



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 11:1-4

“The Honor Roll of the Old Testament Saints”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful, again, for the privilege of studying the word of God together and we thank you for this great chapter that we shall study for a little while, for the impression it makes upon us of the life by faith and we thank Thee for these marvelous men of faith, who down through the years have distinguished the doctrine of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and have so marvelously displayed the blessings of trusting the moment by moment, in the midst of many failures; but, nevertheless, basically trusting Thee. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt give us something of that same trust, some of that same commitment in the midst of our lives in which we live in a body that is indwelt by the sin principle; but may our fundamental commitment, Lord, be to him who loved us and gave himself for us, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee for the gift of the Holy Spirit, which has come to us and we pray that He may teach us as we look again at Holy Scripture.

And we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Hebrews chapter 11 in verse 1 through verse 4, the author writes.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things, which are seen were not made of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.”

Westminster Abbey is one of the great buildings of the Western world. It was originally, as you may know, an abbey-church of a Benedictine monastery in London. It was erected by Aethelbert, King of Kent, in the early 7th Century. Additions were built by Sir Nicholas Wren and Nicholas Hawksmore in the 18th Century. All the English kings and queens since William the First have been crowned in Westminster Abbey, and it's the burial place of eighteen British monarchs. England's most notable statesmen and distinguished subjects have been given burial in the Abbey since the 14th Century. In the poet's corner, which we are all shown when we look at the Abbey, there are found the graves of Chaucer, Browning, Tennyson and the other great English poets.

Well, with the 11th of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we have as it has often been said, “Reached the Westminster Abbey of Scripture.” Or, the honor roll of Old Testament saints. But with what a difference! These individuals died in faith so we are told in verse 13.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off, we assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers in pilgrims in the earth.”

They were individuals who died in faith and, therefore, they live. That cannot be said for the British monarchs and the poets and others whose graves are in Westminster

Abbey. Scripture says they are living in the sense of existing, of course, and the time of judgment will come in the future. But of the men whom we study, it can be said that they belong to the Lord God and died in the genuine faith.

This chapter is the faith chapter. It's a vital commentary on the faith of ancient believers, from verse 3 through verse 22, the author concentrates on the Book of Genesis and then in verse 23 through verse 29, on the Exodus. And then in verse 30 through verse 38, on the remainder of the Old Testament plus a reference to the Maccabees, a book not one of our 66 inspired books but, nevertheless, a book that does record some truth.

The faith of the Hebrews that we study here, you will note, is a faith that looks toward the future. In fact, it's so pointed toward the future that it's been the observation of many students of the Epistle to the Hebrews that faith for the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is very close to what we think of when we think of hope.

Now, of course, there is a difference. When we think of hope, we don't always have assurance of the reality. I hope the Cowboys defeat the Red Skins on September the 6th or whenever it is that the season begins. That's a hope. But there is no assurance, whatsoever, that it's a reality. But the hope, of which the author speaks here, is the hope of reality. So faith looks toward the future for him and thus merges practically into what we think of as hope.

John Bunyan, before he knew the truth of the word of God, was tortured by uncertainty. “Everyone doth think his own religion rightest,” he said, “both Jews and Moors and Pagans. And how have all our faith in Christ and the Scriptures should be, but I think so, too.” But when the light finally broke on Bunyan, he said, “Now I know.” I know. And, of course, that's the confession of the New Testament.

When I was speaking here in the chapel a few months back, I laid a bit of stress on the first part of John, where John says three times in four verses, “We know that whosoever is born of God does not sin.” “We know that we are of God, and the whole

world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true.” So the certainty of a believing Christian is found here in Hebrews chapter 11.

This faith that he talks about is a faith that operates in several directions; it is in God against the world. For example, in verse 7, “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” In verse 38, the writer of the epistle states, “Of whom the world was not worthy.” Referring to a number of the Old Testament saints. So the faith is a faith that is in God, and it is against the world. It reminds you of Daniel chapter 3, and Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, in the fire. It’s that kind of faith.

It also is faith in the invisible against the visible. It’s a conviction that the things that we do not see are, nevertheless, real things. That’s the kind of faith that one finds here. And, thirdly, it’s in the future against the present; and so we have them saying, verse 10, “For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” In verse 13, we have him writing, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” And, again, in verse 20, “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.” So these are the characteristic things of faith. It has to do with belief in the certainty of the divine future. The verdict of history is, of course, that this is true. That those who do trust in the Lord God, ultimately, win out.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, who didn’t say an awful lot of good things that evangelicals could rejoice in, once said that, “The future,” referring to the future, reversing the verdict of the moment, said, “Nero once condemned Paul, but the years pass on and the time comes when men call their sons Paul and their dogs Nero.” That’s an amazing

admission for a liberal man to acknowledge that it is true that the things that are found in the word of God are still here with us and we rejoice in them.

