

Cain Wasn't Abel

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. (Heb. 11:4)

The righteous live by faith ...

- The righteousness we have is an alien righteousness—we are declared righteous.
- Faith, the title deed of what has been promised, awards us that righteousness.
- There is a “life of faith” that the righteous live.

Today we are going to look at that “life of faith” that Abel lived.

Now ... in order to truly understand WHAT the Bible is telling us about Abel we need to first understand HOW the Bible reveals truth.

One of the disciplines of theology is Biblical Theology ...

The grandfather of biblical theology was a man named Geerhardus Vos.

He taught that that we needed to see the Bible, not as a collection of 66 books but as one great single book a single self-revelation of God...

... that we learn about God, not only in what the Bible says but also by observing God's divine activity as it progresses through time in history.

For example:

When you leave home in the morning, and the sun is first coming up, your shadow is elongated and distorted. [**That is what things look like in the early part of the Bible.**]

But as the day progresses at, or about 11 a.m. when the sun is at a 45 degree angle your shadow is clear and distinct. [**That is what we are seeing in the gospels.**]

... but, of course, the sun continues to rise and at high noon, when the sun is directly above you and you are in the brightest light possible—there is no shadow at all. [**This is the book of Acts and the Epistles.**]

Throughout much of Old Testament, and particularly in Pentateuch, there are a lot of shadows...

... shadows that whisper of future coming events ...

...The Apostle Paul, speaking of these Old Testament events, says “*these things were a shadow of what was to come.*”

In order for there to be a shadow there must be two things: 1) light and 2) an object for that light to shine upon.

Today, the light of Jesus Christ, found in the New Testament, is shining upon these two brothers and the sacrifices they brought to God.

Genesis 4:1-8—¹*And Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a man child with the help of the LORD."* ²*Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.* ³*So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.* ⁴*Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;* ⁵*but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.* ⁶*Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"* ⁷*"If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."* ⁸*Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.*

As we look at Abel's life of faith, we are going to also learn something about worship.

... and when I say worship, I am referring the attitude of our heart toward God.

God is to be worshipped but there is a right way and a wrong way ...

... there is such a thing as “vain worship.”

In Mark 7:7 Jesus quoted Isaiah, saying, “**In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the**

commandments of men.” But what did Jesus mean about worshiping in vain?

In Mark 7, Jesus was being criticized by the Pharisees because His disciples ate food without first ceremonially washing their hands.

In order to help his readers understand what was going on, Mark explained, “The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders” (Mark 7:3).

The Pharisees thought their strict customs and traditions were necessary in order to keep people from accidentally breaking the Law of Moses by eating something “unclean.”

However, Jesus’ disciples were not observing these customs; which is why the Pharisees were very critical of them and of Jesus.

The word, “vain” means “useless” or “empty.”

When Jesus used Isaiah’s words to criticize the people of His day, He wasn’t criticizing the way they were praying or singing.

... He was criticizing the attitude of their hearts.

Today we have read the story of two young men coming to God—one is a vegetable farmer and the other is a shepherd.

They are both attempting to worship God.

One brings his vegetables, the other brings a lamb.

Both have an **altar**, both are **putting something** on the altar, both are **bringing their offerings** before the same God.

.... But there are three differences between these two offerings.

- What they Brought. (visible)
- Why they Brought it. (invisible)

1. What They Brought-*the visible evidence*

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain

There are a multitude of religions in the world ...

... some people believe that we are all just worshipping the same God using different names

That is simply not true.

... the difference between Christianity and all other religions is not an issue of **semantics** it is an issue of **substance**.

... In Acts 4:12, Peter clearly affirms the exclusivity of Jesus— *“there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”*

Who we worship matters a great deal!

The name which our God bears is essential!

In Genesis 4:3 we what Cain brought in his worship to God.

“So, it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.”

... this “ground” is not the perfect ground of the garden of Eden.

By this time Adam and Eve had already sinned and rebelled against God.

... as a result, they were put out of the garden and God had cursed the land ...

(Gen 3:18-19) ¹⁸ “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”

Cain's sacrifice is the fruit that came out of 'cursed ground'—

... It was probably a beautiful offering.

But God refused to accept it ... **the writer of Hebrews tells us that Abel's sacrifice was better.**

Cain's sacrifice required more work/toil/effort ... But Abel's was better.

We saw last week that we are not saved though our hard work so personal righteousness ...

... the righteous live by faith!

How do know that Cain was NOT living by faith?

Genesis 4:7 says something very interesting ...

