

Series: God & Cain #1030

Title: Genesis 4.4-5

Abel Accepted, Cain Rejected (Part 5)

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. I am glad to have you here as we end this week together. The weeks do go fast, don't they? If you are just joining us today, we welcome you! And we want to encourage you to get caught up on what you missed by going over to the following website and listening to each day's God Is Podcast. The website is godisministry.org.

If you already listen via the God Is Podcast, I would like to encourage you to share it with someone who is yet to join us. Send them a link to the website. Text it. Email it. Write godisministry.org on a piece of paper and press it into the hand of a friend, a family member, someone at your church or synagogue. If you are on social media, share our posts. On Facebook and Instagram our page is God Is Podcast. That's God Is Podcast. Like our pages, leave a comment, and invite others to follow us on there as well.

I want to share part of a letter I recently received from a dear listener named Brian. I hope this will be as encouraging to you as it has been to me, as we pray that many more people will know who God really is, as He is revealed to us in the Bible. Brian writes, "Dear Pastor Mark, I am writing to let you know how much I appreciate and enjoy learning through the sound biblical teaching presented on God Is. Your clear, expository style and verse-by-verse, systematic approach is especially effective and I find I learn more during the brief time in which your program airs than I would perhaps on my own reading the same passages.

God Is provides just what I need and long for – to know God better. (And Brian continues in his letter to me...) I also find myself sharing what I learn with others in my small group...God, in His amazing grace provides many wonderful resources – many by radio – to help me and other Christ followers grow in faith...I will be praying for you as you continue to serve God in the ministry He has called you to."

Now *that* is quite a letter! Thank you, Brian my brother-in-Christ, for sending this to me. I will respond to you personally, but I wanted all of you to hear what Brian said, because this is a testimony from someone other than myself about our focus here each weekday: who is God? The Bible is our true source for teaching us about the nature and character of holy God, and so day-by-day we open the Word of God and invite the Spirit of God to lead and guide us. And you have heard what an encouragement this is to Brian and his small group!

That is something else I appreciate about what Brian is doing – he is sharing what he is learning with others. I want to encourage you to do the same. You know, often when we teach others what we are learning, we learn the content better ourselves. So pass on what you are learning about God.

If you want to know God better I believe you have come to the right place. If you know of someone else who yearns to know God, tell them about this ministry. Brian listens on the radio on KGMS in Tucson, Arizona (that's a *great* station owned by our good friends, the Wilkins Family). You may listen by radio and/or via the podcast. Whatever the case may be, spread the word!

And, do write to me. As I enjoyed and greatly benefited from reading Brian's letter, so too I would love to hear from you. You can send your letter to God Is, PO Box 802, Winchester Massachusetts 01890. Or, send me a quick email this weekend to mark@godisministry.org. Tell me how God is using this ministry in your life. Perhaps there has even been something about the *faith* we have been talking about this week that you want to comment on? I look forward to hearing from you, friends.

Let's go back to the passages in the Scripture that have captured our attention this week. We have been talking about the difference between the offerings Cain and Abel brought to God in Genesis 4, verses 4 and 5. And to highlight the difference we journeyed over to the New Testament Book of Hebrews chapter 11, verses 1, 2, and 4.

Let me read the passages side-by-side, beginning in Genesis 4.4, "**the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; ⁵ but for Cain and for his offering [the Lord] had no regard.**" And Hebrews 11.4, "**⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain...**" As we have said, the reason God accepted Abel

is because Abel brought his offering *by faith* and the reason God rejected Cain is because Cain did not bring his offering *by faith*. God was looking for faith. He found faith in Abel, not Cain.

And next week we are going to find out a lot more about Cain's attitude, especially what he thinks of God's response to him. Please do plan to be with us, beginning again on Monday. For today, I want to say something more about Abel's faith. We have already defined faith, but a good question is what specifically did Abel have faith in? You might say, "God, he had faith in God." And that is absolutely correct. Indeed, how true.

And I think there is more. Specifically, Abel had faith in this: he believed what God said was true. He believed, by faith, in the Word of God. As I said yesterday, while Genesis 4 does not record a specific command from God to Cain and Abel about their offering, Hebrews definitely indicates God had spoken to them, laying out clearly (God is always clear with us) laying out clearly God's expectations for the offering. And whatever God had spoken, Abel believed God. Abel took the command seriously, and fulfilled God's expectations. Therefore, God accepted him and his offering.

God did not hold Cain and Abel accountable for their offering if God had not already been clear about what He wanted in the offering. In keeping with His character God must have said, "This is what I want." And Abel did what God wanted. Cain did not do what God wanted. Let me use the words of Scripture and put it to you this way: Abel demonstrated the obedience of faith. Abel put his faith in God and God's Word (God's command) he put his faith in them into action.

Also in the New Testament is the Apostle Paul's theological magnum opus. His magnum opus, his great work, the Book of Romans. And more than once in Romans the Apostle uses this phrase, "the obedience of faith." For example, this is used right in the opening chapter at verse 5. I am reading Romans chapter 1, just part of verses 4 and 5, "**Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake...**" (Romans 1.4-5.)

The obedience of faith speaks of the genuine saving faith in Jesus Christ which God demands so that our sins are forgiven. The truth is saving faith always, *always*, produces obedience towards God. How do you know if you possess true, genuine saving faith in Christ today? Here is one way to test this: do you obey God? Notice I did not say do you obey God *perfectly*? I did not say is there no sin whatsoever in your life? That was not the question.

Think of it this way: is the general direction of your life one of obedience to God? Is there a trajectory of obedience to Christ and His commands in your life? In my life? If so, even as we always struggle against the lusts our flesh, even as we are not perfect, if there is a pattern of obedience, then we have the obedience of *faith*.

Abel had the obedience of faith. He put his faith in God into action in his offering. Cain did not. Cain believed in God. If he did not, then why would he have even shown up to give his offering of the fruit of the ground? Cain did come, but he did not come towards God having faith, and manifesting that faith in absolute obedience. And so, let me ask: who are you more like? If you take this question seriously and think about it: are you like Abel or are you like Cain?

It is relatively easy (still) in our culture to say, "I believe in Jesus." "I am a Christian." "I have faith." Actually, to hear someone say they have faith is quite common! *But* does that person manifest the obedience of faith?

It is one thing to say you believe in God and have faith, but it is quite another to have a lifestyle that proves you really are a genuine Christian. Again, not that you are perfect. That is not what I am saying. No one is perfect in this life. But what we learn, right in the opening chapters of the Bible, is that God requires of us *faith* and true faith always results in obedience to God.

Think seriously upon this. And be sure and come back again on Monday as we continue to discover who God Is.

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