The Righteous Shall Live By Faith

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[0:00] We're continuing, and will for some time, looking at our study, the great chapter of faith,!

Here in verse 4, it will be familiar to you, 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. And that last sentence is really impressive. Abel's been dead for millennia, and here we are, 10,000 miles away, talking about him. Is this the 21st century? I think it is. One man has said, death is never the last word in the life of a righteous man. When a man leaves this world, whether he is righteous or unrighteous, he leaves something in the world. He may leave something that will grow and spread like a cancer or a poison, or he may leave something like a fragrance or perfume or a blossom of beauty that permeates the atmosphere with blessing. I cannot read a statement like that and not mention a study that was done long ago, and it was comparing the descendants of America's greatest theologian, born on American soil, born on American soil, Jonathan Edwards, with a notorious criminal who lived in the same time frame named Max Jukes, J-U-K-E-S. This study was done by an American educator by the name of A.E. Winship.
Let me read it to you. Winship decided to trace the descendants. Of Jonathan Edwards, almost 150 years after his death, his findings are remarkable, especially when compared to another man from the same period known as Max Jukes.
Jonathan Edwards' legacy includes one U.S. vice president, one dean of a law school, one dean of a medical school, three U.S. senators, three governors, three mayors, 13 college presidents, 30 judges, 60 doctors, 65 professors, 75 military officers, 80 public office holders, 100 lawyers, and then I put parentheses when that was a good thing, 100 clergymen, and 285 college graduates. They all descended from Jonathan Edwards.
Edwards was a godly man. Edwards was a hardworking man. He was moral, intelligent.
[4:22] Furthermore, Winship states, much of the capacity and talent and intensity and character of the more than 1,400 of Edwards' family is due to Mr. Edwards.

Max Jukes' legacy came to people's attention when the family trees of 42 different men that were at that time in the New York prison system were traced back to him.
He lived in New York at the same time period as Edwards. Edwards lived in New Jersey at Princeton University, Princeton Seminary then.
The Jukes' family originally was studied by sociologist Richard L. Dugdale in 1877.
In 1877, Jukes' descendants included seven murderers, 60 thieves, 190 prostitutes, 150 other convicts, 310 paupers, and 440 who were wrecked by addiction to alcohol.
[5:39] Of the 1,200 descendants that were studied, at least 300 died prematurely. So the old saying that dead men tell no tales is not true.

Many things, good and bad, follow us to the grave. As I said earlier, Abel lived thousands of years ago.
And here we are in the 21st century, and 10,000 miles from where he lived and died, we're talking about him. Abel lived in a different time.
The earth was new. He was a second generation human. But what he has to tell us is very relevant to life today.
I wasn't really sure when I was going to inject this into my study, but I saw something today. I'm going to do it now. One of the great masters like Rembrandt or one of the great artists, and this was hanging over in Europe somewhere, but they had this huge, and these portraits are bigger than that square there.
[6:57] They had a picture of Cain killing Abel. And someone had put a caption under there.

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I don't know if you remember this, but the current war between Hamas and Israel started on October 7th. And it showed the picture of Cain killing Abel, and it said on the evening of October 7th, Hamas asked for a ceasefire.
Cain asked for a ceasefire. He didn't want to be punished for killing Abel. So he asked for a ceasefire. Hamas really did. They asked for a ceasefire that evening.
After they'd launched 9,000 missiles into Israel. Israel declined and still declined. Abel's parents were Adam and Eve.
Their faith was different from that of their son Abel. They had seen God face to face. They'd communicated with God.
[8:03] They talked. They walked with God in the Garden of Eden. Certainly Adam did. And both were present when God punished them for the sin of disobedience.

Until then, they had no need for faith. They existed in the covering of God's light, which was withdrawn.
That's the first time they realized they were naked and were ashamed and hid themselves. So their children were really the first people on earth to need faith in the fullest sense.
Now, Abel's faith was manifested in three ways. His faith resulted in true sacrifice.
His faith resulted in true righteousness and a true witness. Abel had a better sacrifice because it was grounded in faith.
[9:14] Abel received a righteousness that comes from God.

