

MATTHEW ALLEN

# THOSE WHO WALKED BY FAITH

*Trusting in the Individual Promises of God*



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# **Those Who Walked by Faith**

*Trusting the Invisible Promises of God*

**A Bible Study Workbook by  
Matthew Allen**

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Trusting the Invisible Promises of God  
By Matthew Allen

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## Why This Study?

Throughout Scripture, we find that faith, as described in Hebrews 11:1, is more than simple belief—it is an active trust in the future God has assured us. It is not just an intellectual assent to the promises laid out in the Bible but an embracing of them in their full glory and detail. Faith perseveres through life's trials, holding steadfast to a vision of eternity with God, where the pains of the present are but a memory. The heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, each faced formidable challenges. Yet, they did not allow these difficulties to hinder their progress or dim their vision; they pressed on and received commendation from God.

God calls upon us, as He did them, to trust in a future He has written—one of ultimate blessing and eternal joy. Hebrews 10:38 underscores the necessity of this faith—we must not *shrink back* but must keep moving forward. God takes no pleasure in those who withdraw in doubt. Hebrews 10:39 further warns that to draw back is to embrace destruction. Yet, Hebrews 11 is there to encourage us by reminding us of those who lived by faith and did amazing things despite not receiving what had been promised in their lifetime. They trusted in its eventual fulfillment, living with a faith that was as real to them as the tangible world around them.

Faith, therefore, is not simply hoping for the best; *it is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*, as stated in Hebrews 11:1. It is a tangible trust in the invisible promises of God. It is possessing the substance of what we await with anticipation, the essence of our future hope.

Concerning the Bible characters you will study in this workbook, the promises of God were so real to them that they built their entire lives around them, trusting in what they had not yet seen or experienced. Just as they did, 2000 years after the cross, we, too, trust in the promises of Scripture. We believe in heaven, in eternal life, in a future with God—all unseen, yet real to us. This belief creates a present reality as we trust in what is to come, shaping how we live now. It informs our worship, our observance of the Lord's Supper, and it undergirds every aspect of our lives. Our faith is the conviction of things not seen, the evidence of our hope, moving us to live in anticipation of God's future revelation.

Romans 8:24–26 speaks of being saved by hope, a hope that is patient and unwavering because it is rooted in faith. This faith provides a present substance to our hope, steadying us in our earthly pilgrimage as we look for that “better country”—a heavenly one. Without faith, Hebrews 11.6 tells us,

we have nothing. Life without God is devoid of hope, but in faith, we find a saving hope, a firm foundation for both the present and the future.

I'm excited you have decided to explore the heroes of faith in this workbook. Let the testimony of these saints inspire you to embrace the hope that only faith in God can provide.

Matthew Allen

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## Lesson 1

# He Still Speaks: Abel

## *What Abel's Faith Led Him to Do*

### Read

Hebrews 11.4

Genesis 4.1–12

### Introduction

Someone once said death is never the last word in the life of a righteous man. When we depart this life, we all leave something behind. Our legacy will either be as a blossom of beauty, or something that spreads like a cancer. Just make a quick comparison between the legacies of Paul and Nero. Think of two individuals closer to modern times: Hitler and Churchill. Dead men do tell tales. They are not silent. They loudly speak. Notice what was said about Abel in Hebrews 11.4:

And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

Who was Abel? What does he say to Christians today? How is he someone who walked by faith? Abel has been rightly called the first man of faith. Born outside of Eden, he never had the opportunity to know God in the same way his parents did. He was the first man to really exercise positive faith in God. He not only believed, but he also bet his life on it.

In this lesson, we will examine Hebrews 11.4 in depth.

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

Abel's faith led him to do three things. First, it moved him to *offer a more acceptable sacrifice*. Secondly, it led him to be *commended as righteous*. And last, it enabled him to *speak*, though he is dead.



## A More Acceptable Sacrifice

In the opening verses of Genesis 4, we read of the birth of Cain and Abel. Cain grew up to be a tiller of the ground and Abel grew up to be a keeper of sheep, 4.2. The next two verses are extremely important:

In the course of time Cain presented some of the land's produce as an offering to the Lord. And Abel also presented an offering—some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, Genesis 4.3–4.

