

FOCUS FOR THE UNFORESEEABLE

FOCUS

Heb. 11:1-4

Heb. 11:1 Now **faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 **Through faith we understand** that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

4 **By faith Abel offered** unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Our theme for this year is...

VISION 20/20
HIS VISION. OUR FOCUS.

During these challenging days of the present pandemic, many people, including believers, are facing issues that a few months ago were simply **unforeseeable**. **Life is, unfortunately, a series of unforeseeable events.** For the next few weeks we will observe what the Bible says about how to handle such trying events, "*how to focus on the unforeseeable.*" We will begin with the principles found in 1 Jn. 5:1-5:

THE FOUNDATION FOR THE FOCUS

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE RELATIONSHIP

1 Jn 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

A. The Relationship Defined – “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...”

B. The Ramifications Declared – “...and every one that **loveth him that begat** loveth him also that is begotten of him.”

II. THE OPERATION OF THE REALIZATION

1 Jn 5:2 **By this we know** that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

3 For **this is the love of God**, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

A. The Proof of Love is in the Experience, 5:2a – “By this **we know**...”

B. The Particulars of Love is Explained, 5:2b-3 “...that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3 For **this is the love of God**, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”

III. THE OBSTACLES TO REFOCUS

1 Jn 5:4 For **whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world**: and **this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.**

5 **Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**

A. The Ever-Present Challenge, 5:4a – “...the world...”

B. The Ever-Present Capability, 5:4b – “...and **this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.**”

C. The Ever-Present Conqueror, 5:5

If “faith is the victory that overcomes the world,” how does that apply to us when the unforeseeable happens? For the next few weeks we will observe how faith is the key to facing challenges of life.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews begins with a simple definition of faith and declares its power to assist us in understanding very complex concepts – like creation. Through faith, we can understand when the unforeseeable confronts and confuses us. What follows after verse three is a “Catalogue of the Courageous” – the “Hall of Fame of Faith.”

We begin with Abel. Note – the inclusion of Abel is a verification of the Scriptural account of creation, beginning with Adam and Eve.

Heb. 11: 4 **By faith Abel offered** unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

I. FAITH PRODUCES ACTIONS PLEASING TO GOD – “By faith Abel offered unto God...”

- A pioneer is one facing unforeseeable challenges. By definition, a pioneer is...

pioneer

a person who is among those who first enter or settle a region, thus opening it for occupation and development by others.

one who is first or among the earliest in any field of inquiry, enterprise, or progress: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/pioneer?s=t>

- Abel was a pioneer in how to properly worship the Lord; guidance was scarce.
- During this pandemic, pastors are pioneering how to properly lead the flock; guidance was scarce.
- Abel, and pastors, had to follow known guidelines, by faith, to please the Lord.
- The unknown factors would become opportunities for corrections, if need be.
- Cain would learn that he needed to make adjustments.

A. The Quality of the Actions

1. The Comparison from God's Perspective – "...a more excellent sacrifice than Cain..."

Gen. 4:2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3 And in process of time it came to pass, that **Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.**

4 And **Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.** And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the LORD said unto **Cain, Why art thou wroth?** and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 **If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.** And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

- The focus of Abel was his offering from God's perspective.
 - He brought an offering that was of the "firstlings of his flock" – typifying the Lord Jesus Christ as the "firstborn" – Col. 1:15, 18
 - He brought forth a sacrifice – "...and the fat thereof..."
 - He recognized the "blood offering" = man's guilt before God who is Holy; God who judges sin must be reconciled; God is merciful to accept an innocent substitute in his place.
 - He followed God's plan, by faith, to please Him.

- The focus of Cain was his offering from Man's perspective.
 - Cain was knowledgeable of God's plan.
 - He was religious in offering an offering.
 - He offered a bloodless offering.
 - He offered something from his works – "...fruit of the ground..."
 - He knew that the ground was cursed – Gen. 3:17

Gen. 3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed is the ground for thy sake;** in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life;

- He knew the penalty of sin and God's grace to redeem from its consequences.

Gen. 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

- Cain was the first religious hypocrite – "...having a form of godliness..."

Prov. 12:15 **The way of a fool is right in his own eyes:** but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.

Prov. 21:2 **Every way of a man is right in his own eyes:** but **the LORD pondereth the hearts.**

2. The Conclusion from God's Perspective – "...by which he obtained witness that he was righteous..."

Rom. 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, **The just shall live by faith.**

1 Jn. 3:12 **Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.** And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and **his brother's righteous.**

- Abel's faith met God's righteous standard – "...And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:"

B. The Qualification of the Actions – "...God testifying of his gifts..."

- God bears witness with His children.

Rom. 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, **they are the sons of God.**

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16 **The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:**

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

II. FAITH PROVIDES ACTIONS PERPETUAL FOR GENERATIONS – “...and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

A. The First Death

Gen. 4:8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that **Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.**

1 Jn. 3:12 Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore **slew** he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Original Word: σφάζω

Transliteration: sphazó

Phonetic Spelling: (sfad'-zo)

Usage: I slay, **kill by violence, slaughter**, wound mortally.

<https://biblehub.com/greek/4969.htm>

B. The Faithful Death – “...and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

Gen. 4:10 And he said, What hast thou done? **the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.**

- The Lord gave Cain opportunity to confess.

Prov. 28:13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: **but whoso confesseth and forsaketh** *them* shall have mercy.

- From Creation, religious hypocrites have despised the righteous.

Gal. 4:29 But as then **he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.**

- Abel, facing the unforeseeable, walked by faith.
- Death is a momentary interruption to the believer who is walking by faith.

Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for **I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.**

Rom. 14:8 For **whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.**

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, **that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.**

- Abel's death did not end his influence – "...being dead yet speaketh."

Rev. 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, **Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord** from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that **they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.**

Summary

- Cain and Abel were “God Conscious,” worshipping God in their own way.
- God accepted Abel’s, but rejected Cain’s offering.
- Though Cain’s offering was refused by God, Cain was given opportunity to correct it.

Gen. 4:6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 **If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.** And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

- Instead of facing his sin and making amends, Cain rebelled and killed his own brother.
- Killing Abel did not justify Cain.

Luke 16:15 And he said unto them, **Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts:** for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

- Abel faced an unforeseeable challenge BY FAITH!

Conclusion

- Cain and Abel confronted an unforeseeable challenge when each made an offering.
- Cain went his own way and was rejected. Abel moved “by faith” and his obedience was accepted.

1 Sam. 15:22 And Samuel said, *Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? **Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.***

- As we confront the unforeseeable future, we must keep walking by faith, because we love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jn. 14:15 **If ye love me, keep my commandments.** ...

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, **If a man love me, he will keep my words:** and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

1 Jn 5:3 For **this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments:** and **his commandments are not grievous.**

4 For **whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.**

5 **Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**