

Tuesday, September 17, 2024

Men of Faith-Abel

CONTEXT & RECAP

- We learned last week:
 - Faith for Christians is not blind leaping in the dark. Faith for the Christian is informed trust based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - Faith acts upon the certainty of who God is and what He has promised.
 - We reject the idea that we have faith in faith. We have faith in the faithfulness of a faithful God.
- Hebrews 11
 - Context for the Book of Hebrews: Take heart struggling believers.
 - The life of faith is not void of hardship. There's a cost to walking by faith in Jesus.
 - The stories of the men included the Hall of Faith dismantle the lie that a life of faith is a walk in the park.
- Hebrews 11:4-40 Faith in action
 - *What can we observe and learn about faith in action through the life of Abel?*
- **Hebrews 11:4**
 - **⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.**

“By faith”

1. Biblical faith demands action. (James 2:14-26)

- **James 2:14-26**
 - 14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of

daily food, **16** and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it profit?* **17** Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. **18** But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. **19** You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! **20** But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? **21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? **22** Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? **23** And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. **24** You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. **25** Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way? **26** For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

- **James stresses the significance of works that come from faith, rather than works done to earn faith.**
- Like Abel, who offered BY FAITH, Paul writes that all believers...
 - 2 Corinthians 5:7 “We walk by faith, not by sight.”

“Abel”

- **Hebrews 11:4**

- **4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.**

- **Genesis 4:1-15**

- Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord.” **2** Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. **3** And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. **4** Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, **5** but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. **6** So the Lord said

to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? **7** If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.” **8** Now 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 killed him. **9** Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where *is* Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. *Am* I my brother’s keeper?” **10** And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. **11** So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. **12** When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.” **13** And Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment *is* greater than I can bear! **14** Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me.” **15** And the Lord said to him, “Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

- Abel was the son of Adam and Eve and brother to Cain.
- What did Abel do?
 - Shepherd

“Offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain”

- **Hebrews 11:4**

- **4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.**

2. Faith offers the best to God.

- What did Abel offer?
 - **3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering.**
- What’s the difference between Cain and Abel? (2 things)

- Both were brothers from the same family, both assumed the office of priests, and both offered something to God.
 1. Abel brought the firstborn of His flock, the best, to the Lord.
 2. Hebrews 11:4 “by faith”
 - It’s also about the motive
 - The Genesis account does not say that Cain brought the first fruits of the ground to the Lord.
 - The sense is that Cain brought the “leftovers” unto the Lord.
 - God knows the condition of our hearts. There’s no fooling the Lord.
 - Hebrews 4:13 “All things are open and naked to the eyes of Him whom we must give account.
 - God knows the motives of our hearts.
 - God starts with the person (motive) and then offering.
- **Psalm 51:16-17**
 - “For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart-these O God, You will not despise.”
- **Faith offers the best to God; the best to God is a humble heart.**
- Prov. 15:8
 - “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight.”
- 1 John 3:11-12
 - **11** For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, **12** not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.
 - Before Cain murdered outwardly, Cain murdered inwardly.
 - WE NEED THE LORD TO CLEAN OUR HEARTS.
 - Our responsibility is to change our minds (repentance), God changes our hearts.

“Through which he obtained witness that he was righteous”

- **Hebrews 11:4** ⁴ **By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.**
- “The just shall live by faith...” Romans 1:17
- What was Abel’s faith in?
 - God’s holiness, God’s Preeminence, God’s worthiness.

3. A fruitful life of faith responds to the greatness of God.

- What you look at has the power to give you life or death.
- Abel saw the Lord and saw His worth; Cain saw the Lord and thought Him as common.

“God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.”

- ⁴ **By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.**

4. Our acts of faith honor God and serve as a testimony to others.

Application

- The sacrifice of ourselves: **Romans 12:1-2**
 - “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
- The pleading of Paul stems from **Romans 11:36**
 - “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”
 - Same echos of the song in heaven- **Revelation 4:11**

- “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”
 - “Present your bodies a living sacrifice”
 - YOU present your
 - This is an act of will, a decision that needs to be made continuously.
 - Bodies
 - Your whole being
 - Heart, soul, mind, strength
 - Abel gave God the best.
 - We can give the best of our finances, focus, and our future.
- 1. Biblical faith demands action.**
 - 2. Faith offers the best to God; the best to God is a humble heart.**
 - 3. A fruitful life of faith responds to the greatness of God.**
 - 4. Our acts of faith honor God serve as a testimony to others.**

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways can we move beyond belief and put our faith into action in our daily lives? Are there areas where we may feel called to step out in faith but hesitate?
2. How can we humbly offer our best to God in practical ways? In what ways have we offered to God our “leftovers”?
3. How can the way we live out our faith serve as a powerful testimony to those around us? What challenges do you face in living a life that reflects God’s greatness?