

HEBREWS: REPLACING MAN'S RITUALISM WITH CHRIST
"Part XV: Practicing Godly Worship By Faith At All Costs"
(Hebrews 11:1, 4-6; Genesis 4:1-8)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The **way** we worship God has become a rather significant issue in Christendom today:

(1) Many of us were raised in churches where we were to practice infant baptism, participate in the weekly mass, be confirmed in the Church, have last rites said near death and other alleged "sacraments" if we would expect to enter heaven.

However, we have since learned the message of Ephesians 2:8-9, that we are saved by grace and not by works. We have gone out on a limb even with fellow close associates and family members in standing against these matters involving our worship, all to obey Christ and hold to the Gospel of salvation by faith in Christ.

(2) However, **beyond** these issues of worship, other issues exist in gospel-preaching churches that can strain Church unity to the limit!

(a) I once worked in a Bible-teaching church where the song leader was doing his best to innovate and spark **life** into the service. Yet, mostly I heard a lot of mumbling among the people about the "clown" up front. After he left, somewhat to my dread, I was urged to lead the congregational singing, knowing I was in the firing line!

(b) In a youth group where I once attended, we sang a chorus entitled, "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder". I used to sing it because it was in the song book until I heard a Bible teacher on a tape telling us that there was little theological value or truth to the song! Since then, I have noticed more and more choruses that are either weak theologically, or actually erroneous! Whether to sing or not to sing such songs in a group is a big issue in many churches today!

Well, should we strive to worship God exactly the WAY Scripture teaches, or do we "fudge" a bit to keep harmony with relationships?! How important is HOW we worship to God?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "From what the Bible teaches, I must worship God in a WAY that DIFFERS from what close friends practice. However, I may risk serious relationship trials if I heed Scripture, so what NOW?!"

- I. **The author of Hebrews urged his Jewish Christian readers to obey Scripture in worshiping the heavenly, UNSEEN Christ rather than reverting back to using the Jewish temple due to peer pressure, Heb. 9:7-10, 11-14 (sermon XII); Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, p. 1729.**
- II. **This urging fit a LIFE of FAITH in obedience to Scripture versus heeding the pressures of VISIBLE, FALSE entities, Heb. 11:1.**
- III. **In an APPLICATION of this, the readers were to follow Abel's Old Testament example to worship uprightly versus the pressure to the contrary of a family member, Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:1-8.**
 - A. Cain and Abel are repeatedly contrasted in the Hebrew phrasings of Genesis 4:1-8, cf. Alan Ross in Bible Knowledge Com., O. T., p. 34.
 - B. This **contrast** shows how Abel's righteous act countered Cain's sin much to his humiliation in light of Cain's **expected role** in the family:
 1. When Eve gave birth to Cain, she praised God for granting her an offspring in spite of the curse on childbearing (3:16), naming him Cain, or "I have acquired" as a result, *Ibid.*, Ryrie, *ftn.* to Gen. 4:1.
 2. This good start for Cain set an implied *expectation* for him to be the "hope" in his generation's **honor** of *God!* (*Ibid.*, B.K.C., O.T.)
 3. **Yet, CAIN disobeyed God on worship where ABEL obeyed, so Cain felt ANGER that he had been "shown up" in his ROLE:**
 - a. Though Scripture does not condemn a fruit sacrifice (cf. Lev. 2:1, 4, 14-15), Cain's fruit offering violated what God had then **told** Cain to offer. Thus, God rejected it, Genesis 4:3, 5a.
 - b. Besides, Cain did not offer God the **best**, or the *firstfruits* of his crops, exposing a sinful, halfhearted worship, Genesis 4:3.
 - c. In **contrast**, Abel *risked* trouble with **Cain**, appearing to show Cain up spitefully by **obeying** God: he used the right sacrifice in contrast to Cain, and conversely gave of the **best part** (fat) of the **best** of the **flock** (firstborn) that he had, Gen. 4:4; H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, v. I, p. 196.

