



September 6, 2026

FaithFull - Abel and the Salvation of Faith

Hebrews 11:4 (ESV)

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

- In verse 4, the Hebrews writer says let me *show you* what faith is.
- Here are some people throughout history that God **commended** for their faith.
- And the very first person he throws on the table, is Abel.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain...

Cain and Abel: a contrast of faith.

Augustine wrote about Abel and Cain that *Cain was the first born, and so belonged to the city of men. After him was born Abel, who belonged to the city of God.*

From the beginning of the world there has always been two kinds of people.

Type 1: Those who take the way of Cain. It is to belong to the city of men highlighting their own works and goodness. Jude 11 warns us against taking the way of Cain.

Type 2: Those who take the way of Abel. Abel's way is the way of faith. It is to respond to the word of God and belong to the city of God.

Chapter 4 of Genesis begins saying that Adam and Eve have a son. They name him Cain. they have another son, and they name him Abel. Cain is the older. Abel, the younger.

- Abel is a keeper of sheep. A shepherd.
- Cain, it says, is a worker of the ground.
- So right away, even in their occupations, Cain is associated with the curse. The curse was that man would have to work the ground and deal with thorns and thistles.
- But Abel is associated with the work that God had intended for man from before the curse. Watch over the animals. Name them and care for them.
- Cain is squarely in the city of men. Abel in the city of God.

Genesis tells us that Cain worked the ground and brought to God an offering made up of what he had produced.

- Abel was a shepherd. And so for his worship to God, he brought an offering from his flocks.
- God had regard for the gift of Abel, but he had no regard for the gift of Cain.

Abel is Commended.

Commended is when someone speaks favorably of you. That's what God does for Abel because of his worship.

- Both of these sons bring an offering to the God they were separated from.

How did they know they needed to do that?

- Answer: For the same reason you comb your hair and brush your teeth.

Every relationship you have in this life is broken. We live in a state where we have to prove to everyone we encounter that we are acceptable.

- Cain brought his grains. Abel brought his firstborn sheep.
- One offering was acceptable, one was not.

Why is Abel regarded and commended, while Cain is not?

- Hebrews cuts right to it and just gives us the answer: **faith**.

Faith is becoming aware of a reality, then agreeing it's true, and then acting in light of that truth. Apply that to Abel.

- Abel was aware of the reality that God was no longer accessible like he once was. Sin had come in.
- God says, I alone am the one who can cover you. And he made clothes out of animal skins. It means that blood had to be shed to cover sin.
- God says there will now be enmity/hostility/war between your offspring.

God is planning to send his Son, offspring of Eve, in human form, and blood will be shed to defeat Satan and cover sin. (Genesis 3:15)

- Abel agrees with what God has said. *Only I can cover sin.* Then his hands act in light of what he knows.
- He brings his offering in faith. Abel's offering pointed to what God would someday do.

Cain's offering said, *Look at what I have done to cover my sin.* Cain is of the city of men.

Abel's offering said, *I trust in the sacrifice you will one day make, God. I trust in the wounded one.* Abel is of the city of God. Abel has faith.

Abel is commended. Cain is not.

Abel Cries Out.

Jesus uttered the name of Abel. It's in Luke 11. Abel is called a prophet by Jesus.

- Look at this little phrase in Genesis 4:8 - *Cain spoke to his brother Abel.* It comes after the offerings are given and Cain is rejected. Cain gets angry.

God himself confronts Cain, and still, Cain does not think, how can I change?

- Sin is so destructive. In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve are talked into sin by Satan. One chapter later that not even God can talk Cain out of it.
- God tries. And in this little verse 8, Abel tries. Cain and Abel talk. What do you think a prophet says in this situation? He says the truth. He cries out what God has said.
> Abel is the first prophet in a long line of prophets, says Jesus, to be rejected.

John writes in I John 3:12 that *we should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why? Because his own deeds were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

Abel is Killed.

You can see the discussion ratchet up both ways until Cain has had enough, and in his rage he attacks and kills his brother.

- Cain's name rhymes with the Hebrew word "gotten" as in, *I have gotten a man.*
- Abel's name means *vapor*, or *breath*.
- Is Eve realizing the implications of the curse in Abels' name?

Abel's death is the first death in the whole world. The way of Cain, the city of men, always leads to death.

- But his death is not the last of Abel.

Abel Still Cries Out.

God tracks down Cain and holds him accountable for what he's done.

- Cain responds with, *Am I my brother's keeper? I don't know where he is.* He's lying to God and denying his crime!
- *And God says, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."*

How does blood cry out from the ground? It cries for justice.

- God banishes Cain to a life of wandering. He tells him that for him the ground will no longer cooperate. The very thing that Cain was leaning on to prove he was acceptable is stripped from him. Lesson there.

Hebrews adds, not that Abel's blood cries out, but that Abel's blood *still* cries out. How?

- In Hebrews 12:24 it says that *the blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

Abel's blood still cries out for vengeance. And his blood points us to the blood of Jesus that speaks a better word.

The blood of Jesus also cries out for justice. The difference is that Jesus' blood doesn't cry out for justice for him, but justice for us.

The better word then, is mercy. **Abel's blood cries out for justice. But the blood of Jesus cries out for mercy. For us.**

- Someone once said that death is never the last word in the life of a righteous man.
- Abel spoke in faith while he lived. And he speaks even in death. And he tells of the blood of Jesus.

That's faith. Responding to God's promises not by pointing to ourselves, but to Jesus.

The Faith of Abel brings us to fork in the road.

There is the way of Cain. The city of Men. There is the faith of Abel. The city of God.

- The question is **how do you know which road you're on?**
> Here's the best way: **Abel is commended.** He knew that he pleased God.

Do you know that you're approved/accepted/commended by God? Cain's never do.

- But Abel's come to God as humble sinners pleading the blood of Jesus. They come pointing to what Jesus has done.
- That's a FaithFull Abel. That's what a Christian is.

Abel is the first person in heaven. What made heaven possible for Abel? Faith.

- What is true from the first will be true until the last. No one will enter heaven, except those who believe.

*Let others in the gaudy dress of fancied merit shine,
The Lord shall be my righteousness, The Lord forever mine.*

Prayer

God, there is only one way we can ever come to you and know for sure that you love us, that you approve of us, that you commend us...it is by having faith that you love and approve and commend Jesus. May every last breath, and even after we have breath, cry out that Jesus has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. In faith, we trust the wounded one who has covered our sin. What an incredible offering to bring. We bring it in the name of the one who crushes the head of Satan, Jesus Christ, Amen.

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