

Faith At Worship: Abel

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[0:00] Genesis chapter 4, we'll be reading the first 16 verses. Genesis chapter 4, verse 1.

Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, With the help of the Lord, I have brought forth a man. And later she gave birth to his brother, Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time, Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.

The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering. But on Cain and his offering, he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Then the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door.

[1:00] It desires to have you, but you must master it. Now Cain said to his brother Abel, Let's go out to the field. And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain, Where is your brother Abel? I don't know, he replied. Am I my brother's keeper? The Lord said, What have you done?

Listen, your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth. The days of socially acceptable Christianity are over.

The words are those of Robert George, law professor at Princeton University, recently speaking at a prayer breakfast on the cost of discipleship.

[2:06] He announced, The days of socially acceptable Christianity are over. Now they've been over for quite a while in other nations.

But now at last in our own nation, Christianity is quickly becoming socially unacceptable. Biblical views of marriage and morality are not only unpopular, but are being regarded in the courts as unacceptable and punishable.

They will not be tolerated. You will change with the times or suffer for it. So a Christian wedding photographer has a homosexual couple come and say, We'd like to have you as our photographer at our wedding.

And she says, I'm going to refuse that offer. And she finds out that she no longer has that freedom to refuse, that she must serve all of society or suffer stiff fines, which she must pay.

Young people, the practical cost of not being ashamed of Christ and his word is going way up. The cozy relationship between the church and the world is over.

[3:30] The battle lines have been drawn. And if you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. Now, of course, this is nothing new for Christianity, is it?

It's the way it was in the very first century. For these Hebrew Christians, we're studying the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, and that's the way it was for those first century Hebrew Christians.

They were increasingly coming under persecution, unjust suffering, public insult, refusal of jobs, refusal of work, imprisonment, confiscation of their property, and all because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just abandon faith in Christ and it will all stop and you'll be fine and we'll treat you fine. So the writer to the Hebrews wants to encourage them to not shrink back, to not avoid the cross, but to go on believing, to go on living by faith through thick and thin.

So where does the writer to the Hebrews begin? He gives them a whole chapter of Old Testament examples of faith to spur them on.

[4:59] The ancients who were commended by God for their faith, the righteous who live by faith through all sorts of problems. And as he goes to the ancients, how far back does he go to start with?

Where does he start with the examples of faith? With the very first martyr, the second son of Adam, who lived by faith and died because of it.

Consider Abel because he has something to say to you, the writer is saying to us. He's a fitting example of faith for us to imitate, for the first century Christians to imitate.

And for us 21st century Christians in an increasingly hostile world. Now, turn to Hebrews chapter 11.

If you have your Bibles open at Genesis 4, you'll want to put a bookmark there and then turn back to Hebrews 11. We'll be bouncing back and forth between these two portions of God's word.

[6:06] Hebrews 11, and this morning we're concerning ourselves with just one verse, and that is verse 4.

By faith, Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith, he was commended as a righteous man when God spoke well of his offerings.

And by faith, he still speaks even though he is dead. Very simply then, there are three things that are here attributed to Abel's faith.

Acceptable worship, commendation by God, God's commendation as a righteous man, and an ongoing witness.

Now, before we start with the first, just as an aside, I want you to notice here in Hebrews 11 how that the New Testament scriptures affirm the reliability of the Old Testament scriptures.

[7:13] The opening chapters of the Bible give us true history. The first 11 chapters of Genesis are not some non-literal myth, some story that God is telling to make some points with men.

No, Adam and Eve really lived. They are the first people to occupy this planet. They are historical figures, and so are Cain and Abel, their first two sons.

They really lived. So we see that New Testament scriptures affirms the truthfulness of the Old Testament scriptures, and namely this Genesis account.

Now, we come then to the first point. Abel's faith produced acceptable worship. Verse 4 says, By faith, Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain did.

And Genesis 4 records a very familiar scene. In fact, it's being repeated all over the world today. Perhaps even in this church today.

[8:28] It's the scene of two brothers worshiping God. And they both have the same father and mother, which means that they both receive the same religious instruction and discipline, the same example in parents.

They're worshiping in the same church, singing the same hymns, hearing the same sermon and prayers, and perhaps even putting the same amount of money in the offering box.

And yet, for all their similarities, the worship of one is accepted by God, and the worship of the other is rejected by God. This was Cain and Abel.