And he calls out to us thousands of years after his death that righteousness is by faith.
Abel received a blessing. Abel received a blessing. And you'll find that many times in the Old and the New Testament. Now, we know the history of Adam and of Eve and their two sons.
Adam and Eve were put out of the garden because of sin. Sin always violates fellowship with God. Their sin destroyed the fellowship they had enjoyed with God. And because of sin, they had forfeited the right to live in the presence of God.
[10:15] So, in Genesis, we read that God drove them from the garden. And he drove them out of his presence. But at the same time, God made a way for them to re-enter into his presence.

In fact, we read about this promise in the form of the first prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah. Genesis 3.15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed.
He shall bruise you on the head. You shall bruise him on the heel. Very interesting language.
The seed of the woman is going to bruise the serpent or Satan on the head. That's a fatal wound. But at the same time, he'll be able to bruise the Savior on the heel.
Painful, but you survive those. You survive them. So here we have the first verse of Scripture in the third chapter of Genesis alluding to the life and manner of death of the Messiah.
[11:34] He would be born of the seed of a woman. Usually the man is the seed. He would be born through a daughter of Eve by the name of Mary.

He would conquer and destroy Satan and his demonic followers. He would deliver mankind from the curse of sin in the midst of God judging Adam and Eve for their sin of disobedience.
At the same time, God was providing a pathway of mercy. Now only one woman and her seed have produced a child and that's the Virgin Mary.
With that one exception, the male has provided all other seed. And from the construction of the language, it appears that Eve may in fact have believed that Cain might have been the promised deliverer.
She knew a deliverer was coming. And in effect, when he was born, she said, here he is. Well, that didn't work out. And after Abel was dead and then Seth came along, she thought, well, maybe Seth's the deliverer.
[12:52] Not realizing that the deliverer was thousands of years in the future. In fact, she believed Cain to be the deliverer, but she was terribly mistaken. Cain was actually the first murderer on earth.

And then she had the son, Abel. Abel grew up to become a shepherd or keeper of flocks. Cain was a farmer called a tiller of the ground.
Both conceived after the fall outside of Eden, which had by then undoubtedly disappeared. In other words, they were both born with a fallen nature.

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and we learned some things about Abel. He's our focus tonight. Abel made a true sacrifice.
Hebrews 11, verse 4, the first part there says, by faith, Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain.
Now, both boys brought a sacrifice based upon their chosen career. Abel brought a firstling from his flock.
[14:09] Cain brought the fruit of what he had produced by tilling the ground, planting the seed, watering. He did all this work by the sweat of his brow and grew some vegetables and fruit and he offered some of those.

I think we can assume that they built some type of an altar, probably taught by their father Adam to do that. This was probably an ancient picture of the mercy seat.
That doesn't come along until Moses, time of Moses and the Exodus, the mercy seat. That was a place for the atonement of sin and it was a place for receiving forgiveness.
Now, the portrait of Christ and his work was present very early in the history of mankind. Very early. both boys offered their respective sacrifices at a set time, probably instructed to do so by their father.
[15:31] One can assume that God set both the time and place for those sacrifices and relayed that to Adam. God and there is strong reason to believe that God also designated a way to worship.

Now, obviously, either God instructed them directly in the manner by which they were to worship. It was designated. Worship was designated and obviously God either instructed them directly in this way of worship or made sure that Adam and Eve taught those boys the proper way to worship.
But it's also obvious that Cain violated God's instructions. We don't have all the specifics of that, but his offering was not acceptable.
Some have said, well, it wasn't a blood offering. Well, it wasn't. Was that the problem? I don't know. Others have said, well, it was the fruit of Cain whereas Abel's was the fruit of, you know, God provided.
[16:42] Was that it? I don't know. But Abel offered his sacrifice by faith. And I hate it when Hollywood depicts this because you see in Hollywood, Cain brings this big basket of fruit and he presents it on the altar and then he takes some of it back.

And they are implying, well, he removed some of it. The Bible doesn't ever teach that. It doesn't say a word about that. There was nothing wrong with Cain's offering of grain or fruit or vegetables other than the fact, and I kind of hang my hat on this, that that was produced by Cain's work.
He did the work. He tilled the ground. He fashioned tools and he did all that. Well, I think we can deduce from that Cain's was a form of works righteousness.
He worked for that. And let me assure you, and you can read this from Genesis to Revelation, that form of works righteousness is always unacceptable.
God never accepts works righteousness in the Scriptures, ever. But the greater offering was blood because by blood sins are dealt with.
[18:17] And later the Bible does say, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. sins. And without the shedding of perfect blood, there is no eternal forgiveness of sins.

