Abel and the Life of Faith
Scripture: Hebrews 11:4
Code: 1627

We come to chapter 11 and verse 4 in our study, and ah, as we're going through this 11th chapter of Hebrews we're just going to take probably one of those characters each evening, ah, we may get a little further than that as we get further on in the chapter, but especially on this subject of Abel we wanted to spend some time even though our text is only one verse, let me read it to you. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh." We might entitle this message, "The Sermon from a Dead Man."

Moffatt once wrote these words, "Death is never the last word in the life of a righteous man." When a man leaves this world be he righteous or unrighteous he leaves something in the world. He may leave something that will grow and spread like a cancer or a poison, or he may leave something like the fragrance of perfume or a blossom of beauty that permeates the atmosphere with blessing. Man leaves, he's either a Paul or a Nero. Dead men do tell tales. They are not silent, they speak. Witness the end of verse 4, "he being dead yet speaks." And that is said of Abel.

Now if Abel is still speaking, what is he saying? What is this individual who was the second generation of - of, of men since the creation, the dawn of the existence of man, what does he have to say to the 20th century A.D.? What does he have to offer to me? This man who lived only when the earth was new and born and there wasn't anything like there is today, what does he have to offer me? Certainly the economy of God in his day was different that it is now, God cannot deal with us as He dealt with them. What does he say to me? What is this chapter saying? This chapter is talking about one word, what is that word? Faith, and that is the message that Abel wants to give to you tonight. The theme of the 11th chapter of Hebrews is the subject of faith. And the message of Abel is the message of faith.

Now just for a moment of background, in the Book of Hebrews the writer establishes the superiority of Christ and the new covenant, you're well aware of that, if you get nothing else out of this series you will never forget that, because we have repeated it so many times. He is establishing the superiority of Christ and the new covenant. Then he goes on to say the only way that a man can come to the new covenant is by faith. That the old system of ritual and so forth and so on is no longer in vogue, but men come only by faith there is not necessarily any prescribed form any longer. And you will of course remember that even in the Old Testament men were justified by faith but their faith found its obedience in a very prescribed form. But here in the new covenant it is a simple matter of faith in

Christ, no longer continual sacrifices, one sacrifice. No longer a multitude of priests, one great high Priest. No longer no access to God but access to God through Christ. All the things the old covenant couldn't bring the new does and, and so he presents the superiority, then he says the only way to enter into the new covenant is by faith, and that means to believe. To believe that God is, to believe that Christ is God in flesh, to believe that Christ died, that He rose again, that He lives today and that you can only know Him through faith. That is to believe, and to bank your life on it.

Now it's one thing to tell people to believe, it's something else to define faith, and so having in verse 38 and 39 introduced the subject by saying, "Now the just shall live by faith," he goes on in chapter 11 to explain what faith is and how it operates. if he's going to demand a response of faith, if he's going to urge men to faith, to personal faith in Christ then it's important that he explain faith in detail. Because you see the Jews to whom he spoke in the first century were works oriented. Their whole concept of religion was founded upon a works system or a merit system. They, they had the idea wrongly so, they had perverted their own Testament, but they had the idea that God kept score, and if you had more Brownie points than negative points you got in. And if you were sort of good then that was all God expected if you followed the prescribed ritual. And so when he's talking to them about faith it's really a commodity that don't quite understand. They don't quite see, watch this, the absolute independence of faith from works as a way to God, do you see? They may have understood a mixture of faith and works but that's abominable to God. They had to understand the absolute isolation of faith apart from works as a way to God. Now faith having been pure will produce works, but faith mixed with works as a way to God is invalid. And so they needed to understand very clearly the absolute character of faith, that it had nothing to do with works in any way, shape or form, that none of their ritual and none of their ah, ceremony and none of their prescribed feasts or festivals had any-thing to do with satisfying God, only by believing in Jesus Christ could that satisfaction come and therefore could they participate in the new covenant.

Now last time we looked at verses 1 to 3 and we saw four features of faith, we saw just a basic kind of char...ah, characterization of faith, and here are the four things we studied last time, we determined in the first 3 verses that faith gives a present reality to things in the future. Verse 1 says, "It's the substance of things hoped for." Faith actualizes the future into the present. And we talked about the man who's dreaming about his vacation, and he's so involved in his dream that he's sitting in his chair and he's watching the fish being reeled in and he's loving the sunshine and so forth and so on and he's almost transported himself right into the middle of Colorado or wherever it is he's going to be. And that kind of, that kind of, of hope and confidence is what actualizes the future into the present and that's the - that's the essence of faith. Faith takes that which is unseen, which is yet in the future, the promise of God to be fulfilled and actualizes it in the present.

The second thing we saw about faith is that it furnishes suffici-ent conviction so that a man banks his life on it. And that we saw ... it is the evidence of things not seen. It is the assurance of these things to the point where you not only believe it but you bet your life on it. And faith is somewhat less than full

faith when you only believe it but you're not willing to bet your life on it, see? That's like the lady who was flying in the jet and somebody asked her how she liked it, she said, I hated it and I never put my whole weight down the whole trip. There must be a ... if faith is to be legitimate it is not only I believe it, it is I stake my life on it. Okay.

The third thing we learned about faith is, faith secures for men the approval of God. And the only people who will ever enter into God's presence are those whom He approves of and the only way to get His approval is by faith, verse 2, "For by it the elders receive witness." Or approval. By faith men receive the approval of God. Verse 2 indicates that that is the case, and as you well know the Bible says, "without faith it is impossible to please him," and that's over in verse 6.

