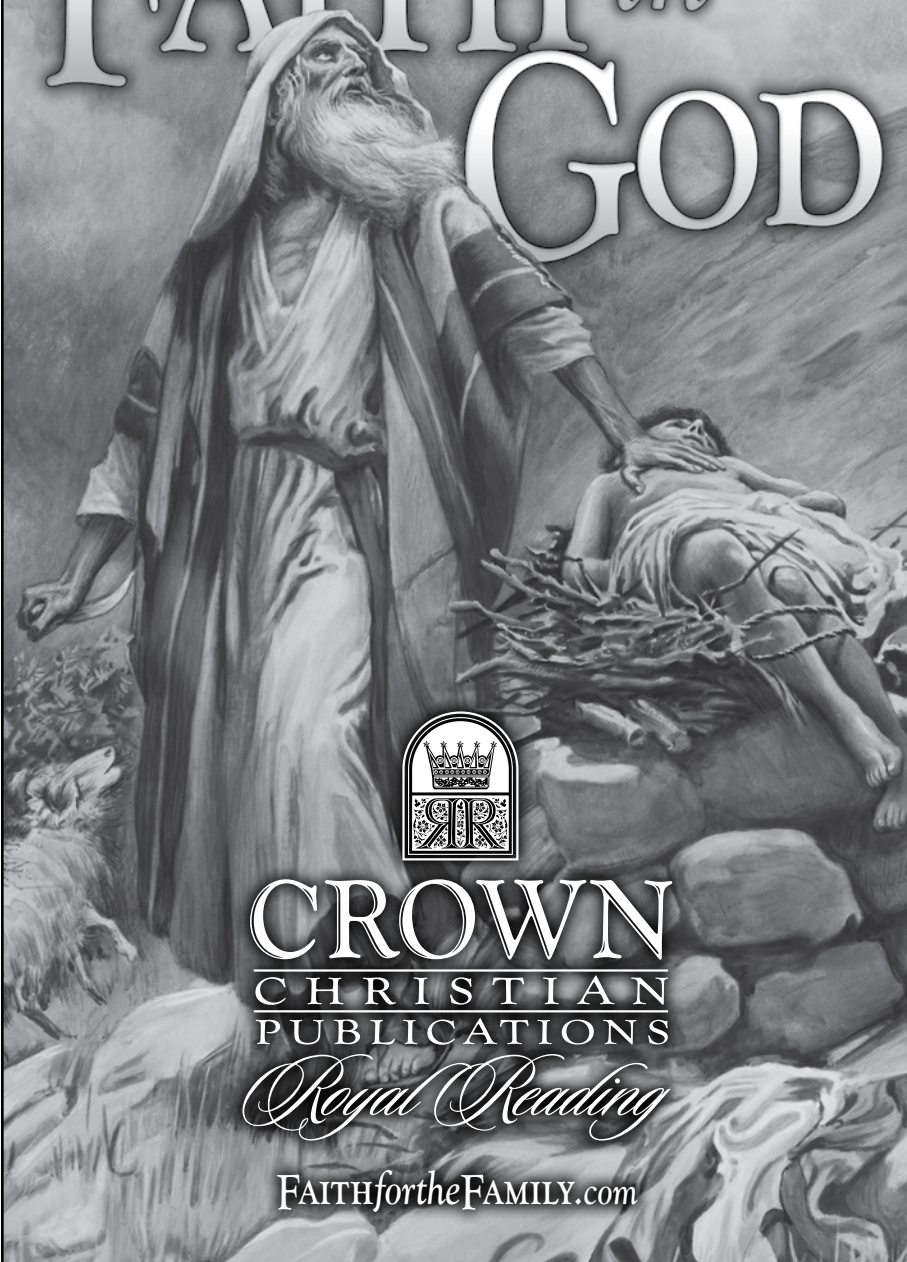


HAVE FAITH *in* GOD



CROWN
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HAVE
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GOD

CLARENCE SEXTON

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**PILLAR
AND
GROUND**
OF THE TRUTH

**SUNDAY SCHOOL AND
BIBLE TEACHING SERIES**

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

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Dedication

This book is affectionately dedicated to my precious friend Dr. Dolphus Price. He is now beholding the face of Jesus. Dr. Price loved me and encouraged me to believe God for great things. His precious wife Nellie continues his legacy of encouragement.

Carrence Sutton
Act 5:42

Introduction

This series of lessons is given with the prayer that as they are studied and applied, our faith will increase.

The faith life is the real Christian life. Our Lord has designed the Christian life so that it can only be lived by faith.

