

News & Notes

Sunday, February 1, 2009

Remember in Prayer: David Anderson; Arland Anderson; Connie Atry; Mary Bailey; Mary Elizebeth Buxton; Mary Childers; Gentry Cox; J.C. Enlow; Collette Ford; Taylor Goode; Lettie Mae Hunt; Dot Ketchum; John and Deliah Mann; Nell McMurfee; Diane Mize; Wayne Orman; Alva Powell; Ann Ray; Katherine Shaw; Calvin Ursery; Joan Wilkerson; Alvie Williford;

Sympathy is extended to the families of Daryl Alberson and Bryan Little.

Pantry item for the month of February is pasta.

Ashland Events: Today: periodic singing at Briarcrest Extended Care at 4:00 PM.

Area Events: February 19: Freed-Hardeman Associates' benefit dinner at the Beech Hill dining hall at 6:30 PM; February 21: Teacher's workshop at the Batesville congregation;

Sermon in Preview:

AM: John Mark—The Rest of the Story

PM: Joseph—Providence at Work

For the Record (January 25, 2008):

Attendance: 78 Contribution: \$1195.00 Budget: \$1452.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Worship 10:30 AM
Worship 5:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King
Jeff Roberson
Carrol Street

ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

"Note Those Who So Walk"

Philippians 3:17

2Thessalonians 3:14

"Note Those Who So Walk"

Abel — Faith and Sacrifice

Hebrews 11:4

Jeremy Northrop

The writer of Hebrews mentions several heroes and heroines of faith in Hebrews 11. The first among these to be mentioned is Abel. Often times, when one considers the story of Cain and Abel, the emphasis is placed upon Cain. He is noted to be the first murderer and the focus is on the way he treats Abel and responds to God regarding Abel. While this negative aspect of this story is noteworthy and needs to be examined, the focus of the writer of Hebrews is on Abel. The application that can be made by Christians today is the way in which Abel exercised his great faith.

Hebrews 11:1 gives a description of faith: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." He provides an illustration of faith in mentioning the creation of the world in verse three. Hebrews 11:4 begins the list of men and women who are recorded to have had great faith and the actions which they did by faith. The first of this list is Abel:

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained

witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks (Hebrews 11:4).

Paul had some interesting conclusions about faith. In Romans 10:17, he declared, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The implications of this passage are clear. Faith is not something that is done out of feelings, what others might say, or any host of other sources. Faith comes by the word or will of God. What Christians today do in faith, they do by that which has been revealed. Acceptable worship, for example, is done by faith which means that it is as Jesus declared in John 4:24, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

This means that if Abel’s sacrifice was by faith (and the writer of Hebrews declares that it was), then it had to be according to the will of God. How did Abel know the will of God? It must have been revealed to him some time prior to the offering of his “more excellent sacrifice.” Otherwise, the sacrifice could not have been made by faith. Some declare that Cain’s sacrifice was not acceptable because of its content. This concept can be neither proven nor disproven. Grain sacrifices were certainly outlined in the Old Testament (see Leviticus 2:1-3). The real difference was that Abel’s sacrifice was out of faith while Cain’s sacrifice was evil. John stated that Cain’s actions were an indication that he hated his brother:

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

There are some great things that we learn about Abel from Hebrews 11:4. First, we learn that he was a righteous man. He offered a sacrifice by faith and the text says this indicates to us that he was a righteous man. In fact, it says that God testified of his gifts. This tells Christians today something very, very valuable. When people today do actions out of faith, then their actions show them to be righteous people. It takes a righteous man to offer acceptable sacrifices. David said, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, But the prayer of the upright is His delight” (Proverbs 15:8).

Another thing we learn from the righteous deeds of Abel is that while he is dead, his faith still communicates to man today. This is true because the Holy Spirit has saw fit to preserve the account of Cain and Abel for people to read today (see 2Timothy 3:16). His blood also cries out in communication to man today. His blood cried out to God as He said “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10). Jesus also spoke of this in Matthew 23:35 when He said, “...that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.” Hebrews 11:4 attests that Abel’s faith continues to speak. His faith is seen in his sacrifice to God, by God’s testimony, and by his righteous life.

Abel had a faith worth imitating. He followed after God’s will, not his own. He did things in God’s fashion, not as he wanted to do them. Today, Christians everywhere need to follow after this godly example. They need faith that is genuine faith, not according to men. They need faith that will be seen in action. They need faith that will have the value of communicating to others the righteous life that needs to be lived in this life.