

## Faith that Justifies

### Hebrews 11:4 & Genesis 4:1-15

After declaring that “by faith we understand the worlds were prepared by the word of God,” the author now moves us to one of the earliest examples of faith in the book of Genesis.

**Genesis** means “beginning.” We see many firsts in the book of Genesis. Two of these firsts involve our character Abel (We will focus upon Abel this morning, not the sinful attitude of Cain).

- **Abel was the first shepherd (Gen. 4:2)**
- **Abel was the first to die, first to be murdered (Gen. 4:8)**

**Two ways to come to God.** In this ancient drama of sibling rivalry, hatred, and murder, we see the continuation of man’s attempt to come to God on his own terms.

**Like father, like son!** Adam was the first to attempt to approach God on his own terms. Remember the first futile attempt of man-made, works-based religion in the garden? Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together in an attempt to hide their sinful nakedness.

**God provided the first sacrifice.** In the garden, immediately following the sin of eating the forbidden fruit, God demonstrated the way in which sinful men could approach Him: by way of the shedding of blood! **God provided the first, and God Himself became the last!**

The book of Hebrews is built upon this very reality. “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” (Heb. 9:22) Over and over again, the writer of Hebrews points his readers to the all-sufficient, once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ. The very principle of penal substitutionary atonement flows throughout the biblical record and is the very foundation of orthodox Christianity.

**Note: I highly encourage you to watch “American Gospel” Part 2.**

- **Abel offered a sacrifice by \_\_\_\_\_.** (11:4a) There is much debate concerning the reason God received Abel’s offering and rejected Cain’s, but the author of Hebrews indicates that it was a faith issue.

**“By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain.”** Some translate this “a more acceptable sacrifice” or “better worship.” What is it that distinguishes Abel offering from Cain’s? Faith.

- **Abel’s faith declared him \_\_\_\_\_ before God.** (11:4b) The author of Hebrews is now informing us that God justifies guilty sinners on the basis of faith alone.

**Long before the \_\_\_\_\_!** “By faith alone” was one of the great pillars of the Protestant Reformation, yet this has been the foundation of biblical soteriology from the beginning. Martin Luther simply refocused the church upon a glorious reality that had been obscured by man-made tradition and ritual.

**Cain represents works-based religion that comes to God on human merit and works rather than the way that God provided.**

- **Abel’s faith continues to \_\_\_\_\_ us to Christ.** (11:4c) The writer of Hebrews seems to be drawing upon the historical narrative when he writes, “though he is dead, he still speaks.”

**Abel’s testimony of faith, in Scripture, is still speaking! It was, is, and shall always be “by faith alone.”**

**Application: Give up working for your salvation; trust the atoning work of Christ alone!**

**Guard the purity and truth of the Gospel as passed down to us.**

**Glory in the God Who justifies guilty sinners through the blood of Christ!**