Both had the same parents, our first parents, Adam and Eve. Both had the same religious instruction, and discipline and example. Both had honorable jobs, Cain a farmer, and Abel a shepherd.

Both were religious. Both worshipped God. Both brought offerings that were appropriate to their vocations, from the work of their hands. Cain from the fruit of the soil, Abel from the fruit of the flock.

[9:36] But God's response to their worship could not be more different. As Genesis 4 states, that the Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offerings, but he did not look with favor on Cain and his offerings.

He had regard for Abel's worship, but he had no regard for Cain's worship. Abel's worship was acceptable and pleasing to God, but not Cain's.

And the writer to the Hebrews comments on this by saying, Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain did.

A better sacrifice. Now, of course, the big question that commentators are seeking to answer is, why? What made Abel's sacrifice better than Cain's?

Well, I don't want to disappoint you, but you will notice in Genesis 4 that the answer is really not given to us, at least not explicitly.

[10 : 39] It doesn't tell us what made Abel's sacrifice better. It does tell us that it was better, but it doesn't explain. And so commentators make calculated guesses.

Was it because Abel offered a blood sacrifice and Cain only a grain and vegetable sacrifice? Well, I just want to say there's nothing in the account itself to suggest this.

Indeed, we find later in the laws regulating worship that both kinds of sacrifices are commanded, required, and approved and accepted by God.

Well, then was it that animals were more valuable than grain? that an animal is alive and vegetables are dead? Or was it that Abel brought the best of his flock and Cain brought the unwanted leftovers of his field?

Again, the problem is that it simply does not say that. It's pure conjecture. And all of these guesses and more of them that we won't take time to go into require us to read into the scriptures what is not there.

[11 : 50] And I think that our focusing on such things misses the crucial point altogether. That the decisive difference between the worshipers was in fact not something to be seen by men.

That they both appeared in man's sight to be equally worshiping God. Even as I look upon you this morning, everyone here seems to be worshiping God.

what poor judges we make of each other. But the Lord does not see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart.

And that is never more true than when we are worshiping, the Lord is looking at our hearts. and it was what he saw in the heart of the worshiper Abel.

I should say what was it that he saw in the worshiper heart of Abel that he did not see in Cain?

What made Abel's worship better and acceptable to God?

[13 : 04] Hebrews 11.4 doesn't leave us in the dark. It tells us faith. By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain did.

Beyond this we do not know what made it better but that's all we need to know because that's all we're told. Faith was the decisive difference in these two worshipers. It was present in Abel, it was absent in Cain.

And it made all the difference in the world in God's attitude towards them and their worship. You can find two men in Jesus' parable that went into the temple to pray. They both went in, they both prayed, they both worshipped, but one worship was acceptable and the other wasn't.

It's what God saw in the heart. Now, let's remind ourselves what faith is.

Verse 1 of Hebrews 11 says, now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Now, where do we go to learn about things that cannot be seen or that are not seen or future things that we yet hope for?

[14 : 20] Well, we go to the scriptures, don't we? We go to God's word, a revelation from God. That's where we find out about things unseen. That's how we find out about future things that we hope for.

It's in the word of God. And that's how we understand, verse 3, that the universe was formed at God's command. We weren't there.

We didn't see it. It's an unseen event, isn't it? So how can we know for sure that it happened? Well, we come to the revelation of the one who was there and has told us how it happened.

The word of God, the revelation from heaven. Indeed, throughout Hebrews 11, faith always looks to, always responds to a word from God.

So God says to Noah, I'm going to bring a flood. You build an ark. And it's that word from God that faith responds to. He says to Abraham, leave this place, your home, and go to a place I'll show you.

[15 : 23] He had a word, a revelation from God, and that's what faith responded to. He left home and went, not knowing where he was going, just that God had spoken to him.

So faith always looks to the word of God. Indeed, faith comes by hearing, Paul says, and hearing through the word of Christ, Romans 10, 17.

So the worshiping faith of Abel was looking to some word from God. What word might that have been? Again, we're not told.

But this story takes place in Genesis 4, and if you just turn back one page or chapter, chapter 3 and verse 15, we have a promise, a word from God that I believe explains to us what word that Abel was trusting in.

What is that, what is it that faith looks to that makes us in our worship this morning acceptable to God? You see, it's nothing different from what made Abel and his worship acceptable to God.

