



Sunday, June 18, 2017  
Pastor Don Denyes

## **Intro to Hebrews 11:4**

The story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-16 is one of the more mysterious stories in Scripture. It leaves us asking many questions that God, in His wisdom has chosen not to answer. Like, how did they know what was right and what was wrong in terms of an offering to God? Where were Adam and Eve in the whole story? How did God express His favor for the one sacrifice and not the other? Why didn't God give a fuller explanation of why Cain's sacrifice wasn't accepted?

In all of these questions, we are seeking things that God purposefully did not reveal, and we are missing the very clear message that God intends to communicate to us here and now. The point of the story is to explain how quickly the sin of Adam and Eve has escalated to envy, jealousy, anger, and murder. It is also to demonstrate the mercy of God towards sinners. Those sinners who, by faith, present to God a blood sacrifice for their sins, He accepts. Those who do not are still in rebellion against Him. This holds true for the Israelites at the time of the Exodus with the Passover and it holds true for us today. All who, by faith, present to God the blood sacrifice of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins will receive pardon and be blessed by God. All who do not have faith and do not trust Jesus, will not find favor with Him.

## **Context**

In Hebrews 11, the author goes all the way back to the first written testimony of a person who responded to God in faith. That person was Abel. He will go on to paint a picture of people from every era to demonstrate how God has continued to raise up a people for Himself by faith.

**Read and Reflect** (Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)

Have two people read (one read Hebrews 11:4, the other read Genesis 4:1-16)

- The Meaning of Faith v. 1
  - The Importance of Faith v. 3
  - Abel, by Faith v. 4
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- I. His History Genesis 4
    - Brother *attained*
    - Name *means “breath”*
    - Occupation *shepherd, farmer*
    - Offering *favorable, unfavorable*
    - Results *murder, mercy*
  - II. His Heart Various Texts
    - Hebrews 11 *faith*
    - Matthew 23 *righteous*
    - Hebrews 11 *he still speaks*
    - Hebrews 12 *Christ’s blood*
    - God’s heart *not death, but mercy*

## Discuss

- 1) Abel's name in Hebrew literally means "breath" or "vapor." Some say he could be used as an illustration for the cliché, "life is short." Our culture often pays lip service to this idea, but fills it with other, nonbiblical ideas. When you hear people say, "life is short," what kinds of things do they normally try to encourage you to do?
- 2) Pastor Don mentioned that one aspect of faith is responding positively and humbly to God's rebuke or correction. Yet we are often hesitant to rebuke or correct others. Why is it so difficult in our culture (and even in the church) to rebuke or correct one another?
- 3) It is clear from the story of Cain and Abel that the condition of our hearts is of utmost importance when we come to worship God. Jesus, quoting Isaiah, said, "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." (Matt. 15:8; cf. Is. 29:13). How can we make sure our hearts are right towards God in worship?
- 4) Read 1 John 3:11-18. How does that passage help us understand the difference between the life of unbelief/unrighteousness and the life of faith/righteousness? Describe each way of life according to this passage.
- 5) Abel's faith is affirmed in that not only did he respond rightly to God, but he did so despite the fact that his brother hated him. How can we overcome the temptation to abandon the faith when our family and friends hate us for it?