And that perfect blood, of course, was Christ. Now, God acknowledges Abel's offering. And the Scriptures say he offered a better sacrifice.
sacrifice. And I think we can kind of figure that Cain chose to disregard the type of worship God had prescribed and was thus disobedient in his offering.
Abel gave to God what God desired. Cain gave what Cain wanted to give. I think that's one of the fundamental differences in the two offerings.
Now, we know that Cain believed in God. I know there's a God as a person because he offered a sacrifice to him, albeit an unacceptable one.
[19:31] And that happens around the world with false religion. They offer things to God all the time. They may not call him God. They may call him Allah or Buddha or Krishna or Confucius or whatever.

But they make offerings. But Cain believed in God. He was told about him by his parents.
And he makes this offering of a sacrifice. He recognized God, but at some point, there was a disconnect because Cain did not obey God.
In fact, Abel said, if you do the right thing, God will accept your sacrifice. That's what infuriated Cain and led to our first homicide.

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Cain, I think, thought he could approach God in any manner he chose and not by the method that God prescribed.
[20:38] And let me tell you, that's a prevailing thought to this very day. How many people globally yesterday tried to approach God without the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ?

millions, hundreds of millions. That's unacceptable. No one can come to the Father except through Jesus.
John 14, no one can come to Him. But Cain thought, well, I can approach God any way I want to. It doesn't have to be the way God tells me. And like I say, many think that to this day. False religion is always trying to approach God through a scheme devised by men and it always falls short.
It always falls short. The only way to approach God is through Christ. Now, did Abel approach Him through Christ?
[22:00] Yeah. Abel looked forward to the Deliverer. We look back. We both look at the cross, but from two different perspectives.

And Abel didn't have near the light we have. Abel's sacrifice pointed to the distant future when Christ would offer Himself as the acceptable sacrifice.
Only true believers know and understand that Christ is the only way to God. God I've had people tell me, I believe in God, I just don't believe in Jesus.
Or I don't need Jesus. I've got God. No one can come to the Father except through the Son.
And Abel offered a better sacrifice because it was an offer based upon obedience. God is doing what he had been instructed to do. And the scriptures tell us in verse 4, the second part there, through which he, that's Abel, obtained the testimony that he was righteous.
[23:29] Wouldn't it be nice if God paid you a visit and said, you know, you're one of my righteous followers. That's never happened to me. I'm sure it's happened to some in here, but not to me. The only thing that made Abel acceptable God was his obedience of faith in making the appropriate God-ordained sacrifice.

It was not that he was better than his brother, although he probably was, but good works never has anything to do with being accepted by God.
We do good works not to be accepted by God, but because we've been accepted by God. Abel was just as sinful as his brother in the sight of God.
All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There's none righteous, not even one. There's none who choose God. All our works are a filthy rag before the eyes of God.
You can go on and on and on. Just read the third chapter of Romans verses 10 to 18. Abel had a type of faith, though, that allows God to move in and do a work of divine righteousness.
[24:56] If you are righteous today, and I trust that you are, it is because God has created you in his righteousness. He's imputed to you the righteousness of Christ.

If it's another righteousness, that's an alien righteousness and unacceptable. We are to have the righteousness of Christ. Now, there are millions who claim to know God but ignore his word.
that cannot happen. Our faith is built upon hearing. And guys, when you read your Bibles, reading is a form of hearing.
I remember the one brother who said, if you want to hear from God, read the Bible. If you want to hear from God with your ears, read the Bible out loud.
Because he speaks to you through the word of God. But millions claim to know God but ignore his word. That cannot happen.
[26:13] Our faith is built upon hearing and reading and obeying. James told us that there would be many who have a dead faith and dead faith never saves.