Well, now, turning to our passage, and the first two verses describe some of the characteristics of faith. He says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for.” He has exhorted his readers, in the preceding context, particularly near the end of it, to endure, to have patience.

Notice verse 36 of chapter 10, “For you have need of patience so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.” So he’s exhorted them to endure and to manifest in their lives the evidence of genuine faith. But now, he will illustrate, by the faith of the saints, who as he says in verse 27 of chapter 11, “Endured seeing Him who is invisible.”

So one of the first things that we want to keep in mind is that what he is doing is exhorting his readers and he’s exhorting us, of course, by his letter, to have patience that the great promises of the word of God are going to be fulfilled to us. To have patience, that after having done the will of God, we may receive the promise. So faith is the substance of things hoped for. Bible teachers have a little bit of a problem with this because, unfortunately, the term that is used here for substance in my translation is a term that also may mean “assurance.” Now, if it means substance, he’s talking about the objective realities, toward which we look. If he is talking about it in the sense of assurance, then he’s talking about it subjectively. So is faith the assurance of the things hoped for? That is, is faith that which gives us an inward sense of assurance, for the fulfillment of the promises? Or, is faith itself the substance of the things hoped for?

Now, perhaps, it is something that you might think theologians might quibble over, and probably that’s true, to some extent, because both of these things are true. But if this means “substance,” then what he is essentially saying is that faith is not simply the kind of faith that we think of when we think of faith, but it really is something that is

substantial. Because, when we believe, we really have those promises. We might not have them yet, but they are sure to be ours.

Some of us think of faith along the lines of Ambrose Bierce, the American cynic. Many of Bierce's things are extremely funny. If you ever can find a book of his sayings, it's well worth reading. You'll read a few of them and you'll want to read all of them, before you put the book down. But, fortunately, many of them have been collected. And he once described faith, in his work called, “The Devil's Dictionary.” “Belief without evidence in what is told, by one who speaks without knowledge, of things without parallel.”

Now, that is not faith according to Scripture. Scripture is the assurance of the reality of the promises of God and that conviction that comes to us is a conviction that is wrought in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And when a person really has true faith, the Holy Spirit convinces him that he has that faith. So it's the work of the Holy Spirit to bring the conviction of the truthfulness of the word of God. He says, “Faith, therefore, is the substance of things hoped for.” That is, it's the reality. When you have faith, you really have the reality. Not yet, but you really have that reality.

Now, if it meant assurance, then it would be something like, faith is the sure confidence of the things that lie ahead of us, which of course is also true. It would be the opposite of drawing back which he has talked about; the conviction that the promises will be fulfilled. So let's not quibble too much over this. I personally think that it's likely that he does mean substance but, unfortunately, this same word occurs elsewhere in the epistle in both of those senses. So we're really not sure. Fortunately, there is no real difficulty. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and it's the conviction or the evidence of things that are not seen.

If you look at the word of God and you think of the many experiences of the saints of the word of God, I'm sure you have illustration after illustration of what true faith should be like. I think of Elisha. When Elisha was having difficulty with the Syrians, you

may remember, in your reading of the Bible, you want to know where I am, I know, I'm finishing up Judges and going into Ruth tonight, but you may remember that when Benhadad was seeking to destroy the Israelites, Elisha kept informing his people of what Benhadad was doing. And so, finally, since he was doing this, the king of Syria asked, how is it that this man always knows what we are doing? Or rather, how they know what we're doing? And, his men told him, "The man of God keeps telling your top secrets to the king of Israel." So they decided they would stop this by finding out where Elisha was and then going down there and getting rid of Elisha. So, the he king asked where Elisha is. Well, he's in Dothan. And so they came by night and they besieged Dothan. And, you remember, Elisha had one of his servants with him and the servant was all in a panic over what had happened. Here is the Syrian host about them and there is Elisha and the servant. And so he cried out to Elisha, "Alas, my master, how shall we do?" Well, Elisha was not the least perturbed, for him faith was the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. And so he asked that the Lord would give him a sense of what really the situation was. He couldn't take it and he was fretting and fuming. And so Elisha prayed, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see," and his eyes were opened to the sight of a mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

Now, Elisha didn't have to see them. He knew they were there. For him, faith was the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. But, the servant did not have that faith and so, he was shown the substance, he was shown the evidence.

