

INTRODUCTION

According to Google, there are thousands of Halls of fame, Walls of fame, and Walks of fame around the world. We are familiar with the major hall of fames like the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and the Major League Baseball Hall of fame, but there are also many you've never heard of. These are some actual halls of fame that are little less known, but they actually exist. If you're in Milwaukee you can visit the International Clown Hall of Fame. For a price you can put on a clown costume and make up to have a Clown encounter of the creepy kind.

Or if you're an RVer you can visit the RV/Manufactured Housing Hall of Fame in Elkhart, Indiana—a least that's where they were last week—knowing RVers they might have hit the road.

Texas is famous for many reasons, but I didn't know that we have the Cockroach Hall of Fame in Plano, Texas. They have a small Statue of Liberty holding up a roach instead of the torch. No kidding. But my favorite display is where they have a cockroach dressed up in sequins playing a tiny grand piano with a candelabra and they call him ... wait for it ... Liberoachi. I'm not making this up.

And for your polka fans, there's the International Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame, if you go, don't polka any holes in the displays.

But my favorite, and now on my bucket list, is to visit the Pig Hill of Fame, at Poole's BBQ in East Ellija, GA. They have over 3,000 signs and billboards commemorating famous pigs. The owner likes to ham it up so he calls his museum the Taj Mah Hog. And the Dining Room is called the Hog Rock Café. I already like that guy.

Congratulations if you've ever been named to any hall of fame; but just remember those people (or pigs or bugs) are selected by other people. However, when we come to Hebrews 11 we see that God has chosen to list some individuals who are named in His Faith Hall of Fame. Sixteen Faith Heroes are mentioned by name, but many others are included whose names are not listed. And finally, don't despair if you've never been named to a human hall of fame. Every single one of us who have faith in God is included in this list in Hebrews 11.

Over the next couple of months, we're going to be examining the lives of these heroes of faith. In this message we'll talk about the first two inductees, Abel and Enoch. The phrase "by faith" appears three times in these verses.

Hebrews 11:4-6 (CSB). "BY FAITH Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. BY FAITH he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith. BY FAITH Enoch was taken away, and so he did not experience death. He was not to be found because God took him away. For before he was taken away, he was approved as one who pleased God. Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter. One of the men who taught me the most about faith and trusting God was Manley Beasley. Manley lived by faith. He suffered for many years from kidney failure and often checked out of hospital to go preach and then checked back in after he preached on faith. He was promoted to Heaven in 1990 at age 58. My friend Lanny Bridges reminded me of Manley's definition of faith. I want to share it with you. He said, "Faith is believing God that something is SO, when it is NOT SO, in order for it to BE SO, because with God it is ALREADY SO."

As we begin our stroll through God's Faith Hall of Fame, we're going to examine the faith of two men, Abel and Enoch. I had originally planned to talk about Noah, too. But as I got into this message I found that there was so much I wanted to share that it came down to either preaching today for an hour, or splitting the message into two parts. So, we'll talk about Noah's faith next week.

1. ABEL: WORSHIPPING BY FAITH

Worshipping God is an important responsibility, and Cain and Able give us the first example of two people approaching God with a sacrifice in worship. The writer of Hebrews tells us, "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did...and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith." (Hebrews 11:4 CSB)

Regardless of your political persuasion, you must agree that we have a very dysfunctional First Family. I can't keep all the children straight. Who belongs to whom? And they always seem to be doing or saying something to get them in trouble. The First Family is extremely dysfunctional. Oh, I'm not talking about President Trump's family. I'm talking about the REAL first family—Adam and Eve!

After they are banished from the garden, they start having children. Their first child was Cain, so they started raising Cain. Their second son was Abel, and their third son was Seth. The Bible says Adam lived for 800 years after Seth was born and fathered a veritable army of sons and daughters. These three are the only ones who are named.

There is a joke about Cain pointing out a beautiful garden guarded by two angels with flaming swords. He asked Adam, "What is that place?" Adam said, "That's where we used to live before your mother ate us out of house and home!"

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had unfettered access to their Creator. They could approach Him freely with no barriers. But after sin entered their lives, they were evicted from the Garden. But they still had a desire to worship God, but they had to approach him with some kind of sacrifice afterward. As Cain and Abel grew up, they also found in themselves a desire to worship God. Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer. So the day came to worship God through making a sacrificial offering to him.

Let's read about it from Genesis, "In the course of time Cain presented some of the land's produce as an offering to the Lord. And Abel also presented an offering—some of the firstborn

of his flock and their fat portions. The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious." (Genesis 4:3-5 CSB)

The Bible says Abel is dead, but he is still speaking to us today. So what is he saying? He gives us our first Faith Lesson: Faith-driven offerings please God. When Jesus was talking to the woman at the well, He said that true worshippers must worship God in spirit and in truth. That means we have to have the right attitude—spirit—but we must worship according to God's truth. We must worship the way God tells us to worship in His Word.

