



Abel

What is faith? It is an interesting question. Is it a thing? You know, the type that you can explain like God. Oh, wait a minute, God can be hard to explain. Maybe you say something like “I just know He is real.” How about “the Bible says so.” Yet, God chose to be invisible and to a disbelieving world that is hard to prove. I do have faith that the sun will rise tomorrow. Why do I believe that? It is because it has risen my whole life. Is it a belief or faith that the sun will rise? I am just saying that pinning down faith is complicated.

Paul has chosen to describe faith in a non-conventional way. He is writing in the New Testament era. Paul was solely Jewish but now he is going further by following Jesus. Paul has faith in the Jewish messiah called Jesus the Christ. Yet, his fellow Jews would not believe him. They claim to have Jewish faith but not a faith in Jesus. Regardless of the gap in faith and belief between his Jewish counterparts, Paul writes about the faith of Jewish heroes in the Old Testament. He wants Christians to know that their faith is strong. Strong because they believed in unforeseen promises of God. This study will be dissecting the unmerited faith of the ancient saints of Hebrews 11.

Do we have faith because others did? I would contend that the Bible says no. We have a strong faith because we know deep inside Jesus is the Christ. There are words that describe our faith. Words found all through the Bible. I call them the three T's: trust, truth, and tested. I am sure that faith could be described in many ways. I have faith in my dad as a carpenter. I believed

in the words of my grade 8 teacher Mr. Neufeld. Yet, I have faith in these men for little reason. It is my view. I chose to walk in their steps. These men inspired me and bestowed wisdom on me. Yet, the first man of faith that Paul mentions is Abel. A man who said nothing.

We can get a glimpse of what faith looks like and how it works in the lives of Bible greats. Sometimes it is because of a great deed. Yet, Paul begins his adoration of ancient faith by showing us the actions of one man who said nothing. Abel clearly has great faith. He gave of his best because God asked for his best. The Bible does not have rules or commands to the Lord currently. There must have been an understanding between humans and God. However, we do know that God had required an offering for sin. We have also read that Jesus said we should bring a joyful offering. The Bible says that Abel gave a pleasing offering. We could assume it was joyful, honoring, and from the heart.

The word for offering is called *mincha* in Hebrew. God made it clear to Moses that there are grain offerings and blood offerings. Yet, the giving of our best puts a strain on our heart for God. Abel gave without restraint. How do we know? God knew. He accepted Abels offering. Yet, there was something in Cain's grain offering that displeased the Lord. Was it the lack of blood? The lack of the best of his crop? Or, was it a lack from the heart. It is assumed that Cain gave fruits of the soil to gain favor. Abel gave because He loved the Lord and wanted to give his best.

People get hung up on the type of offering. Plainly Abel came in faith with what God wanted. Cain gave what he wanted to give and expected grace. God could see the difference. Read this chapter 4 in Genesis. God warns Cain about his heart. After the offering Cain deceived his brother and killed him. Then he tried to deceive God. We can tell by the actions of the heart why God accepted Abels gift. That is what Paul is driving at in Hebrews 11. You do not have to speak. Yet, your actions can speak louder than words.

Leviticus 4:31 *“Then he shall remove all its fat, just as the fat was removed from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar for a soothing aroma to the Lord. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.”*

Christians with no heart for God will use the words of Genesis 4 to make their case. God wants the blood. Cain gave fruit of the soil. Yet, there is so much more here. Abel gave the fat portions. Do not let that slide past you. He took the time to give his offering the right way. Some Christians will say that the law did not count back then. It does not count now because that law was for the Jews of the desert. Yet, Abel took the time to separate the fat offering. He and Cain knew the right way. We all know they did. It is displayed in their actions.

I pick on Christians because we love to look for a way out of our responsibility. Maybe Gods words does not say? Oh, but through the faith of Abel it does say. Although no command is written down Abel knew what to do. He came with a good heart. He gave of his best. Jesus nails it in Matthew 5:24 *“leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”* There is this fancy tradition that the Biblical faith runs A thru Z. It begins with Abel. Yet, I think it begins with him because he died for his faith. He gave his best.

Finally, I want to mention a few verses. Hebrews 12:24 *“and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.”* Jesus is called the new Adam. Some call Him the new Moses. What the New Testament tries to say is that Jesus was a better offering. If Abels offering was accepted then how much more would Jesus. Paul knew that the blood offering was the correct way to honor the Lord. Lastly, lets remember that Abel said nothing yet, his actions spoke loudly to God. Hebrews 11:4 *“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.” How loud are your actions?