

HEROES OF FAITH #1
Abel: God Was Pleased with Him
by Rev. Donald Zuhn
(R. Friedrich, editor)
Hebrews 11.4 and Genesis 4

INTRODUCTION ... What is a "HERO"? - not a sandwich! ... No, a HERO is a person we can respect for their character or success. A hero is a person that we use as an example and goal for ourselves. When you were young, maybe you had a hero, someone famous you respected, maybe in sports or politics.

Do you have special heroes for your Christian faith? Are there men and women in the past who can be examples for us to follow, as goals for our lives? The Bible, in Hebrews chapter 11, lists 15 people from the Old Testament that can be heroes for us Christians today. This summer we will look at those heroes of faith. God tells us that these were people that pleased Him because of their strong faith. Today we meet ABEL!

=====
==

(Begin Abel act.)

I. "Hi! My name is Abel."

"Maybe you remember my name - maybe not ... maybe you remember my older brother CAIN. Surely you remember our parents - ADAM and EVE. Our life was really much different than your life: not many people around us ... we were the first family - the four-of-us plus other brothers and sisters ... that's all! But we had a good life. Cain was a farmer, growing grain and other foods in the ground. I was a shepherd, taking care of our sheep and goats for the milk and the wool. Our father ADAM taught us about those things, just as he learned it from the Lord.

"Yes, the Lord was very important to us. Our parents often spoke about life in the Garden of Eden after the Lord made them both. It really was wonderful, having God there and talking with Him! But things really changed after they sinned against the Lord! They were afraid of God. God sent them out of the Garden. Life became difficult. But not all was bad. The Lord showed mercy. He promised salvation. He forgave. Our parents believed His promises. They told us about the Lord's promises, and we believed too.

"So very naturally we began to offer sacrifices to the Lord, to show our love and gratitude to Him. But what could we give to Him? He didn't need anything! So we gave Him things from our work. Cain, for example, gave Him gifts of grain and fruit, and I offered sheep to Him. God was pleased with our offerings. More important, God felt pleased with us.

"But sin - that monster! - continued to grow. That sin started so small - eating fruit! But the sin grew. Cain and I were sinners, too. We were born with that sin in our hearts - that seed of rebellion against the Lord, that dirt that needed God's mercy and forgiveness. We saw what sin did: When we were kids, we had our brotherly struggle and fights, jealousy for our parents' attention.

"Then one day God didn't accept Cain and his offering, but He accepted my offering. Why? - maybe because I offered Him the first-born sheep and gave Him the best part, while Cain just brought some grain. It seems that he felt he had to give something but did not do it with joy and love. Most important, Cain brought his gift without faith.

Cain was mad! For many days his face showed that anger. We didn't enjoy living around him. God warned Cain: 'Be careful! Sin is waiting to take control of you' But Cain didn't listen. His anger and jealousy and hatred only grew. Until one day when we were in the field, he killed me! And then Cain tried to pretend to the Lord that he didn't know what happened to me and that he wasn't responsible for taking care of me.

"Do I feel like a hero? No, not really! I didn't do anything special. I was not an especially good person. I was a sinner just like you, just like Cain. But I believed in the Lord. I trusted His mercy and His promise about salvation. I had faith in the Lord, because He spoke His love and mercy to us."

(Abel act is finished.)

=====
==

II. That faith made Abel a hero.

God named Abel "a righteous man" because he believed the Lord's promises. And for the same reason God names you and me "righteous people"! We really know more about the salvation than Abel knew. We know that all God's promises point to Jesus, God's

own Son. We know that Jesus won salvation for us by Himself accepting all our sin and guilt. Why? Because God still shows mercy and love, same as He did for Adam and Eve, for Cain and Abel (but we don't know if Cain accepted that mercy and forgiveness from God). And we know that the Spirit of God gives us the power to believe God's salvation. Thank God! We know. We believe. We have received God's salvation through Jesus. God names us "righteous".

We can copy Abel's example of faith, and we can copy his example of showing his love to the Lord by bringing the best offering to give to the Lord - and doing that with love and joy!