

# **SERMON OUTLINE**

## **'Who by Faith' - 2**

### **Studies in Hebrews 11**

#### **Hebrews 11 v1 - 4 & Genesis 4 v1 - 16**

The first of these portraits of the men and women of faith - Abel (v4) the inspiration for which we find in the hard to understand story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4.

#### **1. THE PROBLEM OF THE STORY**

See Gen 4 v3 - 5a - was this not blatantly unfair?

Key Questions - Why did God look with favour upon Abel's offering, but didn't look with favour upon Cain's? What was it about Abel's offering that made it (Heb 4 v4) "a better sacrifice"? Hint - we need to look, not at the sacrifices (in and of themselves) - but at the sacrificers! That is - what it was that motivated them to make the sacrificial offerings which they did.

#### **2. THE CONTEXT OF THE STORY**

In this story - the context is all important. See Gen 3 v23 - 24, which is all about the exclusion of man from the Garden of Eden - from the Presence of God. See Is 59 v2. Key Question - How could God ever be approached so that man might once again come to know Him and have fellowship with Him? We have the answer here!

#### **A. THERE WAS A PLACE WHERE GOD WAS TO BE APPROACHED**

#### **B. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN GOD WAS TO BE APPROACHED**

#### **C. THERE WAS A MEANS BY WHICH GOD WAS TO BE APPROACHED**

The means was - "by faith". See Heb 4 v4. Key Point - Faith is always faith in God, and in particular - in what God says in His word. This tells us that when we read that Abel brought his sacrifice "by faith", it means that this is what God told him to do, and he was being obedi-

ent (the obedience of faith) as he submitted to that word.

Key Question - Why did God require the offering of the sacrifice of a lamb? Answer - Because sin bring death, and where there is to be life there needs to a substitute to taste death (sin's penalty) on the sinner's behalf. Abel understood this and believed this - and acted upon it. Key Words (Gen 4 v4) - "The Lord looked with favour on Abel....."

The Lord didn't look with favour on Cain and his offering because he refused to acknowledge his sin and come to God by the God ordained means.

### **3. THE APPLICATION OF THE STORY**

What we have in this story is the 2 ways in which man seeks to approach God - either through the work of the cross or through the work of his own hands.

Note (Heb 11 v4) how Abel is described as "righteous". See also Matt 23 v35 & 1 Jn 3 v12. In other words, Abel came before the presence of God mourning over his sin and clinging to the sacrifice which God had provided for him - and came away from the presence of God having been declared righteous. This is the doctrine of justification by faith.

Key Application - Will it be your way (man's way - see Jude 11) or will it be God's way? Abel came away from the presence of God justified by faith, whilst Cain came away from the presence of God mastered by sin. See Gen 4 v7 - 7.

### **4. THE ABIDING RELEVANCE OF THE STORY**

See Heb 4 v4 - "and by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead." How? Answer - As he point us to the cross of Jesus. See Heb 12 v22 - 24. Key Point (see Gen 4 v10) - blood speaks!