

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

BY FAITH – PART II

Hebrews 11:4 “By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.”

Abel and Cain, the first two sons of Adam and Eve, both brought offerings to Yahweh. Abel, a shepherd, brought a lamb from his flock. Cain, a farmer, brought produce from his fields. Yahweh “spoke well of Abel’s offering.” The writer to the Hebrews says, Abel’s offering was accepted by God as “better than Cain’s.”

What was it that made Abel’s offering better than Cain’s? As you carefully read Hebrews 11:4 one word answers this question. “Faith” was the difference. “By faith” Abel brought his offering to God. No mention is made of Cain’s faith. He merely brought the produce from his fields.

The Lutheran Study Bible study note quotes Luther’s explanation why Abel’s offering was better: “The sacrifice of Abel was better because he believed. But because Cain was an ungodly man and a hypocrite, he performed a work that was moral, or rather one that was reasonable, by which he sought to please God. Therefore the work of Cain was hypocritical and faithless; in it there was no faith in grace but only a presumption about his own righteousness”

It was not the type of sacrifice the two men offered. It was not the quantity they brought to the altar to sacrifice. It was their heart that made the difference. David, King of Israel, but a sinner, confessed to God, “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17) He came to God as a poor miserable sinner, in faith trusting God to forgive Him because of His unconditional love, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” (Psalm 51:10-12)

By faith, Abel approached God for His forgiveness. By grace, God recognized Abel’s faith and forgave him. By faith, David approached God for forgiveness. By

grace, God recognized David's faith and forgave him. God has given you faith to approach Him confessing your sins and by His grace forgives you for Jesus' sake.

Prayer: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me," O Lord, in Your mercy for Jesus' sake. Amen.

When in the hour of deepest need We know not where to look for aid;
When days and nights of anxious thought No help or counsel yet have brought.

Then is our comfort this alone That we may meet before Your throne;
To You, O faithful God, we cry For rescue in our misery.

For You have promised, Lord, to heed Your children's cries in time of need
Through Him whose name alone is great, Our Savior and our advocate.

And so we come, O God, today And all our woes before you lay;
For sorely tried, cast down, we stand, Perplexed by fears on ev'ry hand.

O from our sins, Lord, turn Your face; Absolve us through Your boundless
grace. Be with us in our anguish still; Free us at last from ev'ry ill.

So we with all our hearts each day To You our glad thanksgiving pay.
Then walk obedient to Your Word, And now and ever praise You, Lord.
(LSB 615)