

The More Excellent Sacrifice

by Henry Law

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in receiving the 'more excellent sacrifice' of Jesus Christ, which brings salvation, peace, sanctification, and holiness.

Scripture: Genesis 4:4, John 3:36, Romans 10:17, Philippians 3:8, Hebrews 9:22, Hebrews 10:14, Hebrews 11:4, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 3:12

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Atoning Sacrifice"

Description

Henry Law preaches on the contrasting lives of Abel and Cain, emphasizing Abel's faith and obedience in offering a sacrifice that pleased God, while Cain's self-will, pride, and unbelief led to his downfall. Abel's act of faith in offering the firstborn of his flock as a sacrifice demonstrates his humility, love, and reliance on God's promise of redemption through a coming Savior. In contrast, Cain's rejection of God's ordained sacrifice due to self-will, pride, and unbelief serves as a warning to all who neglect the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which alone can save and bring peace and sanctification.

Transcript

"But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering." Genesis 4:4

A long course of years has fled since the earth drank in the blood of Abel. His was the earliest of all graves. But he is not silent in it. His faith has an ever-living voice. No time can stop its warning sound. "By it, he, being dead, yet speaks." Such is the heaven-told fact. Surely then there must be much most worthy of notice in his testimony, since it thus rolls on from age to age. Its subjects must be all-important. It is so--none can be compared to it. It is so--for it proclaims the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the purpose of its call to every child of man, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Trust in His blood. Plead nothing but His death before God. Make His cross your only hope.

Reader! perhaps you have never found all this Gospel in Abel's brief life. But it is there. Unfold with me the record; and let us do so in humble prayer, that the Spirit may graciously teach. For without His aid, none ever see the Lord. Abel stands before us in the lovely character of one whose spirit rejoices in God his Savior. This is the prominent feature in his portrait. He selects the firstborn of his flock. He brings it as an offering. He lays it on the altar. He raises the knife. He takes the life, as a debt due to God. Such is his conduct. But what moves him to this mode of worship? He must have some grand intent. Let us trace it.

Did reason convince him that he was a sinner, and show him that, as such, his own life was forfeited? Did it whisper the hope, that he might recover it, by giving another in its place? Did it suggest the idea that the death of a guiltless victim might be the release of a guilty soul? That could not be. A sinner's blindness never suspects the real desert of sin--much less can it imagine a blood-stained ransom. There is God in that thought.

But while we thus inquire, Scripture draws back the veil and tells us the principle, which lived in his heart. It was faith. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Thus the case is cleared. For faith is trust in God, and humble reliance on His Word. God speaks--and faith hears--believes--obeys. Faith can breathe only in the atmosphere of revelation. It can stand only on the rock of divine promise. It has no ear, but for heavenly tidings. It can read only what the finger of God writes. It can always give a reason, even this, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

We are sure, then, that since Abel offered in faith, he was following the positive directions of God. We are thus led to read many of the workings of his soul in this service. It cannot be, but that his parents had made known to him, in terms of shame, the enormity of their willful fall. Hence he knew how it occurred, that he was born a child of wrath, and an heir of corrupted nature. But could they pause here? Oh! no. Adoring gratitude would constrain them to add that pardon was provided, and that a Redeemer, all-qualified and mighty to save, was coming to lay down His life. They would teach, too, that a holy rite had been ordained by God to exercise faith, and to keep alive the expectation of the atoning lamb. This was the Bible unto Abel. Here he would read the main lessons of the Gospel of salvation. He staggered not through unbelief. He embraced the truth wholly unto life eternal. In the twilight of the world, he saw the Sun of Righteousness.

Reader! does not this bring condemnation to multitudes, who in the full blaze of light never get saving faith? We thus gain insight into the spiritual man of Abel. He stands at this altar, a man of humility--faith--love. He is full of self-abasement. He abhors himself in dust and ashes. His act confesses that he is a lost, and ruined, and undone sinner. He sees that eternal rejection is his due. He feels that he has no power of himself to help himself.

But he is full of faith. In looking off from himself he looks upward to another. He knows, that in the heaven of heavens there lives a Savior ready to fly down with healing in His wings. He sees in the blood of his victim, a pledge of the blood prepared to cleanse him to the very uttermost. He is full, too, of sanctifying love. For no man can trust in mercy so full, so unmerited, so suitable, so effectual, without feeling, that thus purchased from perdition, he must live a willing sacrifice to the God of grace.

At this time there was another by the side of Abel. But now a great gulf parts them. It was his brother Cain. He was born in like guilt. He doubtless shared the same parental instruction. In outward advantages there was no difference. But is their spiritual character the same? Far otherwise. The truth which melts the one, only hardens the other. One receives the blessing. The other abides under the curse. Their dealings with God manifest them. It is a sad sight. But we must not shrink from observing how Cain discovers himself. He seems to come to God. This is good. But what does he bring?--"The fruit of the ground." The first appearance is fair. But the disguise falls; and we see the hideous marks, which prove that he "was of that wicked one."