And so, this is, it seems to me, something that is fundamental to the way in which we live the Christian life. We have the promises of the word of God; they are for us substance, they are the substance. Our faith is the substance of the things that have been given to us as the promises of the word of God. They can be trusted, those promises.

There's a story that Graham Scroggie, who was a well-known British preacher and had a church in Edinburgh, Charlotte Chapel, a famous little church in Edinburgh, and in his early ministry he was faced by a situation in his church that required him to make a

decision. Certain things were going on which he could not approve and so the issue was brought to the elders of the church or the officers of the church, and they had to make a decision because in his mind it was an intolerable situation. He couldn't remain there. So their decision went against Mr. Scroggie, and he was forced to leave.

And so, a young man at the time, he found himself without a church, without a home, with a wife and two children to support. And he said as he went about packing his books and his other few belongings, several of the towns-people called upon him and one of them was the editor of the local newspaper. And so after a bit of conversation, the editor said, “Well, what do you plan to do now?” And he said, “Well, I'm going to do the same things that I've done before. I'm going to trust God.” And so the editor wrote in his paper, as said to him first and wrote in his paper, I guess, “Rather risky, isn't it?” Well, if we look at it from the human standpoint, it was risky. But it was not risky for Mr. Scroggie. He went on to become one of the really best-known preachers in Great Britain, and his faith was obviously a great faith. So “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it,” that is, by their faith, “the elders obtained a good testimony.” A good testimony before the Lord God and a good testimony before men.

Now, the third verse is a very interesting verse and as you can see what our author is doing, he's beginning at Genesis chapter 1 in verse 1, and he's going to go back over the Old Testament just briefly. So he says “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of the things which are visible.” So the very first page of the Bible, in which we read, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep, and God said, ‘Let there be light.’” That's in his mind. “All that exists,” he says, “In time and space.” what he uses is the term “ages,” which has not simply to do in his context with things, but also with the whole purposes of the plan of God. The ages, everything that exists in time and place in the

creation is something that he understands has come to pass by the word of God. “So that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

The universe is not self-existent; nor is it the random occurrence of tidal disruptions of the sun by passing stars or some ancient theories, nor fragments of an exploding star, nor that the energy of starlight and gravity drove together gasses and dust to form the earth. He goes back beyond that, before there was any matter at all, and traces it all to the Lord God in Heaven.

Plato was a very knowledgeable and a very influential man and still is today. In philosophy, if anyone studies philosophy he must study Plato. Plato even has a statement in the *Timaeus*, in which he talks about the “Father,” and it has been thought that maybe, living four hundred and fifty years before the time of Christ, that he had some kind of concept of a “Father.” Well, he used the term but it appears, really, that he didn’t really have that kind of concept. And he, however, made a statement that might have suggested that he believed in what we understand to be creation; that is, creation arising out of nothing. But, actually, he did not. He believed in the eternity of some form of matter, and that it was formed in according to the likeness of what he called the Forms. So while some statements of his have been cited as if he believed in divine creation, *ex nihilo*, that is, God created what we have about us out of nothing, he did not really believe that.

Now, our author does not state that positively here, but that would appear to be the most likely understanding of what he says. For, he says, “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” Other parts of the word of God, of course, make that very plain. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Everything about us is, ultimately, traceable to the word of God and the power of God. “Let there be light,” thus, the creation. But, our author says, that’s the conviction of faith, that we believe such things. We still would like to know all of the details; we’d like to know how God with his mighty word of power, brought into being these things, but the Scriptures have set

them forth and other passages in the word of God have underlined that fact. And we see no reason not to go along with it, for God has given manifold indications of the trustworthiness of His word.

Now, coming to the fourth verse, he begins his unfolding of the Old Testament, as it pertains to faith. And he says, “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” I guess you would say it’s proper to begin with Abel, for he demonstrates how we get life.