[16:38] So what is it that makes us in our worship acceptable to God? Well, it's the gospel promise of the saving work of our Redeemer.

And that gospel promise was first proclaimed in Genesis 3, 15 to the parents in the hearing of the parents of Cain and Abel. It was first spoken by God to the serpent devil, but in the presence of Cain and Abel's parents.

And this is what God said, I will put to the devil, I will put enmity between you and her, the woman, and between your offspring and hers. He, that is her offspring, singular male, will crush your head and you will strike his heel.

Now that's the gospel promise that Adam and Eve passed down to their boys, Cain and Abel. God is going to send a Savior to rescue us from Satan's power.

A male seed of the woman is going to bring us back to God's side. Sin has put us on the devil's side, but God is going to put enmity.

[17:49] This male seed of the woman is going to put enmity between the devil and her and her seed. God's going to bring us back through this coming Savior, but he will crush and he will crush the head of the serpent.

But in the process, his own heel will be bruised as he wins us back to God's side so that the enmity is no longer between us and God, but now the enmity is between us and the devil.

We're now on God's side. Now, of course, this promise of Genesis 3.15 is gloriously fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous one for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.

We were on Satan's side, and Jesus, by his death, has put the enmity between the devil and us by bringing this to God. 1 Peter 3.18, or again in Hebrews 2.14, by his death, that is Christ's death, he destroyed him who holds the power of death, that is the devil, and freed those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

By death, Jesus Christ crushed the head of the serpent. He broke his hold upon us, and all of this was yet unseen by Abel.

[19:23] It was yet future. It was something to be hoped for. It was that way for all of these Old Testament saints that we find in Hebrews chapter 11, as they waited for this coming Savior from God, the seed of the woman.

woman. It wasn't something they saw. It wasn't something that they could touch. It was future to them. But that's no problem to faith because faith is being sure of what we hope for.

It's being certain of what we do not see. And Abel was sure that this seed of the woman was coming from God.

He was sure that salvation is found in no one else but in him. And so he embraced and believed the promise from afar way before it even happened.

Just as many, most of you have embraced and received and believed the promise from this side of the cross. Looking back, he embraced it looking forward by faith.

[20:31] And he owned his sin. He owned his guilt. And by faith he looked away from any merit in himself and anything that he did to commend himself to God.

Nothing in his hands could he bring. And he threw himself on the mercy of God that would come through this Savior that had been promised to him by God himself that he would redeem us from sin and Satan.

And that, my friends, is what made his sacrifice better than Cain's. faith. Only in this way did he dare to come before God in worship and present his offering.

There's no other way for fallen men to come to God but through the merits of this one and only mediator. Christ's body given at Calvary is that curtain that was torn to give us access into the most holy of holies where God dwells.

We come through the veil. We come through the torn veil of Christ's flesh. We come through his sacrificial work on Calvary and we find acceptance in the most holy place.

[21:44] Only in him are we and our worship acceptable in his sight. Many years later after Abel there would be one of the disciples, Peter, who would write in his first epistle chapter 2 verses 4 and 5.

As you come to him, that is the Lord Jesus, the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Christ. You didn't bring blood sacrifices, you didn't bring grain sacrifices, but you have come to offer spiritual sacrifices to the Lord today and they are only acceptable through Jesus Christ. They're only acceptable to God as you bring them with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. All that we do in worship is only acceptable through the merits of the Lord Jesus. Even our thanksgivings must be brought to God in the name of Jesus. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, we sinners simply have no business with a holy God without the one and only mediator that he has given to us, his own son, Jesus Christ. [23:23] So here in Hebrews 11, 4, here's faith at worship, faith at worship, looking to Jesus to have all that we do in worship accepted before God.

Now the truth is that not all worship being offered today will be accepted to God. I am sure that is a shocking truth that most people do not know.

Most people that went to the trouble of getting up, getting dressed, not going here or there or the other place, but going to church to worship God today, just assume and expect that God will be pleased and accept their worship.

That is not the truth. Not all worship is acceptable to God. Read Cain's worship. Only Abel's was acceptable.

That truth would shock and anger many worshipers today. God gave up a day at the beach.

[24:29] You mean I put that hard-earned money in the offering plate? You mean I went and sat through that long sermon? You mean I did all of that and it gets me nothing?

It's not even acceptable? God doesn't even take regard for it? well that's true if you did not offer it by faith in Jesus Christ.