⁷ "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door

- Last week we saw two times where the author of Hebrews writes that **“by Faith men of old gained approval”**
- ... we saw that this is both an exhortation and a chastisement.
- ... He was saying to these Jewish Christians who were drifting back to the Old Covenant ...
- ... *“the people of old had far less revelation than we do, and they trusted God and took Him at His word ... therefore we should also trust God and take him at His word.”*

A life of faith is a life of trusting God enough to obey what He has commanded.

This verse in Genesis tells us that Cain “did not do well” ... he “sinned”

... and what is sin? **Disobedience to God's commands.**

The Bible doesn't tell us what God's instructions were for the sacrifice

However, God calls Cain's actions SIN,

... this implies that Cain knew what God had commanded ...

... but instead of living by faith in God's Word... Cain chose to disobey.

... Cain decided to ignore God's instructions and do his own thing.

Cain's sacrifice was cultured and beautiful to the human eye ... but it was disobedience...

Living by faith is taking God at his Word and that is exactly what Abel did.

- By faith Abel offered ...
- ... Noah prepared an Ark
- ... Abraham obeyed and went out
- ... Abraham lived as an alien

In Luke 11 Jesus, in condemning the self-righteousness of the Pharisees, says something very interesting.

(Luke 11:49-51)⁴⁹ "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute,⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah

Jesus says that Abel was a prophet who was killed for his faith ...

... the Pharisees were partakers in Abel's death because their faithless disobedience was just like Cain's.

The writer of Hebrews is very clear that it was **BY FAITH** that Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain

... Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God

... In order to have faith you have to hear from God

... You have to believe and act upon what God has said.

... In fact, without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God!

The applauds the faith of Abel sacrifice and calls Cain's sin which means that they knew what God commanded and expected.

Cain wasn't Abel ...

In faith Abel brought a sacrifice that pleased God.

2. Why They Brought It—the invisible proof

By faith Abel ... obtained the testimony that he was righteous

We already know why Abel brought his sacrifice ... he wanted to obey God.

... and because he did, he **obtained the testimony that he was righteous**

...there is the huge difference between righteousness and unrighteousness.

... **It is the difference of acceptable and unacceptable**

That is exactly what we see in the Genesis account.

And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; ⁵ but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.

What Cain brought was in violation to God's command but WHY did he bring it.

... why did he knowing disobey God?

To answer this question, we need to first go to the little book of Jude.

This short letter is an urgent appeal to Christians that false teachers need to be condemned and removed from the church.

In a few, but very clear words, Jude condemns those false teachers who reject authority and only seek to please themselves.

... and in his identifying and condemnation of these heretical teachers Jude writes ...

Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. (Jude 1:11)

Jude says that these false teachers: (1) were following Cain's example; (2) like Balaam, they had chosen profit above integrity; and (3) like Korah, they had rebelled against God.

What was the way of Cain?

First it is to **worship God with impure motives.**

Cain brought his offering to the Lord, but he didn't bring it in faith.

Worship isn't just about WHAT you do, it's about WHY you do it.

... if the attitude of your heart is wrong, then your worship is meaningless.

The way of Cain is to have a heart filled with jealousy...

... and as we saw in the Genesis account the way of Cain is to lie to God about what you've done.

Abel brought his offering to worship God ... Cain was proud and self-righteous and instead of coming to the altar to worship ...

...Cain was coming to the altar to declare his own worth to show that he “deserved” the privilege to come before God.

... as Jude says he was **“like a cloud and wind without rain.”**

... **“a tree whose fruit is withered, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.”**

Cain was one of those ungodly people **who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**

⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. (Gen. 4:9-10)

Having killed his brother, Cain wipes his bloody weapon and his bloody hands and asks, What have I done?

The disobedient sacrifice was just the tip of the iceberg...

He is a liar, a pretender, a hypocrite, a murderer ... and an arrogant one!

“Am I my brother’s keeper?”

... as if to say, “God, Abel is your favorite so why don’t you keep him? You prefer him, why don’t you take care of him?”

Like a spoiled arrogant child Cain tries to pit father against siblings.

This is what the absence of faith looks like!

Bitterness, anger, jealousy, hate!

(1 Jn. 3:10-12)¹⁰ By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;¹² not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Cain's lack of faith led to hatred for his brother which grew and grew until his anger became overpowering.

Our word “slay” in the Greek literally means to “cut his throat” “slaughter” or “butcher.”

This was an action of uncontrollable violence.

That is exactly what Calvary was all about.

An innocent man is violently killed by his wicked brother.

Sound familiar doesn't it?

And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Heb. 12:24)

Abel's blood cried out for justice and vengeance.

... God heard that cry and brought just judgment upon Cain.

But the blood of Christ does not cry out for vengeance against you and me.

... It cries out for mercy and grace.

... It pleads to God, not that justice might be done, but that justice has been done.

By faith Abel obtained the testimony that he was righteous ... and so do you and I.