Fourthly we saw that faith also enables a man to understand what logic does not allow him to understand, verse 3, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." You

see what the philosopher can't discover and the scientist can't discover, faith discovers, that is that God created the universe out of nothing. Faith enables us to comprehend that which is not visible to the senses. So then we've seen a definition of faith, it gives a present reality to a future fact, it furnishes enough conviction so that you bet your life on it, it secures the blessing and the approval of God and it enables you to understand what the philosophers and scientists of the world cannot understand, it enables you to perceive the things that are not open to the senses.

Now so much for the stated character of faith he's going to now give some illustrations, and the illustrations have kind of a purity about them that kind of definitely isolates faith from works because this is what he must do with the Jewish mind. And so to begin with he starts with the first man of faith, and that was Abel. Now we say that because Adam and Eve in the purest sense were not people of faith. And I say that because they did not hope in what they had not seen. They walked and talked with God in the cool of the day in the garden, they had the presence of the shekinah glory, they had an experience with God that was, that was real. It was on earth but nevertheless they saw the manifestation of God in a personal way, they had a per-sonal kind of communion with God and they knew God before the fall in the fullest sense of knowing God. Therefore there was little faith involved in the pre-fall situation, so he doesn't choose to use Adam and Eve as illustrations of faith. Abel was born outside of Eden, so he never had the opportunity to know God in the personal way that his parents did, therefore when he believed God it was an illustration of faith in much more positive sense than was that of Adam and Eve, and you do not find the indication of faith in relationship to Adam or Eve.

Now it's important then to understand that Abel is a man of faith, and he's the first man of faith. I think it's also important to understand that Abel's faith had to do with his personal salvation, and it thus is a perfect illustration for the writer of Hebrews who is encouraging his readers to get to the place where

they're person-ally saved. Now notice verse 4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness," there's that approval again, because he had faith, "that he was right-eous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaks." He's still speaking because he's preaching the sermon of faith.

Now for Abel this was something, for Abel to have faith was amazing. He was the first man to really exercise positive faith in God. He not only believed he bet his life on it.

Now this text is divided into three progressive points and I want to share these with you tonight. Abel's faith led him to do three things, number one, to offer a more excellent sacrifice, number two, to obtain righteousness, number three, to openly speak though dead. Because he believed God he did those three things, and they're progressive. Because he believed he offered a better sacrifice, because he offered a better sacrifice he obtained righteousness, be-cause he obtained righteousness he is for all the ages a living voice saying, righteousness is by faith, do you see. So it's progressive. Let's look at the first point, "by faith Abel was able," and we'll be saying that over and over again, "to offer a more excellent sacrifice." That's point number one, to offer a more excellent sacrifice, he was able to do that on the basis of his faith.

Now to understand this we must turn to Genesis chapter 4 and so I want you to do that and just kind of ah, go all the way back and don't worry about Hebrews chapter 4, you know what that verse says now let's go to Genesis. And we - we come at this point back to the history of the origins of man. You remember how the creation went, God created man on the last day and then He rested. And then He created Eve and nobody rested, right? But anyway God created man and he created woman as a help meet for man, and as we approach chapter 4 the children of Adam and Eve are born. Verse 1, Genesis 4, "And Adam knew his wife;" and there's that word know that has to do with ah, the sexual relationship that produces a child, it is an intimate word, "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bore Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord." Now this is interesting. Now this man that she had his name was Cain, and it's very difficult to trace back ah, the study of words, etymology, but if we go back far enough ah, most Hebrew scholars would say that the word Cain comes from Qana, which would be translated Q-a-n-a, and it means to get, to get something. Now you'll remember that Adam and Eve had been thrown out of the garden. They had been thrown out of the garden because of sin, God said if you're going to live in rebellion to Me you're not going to be able to occupy My garden, My paradise, nor are you going to be able to maintain your fellowship in My presence so you're finished, get out. And He booted them out of the garden. But before He shot them of there He activated His grace, and He promised them that they would be won back to Him, that He would make provision for redemption, that God would make a provision by which these individuals who were thrown out of the garden could come back into relationship with Him. Now that provision is indicated in the 15th verse of the 3rd chapter, and here's what God says, and He's reciting of course the beginning of the curse or the beginning area within the curse here, part of it, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall

bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Now let me read that again and I want you to understand it this time. "And I will put enmity," or division or strife, "between thee and the woman," and He's talking to Satan here, keep it in mind, talking to Satan, "and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Now to Eve that said one thing. The woman, some woman or woman in general, whatever, woman is going to produce a seed who is going to be the antagonist of Satan and Satan's offspring, Satan's seed. Now that's talking about a redeemer, God provides that the woman will produce a man who will be the victor over Satan, oh yes the man will have his he ... heel bruised, but He will bruise Satan's head. Before God then ever acted in, in the final kind of judgment He displayed His mercy by giving them the promise. And though Satan had brought the fall of man God answers that one shall come and bring the fall of Satan, and He says by woman came sin, by woman shall come the Savior, by woman paradise lost, by woman paradise found. The Lord of glory was to be the seed of the woman. Now medically speaking or whatever way you want to look at it from a physical standpoint the woman does not possess the seed in childbirth the man does. There's only been one woman who ever lived in history who possessed the seed apart from its being planted by a man and that woman was Mary. And it was the Holy Spirit who placed the seed within her and thus it truly was the seed of the woman which gave birth to Jesus Christ, and in the 3rd chapter of Genesis, the first Book recording the history of man God made a promise that the Savior would be born of a virgin. A marvelous promise. That He would not have an earthly father. Now of course Eve didn't understand all of this concept, and she didn't have any kind of books on medicine so she wouldn't known what was going on anyway and since nobody had ever been born yet I'm not sure she understood the process. But this is a prophecy of the birth of Christ, but Eve was a little bit blind to that. And it's interesting if you look at chapter 4 there's a kind of a play on words, Adam knew his wife and she conceived and bore to get, saying I have gotten. She called him to get because she got him, see? But it's interesting, a man from the Lord. And if you want the re, the real expression of Cain, if you want to take the term to get and put it in its...in a sense that makes it kind of obvious what she's saying, she really names the baby, he is here. I have gotten he is here. You say, what's she trying to say? She's trying to say, probably, that perhaps this one is the deliverer who will open up the way back to God. The Lord has given me the one promised. But she was wrong. Perhaps she thought, we don't know, perhaps she thought this was the one that would take them back to Eden into the presence of God, but he turned out to be a murderer. Adam and Eve could never produce a deliverer. The Bible says that which is flesh produces flesh, as in Adam all died. They couldn't produce a deliverer, only by the special creation of God could a deliverer come and that had to be Jesus Christ, born of a virgin.