The faith life is the required Christian life. Our God requires faith. I hope you will attempt to memorize the entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews. *“Through faith we understand...”*

The faith life is the rewarded Christian life. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

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CHAPTER ONE

THE FAITH OF ABEL



he Christian life is a faith life. The object of our faith is the Lord Jesus Christ. As we are dealing with the matter of living by faith, we should give special attention to the way our Lord addresses this subject of faith. He illustrates the faith life in the lives of this glorious group of believers found in Hebrews chapter eleven.

The Bible says in Hebrews 11:1-4,

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. 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. 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.

The Faith of Abel

Consider what the Lord Jesus Christ says in Luke 11:50-51,

That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

The Lord Jesus confirms the Old Testament record concerning Abel. In Matthew 23:35 Christ speaks of Abel, *“That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel...”* The Lord Jesus testified that Abel was a righteous man. Remember Hebrews 11:4 says, *“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.”*

The Lord tells us the difference between the offering of Cain and the offering of Abel. In Jude 11 we read, *“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain.”* The *“way of Cain”* is the way of those who are self-willed and self-determined. It is the way of those who deny God. We shall all go the way of Abel or the way of Cain. We shall live the life of faith or the life of self-will and self-service.

Many claim to be people of faith but live lives of self-service and self-will. It is a serious matter to go the *“way of Cain.”* The *“way of Cain”* is the way away from God, void of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, and only Christ, is the object of our faith.

In Hebrews 12:1-2 the Bible says,

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set

The Faith of Abel

before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

When considering the subject of faith, always remember that the object of our faith must be the Lord Jesus Christ. Often we speak foolishly as if we are placing our faith in some thing or some one. But if it is truly Christian faith, the object of that faith is always Christ.

The Lord provides this list for us, and the first person on this list who illustrates living by faith is Abel. Of course, there is a divine purpose in this. We need to learn the story of Abel and ask God to apply it to our hearts.

THE FAMILY OF ABEL

Abel was the son of Adam and Eve. God tells us in the third chapter of Genesis that sin came into the bloodstream of the human race and made all human beings sinners by nature. In Romans 5:12 the Bible says, *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”*

Abel was the second son of Adam and Eve. The first gospel sermon preached on earth after the Fall of man is found in Genesis chapter three. The Lord says in Genesis 3:15-21,

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy

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sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

In Genesis 4:1 the Bible says, “*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.*” Eve was thinking about the promise God made in Genesis 3:15; and now she has had a son, the first child born in the human race. She imagines that this is hopeful. It proved to be everything but hopeful.

The Bible says in verses two through five, “*And she again bare his brother Abel.*” Abel’s name means “vanity.” Mother declared, “It is vanity.” The passage continues,

And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

As we read the Bible, we understand that in these families, God wanted the children instructed. There are two sons in this family, Cain and his brother Abel. These sons were, no doubt, both instructed

The Faith of Abel

by their parents. Remember the Bible says, “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:17).

We express our faith by declaring the Bible to be the Word of God. We affirm our absolute confidence in the Bible, believing every word of it to be the true record, without error, of the written revelation of God. We declare our faith by acting on what we know to be the revealed will of God.

I am convinced that when Adam and Eve had both of these children, they taught each of them the same truths concerning God and His Word. God clearly teaches throughout His Word that parents are to instruct their children. He even says that children should ask questions of their fathers. There should be times when parents are instructing and children are asking questions, so they gain a better understanding of what God has said.

This set of parents, Adam and Eve, had no written revelation of God’s Word, but they knew what God had said and what God had done. They knew how God had spoken to them. From what we find in the Scriptures, we learn that there were certain things these parents taught their sons.

They taught them that all men are sinners. No doubt, they told their sons that they were sinners. It is the only way they could have known it. They explained the incident of the Fall and sin’s entrance into the human race.

Second, they told them that sin must have a covering. When Adam and Eve sinned and knew they were naked, they covered themselves with fig leaves. Their covering for sin was not satisfactory. This leads us to a third truth.



*We declare our
faith by acting
on what we
know to be the
revealed will
of God.*

The Faith of Abel

They taught them that every man-made attempt to cover sin is worthless. In Genesis 3:21 the Bible says, *“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”* Every man-made attempt to cover sin is worthless.



We live in a generation when so many children are not learning what they should learn concerning God and His Word.

This mother and father, the first parents who ever lived and had children on the earth, had sons who were going to respond to what they had been taught. They understood that all men are sinners, that sin must be covered, and that every effort man makes to cover sin is worthless.

They also came to understand that God will provide the covering. The Bible says, *“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins.”* There is no doubt in my mind that this first set of parents told both their sons that when God provided the covering, He obtained the covering by the death of an innocent animal. Their covering required death.