Dead faith never saves. He also said in that same book, the demons believe and tremble. Probably even true believers in the church need to be doing a little more trembling.
Let's dedicate ourselves to 2024 to do some trembling before God. But Cain had a dead faith. Abel was counted righteousness because he trusted God.
If we were in the Greek language, that word trust is the same for believe or have faith. Pistuo. By his faith, Abel stood before God accepted and his account was credited with righteousness.
Same language used for Abraham in Romans. His account was credited to him as a righteousness.
And then in the third part of verse 4, Abel speaks from the grave.
[27:41] God testifying about his gifts and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

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That's amazing. He still speaks to us to this very day. Abel actually spoke very soon, right after his murder.
And he still speaks to us. But he spoke out quickly, right after his murder, because the Bible says his blood cried out to God.
Abel was speaking through his shed blood. And he would be avenged. It's like the souls under the altar we read about in the book of Revelation who have been martyred and they cry out for justice. And the Lord speaks to them, doesn't he? And he says, wait just a little while, your justice is coming. It'll come. Abel spoke to later generations of believers.
[28:57] Abel spoke to potential believers. And today he still speaks. And Abel tells us three things.

man or mankind comes to God only by faith and never by works.
It's never look what I've done. When I was an FBI agent in Tulsa, the U.S. attorney was Frank Keating. Later our governor, prior to his time as U.S.
attorney, he was an FBI agent. And I knew Frank to consider him a friend. We're on a first name basis. But his mother died. And they were Roman Catholic, still are. His mother died and this woman epitomized activity in the Catholic Church.
Anytime the doors were open, she was there. She was baking stuff for them and going to bake sales and doing everything. And I told Frank how sorry I was.
[30:04] I trust she was under the grace of God and is in heaven. And he said she's in heaven because of what she did. And I was being really kind.

I said, Frank, I don't think the Bible teaches that. I think it and he got really incensed at me. He said, my mom's there because of what she did. She deserves to be there.
Same thing happened when Mother Teresa had died. And Paige Patterson had a discussion with an English pastor, liberal guy. And it was being moderated by I think it was Bill Moyer.
But they were talking about Mother Teresa this and Mother Teresa that. And John MacArthur talked about visiting her in India. And her walls were filled with Hindu demons.
And she also gave him a book she wrote and said, I pray to Mary that she'll save your soul. And John gave her on his book and said, I pray to Christ that he'll save yours. But they went on and on.
[31:11] And Paige Patterson was the conservative guy there. And Paige says, well, let me tell you something about Mother Teresa. Mother Teresa may well be in heaven.

I'm not saying she's not. I'm not her judge. But if she's there, it's not based on what she did. It's based upon the grace of Christ. through her faith in him and his blood sacrifice on the cross.
That's the only way she can get there. And they looked at Paige Patterson like he had lost his mind. I saw the telecast. And one of them said, are you telling me she didn't earn her way to heaven?
He said, that's exactly what I'm telling you. If she's there, she's there by the grace of God through faith in Christ. And they just were, is that scant's word?
Stan didn't nod, so I went over my backup. He said it is. Man comes to God only by faith and not by works. Two, man must accept and obey God's revelation above his own reasoning powers.
[32:24] A lot of people have reasoned themselves into heaven, but it's fictitious. And then three, sin is severely and sometimes eternally punished.

Memorize that one, that will keep you awake at night. Unconfessed sin. Abel's ultimate message was simple, the righteous shall live by faith.
Abel lived by faith. He died by faith. He's going to live again by faith.
When Jesus comes back to establish the millennial reign, Abel's going to be with him. Abel is at the top of the list of Old Testament heroes of faith.
He's the first one we talk about. Even after his death, his example encourages people to seek the Lord because he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
[33:35] Abel then is the father of believers of that time before Abraham. We're dealing with what the theologians call pre-Abrahamic history.

that starts in Genesis 12 and goes forward. This is the first 11 chapters of Genesis. That's pre-Abrahamic history.
And Abel is the father of all those who believe before Abraham. His faith in God still speaks as a constant witness to us though he's been dead for 4,000 years.
But he's quite a person to study. Let's close with prayer. Father we thank you for your love, your grace, your mercy, that peace which surpasses all understanding because it's a peace that only

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Christ can provide.
We thank you Lord that you have opened paths to us. That even when we fail you even we sin, if we confess our sins you are righteous and just to forgive us that sin and then cleanse us of all unrighteousness.
[34:53] Lord I've always said that's even the sins that we didn't realize we committed or have forgotten. But cleansing is there through confession and so Lord I thank you for these men bring us safely home bring us Wednesday night and Sunday and next Monday we ask all this in the blessed name of Jesus Amen.

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