Well not only did she possess Cain who didn't turn out to be a man from the Lord, but verse 2 says, "She again bore his brother, Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." Now here's Abel and it's hard also to know the etymology of this word but it may come from hevel which means a breath or weak-ness or vanity, and it has the - idea of a very brief thing and a, and a very lamentable thing, and maybe the idea of the name sort of foretold the briefness of his life and the sad tragic ending to it. Now it says that Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain was a tiller of

the ground. One was a shepherd, the other was a farmer, both were sinners, both were conceived after the fall, both were born outside of Eden, so they were born in sin. These are the second men who ever lived on earth. And I want you to notice something, they function in all capacities as men function. They function in all the capacities that you and I do, they are not so mechanized as we are, they are not so ah, earthly educated as we are but they are in capacity at least the equal. They do not resemble in any way missing links. Neither did Adam and Eve for that matter.

Now evolutionists always are telling us that Genesis can't be true. They - the liberal theological line, the typical higher criticism line is that Genesis cannot be true because the offspring of the first man couldn't have done what they did. So it has to be a forgery. The offspring of the first man would be a blubbering, barbarous, animal type man who would have no tools to plow the ground, no skills by which he could grow things, eating only wild berries and whatever stuff happened to be growing, and killing animals and tearing them apart and eating them with his hands, grunting and saying, ugh, while hitting his woman on the head with a rock and hauling her off to a cave by the hair. And that would be the definition of the second man, if he had in fact advanced that far. But that is absolutely incompatible with the Bible which teaches that in seven days God created the earth, that the first man, Adam and Eve ... the first man Adam himself was extremely intelligent, you've got to be pretty sharp to name all the animals, which he did. The indication by the time you come to Cain and Abel is the fact that they lived in a civilized home where they both had knowledge, where they both had the tools to domesticate and slay animals, to till, plant and harvest their seed, and do all of those things. The evolutionist says Abel could never have had vessels to carry milk, and incidentally whenever you read about ah, like it says Able was a keeper of sheep, implied in the word sheep is also the idea of goats, they were ... the two were inseparable, and he would have taken milk from goats, but they said he couldn't of even invented a bucket to carry the milk. Nor would they ever have had a means of shearing or killing sheep, nor a means of spinning thread, that Cain could never of had a hatchet to cut and fashion timber, nor could he have ever invented a plow to plow the ground. He would never of been able to devise a mill or something to crush the grain to grind it to what he wanted, he would never of had the skill to preserve the crop until it was harvested, he wouldn't of known how to harvest it and he wouldn't know what to do with it after he harvested it. But the strange thing is they did know. The indication is he was a keeper of sheep, not that he stumbled around through a herd of sheep but he kept them. The other man was a tiller of the ground. He cared for it, he stirred it up and he planted in it. I, I don't think ah, Cain and Abel were the first ones with this information, I think Adam knew a lot. And it's very likely that Adam may have unloaded the information that he had gotten directly from God to them. Because in 2:15 of Genesis it says, "The Lord God took the man, put him in the garden of Eden to till it and to keep it." So the first man ever made knew how to handle the garden. And as I said in chapter 2 verse 20 you have the indication, I think it's verse 20 there, just double check, "And Adam gave names to all cattle, the fowl of the air, every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help fit for him." But here he is naming all these animals. He is not some kind of howling, drooling, hairy, peanut brain wild man stomping all over Eden. There are no missing links in, in God's history. In the little book "Countdown" which is so inter-esting, Hardy who's the scientist who wrote it