While they were sitting around talking to these boys, explaining to them what God had said, I do not think anyone would imagine that they would tell Abel one thing and Cain something completely different. They would explain to Cain and Abel, *“This is the Word of God. This is what God said; this is what God did. Understand that we are all sinners, that sin must be covered, and that every human effort to cover it is worthless. God and God alone can provide the covering, and when He does, it requires a death.”* I am sure they followed it up with saying, *“We were the guilty ones; we disobeyed God. We sinned against God, but an innocent animal suffered for our sin.”*

We are dealing with the faith of Abel. It starts by what he hears his parents saying to him concerning the Word of God. You and I are

The Faith of Abel

well aware that we live in a generation when so many children are not learning what they should learn concerning God and His Word.

One amazing child was a young girl by the name of Helen Keller. I have become very interested in her life. Helen was nineteen months old when she lost her eyesight and lost her hearing. Miss Sullivan was brought to the home of the Kellers to teach Helen.

When her parents and Miss Sullivan wanted Helen to know about God, they sought out a preacher, and they had the famous Phillip Brooks to come and communicate with Helen Keller. Of course, Miss Sullivan helped Helen to understand Philip Brooks' message. When they finally got the message to her about God, Helen replied, "I already know that God is real. I have known all along that there is a God." This girl, who could not hear and who could not see, said when she was told by a preacher about God, "Something inside of me has already testified that there is a God."

Of course, we need to understand the fact that she needed to place her faith in the Lord for salvation, and that God's Son, Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. The point I want to make is that children have this aptitude to come to the Lord and to know that God is real. God has made Himself evident to them in their conscience and in creation. Parents have a responsibility to guide their children to God. The world, the flesh, and the Devil in their attack against God attempt to affect the conscience of a child and distort what he thinks about creation.

In Genesis, this first set of parents took the time to explain God and His Word to their two sons. I have given you the things they would have covered from what they knew to be true about God.

THE FLOCK OF ABEL

Abel had a flock. He cared for his sheep. We read about this in Genesis 4:1-4,

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.



Parents have a responsibility to guide their children to God.

The word “*fat*” indicates for us that not only did he bring an animal, the animal was killed. He could not bring the fat of the animal unless it had been slain. Verses four and five continue, “*And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.*”

Why? We are dealing with two boys, sharing the same family, the same mother and father. How did this happen? Remember, “*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:17). When someone hears God’s Word, he must act upon it.

We make a great deal of the offerings, and we should. One offering was from the flock. Abel was a shepherd; he was beloved of God. He was hated because of his righteousness and put to death. He is a type of the Lord Jesus in that way. Cain, his brother, chose his own way. He brought of the fruit of the ground—the ground that God cursed.

The Faith of Abel

The earth is under the curse. The “earth people” in our day most often reject the true God.

Take your eyes off the offerings just for a moment. It was the faith of Abel that led him to bring the offering that he brought. It was Cain’s lack of faith in God that led him to bring the offering he brought. Each brought his offering.

Evidently, there was a particular place designated to worship the Lord. They came to this place of worship, and Abel said, “I believe certain things to be true about God.” When he went to his flock and took the most prized thing he had on earth and brought it to God, he demonstrated that he believed God was right.

This is where we struggle. Cain said, “No, I am right. I’ll do what I want to do.” But Abel, because he put his faith in God and believed God’s Word, said, “No, God is right.” I want you to know, my friend, we are faced every day with this decision. We are either going to insist that we have to be right, or are we going to *“let God be true, but every man a liar”* (Romans 3:4).

By what Abel did with his flock, he declared boldly, “God is right.” He also said, “I am guilty.” It is very difficult for people to say, “I am guilty.” Even on a daily basis, people do not like to say, “I am sorry; I am guilty. I have done wrong. Forgive me.” Do you know why? It is because we are full of ourselves.

Abel also declared that God is a merciful God. There is a way to worship God. He understood, by faith, that it took a death, a slain lamb, to make this offering. In other words, here is a man who, because of what he believed, did what he did.

All of us reveal what is in our hearts by our actions. I am sure Cain’s offering looked pretty good. The Bible says that he *“brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.”* He brought his crops. His offering looked good, but it was not right. It was not what God required. But more than that, the offering tells us that the great

The Faith of Abel

issue was that his heart was not right with God. If his heart was right with God, like Abel's heart was right with God, and if he had faith in God like he should have had, his offering would have been presented God's way.



If our faith is properly placed in the Lord, we will yield to God what the Lord requires.

You and I have an opportunity to give ourselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Paul said in Romans 12:1-2,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable

service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Do you know why we do not do that? It is because our faith is not properly placed in the Lord. If our faith is properly placed in the Lord, we will yield to God what the Lord requires.

The Bible says in Genesis 4:6-10,

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest 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. 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. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast

The Faith of Abel

*thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth
unto me from the ground.*

Let us go back to the home and think of two sinful parents telling their two boys the story of their sin. In this home, we find a hopeful mother whose hope is deferred because Cain does not turn out the way she desired. They would not have known about these offerings and the sacrifice and the lamb and the blood if they had not been told what God said.

