

**The 1689 Confession; Chapter 8 – “Of Christ the Mediator”, Message # 14 –
“Abel’s Sacrifice & Christ”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class,
by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 22nd, 2020.**

Paragraph 6 – Although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ till after his incarnation, *yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages, successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed which should bruise the serpent’s head; (h)and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, (i) being the same yesterday, and today and for ever.

(*2nd Corinthians 4: 10; Hebrews 4: 2; 1st Peter 1: 10-11; h) Revelation 13: 8; i) Hebrews 13: 8)

We are told here that the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ till after His Incarnation, but still the virtue, efficacy, and benefit of that redemption (that is, the merit, the value, and the power to bestow the tangible spiritual blessings of salvation) were really and actually communicated by the Triune God to the elect in all ages, successively from the beginning of the world. This was done, it says in this paragraph, though promises, types, and sacrifices wherein He was revealed. These were prefigurations of the priesthood and the sacrifice of Christ who is the Mediator and High Priest of our faith. The first of these prefiguring types of Christ and His sacrifice was Abel, the first martyr for the cause of Christ. Let’s read about it.

Genesis 4: 1-11 – “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the LORD.’ “Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel.” “Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.” “And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.” “Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat.” “And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering.” “And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.” “So the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry?’ “And why has your countenance fallen?’ “If you do well, will you not be accepted?’ “And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.” “And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” “Now 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 killed him.” “Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ “He said, ‘I do not know.’ “Am I my brother’s keeper?’ “And He said, ‘What have you done?’ “The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.” “So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.”

1. Two different forms of worship are seen here in Cain and Abel. One was not regarded by God and the other was.

Cain is saying – I will worship God with what I want to bring to Him and He should accept it, seeing as I have worked hard to obtain what I have brought to Him. But Abel is saying – I see myself as a sinner by nature and practice. He is saying – I need to be reconciled to you God. And so I will, by faith in God’s promise of a coming Seed, bring a living sacrifice from my own herds, knowing that it was with a living sacrifice that You, God, clothed my parents, Adam and Eve with.

Abel was saying – Faith in God’s word, and His way, and His plan of salvation is how I can please God in bringing this sacrifice. He was stating that by his bringing this excellent sacrifice that he was believing in the gospel. He also showed forth his faith through bringing this sacrifice to God as an act of repentance and worship; looking forward to what the Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, would come to do. That is, that in the fullness of time; He would lay down His life as a sacrifice for sinners and for sins. Because Christ was the promised Seed who would become the Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world.

We need to think about this idea more, that a person must have faith in God and in His promise of Christ in order that any sacrifice that they offer to God can be accepted by God, or please God. So turn with me over to –

Hebrews chapter 11, verse 4 – “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.”

It is so very important that we see that God must accept our persons before He can accept our works. Many people have this backward. They think that they should try to get God to accept their works in order that He might accept their persons.

William Perkins in his commentary on Hebrews 11: 4 (Vol. 3, P. 41, 42) says this – “Cain sinned not only in hating and murdering his brother, in lying and dissembling (trying to conceal his true motives, and feelings, and beliefs from God), but Cain sinned also, even in offering sacrifice.” “And Abel’s sacrifice had been a damnable sin, but that his person was justified before God.” “And the reason of all this is God, for nothing in the work is able to make an action acceptable to God but only the acceptation of the person by Christ.” “This being so, it stands us everyone in hand to look to ourselves and to labor about all things for faith and repentance so that our persons may be accepted righteous before God, and thereby our actions accepted also.” “If it be a miserable thing that all your actions, even holy actions should be sins, then labor to be justified; for that only can make your works accepted.” “If not, then though you labor never so much to be approved in the world and set never so glorious a show upon your works to the eyes of men, they are all abominable sins in the sight of God.” “And at the day of judgment they shall go for no better.”

