

“By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice” Hebrews chapter 11 verse 4

Way back in the book of Genesis Cain and Abel, two sons of Adam and Eve, each offer a sacrifice to God. A clear distinction is made between their offerings. Cain *“presented some of the land's produce as an offering to the Lord.”* Abel *“some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions.”*

The distinction is not between the monetary value of their offerings. Abel's probably did amount to more than Cain's in that sense, but that's not the point. What is important is that Abel gave the best that he had, while Cain's offering was no more than a ritual token.

So Abel's gift was accepted, but Cain's was not, not because of their relative value, but because of the attitude of their hearts.

Jesus also made a comparison between two types of givers. He saw the rich putting large amounts of money into the temple treasury, and a poor woman putting in a couple of pennies. She, he said, had put in more than they did, because in her poverty she gave all she had to live on, whereas they had given easily out of their wealth.

In the Old Testament law of God the Jews were expected to give one tenth of their income to God as an offering. But Jesus pointed out that this was a bare minimum when it came to giving. What does it mean, he asked, if those who give neglect compassion and justice?

So Paul reveals the kind of attitude God looks for in our giving when he says *“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”*.

We may sometimes find ourselves wondering why some people seem to enjoy greater blessing than we do. We may even become jealous. Cain became resentful when God accepted Abel's sacrifice. God warned him *“Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent? If you do what is right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is waiting at your door: Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”* Cain killed his brother. Could it not be that one of the reasons God blesses people is because they offer what is acceptable to him?

God is not impressed with half hearted token offerings. Paul tells the Roman Christians what is the offering that is pleasing to God; *“....present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.”*

When we give our lives and all that we are and all that we have to God, then we know we can trust him to provide for all our needs. We don't need to ask the question “If I give God everything, what will there be left for me?” God is able to give us back immeasurably more than we give him, materially and spiritually. I'm not pushing giving as a means of achieving personal prosperity, but I can bear witness that God will always provide for his children.

Prayer

Father, thank you that you promise to provide all that we need for life and godliness in Jesus Christ, and that we do not need to hoard to ourselves earthly wealth. Thank you that you give us resources in this world; that you enable us to produce wealth. We simply ask that we will be enabled to use what we have for your glory and for the honour of your name. In Jesus name, amen.

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