If you did not come through the mediator the only acceptable worship is through faith that looks to Christ for acceptance. So I don't believe that the fault in Cain's worship was faulty vegetables but rather in the absence of faith in this coming redeemer that was promised.

He did not have faith. He did not put his trust in God's word of promise. It's his proud unbelief that thinks that God should be pleased with my offering. What's the deal here?

I'm every bit as good as my brother. My offering is every bit as good as his but his is accepted and mine is rejected. I'm mad. I'm mad at you God.

[25:41] I'm angry at you. He's clearly not looking to the unseen coming Savior to make him fitting and acceptable to God.

He's looking to the works of his own hands, his own worship, his own offerings. I can please God with my own hands. Oh, the arrogance of unbelief to think that we've done something to merit God's acceptance.

No, no. Hebrews 11 will show us that the whole life of the believer, is a life of faith. Indeed, Paul says we walk by faith. The whole Christian walk through this life is a walk of faith.

Faith every step of the way. Faith is to influence every single thing that you do in life, and I mean everything you do. You need faith as you go to work.

You will not work as you ought unless you work unto the Lord with an eye of faith to the Lord. You need faith not only when you go to work, but when you face troubles, you will not glorify God unless you face that trouble as unto the Lord.

[26:50] You need faith when you face a difficult duty, a hard command from God, a painful persecution, a waiting for promises to be fulfilled. You need faith to live, and my friend, you're going to need faith to die.

We'll see that in this chapter of Hebrews 11. And Abel teaches us that you need faith when you come to worship God. So here you are, you've come to worship God today.

How is faith influencing your worship? Do you come to God seeking acceptance by faith in the Lord Jesus alone? Have you abandoned yourself to this Savior?

Have you quit trying to lean on your own understanding and get your own way? Have you come and just surrendered everything to Christ? Are you trusting only in what he's done for sinners?

Have you submitted yourself to God's way of righteousness? That alone makes you and your worship acceptable to God. And may I just say as a way of a sight, that's why Christ in his gospel must always be central in our worship.

[28:05] because that's the only way it's acceptable to God is as our faith goes out to Christ for our acceptance with God.

Worship must focus our faith on Christ, the mediator. And as God sees faith in his son, you know what his response is to your worship? He is pleased. He accepts it.

You say, oh, but I'm tired and I'm sleeping. He accepts it for the sake of his son. Even the sincere worship of his dear children is acceptable.

Imperfect worship. Acceptable because they look to Christ to make them acceptable to God. So that's the first point.

What Abel's faith produced was acceptable worship. The second thing that is attributed to Abel's faith is God's commendation of him as a righteous man. We're back in Hebrews 11 and the second statement says, by faith, verse 4, by faith he was commended as a righteous man when God spoke well of his offerings.

[29:20] Now, here's the crucial thing that no one will enter heaven without. God's commendation of them as a righteous person. Can the thrice holy God who not only sees what we do but sees our thoughts and our motives and our desires, the God before whom nothing is hidden but everything is uncovered and laid bare, does that God look at us and say, she is holy, she is righteous, he is righteous, if so, heaven, if not, hell.

So, the big issue is, can God commend us as righteous? Now, the Lord Jesus, in Matthew 23, 35, refers to Abel as righteous Abel, that's what he calls him.

Jesus, the Son of God, commends Abel as a righteous man in the scriptures. How did Abel become a righteous man in God's sight?

Well, how does any sinner be commended as righteous in God's sight? How does any sinner get accepted as righteous in God's sight?

Have all their sins taken away and have only perfect righteousness put to their record in heaven?

How does any sinner get justified before God?

[30:57] Well, the answer everywhere in the Bible is by faith in Christ alone. That was true for Abel as much as it is for you. By faith in Christ alone. And that's what the passage says in Hebrews 11, 4.

By faith he was commended as a righteous man. It was because of his faith that God could say you know that man is righteous by faith.

Not by works of righteousness that we have done but by faith in the righteous one Jesus Christ.

Turn over to Philippians 3.9 where you see the apostle Paul making this point so clear as he does in many of his letters it's such a drum that he's just pounding constantly.

And here according to Philippians 3.9 How is any sinner counted righteous before God? It's to be found in Christ.

To be found in Christ. It's by being found in Christ not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law from obeying the law.

[32:08] But that righteousness which is through faith in Christ the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. Notice a few things about this righteousness.