In the two offerings of Cain and Abel, we see the difference between religion and saving faith. Religion is humanity reaching up to God; salvation is God reaching down to humanity. Religion is based on human performance; salvation is based upon heavenly pardon. Cain's offering of produce represented the work of his hands. He had tilled the soil, planted the crops, and picked the crops. His offering represents human performance.

Abel offered a sacrificial lamb. Where did he get the idea to offer a slain lamb? No doubt both Cain and Abel had both been taught all about God by their parents. Like good parents, Adam and Eve had instructed their boys in the way of sacrificial offerings. Adam and Eve learned in Chapter 3 that they could not approach God covered in the works of their hands, the fig leaf garments they had made. They learned that the only way their shame could be covered was with animal skins which required the shedding of the blood of an innocent animal. God had clothed them with the skin of an animal, most likely a lamb.

If you had been judging the two sacrifices that day, you would have given Cain the blue ribbon and would have turned away from Abel's bloody offering. But Abel's attitude was one of faith. Abel had enough faith to believe that one day a Lamb would die and take away his sin, and God recognized his faith and rewarded his faith by accepting his worship.

In essence Abel was saying to God, "God, I know I'm a sinner, and I don't deserve your forgiveness. But you promised my parents that a Redeemer would come to bruise the head of the serpent. Please accept the life of this little lamb in my place as forgive my sins for the sake of the future Lamb who is to come." That is saving faith.

In Luke 11 Jesus called Abel a prophet. And Hebrews 11 says that though Abel is dead, he is still speaking. So what is Abel preaching? He is still proclaiming the scarlet thread that runs through the whole Bible: "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

How did they know about a sacrificial lamb way back then? When Abel lived, the cross was still many centuries in the future. Remember, in Revelation 13 the Bible says Jesus is the Lamb of God slain from before the foundation of the world.

Cain represents religion. One of the reasons I don't like religion is that religion kills. Wars are still fought today over religion. To see that religion kills, let's talk about the rest of the story of Cain and Abel. Cain was so angry that Abel's sacrifice was accepted that his anger boiled over into violence. He approached Abel in a field and killed him. This is the first murder in recorded

history. Later God asked Cain, "Where is your brother?" God knew, of course. Cain replied, "I don't know! Am I my brother's keeper?" And the implied answer was, "Of course you are. Family members should look out for one another." There are always consequences for sin, so Cain left the presence of the Lord to live in the land of Nod and would suffer guilt all the days of his life.

So why did God reject Cain's sacrifice? Was it because God doesn't like veggies? The Bible scholar Warren Wiersbe gives us some great insight. He wrote: "Cain wasn't rejected because of his offering, but his offering was rejected because of Cain: his heart wasn't right with God."

Cain didn't kill Abel out of anger over coming in second place in the offering contest. We see from the New Testament that Cain already had a wicked sinful heart. The Apostle John wrote: "We should love one another, unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you." (1 John 3:11-13 CSB)

Jesus called Satan a murderer from the beginning. Satan didn't give up on the human race after Adam and Eve sinned. He tempted Cain with anger, jealousy, and even murder. And John warned the First Century disciples that the world still hates those who do thing God's way. And today, Christians around the world are suffering for righteousness just like Abel.

And today, if you speak out and say there is only one way to God, through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, you will be mocked and ridiculed for being so intolerant and narrow-minded. So, at the risk of being called narrow-minded, let me tell you that there is only one way to approach a Holy God, and that is through the blood of Jesus Christ. But because of His blood we may boldly approach the throne of grace. We learn about worshipping by faith from Abel.

2. ENOCH: WALKING BY FAITH

Enoch is one of the most interesting characters in the Bible. Some have called him the first astronaut, because he was the first man to travel into the heavens. He was the great-granddaddy of Noah, so he lived during a time of global wickedness, yet he was a man of faith. We read these strange words about him in Hebrews 11:5 (CSB), "By faith Enoch was taken away, and so he did not experience death." What a contrast! Abel died a violent death, and Enoch didn't die at all.

Enoch's name means "dedicated" and he is one of only two men in the Old Testament who never experienced physical death. The other one was Elijah who was caught up, the same word we use for raptured, in a fiery chariot into heaven.

Let's read about Enoch from Genesis 5. "Enoch was 65 years old when he fathered Methuselah. And after he fathered Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and fathered other sons and daughters. So Enoch's life lasted 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was not there because God took him." (Genesis 5:21-24 CSB)

So, you might have wondered about why some of these people lived so long in those days. We can find out when we meet Enoch and ask him, but some scholars believe that before the flood the earth was a much healthier place with less bacteria and infections. But here's a man who turned 65 and had a son. He named him Methuselah, which is a compound Hebrews word meaning, "When he is gone, it will come." (That will make sense next week). And then the Bible says Enoch started walking with God. It implies that before he was a father, he didn't walk with God.