While the details remain undisclosed, the verses suggest at some point God must have set in place some initial expectations for worship. First, a designated spot existed for worshipping God. As evident from the verses, both individuals presented their offerings to the Lord. Presumably, an altar stood at this site. Who informed them of this worship spot? And who introduced the concept of an altar? Additionally, there was a specific time designated for worship. In its original form, the term “the course of time” translates to “at the end of days.” This implies that they were expected to offer their sacrifices at a specified time. God must have designated a particular day for these offerings. It's noteworthy that both approached simultaneously, hinting that they both were aware of the timing. Cain and Abel come at the same time and location but with distinct gifts. Only one offering was accepted by God, suggesting God had set certain guidelines.

Following their expulsion from the garden, it's plausible that God would have instructed Adam and Eve about the proper time and place for worship and the appropriate mode of sacrifice. Hebrews 11.4 mentions Abel's sacrifice was made in *faith*. But where does faith originate? As Romans 10.17 puts it, “faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.” We can't believe in the unknown. Given Abel's faithful sacrifice, it's likely he understood God's wishes, believed in them, and acted accordingly. By comprehending that a sacrifice was necessary because of sin, he manifested his faith through action. Abel's obedience and recognition of his flaws starkly contrasted with Cain's non-compliance and denial of his sins. Perhaps, after the events in the garden, God relayed the solution to human sinfulness. This communication might resemble the verses we've received:

- “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness,” Hebrews 9.22.
- “For the life of a creature is in the blood ... it is the lifeblood that makes atonement,” Leviticus 17.11.

Abel was prepared for this sacrifice. Genesis 4.4 implies he had already prepared the animals by separating their fat. He acted with surety. Abel believed God and that faith motivated him to approach God in the prescribed manner. It was as if he was saying:

“God, this is what You said You wanted and You said if I brought it, You would forgive my sin. I brought it. I believe You God. I acknowledge my sin. I acknowledge the prescribed remedy.”

Cain would have had the same information. Instead, he brought only what was convenient for him and did his own thing. Cain did not believe God and thought he could approach God by his own works. He was steadfastly rejected. Cain has been called the father of false religion. He tried to come to God by another way. He failed. False religion is an invented way to God. *There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death,* Proverbs 14.12.

Abel’s way to God was based on something he was told. God’s righteousness is not arbitrary. It is based on obedience to a prescribed plan. Abel was righteous. Cain was not. Consider 1 John 3.11–12:

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another, unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous.

To disobey is evil. To obey is righteous. God gave them what He wanted and they either obeyed it or they didn’t.

There is one last consideration we need to make with Abel’s offering. Genesis 4 says he brought of the *firstlings* of his flock. **He gave his best.** Compare that to Cain, who just brought of the fruit of the ground. Because of all these things, Abel brought *by faith* a **more acceptable sacrifice.**

## Abel Obtained Righteousness

Regarding their offerings we are told, *The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering,* Genesis 4.4b–5a. The only thing that obtained righteousness for Abel was that he did what God told him. Cain didn’t. That’s the only difference. A faith that responds is the only thing that changes a persons’ relationship with God. It is not about *how good we are.* It is not about whether you are better or worse than anyone else. It’s that you came to God on the terms that He established. That’s all he

asks. Abel was as much a sinner as Cain, but he believed God and obeyed. Because of that faith, it was counted to Abel for righteousness.

True faith is always obedient. Jesus told those who believed on Him, *Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,"* John 8.31–32. God honored Abel because his faith was alive. It was alive in the way he obeyed. The teaching of James 2.14–26 goes right along with this. Our faith is alive when it manifests itself by action. We can't work to get to God, but having come to Him, our works will become evidence of our faith. We have been *called unto good works*, Ephesians 2.10.

## **Abel, Being Dead, Still Speaks**

Genesis 4 says God gave Cain another opportunity to do right.

Cain was furious, and he looked despondent. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent? If you do what is right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him, Genesis 4.5b–8.

Instead, Cain chose to do evil and kill his brother. Note how God confronts Cain in the aftermath.

### ***How does Abel speak?***

First, Abel spoke to Cain. After his death, God said,

*Then he said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood you have shed. If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth,"* Genesis 4.10–12.