says this and I'm go-ing to quote. Listen to this, "The search for the missing link is Mr. Hyde at its best. If the evolutionist was using a scientific approach he would be looking for at least three million missing links. For that is estimate of how many are needed to prove his theory. Dead or alive they cannot produce a single scientifically acceptable trace of intermediate life. Their very able press agents have some well concealed skeletons in the evolutionist closet." Listen, "The Nebraska man, said to be a cool million years old, scientifically built up from one tooth and found later to be the tooth of an extinct pig. Number two, the Colorado man, (some evolutional pro...) same evolutional process as the Nebraska man only a different tooth, this time related to the horse family. Three, the Colorado ape man, a worthy cousin to the Colorado man, his skull turned out to be that someone's pet monkey. The Piltdown man, scraping the bottom of the silicate one million years deep, exhibit number one missing link." The Piltdown man, we all remember reading about it. "Recently has been shown to be a deliberate fake that fooled the experts for 40 years. Mr. Piltdown somehow had borrowed the jawbone of a modern ape. The Heidelberg man, just a young gaffer of three million years old, hand-somely built with sloping brow and flat nose all from one lower jaw-bone. A jaw bone conceded by many to be quite human." How they ever get the forehead from the jawbone is difficult to know. "The Java man, five hundred thousand years old, his bones first found in the riverbed," riverbeds incidentally in deep canyons make great hunting for evolutionists. "Over the ages," he says, "a large enough assortment of old bones is washed down to start a human tinker toy factory. Java man was scattered over an area of many square feet and discovered piece by piece over several years. He was first discovered in 1891 but not properly examined till 1923, his first skullcap was found to be an elephant's kneecap, but finally by 1937 he had acquired a jawbone and skullcap which had been found in the same area. Many scientists have discounted Java man entirely because of his painful birth, but he is still in our text books. The Neanderthal man, evolutionists claim this race of men were actually ape men." The transition. "The original skullcap has been claimed at one time or another by different scientists to be that of an idiot, a modern Cossack and early German." Ha, ha, there's no relation I'm sure with all of that, take your pick, ha. "Several fragmentary skeletons have been found since and tagged Neanderthal, many leading paleontologists consider these skeletons identical in species with modern man. In July 1958 it was reported at the International Congress of Zoology by Doctor A.J. Ecave that his examination of the famous Neanderthal skeleton found in France fifty years ago is that of an old man that had arthritis. Neanderthal man, he claimed, was not a stooped over, bent-kneed creature but actually stood erect and moved like modern man. The Smithsonian Institute only recently announced Neanderthal man even attempted surgical operations, Doctor King Kong no less. No wonder the evolutionist is not looking for our type of freedom he has taken enough liberty in his work to last him a lifetime, with a tooth or a jaw, some plaster of Paris and a (-) pinch of preconception he has turned out an assembly line fashion a whole family of King Kong's with about the same authenticity as Mr. Kong himself." End quote. So when you begin to examine this whole concept of missing links you find that the missing links are indeed missing.

And when you come to - to, to the account of Genesis, whether you're talking about Adam and Eve or Cain and Abel we establish the fact that they function as humans in the way we know that humans

function. Verse 3, "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." Verse 4, "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." And incidentally the distinction ah, between the firstling of his flock, that means the best that he had and the fat means that held already killed it and separated those two things. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Now the central theme of Hebrews 11:4 is faith and that's the whole key to the chapter and that's what we want to find out here. Now we read here that they both brought a sacrifice. Now this tells us several things and I want you to get this, it's interesting. Number one it tells me that there was a place where God was to be worshiped. They had to bring that sacrifice to somewhere, right? In verse 3, "Cain brought." And in verse 4, "he brought." And it says at the end of verse 3, "unto the Lord," indicating that the Lord was some-where, where you could bring something. There had to be somewhere, someplace where they brought. I think uhm, that it's very possible that the place was at the east of Eden and perhaps there was an altar there, verse 4 says that Abel brought an already slain animal, "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering." And so there's at least a good indication that there was already a place to make an offering or an altar was already in that place. And it's very likely that at the place where they had ... where that ... God had placed that angel, do you remember at the east of the garden with the flaming sword to keep them from coming back in that that was the established point of contact with God. In, in verse 24 of chapter 3, "He drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden a cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way of the tree of life." And so perhaps at that point there was an altar. And isn't it interesting that God and ... in the initial moment that He expels man also provides a mercy seat by which man can come back and worship Him. And that mercy seat like the later mercy seat in Israel was protected by cherubim. And the divine presence was there perhaps in some way, whoever would worship God would approach this mercy seat by the way of sacrifice. So there was a place where God was to be worshiped.

Second thing I notice there was a time for worship. Verse 3 says, "And in process of time it came to pass." Now if you take that apart in the Hebrew it really means at the end of days, literally at the end of a certain prescribed time it was time for sacrifice. Maybe God had revealed the Day of Atonement or a day of atonement, a special day, maybe this was the first occasion here recorded in chapter 4. God is a God of order and it's very likely if we study the later times that God operated with men that He established a time when they were to come. I think that's also indicated by virtue of the fact that they both came at the same time, they seemingly both had information regarding this sacrifice.

Thirdly, I think there was a way to worship, not only a place and a time but a way. God could be approached, now mark this, God could be approached only by sacrifice. The children of Adam and Eve had been definitely instructed that there was a place, that there was a time, and I believe that presupposes that they had also been instructed that there was a way to sacrifice. Now Cain and Abel wouldn't have known anything at all about doing this if God hadn't told them, right? Because the concept of sacrifice appears here for the very first time, and so they must have had some information from God about time, place and how to. It's presupposed by the very nature of the situation, they

came to a place ready to make a sacrifice, there must have been something there for which they could ... which they could use to do it. They came together at the same time, to the same place. And they came with differing offerings but God only accepted one of them which indicates God had already established a pattern for them.

In 11:4 of Hebrews as we read earlier we learned that it was by faith that Abel offered sacrifice. Now where does faith come from? Well Romans - 10:17 says, "Faith comes by (what's the next word?) hearing." You cannot put your faith in what you do not know, therefore to assume that Abel offered a sacrifice by faith is also to assume that he heard from God what God wanted and he believed God and obeyed God, you see? If faith then comes by hearing Abel's faith must have come by information from God. Therefore he must have known the set pattern that God designed. He had heard that God required a sacrifice, he believed and he evidenced his faith by doing what God said to do. And there's nothing wrong with farmers, they're wonderful people. There's not really anything wrong with offering God all kinds of fruits and vegetables, grain, that's great. In Leviticus 19 I think it's verse 24 it says, "In the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy with which to praise the Lord." So God had times when they brought all of that to Him. But you never brought the fruit first, always the blood first because the blood was necessary to deal with sin before you could ever enter God's presence. There were meal offerings, weren't there? Sure, the loaves and they would wave the sheaf at God and all of that, but that didn't come until first came the sin offering and the trespass offering. You see the blood had to be first and then the other things could follow. Bloodless meal offerings yes, but the blood first to deal with sin. When Abel did what God said he revealed his obedience and he acknowledged his sin-fulness. Cain was disobedient and didn't acknowledge sin. And so it says, by faith he brought a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. And it was better because it was blood, God had prescribed this, no question about it in my mind, otherwise he would have had no idea what he was doing. And if this is true, watch this, it says Abel offered a better sacrifice and God responded by making him righteous. Now watch this, if Abel just did that by accident then what right did he have to be righteous?