The principle facts that he is thinking about are found in Genesis chapter 4, verse 1 through verse 15. So, I think, it might be good for us to just turn back there and read a few of these verses because, I believe, it will help a little bit as we think about the testimony of Abel. So turn back to Genesis chapter 4, and let’s read a few verses, beginning with verse 1 and verse 2. Genesis chapter 4, verse 1 and verse 2, “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord.” The Hebrew text, probably, could be better rendered, “with the Lord,” at least, more literally. The idea, of course, is that it is God who is responsible, but she is the agent. “Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of the sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.” One committed to animal husbandry and the other a farmer. Now, the births of the two, of course, are the outgrowth of the promise that was made in chapter 3 in verse 15, because there God had said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman,” speaking to Satan, “and between your seed and her seed, he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.” So influenced by the thought of the seed, Genesis chapter 4, gives the facts concerning the newborn. That is, this promise is related to the promise that the Lord God had given and now, Abel is born.

Whether Eve actually thought that Abel was the promised redeemer or not, we don’t really know. It’s possible that she did. It’s possible that she was so filled with anticipation that when Abel was born that she really thought of him as the promised seed. And so she might have had that particular belief in her mind. She said she had “acquired

a man with the Lord.” As a matter of fact, it is really possible though not likely to translate it, “I have acquired a man.” In fact, some even translate that word, *qanah*, which is the Hebrew word, created. “I have created a man.” But, aside from that, “I have acquired,” that’s the more common meaning of the word. It could be rendered, “I have acquired a man that is Yahweh,” That is, the Lord, in which case, it would be an expression of faith. I don’t think that that really is the likeliest translation; it’s a remote possibility. So, let’s leave it as we have it, but she speaks of having “acquired a man with the help of the Lord God.”

Now, can you not imagine what happened in the house of Adam and Eve when this little baby is born? Not knowing anything about babies; well, let me read you something that Alexander White wrote about it. He was a preacher in the University at Edinburgh, where the university is, and he was the pastor for many years of St. George’s West Church, Church of Scotland, there. “Cain’s mother mistook Cain for Christ, as long as Eve saw her firstborn son, she no longer remembered the anguish. What a joyful woman Eve was that day. For, what a new thing in the earth was that first child in the arms of that first mother. Just look at the divine gift; look at his eyes, look at his hands, look at his sweet, little feet, count his fingers.” I can see Eve doing that, you know. I’ve seen that too often with mothers and their little child. And when mother is looking elsewhere, father too. “Count too his toes, so the lovely dimple in the little man’s right hand. What a child! And all out of his own mothers bosom and all his father’s son. Adam’s son, a second Adam, a new man, all to themselves to keep for their own. Look at him taking his first step. Hear him saying his first syllable. The first time he says, ‘Mother.’” The Hebrew word for mother is the word, *’em*. I don’t know what he might have said. Did he say “Amy?” [Laughter] Or something like that? We don’t know but, anyway, I can enter into this. “The first time he’s called her, mother.” Well, we needn’t read that any more. He goes on to say put yourself back into her place. Eve had not brought banishment from Eden on her husband and on herself by listening to the Father.

Why, if she had done that, listening to the “Father of Lies.” But the Lord God had come down to Eve in a terrible distress, and beginning his book of promises with his best promise had promised to her that the “seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, and should thus redeem and undo all the evil that she had wrought on herself and on her husband.” Well, actually, she had; but then Adam had participated in it, too.

A man from God in her own arms; why even Eve, why even, now, my text is faulty. Even he or she or you would be a cold-hearted atheist if she would have been, if she had not hailed the birth of her firstborn son. She would have made God a liar, unless she had said, “This is our God; we have waited for Him, and have gotten a man from Him.”

Well, of course, there is a difference between the birth of Abel and the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the case of the true seed of the woman, the angel Gabriel comes and gives the announcement in the own way in which we read in Luke and in the Gospel of Matthew. But, at any rate, in Genesis, chapter 4, then, we have the births of the two, Cain and Abel, and then we have the offerings. And you know the story of the offerings. We don’t have time to talk about them. But Cain brought a beautiful, someone has said, a beautiful Christmas basket that was his offering. And then Abel brought the firstlings of his flock; two offerings, one having to do with the produce of the field and the other having to do with Abel’s work as a shepherd.

The divine response is very significant, of course, and the Bible says that God had respect for Abel and his offering. Now, one might ask the question, how do we know and in what way did that respect, was it shown? Well, it’s been suggested that since in the Old Testament, there are four or five instances of God indicating his response to an offering, by immediately coming down in his power and causing it to flame into fire; that that was the likely way in which it was indicated that Cain’s offering was not accepted and that Abel’s was.