It does not come by doing but by believing. It is not through works but through faith in Christ. It does not come from me but it comes from God.

It's not my own righteousness worked out by my obedience but it's God's righteousness freely given to me. It doesn't come from my obeying but through my faith in Christ perfect righteousness.

Righteousness is always and only come to sinners through faith in the Lord Jesus. Because faith in Christ unites us to Christ.

We become one with him. And faith receives Christ and when it gets Christ it gets all that Christ is.

It gets all of his perfect obedience. It gets his record, his report card, his righteousness, his standing before God.

[33:23] It gets all of that and the merit of his atoning death. So where there is faith, God the just is satisfied to look on Christ and pardon me because of his righteousness given to me.

So because Abel's faith is in the coming Christ, God imputed all of Christ's righteousness to Abel and all of his sins to Christ who was to bear the punishment for them.

And so Abel was declared righteous, justified by faith alone in Christ alone. Now, we need to be careful that we don't misunderstand what this verse is saying.

Abel did not become righteous, by his sacrifice. That's not what made him righteous. He was already justified. He was already righteous in God's eyes before he made the sacrifice. He already had faith and righteousness before God. But it was by his believing sacrifice, his faith-filled sacrifice, that it gave God, we might say, the opportunity to bear witness to the fact that Abel was righteous.

[34 : 39] And God did just that by accepting his offerings. God did not accept the offerings of the unrighteous. He does not accept the offerings of the unrighteous, but only of the righteous.

And so by accepting Abel's offerings, God was saying that Abel is righteous. I accept his offering. notice what Hebrews 11, 4 says, by faith he was commended as a righteous man when God spoke well of his offerings.

Now how did God speak well of Abel's offerings? How did he show his acceptance of Abel's sacrifice? Again, Genesis 4 does not tell us.

All it says is the Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. A very real possibility could have been that fire came down and consumed Abel's offering and left Cain's untouched.

[35 : 56] Five times in the Old Testament scriptures we see that, that God shows his approval of some sacrifice, some offering, by sending fire down to consume the offering.

Perhaps most memorable is the offering of Elijah and how he is challenging the prophets of Baal and he prepares the altar and he puts the bullock on the altar and dumps water on it and does all the rest and then prays to the Lord and God showed his approval of that faith that looked to him. Fire came down from heaven and consumed the whole shoot and match. We see it as well when Aaron first prepares the tabernacle in the most holy place and they put the sacrifice upon the altar and fire comes down and consumes the sacrifice.

Perhaps that's what happened here. So here comes Cain and Abel and Abel puts his lamb on the altar from the livestock that he had and Cain brings all of his garden wares and lays them on his altar.

Fire falls and consumes Abel's and nothing happens to Cain's. Perhaps that's it. Maybe it was a different way. The important thing that we need to know is this. They both knew afterwards that God was pleased with Abel and his offering and not with Cain and his offering.

[37 : 26] God made that very clear to them both. Abel's faith in worship won him the commendation and praise of God as being a righteous man.

And by accepting his offering, God was saying loud and clear, this man and not that man, is righteous. This man is righteous.

There's the commendation, divine commendation by accepting his offering. Now, notice in Genesis 4.4, God treated their offerings as he treated their persons.

I think that's significant. God treats the offerings of each man in the same way that he treated their persons. Genesis 4.4 says, the Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but he did not look with favor upon Cain or his offering.

You see, God treated the offerings as he treated the person. Abel himself was accepted by God and so was his worship. Acts of worship are not evaluated by God apart from the person worshipping.

[38 : 59] When judging the value of worship, God considers the source. By faith in Christ, Abel himself, as to his person, was accepted as righteous before God.

And so, as a righteous man in Christ, his worship was also found acceptable. Abel was not accepted because of his offerings, rather his offerings were accepted because they came from one who was himself accepted and righteous before God.

And so, God accepts the worship of his accepted children. There's a congruity then between what we are and what we do.

You see it here. Between the tree and its fruit, the heart and what comes out of it. From righteous men come righteous actions. From evil men come evil actions. From faith-filled hearts come faith-filled worship.

And so, our worship becomes an extension of who we are. So, God approves of Abel and his worship, but not of Cain, the person, or his worship.

