of that curse—they would eventually die
- But before He cast them out He gave them a promise that one day they could be brought back into the presence of God

Genesis 3:15—“*and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*”

- Though the promise was somewhat veiled—it seems that they understood it some degree
 - That God would give a child to the woman that would defeat the serpent and unite them back to God

Genesis 4:1—“*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.*”

b. Eve’s hope in a redeemer

- i.** God allows for Adam and Eve to have a child
- ii.** And Eve’s expression, “*I have gotten a man from the Lord.*” indicates that she possibly believed this child to be the promised redeemer that they were told of in the garden
- iii.** But Cain wasn’t that redeemer
 - In fact—the Scripture says that he was of the **WICKED ONE**
 - He was of Satan—as we will see
- iv.** And then Adam and Eve have another child—Abel
 - But notice that there are no expressions of hope that this was the child
 - Eve must have soon realized that the redeemer wasn’t going to come through her

c. The Two children

“*And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*”

- i.** They both grow up
- ii.** And they both have different occupations

NOTE: There was nothing inherently wrong with either of their occupations. In fact, when God cast out Adam and Eve from the garden—it said that God sent Adam forth to “*till the ground.*” And it is most likely that Adam passed his understanding of agriculture down to son Cain. And Abel probably learned his occupation from his father as well, because not only was Adam to be a tiller of the ground, but he was given the responsibility to subdue the creation—which meant taking care of animals.

- iii.** One was a tiller of the ground—and one was a keeper of sheep

d. The Offering of the Two Children

vs. 3-4—“*And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.*”

- i.** “*In the process of time*”

- That phrase literally means—“*At the end of days*”
- There was a **timing in which they were to come and make an offering unto the Lord**
- Which probably means that there was a **place** as well
- Which also indicates—as we will see—that there was a **way** they were to offer unto the Lord
 - There was a way that God would accept
 - There was a way that God wouldn't accept

NOTE: Let me give you the scenario we have here. All of the family of Adam and Eve had an appointed day in which God has set for them to come and offer sacrifice to God—so that their sins would be overlooked. It was probably something that was similar to Israel's Day of Atonement—where all the nation was called together to offer sacrifice before God—so that He would overlook their sins.

There was a prescribed timing, there was a prescribed place, and there was a prescribe way in which they were to offer. So it probably was for the family of Adam and Eve.

And in our passage—God picks the two oldest boys to illustrate what TRUE and FALSE worship look like.

ii. Cain and Abel's sacrifice

vs. 3-5—“*And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.*”

- Cain brought of the fruit of the ground
- And Abel brought a sheep from his flock

NOTE: There is nothing inherently wrong about either one of the sacrifices that these boys offer to the Lord. All the way through the OT we see God accepting *meal offerings* (fruit of the ground) as well as animal sacrifices.

And I'm sure—when it comes to Cain's offering that it was quite a beautiful offering; probably some of the best of his crops. But the problem wasn't the quality of the offering—it was obedience to the Word of God.

QUESTION: “*Why did God reject Cain's offering and receive Abel's?*”

The answer is in our text this morning.

“*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain*”

That phrase—*by faith*—tells us that Abel *heard* the Word of God, and *obeyed* the Word of God.

Romans 10:17—“*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”

He knew what God expected—and it’s very possible that he knew what the sacrifice symbolized—and he obeyed it. And thus God had respect unto his offering.

iii. Cain’s understanding and rejection of the truth

- When God showed no respect to the offering of Cain—it wasn’t that God was being PARTIAL to one sacrifice (or person) over the other
- The rejection of the sacrifice happened because Cain **rejected what he knew God had said**
- He KNEW GOD’S PRESCRIBED method—and yet in his own wisdom he tried to please God **his own way**
- And thus he was rejected

iv. God’s confrontation with Cain

vs. 5-7—“*but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. 6 And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*”

- God doesn’t ignore Cain—but confronts him in his sin
- God seeks the rebel—so that he may give him grace

“*And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 If thou doest well, **shalt thou not be accepted?***”

NOTE: God’s wasn’t willing that Cain stay lost—outside of God’s righteousness. God wanted to give him righteousness just as much as he had given his brother righteousness.

- God pleads with Cain to obey

Vs. 7—“*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*”

- God is telling Cain—that he will accept him—if he like his brother—obeyed

God's prescribed method of sacrifice

- But if he doesn't—sin, like a crouching lion is ready to destroy him

NOTE: This was really a warning to Cain—that if you don't do it God's way—that sin would so overtake you—that you will never find God's grace again.