Are you with me? If it was only an accident that he thought well all right I'm a sheep keeper I'll bring a sheep. Cain thought well I'm a tomato keeper I'll bring a tomato. If it was a pure accident then on what arbitrary basis would God say Abel you're righteous, Cain you're not. That would be tantamount to saying I like sheep and can't stand tomatoes. But you see whenever Abel was accepted that means that somewhere along the line he heard what God said and he obeyed it, do you see? Otherwise there's no premise for his righteousness or his being accepted. And we'll see that illustrated further on in another New Testament passage. God accepts only faith. Abel believed God and he approached God, said God, this is what You said You wanted and You said if I brought it You'd forgive my sin, I brought it, I believe You God. I acknowledge my sin, I acknowledge the prescribed remedy, here I am. Cain had the same information, brought what he wanted to anyway, he did his own thing in the great tradition of his mother, did his own thing, and his father for that matter. Cain didn't believe God, thought he could approach God in his own works, thought held gather up the goodies that he'd collected and show God how won-derful they were, how he had tilled the soil and grown all this, and

he said here it is God, isn't it terrific? And you know what? Cain stands as all time father of false religion. You know what false religion is? Coming to God by another way than that which God has prescribed, right? That's all false religion is. Peter said in that great sermon, he said, "Neither is there salvation in any other; there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." False religion says oh yes there is. False religion says I can get there because I think myself into nirvana, false religion says I get there because I sit in the corner and meditate, false religion says I follow the writings of Mary Baker Eddy or Annie Besant, Judge Russell, somebody else. False religion says I can do what I want and just be good and if I have enough good points I'll get there, and Cain was the father of every bit of it. God says, I have a way, Cain said, no I think I'll come my own way, that's false religion and he was the first one, the father of all false religion. False religion is an invented way to God. "There is a way that seems right unto a man but the ends thereof are the ways of (what?) death." Men always have their own way, don't they, to go everywhere?

I'll never forget when we were up in Haifa in Israel and we came to that ah, Bahaism Temple and they've got nine doors to God, every way goes to God. Now that's Satan's lie.

Now as we shall see further Cain failed to acknowledge the fact of sin first of all and secondly he failed to obey God by bringing what God prescribed for his sin and thought he could come on his own merit by the scheme he himself had invented, and God rejected him. And over in verse 16 of chapter 4 it says, "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and he dwelt in the land of Nod," and the land of Nod its very name means wandering, roaming, "on the east of Eden." And you know what Cain did? He had some children there, and he built a city. And it was the first city men ever built, and you know what it was? It was the birth of the system, it was the birth of the world's system which fell into the control of Satan immediately. He chose to go his own way, he walked out of the presence of God, look at it, verse 16, "He went out from the presence of the Lord." His own will, his own volition, he walked away from God. Don't feel sorry for poor Cain because God didn't accept his fruit. He knew what God wanted he just didn't buy it. And the question always comes up you know, how could God have judged that way when they hadn't been told? My dear friend, they knew, they had to know, they had been told. God's righteousness is - is not arbitrary, it is based on obedience to His prescribed plan. It was not ignorance that is the issue it was willful sin on the part of Cain. Abel was righteous, Cain was not. And to support that I read you one verse, First John 3:12, maybe you never knew First John talked about Cain and Abel, it does. Verse 11, "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one," ohh, he identifies Cain with Satan, that's talking about motive, isn't it? "And killed his brother. And why killed he him?" Why did Cain kill Abel? "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's right-eous." You see it wasn't arbitrary on God's part. To disobey is evil, to obey is righteous, just that simple, God gave them what He wanted and they either obeyed it or they didn't. You say, well ah, how do we know that sacrifice had been revealed? We have to assume that by faith to some degree but I think there's a little indication. Not a lot of indication but a little bit of indication. It's interesting that uhm, when Adam and Eve were found by God, God said in effect to them, ah, I'm going to take care of you,

look at verse 21 of chapter 3, "For Adam also and for his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." Now that's interesting. And here the Lord in action speaks about sacrifice. Four things are intimated by the fact that God made cloaks of skin for them, number one, sinners need to be covered, number two, it couldn't be of a human manufacture, they had already made leaves and - God said no. I will design the covering. Number three, God had to provide it Himself, number four, it was obtained only by death, an animal had to die. And so in a, in a very limited way perhaps that was an initial disclosure of the importance of sacrifice for covering. And that's really the only hint we have of it, but we know by the virtue of the fact that there was righteousness and unrighteousness, that there had to be a standard by which men could be judged that way, so we believe God revealed His standard.