Here is some great advice for those of you who are young parents. Once you have a child, you realize that regardless of how you have lived in the past, you are now responsible for the spiritual development of someone other than yourself. Almost forty years ago, God gave us our first child, Jenni, and I have often said that I learned more about God in the first five minutes of being a father than I had learned in seven years of higher theological education. Then God gave us another daughter, Laura Grace. We realized we had a responsibility of raising our girls in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It's tough raising pastor's kids, because they never really have a pastor. So through the years, even though I haven't been a perfect father, I've often reminded myself how much I love my daughters regardless of the bad decisions they made. And it reminded me that God is a perfect loving Father who loves me even when I make mistakes.

So young parents, the best time for you to really start walking with the Lord is when you have your first child. You should join a church and get involved in a small group and get your child involved in the preschool and children's ministries here.

Some parents are so foolish that they say, "I'm not going to try to influence my child spiritually, I'll just let them grow up and choose on their own." That's like saying, "I'm going to start a garden, but you don't plant any flowers or vegetables seeds. The result of that kind of garden is that all you'll get is a bunch of weeds. You've got to plant good seeds to have a good garden.

And moms and dads, let me tell you: If you don't plant good spiritual seeds in the minds of your children, there are plenty of dangerous voices in our culture that will teach them NOT to believe in a personal God who created your child and loves your child. So parenthood is a great time to start walking with God.

Enoch walked with God for three hundred years, and then he simply disappeared, because God took him. In Hebrews 11 it says Enoch was "taken away." In the KJV it says Enoch was translated. The Greek word is the basis of our English word metathesis, which means to exchange. It's when you exchange one letter for another in a word. The best example of a metathesis is Oprah Winfrey. Her real name is Orpah from the book of Ruth, but everyone in her family exchanged the letters and called her Oprah. That's a metathesis, a change.

It's a word that also means to transpose music. Sometimes when someone wants to sing a song, but it is written in a lower key, Tim Nipp will transpose the music into a higher key. That's what happened to Enoch, he exchanged earth for heaven and He got transposed to a higher key; a much higher key!

Here's the Faith Lesson: Walking with God creates intimate fellowship with God. Of course, walking with God is a figure of speech. It's a metaphor for a lifestyle where you have an intimate relationship with God. Adam and Eve walked and talked with God in the Garden of Eden.

God didn't primarily save us to serve Him. He has an innumerable company of angels to serve Him. He created us to have fellowship with Him. God doesn't want you to think of Him as some impersonal force on the backside of the universe who doesn't care about your life. He wants you to know Him intimately as a loving Father who cares about the details of your life. He wants you to walk with Him every day.

The Bible says in Micah 6 that God really only requires several basic things from us – to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. Are you walking with God? That means that every waking moment you are conscious of His presence with you. You can talk to Him and listen to His still small voice wherever you are and whatever you are doing.

If Abel was the first preacher, Enoch was a preacher, too. And it may be hard for you to believe, but Enoch was the first to preach about the Second Coming of Jesus. We read these powerful words in the little book of Jude. It was about these (counterfeit believers) that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied: "Look! The Lord comes with tens of thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly concerning all the ungodly acts that they have done..." (Jude 1:4-15 CSB)

So from the time of Enoch, there was the teaching that one day that the Lord will return with ten thousand saints to execute judgment on the earth. We're still preaching the Second Coming.

So what really happened to Enoch? I've always imagined that one day Enoch left home and he was walking and talking with God. They were having such a good time that Enoch forgot about the hour and how far they had walked. They kept on walking and talking until night has arrived. And Enoch said, "Father, it's getting late. I'd better head back home."

And God said, "I'll tell you what, Enoch. We're closer to my home than we are to yours, so why don't you just come on home with me?" And Enoch said, "Sure!" And he was no longer on earth, for God took him. He was transposed into a higher key. He didn't die, and there never was a grave for Enoch.

And Enoch is a picture of the generation of believers who are walking with God when Jesus returns. We won't have graves either. We'll experience metathesis in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. The Bible says, "For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up [raptured, changed, transposed] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) We will be just like Enoch; here one

moment, gone the next. And to those who are left behind, it will seem that the same thing that happened to Enoch will happen to us.

CONCLUSION

How's your faith today? Do you have a worshipping faith like Abel? Do you have a walking faith like Enoch? Have you placed your trust in Jesus? One of my favorite stories about faith is about a father and son. One night their house caught on fire, and the son was forced to climb up to the roof. His father was on the ground below him and said, "Jump! I'll catch you!" But the little boy was afraid. His father kept saying, "Jump! I'll catch you!" The son protested, "But daddy, I can't see you!" The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters."

You can't see God with your physical eyes, but He can see you—so you can trust Him with your today and with all your tomorrows!

OUTLINE

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Faith Lesson: Faith-driven offerings please God.

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Faith Lesson: Walking with God creates intimate fellowship with God

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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