“Preach and teach all your life long; nay give your life to die for religion; give all your goods to the poor; deprive your flesh of all delights; build churches, colleges, bridges, highways, etc. – and there may come a poor shepherd, and for his keeping of his sheep be accepted when you with all this pomp of outward holiness may be rejected.” “And why is this?” “Only because he had faith, and you have none.” “His person was justified before God, and yours is not.” “Therefore, let this be my counsel from Abel: labor not so much to work glorious works as that which you do, do it in faith.” “Faith make the meanest work accepted, and want of faith makes the most glorious work rejected.” “For so says the text: Abel must be accepted, else his sacrifice is not.” “Thus we see Abel was just, and God so accounted him.”

Perkins also says on P. 40 – “Secondly, observe he says, ‘Abel was approved’ and accepted of God.” “How proves he that?” “Because his works pleased God, as who say, his works cannot please God unless his person do.” “Therefore in that his works do, thence he concludes that his person did.” “It is the reason of the Holy Ghost and therefore infallible.” “In the framing of this reason, the Holy Ghost teaches us a great point of our religion – namely, that first a man’s person must please God afore his actions can.” “And after the person, then the actions.” “This is plain in these words, for it is said he ‘first obtained witness that he was righteous’ himself, and then God testified of his gifts.” “So likewise more plainly, God had respect ‘first to Abel, and then to his offering’ (Genesis 4: 4) so that the truth is manifest: no work pleases God afore the worker do.”

2. It says that God testified of his gifts and through it he being dead still speaks.

God testified of Abel’s gifts; that is, He testified of his having offered a living sacrifice of the first of his flocks of sheep. He sacrificed them in a blood sacrifice to God, and God probably testified his approval of this sacrifice by fire from heaven, or some other indication of acceptance. This is what God did with Aaron in Leviticus 9: 24, with Solomon in 2nd Chronicles 7: 1, and with Elijah in 2nd Kings 18: 28.

I want you to see however that Abel went further, and he ended up suffering and dying for righteousness sake. He sealed his sacrifice with his blood and thus he became a type of Christ, not only in regard to the sacrifice that He brought, but himself being killed by his brother. Abel’s blood cried out to God. He was the first martyr for the sake of Christ and the cause of truth and righteousness. His death glorified God in

every way from the standpoint of his righteousness. It spoke of the great sin of Cain in putting him to death for his doing what was right. Cain hated Abel because his offering was accepted and his was not. Abel's blood cried out to God for vengeance, but not forgiveness. When Christ came to His brethren, the Jews, He was hated by them without a real righteous cause it says. But there was a cause in that just like Cain, the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Rulers of Israel thought that their works should be accepted by God, as the means of His saving them. They envied Christ for the evident blessing of God upon His ministry, and so they put Him to death, justifying it by denying His identity as the Son of God and their promised Messiah.

But Christ in His offering of Himself to God as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins, His blood cried out not only for vengeance, but also forgiveness for the sinner who puts their trust in Him, and in His finished work of redemption, as the High Priest of our faith.

Hebrews chapter 12, verse 24 says to those who have come to Jesus for salvation that they have come "to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel." Jesus' sacrifice of Himself, as the High Priest of our faith, speaks better things than Abel in that it speaks peace and pardon to the sinner's conscience; the one trusting in Him. Even some of those Jews who put Jesus to death were later able to by grace, repent of their sins, and receive Him to themselves as their Savior and Lord.

So, let us see that Christ's sacrifice of His precious blood at the cross, His being a perfect Man and God made manifest in the flesh, speaks better things by far than Abel, in that no man can by any means redeem his brother, or give a ransom for his soul. He should cease trying, it is too costly it says in Psalm 49, verse 8. All men should cease trying to redeem their brother, or even themselves in the sight of God. They cannot do it, that they should live eternally, and not see the Pit. But Jesus' blood speaks much better things than that of Abel, because He is the only Mediator between God and men, and the value of His precious blood infinite; abundantly able to save to uttermost all that come to God through Him.