So faith then, now mark it, faith presupposes divine revelation. So when a guy comes along and says, well I, I believe in believing, that is stupid. Or it doesn't matter what you believe just, just believe in anything. One guy believes in that and one guy believes in that and we all believe what we want to believe and we're all going the same way. Faith presupposes a divine standard. Do you know some-thing? Cain believed himself, believed in himself, and he believed in the wrong thing. You know something? In Hebrews 9:22 it says this, "Without the shedding of blood there's no (what? there's no) forgiveness of sins." There isn't any, I don't care what you believe. There is a standard and God set it. In Luke, ah, in ah, Leviticus 17 verse 4 it says, "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul." That's a standard, that's God's revelation, that's a disclosure from God and it is not arbitrary it is absolute. People always say, oh you're so narrow minded. Well I could be broad minded and tell lies, but that doesn't help anybody. This is God's standard, this is why we speak it. And he was ready for the sacrifice, the indication of the firstling and the separated fat indicates held already killed the animal so he knew what he was doing.

Now here's where the life of faith begins and let's just grab this thought, the life of faith begins with a sacrifice for sin. it begins with believing God that you're a sinner, that you're worthy of death, that you need His forgiveness, and you accept His revealed plan, you see. That's the beginning of the life of faith. And nobody lives by faith ... Toots Shore the New York night club owner said, I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for the fact that I believe in the Big Man upstairs. Oh yick, that is nothing. That is, that is artifi-cial, that is arbitrary. No man ever lives believing in God until he comes to God, and the only way a man ever comes to God is when he comes through the prescribed sacrifice of Christ recognizing that he's a sinner, there's no other way. And I'm not saying that to be narrow minded I'm saying that because it's the truth. If you go into the hospital and the doctor comes in and says you've got cancer, you could say, oh don't tell me, I don't want to know about that, tell me I have a cold. You say, well that isn't going to help you. I've got to tell you what you have so you'll get the stuff - to get into the treatment. I mean if you've got a disease we want to tell you what it is. And so right here in Genesis chapter 4 the highway to the cross is firmly established. Here is the first lamb, Abel's lamb, one lamb for one man. Later on in the Passover, one lamb for one family, later on in the Day of Atonement, one lamb for one nation, later on at Calvary, one lamb for one world. And here's

the first lamb, the way to the cross begins to be paved. And so Abel brought the right sacrifice. He acknowledged that he must bow to the truth of God, he must acknowledge that he's a sinner, unto the sentence of death, he has no excuses, no merits to plead, his best is as Isaiah called it, "filthy rags." He can only believe God, that's all he can do, and he has to bet his life that God is right and that God means what He says.

But Cain was not so, Cain believed in himself. And that's the dumbest thing anybody could ever do. Not only that he was a hypocrite. If held of really believed in his ... in himself he wouldn't of even showed up at the altar, right? He was not only a believer in himself he was a hypocrite. He cloaked his rebellion in religious activity. Here I come God with my little sacrifice, see? He was patronizing God. - Jude 11, interesting little verse, talks about the way of Cain. You know what the way of Cain is? It's self-will, unbelief, disobedience all couched in religious pretense. Religiosity, abomination to God. The Pharisee and the publican, you know? The Pharisee goes into the temple and of course he climbs up on the podium, and he says, I thank Thee that I am not as other men. Checking around see...make sure they're watching. And I give tithes of all that I have, I ho, do this, do this. And the Bible - interesting enough says, he prayed with himself. It's for sure he wasn't talking to God. Dear me, you know? Dear me for sure. Over in the corner there's a guy on his stomach with his face in the dirt and he's saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner. And Jesus said, that man went home justified rather than the other. Religious hypocrisy. So Abel offered a better sacrifice, why? It was better because it was obedience, God said, do it that way, he did it. It was better because it was faith, he believed God, it was better because it was willing, he did it because he wanted to do it. And you know what? He brought his best, don't you like that? It says he brought the firstling. That's the best one he had. First place sheep. And it just says Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, just got some of it together. So Abel by faith was brought to offer a more excellent sacrifice.

Now because of that he was - able to obtain righteousness, that's the second point. He was able to obtain righteousness. This is interesting, watch verse 4, "And Abel, he also brought of the first-lings of his flock and of the fat thereof." Watch, "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; But unto Cain and to his offer-ing he had not respect." God didn't respect Abel for what was in Abel, God didn't say, Abel I like you better, I've checked you two boys over and you're the best. He didn't say that. He didn't say, Abel, I just like the way you walk, you know the way you handle your-self, Abel you just, you just really come on strong Abel, I really like you. Cain you have a funny limp, see. You know there are people who think God is so superficial that He really cares about what they look like. He didn't say, Abel I think you have a nicer disposition, not at all. You know there's nothing at all in the text to indicate that Abel was any better than Cain? They were both sinners. The only thing that obtained righteousness for Abel was he did what God told him, Cain didn't. That's the only difference. That's the only thing that changes any man's relationship to God, it's not how good you are, it's not that you're better or worse than anybody else, it's that you came to God on the terms that God set down, that's all He asks. Abel was as much a sinner as Cain but he believed God and he obeyed and because of that faith was counted to him for righteousness and God accepted him. You see it's that