You can imagine that one boy said, "I am going to serve the Lord. I am going to live for God. I am going to do what God wants me to do. I am going to put my faith in God. I am going to believe God's Word. I am not going to just say I believe God's Word, I am going to live God's way. I am going to exercise faith in God's Word. I am going to do the very thing God requires of my life."

The other boy said, "I am not going to get that serious about it. I have a good way; I am a good guy. I have my own ideas about religion. It's not so bad. I'll make an offering, but not that kind of offering." And God takes us far enough into this story to show where that lack of faith led.

When a sinful creature does not obey the Lord and seek God's covering



- *Adam and Eve taught their children that all men are sinners.*
- *Adam and Eve taught their children that sin must have a covering.*
- *Adam and Eve taught their children that every man-made attempt to cover sin is worthless.*
- *Adam and Eve taught their children that God alone has provided the covering of sin by the death of the innocent.*
- *Adam and Eve taught their children of God and His Word.*

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for his or her sin, that human heart left to itself does not get better and evolve into some great person. Cain continued to seek out his wicked way and became harder and harder and darker and darker until one day he rose up and killed his own brother.

You and I say that the story of Abel's faith is a great story. These stories, historically, were passed down by God's people from generation to generation. The point we need to understand is that disobedience to the Lord results in a tragic life.

THE FUTURE OF ABEL

The story we read in Genesis is not the last thing we shall hear of Abel. In Hebrews 11:4 the Bible says, "*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.*" Most Bible commentators are not exactly sure, because of some disagreement about the antecedents in this verse, whether it was by the faith or by the sacrifice that Abel obtained the witness that he was righteous. Personally, I do not think you can separate the two. If you have the faith, you are going to make the sacrifice. If you do not have the faith, you are not going to make the sacrifice.

When we are not making the sacrifice, what does it give evidence of? God teaches us that faith without works is dead. So when we do not obey the Lord and do the thing God wants us to do, then we are giving evidence by not going God's way that we do not have the faith. As I said to you earlier, the great thing we see about the life of Abel is that he put his faith in God. His faith in God led him to make this sacrifice, and God accepted it.

This verse concerning Abel concludes by saying, "*...and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*" He is speaking. What is he saying? The Bible says in Genesis that his blood is crying out. "*The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*" He is crying

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out. He has been sinned against; he has been murdered by his own brother. Something is not right in this world. His blood is crying out. Is it ever going to be made right?

We find the answer to this question in the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Our Lord is speaking here of a future event, and He says in Revelation 6:9-10,

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

We know as we read on in this blessed Book that God answers their cry and avenges their blood. I want to remind you that there are offended people, people who have been sinned against, and they cry out, “How long until it is made right?” What about faith? Do you still have faith that God is going to make it right?

My wife has a wonderful extended family. Among them she has an uncle who is a preacher. He and his wife have a daughter who went to heaven not too long ago. She was grown and married. She had children and grandchildren. They also have three sons—twin boys and their brother. About thirty years ago, my wife and I got a phone call that one of those twin boys, who was an older teenager at the time, was driving home. He had been on an innocent date with a girl. One of the girl’s former boyfriends was angry about it, and he paid a friend of his twenty-five dollars to kill my wife’s cousin. And for twenty-five dollars, the hired killer pretended that his car was broken down. This kind young boy stopped to help him. He had been



*If you do not
have the faith,
you are not
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the sacrifice.*

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deceived. The boy pulled a gun on him, took him into a cornfield, and made him beg for his life before putting a bullet into his head. He killed him for twenty-five dollars.

There are people like that who have been terribly and cruelly sinned against in this world, and they cry out, “Will it ever be made right?” The second child born on the face of the earth was the first to die. He was murdered by his own brother. Will these things ever be made right? I want to tell you that there is a God in heaven who is going to answer and avenge His children and make all things right. You can count on it.

Some of you dear, precious people have tried to do the best you could do, though you are sinners and you admit it, but there are things in life you cannot get over. Keep your faith in God. There is a God in heaven who is going to make it right. He is a just and true God. Trust Him. Believe Him.

You may say, “I have been sinned against.” Yes, but there is a God in heaven who is going to make it right. Trust Him. Believe Him. Lean on Him.

It is good to look at Abel’s family and think, “God, help us in our family to teach our children the truth.” Look at Abel and his flock and see why he offered what he did. He believed God, confessing that he was guilty, and God was righteous and holy. You may still say, “Poor guy, he was killed by his own brother for doing the right thing. What kind of reward is that?”

I cannot fully answer your question, but I can tell you that there is an almighty God who knows everything that has ever happened, and He is going to make it right. I have faith in Him to believe He will do right.