[40 : 13] So, if your person is not accepted by God as righteous, then neither will your worship be accepted. It comes from one who's still in rebellion against God. It comes from one who is still under

God's wrath, one who has not submitted himself to God's way of righteousness through his Redeemer.

So, though Cain's offering itself may have been the very best from his fields, on Cain and his offering, the Lord did not look with favor.

Worship coming from one who is not acceptable can never itself be acceptable. And outside of Christ, nothing the wicked do is acceptable to God.

Proverbs says that even the plowing of the wicked is sinful. It's not done unto God by faith for his glory. Even their best deeds, their righteous acts are like what?

Filthy rags outside of Christ. Even their acts of worship are detestable. Proverbs 15, 8 could be written upon the tombstone of Cain.

[41 : 20] The Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked. But the prayer of the upright, of the righteous, pleases him.

That part would be written over Abel's tombstone. The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable, an abomination to the Lord. We saw that in Isaiah chapter 1, that God's complaining of their worship. He has no pleasure in it, chapter 1, verses 11 through 15. He has nothing delightful in it. It's the trampling of my courts when you come in here, he says. It's meaningless. It's an abomination. I can't bear it. My soul hates it. It's a burden to me. I'm weary of it. And I'll hide my eyes from anything you do in worship. Why? Because your hands are full of blood.

You're hating and murdering and killing and then you come traipsing into. You see what he's saying? You can't separate what's done in worship from the person who worships.

[42 : 27] That's how God evaluates worship. And Abel was in Christ, a righteous man. And Cain was not. So here are these two sacrifices of these two brothers.

One came from a righteous man, made righteous through faith, living a righteous life, and therefore his worship is accepted. Whereas the other came from an evil man without faith, and therefore his worship was rejected.

One came from a trusting child of God, the other came from an unbelieving child of the devil. You say, aren't you being hard on Cain? Well, this is just what the New Testament says about him.

In 1 John 3 and verse 12, the Apostle John says under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, do not be like Cain who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother.

And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil. And his brothers were righteous. Even Cain's faithless worship is here called evil.

[43 : 41] His own works were evil. It includes what he did that day he brought his offering. It was evil. From righteous evil came righteous actions and righteous worship, but from evil came evil actions and evil worship.

What was there in his heart? You say, well, he hadn't killed him yet. nobody had the murder, the seed, the hatred, the seed of murder in his heart already. Even as he's offering his sacrifice, he had pride in his heart, arrogance to think that God ought to accept my offering.

He has anger, hatred, rage, resentment. It's all there and it's soon to spill out, but God already sees it. And that's why he cannot accept his offering.

It's why God never accepted Cain or his offering. He was evil, belonging to the evil one. And his worship proceeded from such a heart that can never find acceptance with God.

No, the heart must be first purified by faith in Christ to be accepted. Yet here's Cain and he's angry and he's blaming God instead of blaming himself.

[44 : 51] Isn't that something? Isn't that the sinner's way? The sinner disobeys God, then he gets the fruit of his disobedience and he's mad at God for the discipline. Here's Cain.

He refuses to come to God on God's terms. The surrender of faith in another, in the coming Christ. No, I'm not going to do that. I've got a better way.

I'm coming in my own righteousness. Well, he came on his own terms and so he's rejected. His worship is rejected. He's rejected. His worship is rejected. And now he's mad at God for rejecting his worship as if God had wronged him.

So what does God tell Cain? The blame's all yours. The blame is all yours. You have no reason to be angry. If you do right, will you not be accepted?

If you don't like being rejected, well, then just repent and believe and do what's right. Come to the Savior. Trust in him and I'll receive you in your worship. What a gracious Savior still pleading with this Cain who's angry at the saving God.

[45:55] Causing Matthew Henry to say there's not a damn sinner in hell, but that if they had repented and trusted in Christ, they would have found mercy and a home in heaven.

Cain, even now, if you will do right, you will come by faith like your brother Abel. You too will be accepted. Abel's faith and righteous acts brought God's favor down upon his head, but it also brought his brother's hatred.

The righteous acts of righteous men stir up the hatred and envy of evil men. A righteous life exposes their sinful life and makes them jealous, and so Cain's hatred and envy leads to the murder of his righteous brother.

Why did he murder him? Because his own works were evil and his brothers were righteous. How many of the righteous are hated by their brothers and sisters just because they're righteous?

We see it in the first family, and it's ever living itself out in families where there is the righteous and the unrighteous. So the apostle John concludes in 1 John 3:13, Therefore, do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.