kind of faith that enables God to move in on our behalf and make us righteous. Do you know that true faith is always obedient, do you know that? Always. John 8, "Many believed on his name. He says, but if you continue in my word then are you my disciples for real." Lot's of people have superficial faith but the ones who hang in there and obey, they are the ones that really are true believers. The devil's believe and tremble, you know James says. So God honored Abel because his faith was alive, it was alive in the way he obeyed. Don't say you believe God and disobey, if you believe God, obey. Look at James, what he says, oh it's a powerful passage. James chapter 2 don't turn to it, I'll read it to you. Verse 14, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?" In other words what is the idea of going around saying, I believe, I believe, I believe and then someone looks at your life and says, if that's faith it sure doesn't show. "If a brother or sister be naked, destitute of food," and so forth and so on, and you say, well I hope you find something to eat fella, hu-hu, you know, and send him on his way. You haven't even given him the kindness that should come out of Christian love. What do you mean you have faith? Faith should produce something in your life. He says ah, in verse 19, "Thou believest that there is one God;" big deal, that's current translation. "The devil's also believe," so do the devil's, "and they tremble." "Was not our father, Abraham, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar?" In other words was not the evidence of his true faith seen in his willingness to sacrifice his son? God said, sacrifice your son, Abraham said, all right God, I'll do it. Obedience. "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was his faith made (evidently mature and) perfect." You could see his faith by what he was willing to do. "And the Scripture was fulfilled which said, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." Watch, "You see, then, that by works a man is justified, and not by faith alone." You say, does that contradict Paul? No, what it means is that visibly in the eyes of people and in the eyes of God your faith is only real when it issues in works. You can't work to get to God but having come to Him works will become evidence. - - Ephesians 2:10 says, "He's called you unto good works." So what happened here then? Abel was obedient, he evidenced the validity of his faith by obedience. I'm sure if somebody said, Cain do you believe in God? He'd say, oh yeah, I believe in God, oh I'm, I'm a believer in God. But he didn't obey God. I like what it says in First Samuel 2 verse 30, God said this, remember this, "For them," listen to this, "that honor me I will honor." It's obedience, it's obedience. And you know there's only one way to honor God, John 5:23, "He that honoreth the Son honoreth the Father." You can't honor God apart from honoring Jesus Christ, no way. That's His prescribed way.

So Hebrews 11:4 says that Abel received witness or approval from God. You say, well how did God do that? Did God just come down and ah, just put a little gold star on Abel's forehead or did he ... what did He do to him, how did he know he got approval? That's another interesting question. I think, this is MacArthur, I speak this not of commandment but by permission, I think that God moved down and consumed his offering. Later on if you study and ah, I'm not going to look these all up because our time is getting away but Leviticus 9:24, don't try to write them down either you might get lost...if you can write fast, Judges 6:21, First Kings 18:38, First Chronicles 21:26, Second Chronicles 7:1, all of those passages, at least five of them there indicate on other occasions when God showed His approval by sending fire to consume the sacrifice. So it became a pattern for God that fire would fall

and consume the offering, and I think that that's very likely what happened here though it does not say specifically. And if that's what happened then fire fell on Abel's and fire didn't fall on Cain's, and God thus was approving of Abel's sacrifice. And when God approved of what Abel did God imputed to him righteousness, isn't that a miracle? Because he wasn't right-eous. You know something? I'm not either, I am not righteous. You say, we know. Well I know you know but I'm only emphasizing the point. I am not righteous. But you know something? Because I believe in Jesus Christ, because that's what God told me to do He therefore imputes to me Christ's righteousness. And the Bible says it this way, "He became sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God (where?) in him." So I'm not right-eous, I have no more right now to stand in God's presence than I did when I was...before I was saved, did you know that? I have no more right. But because I believe in Jesus Christ God imputes righteousness to me. That's what happened to Abel, Abel was the same old sinner before he got there and he didn't even get the Holy Spirit, he didn't get anything. He walked away from there with the same problems that he had before he came. But God said, it's all right, you obeyed Me, I impute My righteousness to you. And Cain didn't get it. Do you know something friends? No Cain style approach ever makes it. Self--styled works, a failure to acknowledge sin doesn't cut it, doesn't cut it. And I told you about that Jude passage, I just want to read maybe as I'm thinking about it here, Jude, that little Book, don't turn, I'll read, verse 3, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needed for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Listen, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." There's all kinds of people running around under the guise of religion denying Christ. Listen to what he says about them, "Woe," verse 11, "Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain." See? They've put on the mask of religion. And I think at this point that the note that Scofield has is really good, he says, "Cain is an ex-ample of the religious natural man who believes in God, and in "religion," but after his own will, and who rejects redemption by blood." Rejecting the atonement, God's plan of salvation. It's a sad, sad thing. There's a verse in Romans 10 that ah, opens up a thought to us along this line, verse 3, "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness," watch, "and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not sub-mitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." The next verse, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that (what?) believes." And they're running around trying to establish their own righteousness, cut it out, believe, and you have it. Imputed righteousness.

All right back to Genesis 4 verse 5. Well when Cain didn't get any approval from God he got a little bit upset. Verse 5, "And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell." His face, poomp, fell. He was furious, furious. I mean there's nothing worse than a religious egotist getting put down, do you see? That's a hard thing for him to handle. lie just really couldn't handle that. Verse 6, "The Lord said unto Cain, Why are you angry? And why is your face fallen?" That's a vivid term, isn't it? He just sunk, ohhh, his whole face. Isn't it beautiful though, the grace of God? He could have just kind of slid up there to Abel and said, Abel let's you and I stick together, Cain blew it, see. But God goes to Cain,

see that's grace, God moves toward Cain, and He says, Cain, what are you so upset about? And here we see ... watch this, here we see the beginning again of the evidence of God's redemptive character. Here's the ... we saw it with Adam and Eve when He promised the seed and here Cain blows it and God immediately moves to Cain and says, Cain, I've got to ask you a ques-tion, and He's asks him a question, and we begin to see God in His redemptive character. Verse 7, "If you do well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Now that is a very, very difficult verse to translate. And in the Hebrew there are at least 25 different translations, very hard to put the word order together. I think the best translation is the one in the New American Standard, and I'm going to just quote that to you, listen, "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?" You know what He's saying to him in effect? He's saying, look Cain this isn't the end, isn't the end, if you come back again and do it right, you see? I mean the offer's still there. "And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you," and He says, "you must master it." God is saying, Cain, come on, My altar's still here, offer the right sacrifice in obedient faith and you will be accepted just like your brother. That's grace. But if you don't Cain, sin waits at your door like a crouching beast and it's ready to spring up and destroy you. But you must overcome that. You see in grace God is extending to Cain an offer to come back. Gracious invitation. And you know what? Cain didn't want to, he was not interested. And again this verifies the fact that ignorance wasn't the issue at all. And the very fact that God says if you do well,

