

January 4-Genesis 4

Genesis 4 provides an immediate illustration of the effects of the fall of man recorded in Genesis 3. In this text, we read the account of the first murder in human history. It is a horrific story of jealousy and depravity. We are instantly reminded of what we learned in Genesis 3:15, namely that man is in desperate need of a Savior who can redeem.

However, in this account we also find that there is hope for a man who trusts and obeys God. This truth is found in verse 4 when the Bible says “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.” This verse admittedly leaves some questions unanswered. We don’t know the instructions God gave Cain, Abel and the rest of the family regarding their sacrifices.

However, we do know that the major factor that separated Abel’s sacrifice from Cain’s was his faith. Hebrews 11:4 tells us “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.” The author of Hebrews shares with us that faith is what separates Abel from Cain in Genesis 4. In fact, the larger biblical principle is that the children of God live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Hebrews 10:38). It was Abel’s faith that commended him to the Lord and it is our faith today that allows us to stand before God as well.

Abel was a faith filled man but the question must be asked, faith in what? What was it about Abel’s faith that commended him to the Lord? The answer is faithful obedience to God’s commands. While we do not know what God’s commands to Cain and Abel regarding their sacrifices, we do know that God knows the heart of a man (Proverbs 15:11, Matthew 12:25, Luke 16:15). As God gazed upon the heart of Abel, He saw a man who stood before Him in faithfulness and belief trusting that God’s instructions were to be followed. This belief is what commended Abel to God and it is still belief today that commends men to God.

Abel was no exception; in fact all men are justified by their faith filled obedience. Today, God has commanded men everywhere to believe in Christ as their Savior, “And this is His (God’s) command, to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23a). Furthermore, the Bible instructs us that this true, biblical faith in Christ is what saves us, Romans 3:28 says “for we hold that one is justified by faith, apart from works of the law.” Brother and sister, we do not earn our salvation, we trust in the one who has earned it for us!

God still knows the heart of a man, and what He requires of us is that we would faithfully trust in His plan of salvation, namely the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as God looked upon Abel and saw his willingness to trust and obey God, God looks upon us examining whether or not we will trust in the payment of Christ for our sins. Those who do believe will be accepted and counted righteous just like Abel, those who don’t will be rejected and condemned just like Cain.