They are followers of divine admonition, with reference to the birth. I keep turning back to the New Testament, I really ought to keep my hand in the Old Testament. But, anyway, in chapter 4 in verse 6 and verse 7, we read these words, “So the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.’” The word means sometimes “sin offering, probably sin is best. “Sin lies at the door and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” So the Lord expressed his displeasure with Cain, but he also suggested a way by which Cain could be acceptable to him. So that divine admonition is something that Cain should have responded to. The sin that is mentioned is the sin of bringing an offering in the wrong spirit and, as we shall see, also, the wrong offering. And then the divine condemnation follows, and it’s separation from the Lord God, and ultimately, divine judgment. And the end of the story is that Cain says his punishment is too great for him to bear.

We should remember that it is likely that Cain, at the time of this, was over one hundred years old. In fact, if you study chapter 5, in the light of this, it may well have been that he was as old as one hundred and twenty-five years. And so there is a great deal more to be found in the reality of it, probably.

Now, the work of Abel was, of course, to bring the firstlings of the flock. That we know was motivated by faith, for we read in the New Testament here in chapter 11, verse 4, “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”

Now, if you will remember two things, it will be helpful, I think. In the first place in chapter 3, when the promise with regard to the crushing of the serpent’s head and the wounding of the heel of the promised seed, that it was said immediately after that, “Then to Adam, because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the Tree of.” Go on, I shouldn’t read that, but go on to verse 20, “And Adam called his wife’s name, Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also, for Adam and his wife, the Lord God made tunics of skin and clothed them.”

From that, of course, we may gather that in the intervening time and the explanation of it, the Lord indicated something of the proper approach too, to Him. In the New Testament, we read that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. And so when we read, “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice,” I don’t think we’re really going too far astray to say that he was given instructions about the way in which he should come to the Lord God. He should come in faith, in response to what he had been told, concerning the proper way to approach the Lord God. And he had come with his lamb.

Now, I know, in Genesis 4, it does not say that he came with a lamb and therefore he was accepted, whereas, Cain came with something that was the work of his own hands and, therefore, he was not accepted. But, of course, there are many things that are not said specifically that may be inferred from the things that are said. And, I think, it’s fair to say, first of all, Abel had faith and Cain did not have faith. And Cain was also offered a further response, which he refused. So the attitudes of the men toward the Lord God are an expression of their true faith or lack of faith in their hearts. And, in the case of Abel, he was motivated by faith, he offered the lamb, instructed by the Lord God and perhaps also by the illustration of the Lord God, who slew the animals and clothed them with coats of skins. And Cain, of course, did not obey that, sought to bring simply a different kind of offering. At any rate, his heart was not correct. And in the New Testament, we read about Cain in 1 John, chapter 3 in verse 12, John says, “Not as Cain, who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother Abel. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.”

Now, the witness of the Lord God with respect to this. We read here, in Hebrews chapter 11 in verse 4, a very interesting little clause. “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” Now, notice that specifically. “God testifying of his gifts.” The same thing is found in the Old Testament, in Genesis chapter 4 in verse 4, again. We

read these words, Genesis 4:4, “Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of their fat and the Lord respected Abel and his offering.” So it’s not simply a respect of the individual but also of the offering. And here, God gave witness to Abel and witness testified of his gifts. There was a faith at work, we can say that.

But what is revealed by Abel’s offering? Well, in the first place, I think, it reveals a knowledge of man’s state. Sin separates us from the Lord God. Sin had come into the Garden of Eden; a separation had taken place between the Lord God and his creatures and so in worship of Him, he comes with an offering, a slain animal, indicative of the judgment of sin, which is death. And so, in that offering, there is a manifestation of the knowledge of man’s state as a sinner. Our sins have separated us from the Lord God.

There is also a revelation in what he did of faith, as we’ve been saying. Faith comes from the word of God. In verse 6 of Hebrews chapter 11, we read, “But without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

It also indicates an assent to blood sacrifice. We know, in the unfolding of the word of God, without shedding of blood there is no remission. And that is taught right in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, and this offering of Abel witnesses to that fact, also.

Now, on the other hand, what about Cain’s offering. Well, Cain’s offering indicates that there is such a thing in the heart of a sinful man as an attempt to have religion apart from righteousness. In fact, we know in the New Testament that is set forth a number of times. In other words, man likes to think that he can come in his own way to the Lord God.

The first murder in the word of God is the outcome of worship. That’s a very striking thing! To think of the fact that they were coming to worship but as a result of their worship, there comes murder.