We find self-will at the root of his religion. God has ordained the way in which He was to be approached. Cain thinks that he can use a course more suited to the majesty of heaven and the dignity of man. He

places his puny reason above the counsels of the All-wise. He turns from a revealed will to grope in the darkness of his own vain conceits.

Reader! is not this a pitiful case? But it is the delusion of many. "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools." Self-will first makes a god--then a religion--and at last a pit of destruction for itself.

We next see pride in him. This must be, for it is the first-born of unenlightened reason. Creation leaves man dust. Sin makes him the vilest of dust. But still he walks vaingloriously, until grace opens his eyes, and lays him low in his proper humility. So it is with Cain. He feels neither sin, nor need of pardon. Therefore he proudly tramples on an offering, which tells him of nature's pollution. High-minded, he will not wash in the blood of the Redeemer, that he may be purified. Thus he is a model of that class, who, in every age, say, "We are rich and have need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

There was unbelief, too. God had set before him the redemption of Jesus Christ. It was proclaimed in promise and in type. What more could have been done? But Cain believes not. Unbelief closes his eyes--he will not look to Jesus. It closes his hand--he will not lay hold on Him. It clogs his feet--he will not run to Him. It closes his ear--he will not hear of Him. It closes his mouth--he will not cry unto Him. It closes his heart--he will not receive Him. Do you marvel at his folly? Take heed! Take heed! Conscience may know, "You are the man."

The end is quickly told. Bad soon becomes worse. Unbelief swiftly goes down to its place, where the Gospel is never preached, and hope never comes. God expostulates. Cain yields not. He sees the righteousness of faith, only to hate it. He seeks, by the murder of his faithful brother, to extinguish the light which upbraids him. He falls into the recklessness of despair. And now, from his everlasting chains, he cries, "Beware of rejecting the more excellent sacrifice."

Reader! it may be, that, careful about many things, you have, until now, been careless concerning that which should be the main concern of man. Listen, then, for a moment, I beseech you. Do you not hear a startling question from this story? It is this. Are you a follower of Abel or of Cain? In simpler terms, are you receiving or neglecting the Lord Jesus? I say the Lord Jesus. For this is the real point. He was the end of the "more excellent sacrifice," which Abel brought, which Cain scorned. He is the Lamb appointed by God, accepted of God, and led to our very doors in our Bibles. Who can utter the mighty motives which urge the sinner to avail himself of this sacrifice? They are more than the moments of eternity. Each speaks as loud as the thunders of Sinai. Each has a thrilling clang, as the trumpet of God.

Only consider its real power. It is just this. It saves forever all the souls of all poor sinners, who present it to God in faith. Now, is not your soul precious? It is so beyond all thought. It needs redemption from wrath and ruin. Are you prepared to offer its equal price? Suppose the balances of heaven brought out. What can you place as a counterpoise in the counter-scale? You have nothing, but what is lighter than vanity. Produce now "the more excellent sacrifice." Its worth is beyond all weight. Offer this, and you are saved. Will you now be Cain-like, and reject "the more excellent sacrifice"? Your sins are many. The sands of the sea-shore are few in comparison. But each must be blotted out, or you die. A sin unpardoned cannot enter heaven. What, then, will you do? One thing is clear. You cannot undo the done. You cannot recall the past. But behold "the more excellent sacrifice." It cleanses from all sin. Through it all manner of sin is forgiven to the children of men. It makes the scarlet, white as now, and the crimson, like wool. It changes the vilest into perfect purity. Its merits can render you spotless.

Will you be Cain-like, and reject "the more excellent sacrifice"? You need peace. Satan threatens. The law condemns. Conscience accuses. Your wounds are deep. Your burdens heavy. Memory shows frightful specters. The heart bleeds. You go mourning and heavy laden. You look to self. It is despair. You look to the world. It mocks your woe. You look to reform. It is a broken cistern. You fly to outside performances of devotion. They are reeds, which break and pierce the hand.

How different is "the more excellent sacrifice!" It tells you that God is satisfied, guilt remitted, and all accusers silent. It thus brings peace--perfect peace, which passes all understanding. Will you now be Cain-like, and reject "the more excellent sacrifice"?

You desire sanctification. You pant to be conformed to the image of Christ. This is well; for it is an eternal law of God, that without holiness no man shall see His face. But holiness can be learned only at this altar. It is a sight of the dying Jesus, which kills lust. It is the shadow of the cross, which causes evil to wither. A lover of iniquity cannot dwell on this hallowed ground. But there never was a holy man, who did not live in glory in "the more excellent sacrifice." If ever you would walk with God in true righteousness, you must not be Cain-like, and reject it. But remember this sacrifice is only one. Jesus by the one offering of Himself, once made, "has perfected forever those who are sanctified." Pass by it, and you can find none else. Pass by it today, and you may seek it in vain tomorrow.

Hear, then, the voice of Abel, which calls you without delay to hasten to the one altar of salvation. Reader! turn not from these humble lines, until in truth you can say, I rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, I find Him to be "the more excellent sacrifice."

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