[47:17] If Cain murdered, Abel, don't you be surprised if the world hates you. So Abel's faith produced acceptable worship, it received God's commendation as righteous in his sight, and it results in ongoing witness in the third place.

By faith, he still speaks even though he is dead, Hebrews 11, 4. He still speaks even though he's dead. kids, how in the world do dead men still speak?

Well, that's a good question. I believe it's chiefly through the lives that they lived. I can still hear my father when asked how he's doing say, better than I deserve.

He's been dead, but he still speaks. some of you can still remember his sermons. Are you wheat or are you chaff?

He asked us. And I'm sure you have the same things with your parents. You can still hear what they said by the lives that they live.

[48:27] We see it here with the record that is still on the books. Back in Genesis 4, Abel's dead, but he still speaks through his life and through the record of Scripture in his case.

So, with Abel, he's long dead, but his example of faith still speaks to those who have ears to hear. And what is it that this ancient man is saying to us 21st century people?

First of all, he's saying the righteous will live by faith. He's saying the righteousness you need to get into heaven is perfect righteousness and it's received by faith in God's Redeemer.

Do you have this righteousness? He'd ask us. If not, then right now you need to run to Christ. Quit any hope of righteousness in yourself to commend yourself to God. Throw yourself entirely upon the mercy of God in Christ, and you will be counted righteous today.

And if you do have this righteousness, then treasure the Lord Jesus and that righteousness that is found in him. Behold in there the risen lamb, my perfect spotless righteousness.

[49:39] Glory in him, he would say. What else does this dead man say to us? Well, he says your worship today only finds acceptance with God through faith in God's appointed Savior.

So in all your approaches to God in worship, make much of Jesus Christ. Exercise faith. Act faith faith in Christ.

Never think to draw near to God in worship except on the arm of the blessed mediator. Faith is to make you worship differently.

So fix your eyes on Jesus as you worship. Have personal dealings with him right through the worship of God in your worship.

Let it be permeated with dealings with Christ confessing to him thanking him crying out for help from him. And this dead man has something else to say to us.

[50:42] He would say that those accepted by God must expect persecution from those who are not accepted by God. You must expect persecution from those not accepted by God.

Abel would say American Christians so you're finding that the days of socially acceptable Christianity are over. Don't be surprised by it. Don't whine and complain as if something strange is happening to you when mistreated by the world.

Expect it. Darkness hates light because their deeds are evil. Don't let it move you. Living by faith meant death for me at the hands of my own brother.

But he would say lastly don't let anyone think that I was the loser. for living by faith. Acceptance with God is worth far more than whatever rejection you might suffer from evil men in this world.

For being accepted by God as righteous will usher you at last as it ushered me right into the presence of God. Where in his presence is fullness of joy at his right hand our pleasures forever more.

[51:59] Believer your best things are not to be found in this evil persecuting world but in the life to come so be sure of what you are hoping for be certain of what you cannot see.

How cheaply men value justification by faith. Being accepted by God. Do you know most men today would rather be accepted by peers than to be accepted by God.

But a day is coming when nothing will matter except this one thing. Does God accept me as righteous?

If yes it's heaven forever if no it's hell forever. Oh yes by faith Abel still speaks even though he is dead.

He has this ongoing witness that he's carrying out today however many thousand years later this is. He's one of those voices in chapter 12 2 in that great cloud of witnesses He's done running the race now we're running the race and he's one of that great cloud of witnesses!

[53:18] And what do witnesses do? They bear witness they give testimony and he shouts to us go on dear brother go on dear sister keep living by faith and you will never never be disappointed!

see anything good in man we know where it comes from not from within him but from you and so we rejoice to take a look at Abel this man that lived so long ago and yet is so like us lost sinful in need of a Savior thank you that you sent the same Savior for him that you sent for us thank you that he trusted in that Savior by faith he was counted righteous by you and so everything he did he did by faith and his worship was accepted by you because done in faith in this coming redeemer so because he lived by faith he received only your acceptance but the world's rejection and so we ask you take his example and teach us from it may it not be that this voice would go unimproved in our lives have you put his name and his story into

Hebrews 11 for us then help us to learn these lessons to rejoice in the mediator Jesus to make much of him in our worship and to count your acceptance is far more valuable than the rejection of this world help us we pray in Jesus name amen