

The Faith of Abel

Andrew Murray:

Faith means sacrifice. We are so accustomed to think of faith as the opened hand or heart which receives and takes in what God gives that we forget that faith in its deepest meaning consists of giving as well as receiving. In fact we cannot receive until we give, and we cannot receive more than we give. The reason why our faith so often fails in its attempts to receive is that it wants to do so without the giving. Faith means sacrifice: the going out of self, the giving up of self, in order to find one's hopes and life in another. The very first element of worship is sacrifice, because it is the simple and complete expression of what God claims, of our relation to him and our hope in him. As the life of faith grows stronger in us and its heavenly significance becomes clearer, we shall see that sacrifice is its strength and value. By faith we offer a sacrifice which is acceptable to God, and this assures us that we are righteous and pleasing in his sight.

Faith finds the lamb for the sacrifice. Why didn't Abel just bow before God and give himself to him as a living sacrifice? Why did he not simply, in an act of consecration and self-dedication, offer himself to the Lord, utterly and entirely? What prompted him to seek a lamb and shed its blood and lay its body before God to be consumed? The reason was this: Abel felt himself to be a sinner. He knew that his sinful life could not be a sacrifice which was acceptable to God.

(Excerpted from *The Promise of the Spirit*, pg. 71)