- d. When God had respect to Abel's sacrifice but not to Cain's, Cain refused to bear responsibility for his own sinful failure, but took out his embarrassment at **failing** to be the spiritual *leader* expected of him to take offense at **Abel's** actions, Gen. 4:4b-5b.
 - e. We know Abel's attitude was not malicious against Cain as **God** urged **Cain** to **repent** and bring **another** sacrifice, Gen. 4:6-7.
- C. The **PRICE** of upright worship on Abel's part, in going against the rub of family ties, was very high: he was **martyred** by his *brother* for it:
- 1. We read in Genesis 4:8a that Cain spoke with Abel without telling us what he actually said in the process. Yet, in the Hebrew language's context what was said is displayed in what next happened: Cain thus asked Abel to go with him into the field, Leupold, *Ibid.*, p. 203. Cain planned to do something with his brother in private so as not to be further publicly humiliated!
 - 2. What Cain did was to **kill** Abel, venting his wrath on his innocent brother instead of accepting his own guilt for his fall from being the expected spiritual leader of the siblings by his parents, Gen. 4:8b!
- D. **Nevertheless, though paying such a high price, in the long-term, Abel's brave and upright worship was worth his upright stand:**
- 1. Though he has been dead for many thousands of years, Abel's brave and upright worship still stands as testimony to future generations of the value of true worship at any cost, Hebrews 11:4c.
 - 2. Because of his legacy, Abel is respected by us, Heb. 11:2 with 11:4.
 - 3. That legacy makes his action bear eternal fruit, for it encourages the rest of us to obey God in our worship at all costs, cf. 1 John 2:17b.

Application: *To please God in worship, we must (1) believe on Christ as Savior from sin to become true worshipers of God, John 3:16; 4:22-23. (2) Then, we fellowship with God by (a) confession of sin (1 John 1:9) and (b) dependence on the indwelling Holy Spirit for behavior control (Gal. 5:16-23) to (c) obey Scripture, 1 John 2:3. (3) Applied to worship, we obey Scripture on HOW to worship, and that with a wholehearted attitude no matter what the cost in personal relationships with opponents to the contrary! In practical terms, this may involve our (a) NOT partaking in a Mass or practicing infant baptism as these push a false gospel contrary to Gal. 1:8-9. (b) It may involve stands like refusing to raise hands in worship, signaling one holds to a non-experience-based theology in accord with Deut. 13:1-4, or using only instruments and music that protect the consciences of all in an assembly, 1 Cor. 6:12a; 8:10-13.*

Lesson: *The Hebrew Christian readers were to follow the example of Old Testament Abel in RESISTING pressures from countrymen to worship at the Jerusalem temple and rather worship Christ in heaven at all costs!*

Conclusion: (to illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

When Mildred Loveland came to Nepaug Church in 1948, she had already been a Registered Nurse of the Hartford Hospital for 21 years, and played the violin as an accomplished instrumentalist.

But, in the course of time, Mildred became aware that there was no organist to help with the worship music at the Church. She could play the violin well, but the violin by itself was not that effective an instrument toward helping with the congregational singing.

So, characteristic of Mildred, she thought of the welfare of the Church and thus decided to teach herself to play the **organ**!

Because of that choice, Nepaug Church was the richer over the years of Mildred's tenure! For several years when she was still in good enough health to drive over to the Church, I heard her faithfully practice in the sanctuary during the week while I was in my office. She last played for the funeral of a long-time associate, and seeing the aged Mildred minister on the organ was a real treat to all of us present!

Mildred Loveland's desire to HELP EDIFY at Nepaug Church required that she sacrificially go the extra mile. INSTEAD of keeping the violin as her forte just because she was already accomplished at it, she taught herself another instrument all over again. That way she could best help in the quality of worship at Nepaug. Now she has gone home to be with the Lord and will undoubtedly get a reward for that CHOICE affecting our worship.

Accordingly, all that we do in our WORSHIP needs to be PURE before God, and that involves how we interact with OTHERS in the process! Let us follow in the example of Abel in this most important area of service to the Lord to be found upright in what we do, and wholehearted in how we perform that worship!