- And so God tells Cain that he needs to master sin—rather than be mastered by it
- It's ready to drag him off forever away from God
- Cain's rejection of God's Way

Vs. 8—“*And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*”

- Instead of turning to God—and coming God's way rather than his own—he turned on his own brother

(vs. 4a)—“*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain*”

I. Abel's Faith Made His Offering Acceptable to God

II. Abel's Faith Testified to His Righteous Standing

With God (vs. 4b)—“*by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts*”

A. The Testimony of Abel's Sacrifice

1. That day when Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices before God—and Abel's was received and Cain's was rejected—God was saying something very clearly for both of them to see

- a.** He was saying that Abel had a righteous standing before the Creator
- b.** And He was saying that Cain was still wicked

NOTE: We are not told how God received one and how He rejected the other. It is very possible that God did what He often did in the OT—that He consumed the offering before the offerer.

It was probably similar to what happened when Elijah and the prophets of Baal offered sacrifices to their God. The prophets of Baal—all day tried to get Baal to consume their sacrifice—and yet he wouldn't—because he didn't exist. And then Elijah placed his sacrifice upon the altar—and

prayed. And in an instant, fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice right before the people's eyes.

2. That day not only testified to their spiritual condition before God—but it also revealed that Cain was a religious fake

- a.** He was a hypocrite trying to put on a show
- b.** He knew what God expected and yet he chose to disobey
- c.** And what made his sin even more grievous is that he flaunted it in the face of God

NOTE: Did you know that there are people that still do the same thing today?

The Scripture says that they are going after the “Way of Cain.”

They are people who are putting on putting on religious garments yet rejecting the very Christ that they say they are following.

B. The Hebrews—Were Following in the Way of Cain

1. They knew the Truth

- a.** They knew what the only way of righteousness really was

- b.** Yet in the face of the understanding—they were rejecting Christ
- c.** They were putting on the religious garments—yet they rejecting the One that they were pretending to love

2. Identifying Marks of Religious Fakes

- a.** When given opportunity to repent—and embrace Christ—they refuse the offer
- b.** But instead they turn upon the righteous
 - i.** They use them as the excuse for why they couldn't believe
 - ii.** Just as Cain did with his own brother

3. The Warning to the Hebrews

- a.** After Cain rejected God's pleading for him to come the right way—he went out, slew his righteous brother—and then was cursed by God—and he went out from the presence of the Lord never to return again

- i.** Cain was the first apostate of the Bible

- b.** And that's the warning that Paul has been laying upon these Hebrews who

have been exposed so much to claims of Christ—and yet are **STILL CLINGING TO WHAT CAN'T SAVE THEM**
c. They are in danger of completely going in the way of Cain

I. Abel's Faith Made His Offering Acceptable to God

II. Abel's Faith Testified to His Righteous Standing With God

III. Abel's Faith Preaches to the World of God's Way of Salvation (vs. 4c)—“and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

A. Abel's Testifying Blood

1. After Cain slew his brother—God approached Cain—asking him where his brother Abel was
2. And Cain's arrogant response was—“*Am I my brother's keeper?*”
3. Listen to God's response

Vs. 10—“*What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*”

- a. He said, “*You thought you silenced your brother—and the testimony that he was giving to you of God's only way of salvation—BUT YOU DIDN'T*”
- b. “*His voice is still crying out*”
- c. “*And now it's crying out to me—to be avenged!*”

Revelation 6:9-10—“*And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*”

4. God's vengeance upon Cain

Vs. 11-12—“*And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. 12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.*”

a. God tells Cain—for the rest of his life Abel's voice will cry out to him through the ground

- i. The ground that received Abel's blood will refuse to yield its strength for Cain
- ii. This man who once was probably a successful farmer—would lose everything
- iii. Every time he worked the field—and was unable to produce a great amount of crops—he would be reminded of what he did

- That he had rejected God's way of salvation

- He had rejected his own brother's testimony of righteousness
- And now—he could never be brought near to God again

NOTE: The sad thing about this—is that when God confronted Cain and pronounced His curse upon him—Cain showed no sign of remorse or repentance.

He had hardened himself so hard against God—that it was impossible for him to be renewed to repentance.

B. Abel Still Speaks Today

1. He is saying the same thing he said to Cain—all his days

- a. Man Comes to God by faith in Christ—not faith in his works
- b. Man must accept and obey God's revelation above his own reason
- c. Rejection of God's truth—will most assuredly bring God's wrath

“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: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

CONCLUSION:

- **Have you come the way God expects you to come?**
- **Or are you still sitting upon the wall of unbelief?**
 - **You may be intellectually persuaded that Jesus is the only way to be saved?**
 - **But you are still clinging to your own way**
 - **Because of fear of men**
 - **Because of love of sin**
 - **You have to come God's way—not your own way**
- **I'm so thankful that God so mercifully extends His hand of Grace out to us—just as He did for Cain**
- **But our continued rejection of His grace will only make it more difficult to be saved**
- **Will you be saved before it is too late for you?**
- **The way a person gets saved:**
 - **They acknowledge their sin**
 - **They've broken God's Law**
 - **Liars, Thieves, Murderers, Adulterers,**
 - **They must acknowledge that they can't save themselves**
 - **They must turn from their sin (once and for all) and put their faith and trust in Christ**
 - **He paid their fine**
 - **He alone satisfies God's wrath**