Griffith Thomas, in his commentary on Genesis, cites a passage from Joseph Parker, who was a well-known preacher, some years back. He said, “If you want to find out Cain’s condition of heart, you will find it after the service, which he pretended to render. You know a man best, out of church.” And, he went on to say, “The minister knows the best side of a man. The lawyer knows the worst side of a man, and the physician knows the real side of a man.” Just like my doctor knew my eye condition. I was telling him how it, of course, could have been done. He said, no, in effect. So if you want to know what a man’s religious worship is worth, don’t look at him in the church, don’t look at him in Believers Chapel, why, he’ll have a look on his face as if he’s a very saintly individual. He won’t fight with you here in Believers Chapel. And he certainly won’t do it in this particular place where the word of God is preached. He’ll be wonderful, nice kind of guy. I don’t know anybody who’s not a nice guy in the church auditorium. Do you? Come on? Do you? [Laughter] Very rarely have you ever seen that. I do know, one seminary student, who got in a fight in his church, but I don’t know exactly what part of the church it was, but I’m almost certain it was not in the sanctuary, it was back in the hall somewhere. So that’s so true. If you want to know what a man’s religious worship is worth, see him out of the church.

“Cain killed his brother when church was over,” so Joseph Parker said. “And that’s the exact measure of Cain’s piety. And so you went home the other day, you charged five schillings for a three schilling article, Mr. Parker said to his congregation, and told the buyer it was “too cheap.” And that’s exactly the value of your psalm singing and sermon hearing, which you’ve been engaged in. You said you enjoyed the discourse exceedingly last Thursday and then you filled up the income tax paper falsely. That indicates what your real faith is. Not what you said about the sermon.”

Now, I know, when preachers stand behind the pulpit, they like for people to come and tell them, you know, nice sermon, if people really mean it. But we all have to

remember that both those who hear that and those who say that, that situation doesn't necessarily represent the reality.

So in the case of Cain, he is worshipping, bringing an offering to the Lord, but his heart is in rebellion against the Lord God. He comes his own way, and so, the first murder, think of it, is the outcome of a worship experience. That tells you something about our human heart.

It was, of course, disobedience. If I am correct, that he should have known what he should bring as an offering, in the light of Genesis 3, and what the Lord did to cover them, and what Scripture tells us about faith being the product of the word of God, Faith comes by the hearing of the word of God, he had heard, but he brings a different offering.

And so what he brings is an offering of disobedience. Something is wrong in his heart and that's why he brings what he brings. And, of course, also, if this is true, then it's a trust in his own human works. He brings of the fruit of the ground; the ground which he tills, which he works. I think, you can see the evidence of this in the Passover, and how God carefully told Israel how they were to place the blood of the Passover lamb on the two side posts and above the door and it was only by virtue of that sacrifice that the first born were kept from the destroying angel.

What is so striking about this to me, too, is the fact that Cain and Abel had the same nature. They had the same environment. They had the same knowledge. They had the same opportunities and one, by the grace of God, comes in faithfulness and offers according to the word of God. And the other comes in rebellion and offers contrary to the word of God.

Our text says, in Hebrews 11:4, “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which,” that, probably, is a reference to the faith, “Through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it,” that is, his faith, “he being dead yet speaks.” Death is never the last word in the life of

a righteous man. And so the testimony of Abel is a testimony to the present day. And, through it, he being dead yet speaks. He speaks of the necessity of approaching the Lord God through faith; not only through faith but through faith of the revelation of the word of God.

What that means, practically, for us today is, there are not different ways of salvation. There is one way of salvation and that one way of salvation is through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as set forth in the word of God. “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me. I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. I am the door by Me if any man enters in, he shall be saved.” So it is through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. “There is none other name under heaven given to men whereby we should be saved,” Peter said, later. So there is one way of salvation, according to the word of God, and that through the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, may God deliver us from the way of Cain to the way of Abel, with its divine approval. Abel is called, later on, Righteous Abel and Cain’s way comes under the judgment of God as being the Way of Cain.

May God deliver us from erroneous approaches to the Lord God.

Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for Thy word. We are thankful for the instruction from it. We remember, Lord, that the word of God is eternal; that the truths of which it speaks are lasting truths. And we thank Thee for the warnings and instructions and we thank Thee, too, for the promises. We thank Thee for the faith given to us and, Lord, if there should be some in this audience who do not have that faith yet, may through pondering the word of God and through the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts they enter into the understanding of the truth and the possession of the life that comes from the Holy Spirit’s use of the word of God. For each one in this audience, we pray, and ask Thy blessing upon us.

“The Honor Roll of the Old Testament Saints” by S. Lewis Johnson
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For Jesus' sake. Amen.