

Text: Hebrews 11:4–7

Title: The Faith of Abel, Enoch, and Noah

Truth: Three Old Testament Examples Teach Us to Live Our Lives by Faith.

Date/Location: Sunday August 7, 2011 at FBC

Introduction

Recall what we learned about Biblical faith in Hebrews 11:1–3:

1. Faith is confidence/assurance in the future promises of God;
2. Faith is certainty/conviction about things unseen;
3. Faith is how the Old Testament believers lived and received commendation from God;
4. Faith is how we know God created the world.

From other Bible passages, faith is our certainty of the resurrection of Christ, His death for our sin, and other miracles that are in the Bible. We do not see them firsthand, but we believe them. They are true facts, whether we believe them or not, but our apprehension of them is not complete until we believe in Jesus Christ (John 20:29). Faith must be mixed with truth this way to make a complete package. With either element wrong or missing, nothing beneficial happens.

The remainder of today's passage gives us excellent examples of that faith from way back in Genesis 1-9. Our objective in the next few weeks will be to clearly understand not only how Biblical faith is defined, but what it looks like in our lives.

I. Abel's Faith Demonstrated His Righteousness from God

A. Sacrifices of Abel and Cain Compared

"A more excellent" sacrifice indicates that Abel's sacrifice of an animal was plainly better than his older brother's sacrifice from the fruit of the ground. Yes, some things are better and some things are worse. Not everyone gets a passing grade with God!

We can find two inter-twined reasons for the offering of Cain being unacceptable. First, it was not a blood sacrifice. Instead it was an offering of fruit from the ground. This is not to say that any offering of fruit or grain was always unacceptable—it was later commanded as part of the Mosaic Law (Lev. 2:12-16). But note that, at least for this firstfruits offering, it was not offered on the altar. It was not an

offering appropriate for Cain's sin. Sin's wages are death, so death of an animal was required (implied from Gen. 3:21).

The second reason that Cain's offering was not acceptable was that, as indicated in Hebrews, it was not offered in faith. If it was not obedient, then it could not have been done in faith. We can do all kinds of things "for God" but if they are not done in faith, that is, believing the truth and believing in God and in His Son Jesus Christ, then they are nothing. In fact, they are worse than nothing—they are sin (Rom. 14:23).

Wrap this all up and you have a bad situation. Cain did not do what was right; then he was angry about God's response; then God said "if you do what is right, will you not be accepted?" (NIV). God is saying that Cain sinned and that sin would ruin him if he let it. He let it.

Note that Abel was a faithful man, but he died young. It happens like that in a sin-cursed world.

B. Testimony of Abel's Righteousness

The testimony of God and the "obtaining witness" are from the same word as "to obtain a good testimony" (11:2). God's approval was a testimony or commendation of Abel's good standing in righteousness before God. Abel did not get righteousness initially from God because of this sacrifice, but the sacrifice showed what was there in his life.

C. The Dead Still Speak

What does this mean? Dead people don't literally speak. But the message of their lives certainly can live on. So is Abel—still speaking though he was snuffed out by his brother. His sacrifice, based on faith in God, and God's testimony of what he did, still is relevant today. It is spoken of every time we read Genesis 4 or Hebrews 11!

Application: Abel's faith compelled him to do his "religious" duty of sacrifice in a way that was appropriate. He believed God's instructions and offered the right kind of sacrifice. Are we like Abel in our Christian responsibilities? Do we believe God and carry out what He instructs?

Abel believed God and was credited with righteousness (like Abraham, Gen. 15:6). *Then* he lived out his faith and gave evidence that He was righteous. Can God testify about your life that you became a believer and now you live it out as a demonstration of the righteousness you have from God?

II. Enoch's Faith Pleased God

A. Enoch Pleased God

The same word based on the verb to testify that appeared in 11:2 and twice in 11:4 appears here again. It means to be *well spoken of or approved* (BDAG Greek dictionary). Here is what he was well spoken of about—"He pleased God." What more could you want than that?

Apparently what our lives say about us and what God in turn thinks about us really matters!

Application: Be honest with yourself and ask, "What is my testimony like? Is God pleased with me?"

B. Enoch Was Translated

Enoch pleased God to such an extent that God decided to short-cut him around physical death and translate him right into heaven. This happened for Elijah also (2 Kings 2:11), but for no other people has God done so. Everyone else dies and then faces judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Even the sinless Jesus died.

Application: I have faith, but not quite *that* kind of faith. I want it. Do you?

C. Faith is Always Necessary to Please God

Faith believes in the existence of the Christian God, the Triune, personal being we know as God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He *is* indicates His external existence (Exodus 3:14). He *rewards* indicates He judges and gives reward or retribution based on that judgment. Thus He is a personal being and not simply a force or energy.

Faith is something that diligently seeks God. It is not passive.

Faith is not an over-and-done-with thing at the beginning of your saved life. Without *faith all the time* it is impossible to please God. Faith motivating and supporting our works is necessary for those works to please God. Remember, whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

III. Noah's Faith Obeyed God

A. Noah Had Faith in Something Unseen, Genesis 6:5-22.

God promised a disaster that would destroy mankind by a global cataclysmic flood. This had never been seen before. God revealed this information ahead of time to Noah, and Noah was convinced and certain that it would occur even though unseen (11:1).

Noah had never seen such a thing. The past was not the key to the future. There were no empirical things he could do; no rational thoughts he could come up with to justify that such a thing would happen. He had to take God's Word at face value. He did so because he feared God (= faith).

We need not draw the conclusion that rain was unknown before this point. Rain was not present very early in creation according to Genesis 2:5, but that need not imply that for the following 1650+ years that there was no rain on the earth.

B. Noah Did something About It

He built an ark. It took 120 years or so of construction. This was a massive undertaking, even by modern standards. In the end, this ended up saving his life and that of his family and of many animals.

Application: It is easy to *say* you have faith, but the proof is in the doing. Noah built. He *did* something.

C. Two-fold Outcome

By faith Noah condemned the world with his action. In effect, he agreed with God's estimation of things, trusted that the judgment was coming, and by so doing placed himself squarely on God's side. Yes, Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5) but this passage emphasizes his action of preparing the ark. He didn't have to say anything to condemn the world—the act of building itself was a prophecy that something dire was coming.

By faith also, Noah became an heir of righteousness. He was blameless and righteous and found favor in God's sight (Gen. 6:8-9). He walked with God (in a pleasing way), like Enoch. So, he was "saved" at some point before the flood narrative gets into full swing. Thus, we do not have to see his obedience as procuring heir-status. Rather, it was "by faith" that he had received this standing with God and obedience only confirmed that which was already true.

Conclusion

Abel, Enoch, and Noah lived by faith, even in the face of death and danger. God presents them as examples for us. Are we living there? Look at the marvelous benefits of faith: having a good testimony, pleasing God, being rewarded by God, being an heir of righteousness. What more could you want than that?

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