implies that he knew what to do, he knew what was required. He didn't want a thing to do with it, a thing to do with it. Verse 8, "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him." Here you have the first death in human history, nobody has ever died before this. And it's interesting that...how did, how did Abel know how to kill ... or Cain know how to kill, how did he know how to kill? There must have been some kind of a precedent to establish the fact that people could die, and not only that how they died. And I think it's likely from the fact of the sacrifice, and prior to the sacrifice the killing of the animal to make the clothes. And having, having ... Adam and Eve having experienced the death of an animal in relationship to the clothes, and Cain and Abel the death of an animal in relationship to the sacrifice, he would know well that with a few right moves in the right area life could be extinguished and thus he carried out the murder of his brother. And from the apparent conversation Abel was totally unsuspecting. And so Cain yielded to Satan. You know in John 8:44 the Bible says that Jesus said, devil was a murderer from the beginning, a murderer from the beginning. And here it is, the beginning of all the killings that Satan has perpetrated. Sad. But then if you continue to read listen to what happened, and the Lord begins to speak. And this is a, this is an exciting thing and yet in a sense it's a tragic thing. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel, thy brother? And he said, I don't know; am I my brother's keeper?" A little bit sarcastic with God. "And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." You see what had happened was there wasn't anything possible that Cain could do to hide the deed that he had perpetrated, and now he had to face God. It's a sad thing. And you know something? He didn't have any answers, and we'll see

that in a moment. Look at verse 11, "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;" God says I accept Abel, I curse you. And it's a double curse, he's already cursed because Adam was cursed and here he's double cursed. You see - all men are cursed but some men are double cursed because they reject salvation, you see? All right verse 12, "When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee its strength;" you are not going to get one thing out of the ground, you've prided yourself on being a farmer, you'll never grow one more thing as long as you live. "You will be nothing but a fugitive and a wanderer all over the earth." That is sad, but that's the sentence that God laid upon him. Cain was to flee and wander all his life. And you know he never got away from what was chasing him, because what was chasing Cain was the corruption of his own heart. Every rock all through his life hid the same enemy, every shadow, the same avenger, he never ever escaped. And you see for the unsaved man it's the same thing, there's no place to hide, you reject God's salvation and run as fast as you want to run, there's nowhere to hide. Because you're carrying your enemy with you all the time. All of life for an unsaved man is, is a barren search, a mad scramble for something that never happens. Verse 13, "Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear." I can't stand this God, You're a little over ... You're, You're do...overdoing it a little. There's no remorse, there's no penitence, there's no sorrow for sin, there's no pleading for grace, there's no all right God I'll give the right sacrifice, it's just God this is too tough, I mean this isn't right. He pitied himself. My punishment is more than I can bear. And you see it's always interesting how sinners tend to pity themselves, and blame God for it. Verse 14, "Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hidden; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that any one that findeth me shall slay me." Now he was sad but he wasn't repentant, you know there's remorse and then there's repentance, right? Remorse is being sorry you got caught, repentance is turning around and changing it. He was sad, he wasn't repentant. Verse 15, "The Lord said unto him, There-fore whoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold. The Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding should kill him." God didn't institute capital punishment yet, so He said Cain will not die, Cain will live. And I think there's a greater punishment in Cain having to live all his life like he had to live it rather than die. He wouldn't even have the peace of death. Held have to abide his whole life with this horrible conscious sinfulness, and the murder of his brother and his brother's blood crying from the ground all his life. Verse 16, "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden." There he goes, the first apostate, he went out from the presence of the Lord, that's apostasy. He turned his back on God and walked away, he left the God of grace. Oh sad tragedy, sad tragedy. So by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice and he obtained righteousness. Cain tried works and he was doomed.

Lastly, by faith Abel was allowed to speak openly even though dead. Look at verse 9, "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel, they brother? And he said, I don't know; am I my brother's keeper?" And Hebrews 11:4 says, "He being dead yet speaks." And listen to this, "And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground-" Do you know that he's dead but he's still talking? And you know who he's talking to? First of all the voice of Abel cried to God, and

you know what he cried for? Vengeance. He cried for vengeance. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord." Remember in, in Revelation 6:9 and 10 the souls of those martyred under the altar crying for vengeance? But his voice not only spoke in death to God, it spoke in death to Cain. Do you know that every - piece of soil that Cain put his foot on bore the consciousness of his brother's blood? It's so powerful a thought. Listen to verse 11, "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand." Everywhere he went it was - it was as if his brother's blood destroyed the crop. He lived his whole life walking on the soil that represented the blood of his brother, always unyielding. And so he being dead spoke the whole lifetime of Cain ... to Cain.

Lastly he speaks to all of us, what is he saying? What is Cain saying er, what is Abel saying to us? Three point sermon. Number one, man comes to God by faith not works, did you hear him say that? Point number two, man cannot follow reason and ignore revelation, he must abide by God's standard and obey it. Point number three, sin is severely punished for the one who doesn't obey. So Abel is the preacher, and he preaches a timeless sermon, and it says in effect just what the Holy Spirit wanted the reader's of Hebrews to hear, "The just shall live (what?) by faith."

Our Father we pray that we have well heard his sermon. God we know that only faith in Christ pleases You. Thank You for what we've seen again through Abel. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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