Wherever Cain went, his crops would struggle. He would spend the rest of his life walking on the soil that represented the blood of his brother—*always unyielding*. Abel, even though he was dead, continued to speak for the remainder of the life of Cain.

But Abel still speaks today. He speaks that sin will be severely punished for the one who does not live in obedience to God. We cannot expect to make

up our own religion and system of works to be pleasing of God. We must follow God's pattern by faith. Only then will He bless us.

## **What's in This for Us?**

### ***Legacy Matters***

The choices we make in life have a lasting impact, even after we're gone. Strive to leave a positive legacy that uplifts and inspires.

### ***Genuine Faith Matters***

Just like Abel, genuine faith requires action and isn't just a mental acknowledgement. Our beliefs should drive our behavior.

### ***Follow God's Instructions***

God has provided guidelines for worship and obedience. Trusting and adhering to these guidelines showcases true faith.

### ***Understanding Leads to Obedience***

Knowledge of what God desires, like Abel had, can lead to actions that are in line with God's wishes. Abel's obedience to God's commands resulted in blessings, whereas Cain's disobedience led to negative outcomes. This highlights the significance of adhering to divine guidance.

### ***Faith and Righteousness are Linked***

Abel's sacrifice was accepted because it was done with understanding and faith. In contrast, Cain's sacrifice was rejected because it wasn't what God asked for. This emphasizes the importance of aligning actions with genuine faith. Abel's obedience to God's instructions made him righteous. Obedience to God's commands is a testament to one's faith. Faith isn't just about belief; it's about how those beliefs translate into actions.

### ***The Danger of Jealousy***

Cain's jealousy led him down a destructive path. Recognizing and managing negative emotions can prevent harmful actions.

## **Conclusion**

The story of Abel serves as a powerful lesson for every Christian. Through his unwavering faith and obedience, he set a precedent for all who seek to truly follow God's commands. In contrast, Cain's disobedience, and refusal to offer what was required by God not only led to his downfall but stands as a warning for those who choose to go their own way instead of adhering to the path laid down by God.

# For Class Interaction and Discussion

## *Lesson Outline*

### **1. Introduction:**

- Legacy of a righteous man
- Examples: Paul and Nero, Hitler, and Churchill
- Legacy of Abel: Hebrews 11.4

### **2. Background of Abel:**

- Born outside of Eden
- Relationship with God
- Importance of positive faith

### **3. Understanding Abel's Sacrifice:**

- Cain and Abel's offerings
- God's guidelines on worship
- The significance of Abel's faith

### **4. Abel Obtained Righteousness:**

- Genesis 4.4b–5a
- Significance of obedient faith
- Difference between Abel and Cain's faith

### **5. Abel, Being Dead, Still Speaks:**

- Cain's choice and its consequences
- Abel's continuous influence
- Abel's message today

### **6. What's in This for Us?**

- Importance of legacy
- Power of genuine faith

## ***Thought Questions for Discussion***

1. How does the legacy of a righteous person differ from one that isn't righteous? Can you think of modern examples?
2. How did Abel demonstrate his faith in God differently from Cain?

3. What do you think the specific guidelines for worship were, given to Cain and Abel?
4. How does obedience play a role in faith? How is it different from just believing?
5. In what ways does Abel's story emphasize the importance of following God's prescribed way of worship?
6. How does Abel's sacrifice resonate with modern-day Christians? How can we apply the lessons from his life to ours?
7. In what ways do our choices today create a legacy for tomorrow?
8. How do our actions and choices today serve as a testimony to our faith?

## ***Group Activity***

**Legacy Mapping:** On a piece of paper, jot down:

1. One positive action or choice you made in the past that has had lasting effects.
2. One negative action or choice you made and its long-term consequences.
3. One action or choice you can make today to positively influence your legacy.

**Scripture Dive:** Read the following passages: John 8.31–32; James 2.14–26; and Ephesians 2.10. Discuss how true faith is always obedient.

## ***Walking with God Today***

Reflect on your own offerings to God during the upcoming week. Are you giving Him the best in every area of your life, or are there areas where you've been holding back? Journal your reflections.