

A Great Cloud of Witnesses

- *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, Heb 12:1-2*
- What do these witnesses do?
- How do we allow them to testify?
- How do they help us lay aside weights and sins?
- How do they help us run with endurance?
- If we don't have answers to these questions, they are not surrounding us.

What is a witness

- Most of our lives we live as spectators.
- Until we see something important...
- Then our testimony is sought as a witness.
- When God is involved, handpicking witnesses, His criteria is obvious.
- When one of His servants does or sees something important, He records their life in the Scriptures so they can testify to all future generations.

All Men and Women in Hebrews 11

- Had something happen in their lives that God wanted them to testify about.
- They are part of His “*great cloud of witnesses.*”
- Some event, decision, or example occurred during their lives that God knew would help us:
- Lay aside our own weights.
- Lay aside the sin that so easily bests us.
- Run with patience the race set before us.
- Answer some perplexing dilemma we struggle with.

God's First Witness

- *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**.*
- A single event God saw as of great importance.
- Because God recorded this event, from the day of his death until today, “*being dead he still speaks.*”
- Though he is speaking, God is now encouraging us to accept his testimony and use it to lay aside weights and sins and run our race with patience.

Both God and Abel Gave Testimony

- God's Testimony on that day:
- *he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.*
- *Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And **the Lord respected Abel AND his offering,** 5 but He **did not respect Cain AND his offering.** Gen. 4:4-5*
- Abel was righteous because God testified of his gifts. By respecting both Abel and his gifts, God gave him a voice down through the centuries. A voice we need to heed and carefully follow.

His Testimony is Critical

- *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the **true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**; for **the Father is seeking such to worship Him**. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship **Him must worship in spirit and truth.**" Jn. 4:23-24*
- Abel's sacrifice was "true," "in spirit and truth" and "sought."
- What did he testify to?
- ***By faith** Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain*
- Abel had faith in his worship and Cain did not.
- Faith is the critical ingredient is Abel's testimony.

Abel's Testimony

- *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom 10:17*
- *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. Pr. 3:5-7*
- When God gives a command regarding worship, and we do it exactly as He commanded with humility and devotion, we are as genuine as Abel.
- Yet Abel is only one voice! God has given us a Great cloud of such witnesses.

A Great Cloud of Witnesses

- Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham
- Testify: faith is *“the substance of things hoped for,”* *“the evidence of things not seen,”* and *“without faith it is impossible to please Him.”*
- Abel’s accepted sacrifice.
- Enoch’s accepted walk in fellowship with God.
- Noah’s successful completion of building the ark to God’s exact specifications.
- Abraham’s obedience to God’s call.
- all testify: Full trust and submission to God, and total rejection of their own wisdom, led them to success.

Moses' Witness

- **The value of sacrificial faith.**

- *By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.*

- God directly tied his decision with ours.

- The afflictions he endured as a result of his choice is *the reproach of Christ.*

- God expects from all His servants when they “*come of age.*”

The Chapter Concludes

- *“time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets”*
- Becomes evident: every account written in the Bible bringing commendation is another voice in our *“great cloud of witnesses.”*
- *these all, having had witness (good testimony) borne to them through their faith.*
- God testified of their value as a witness by placing them in Scripture. Each witness adding one more voice: Doing things by faith, trust and obedience always brings success and reward.

There is a second “Cloud of Witnesses

- The lives of those who failed and fell.
- Abel’s witness of faith also testified of Cain’s failure
- Abel’s example was recorded for us to follow.
- What about Cain’s testimony?
- Is he being dead also still speaking
- *Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous. 1Jn. 3:12*
- Cain’s testimony: Avoid “evil works

Testimony of Abel AND Cain

Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice because he
“walked by faith and not by sight,”

Cain’s works were evil because his sacrifice and
worship was not by faith.

Since *“faith comes by hearing the word of God,”* God
had told each of them exactly what He wanted.

Abel’s sacrifice was more excellent because he
“trusted in the Lord with all his heart.”

Cain’s sacrifice was an example of evil works because
while being *“wise in his own eyes,”* he *“leaned on his
own understanding.”* 2Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17; Pr. 5:5-7

Abel: The First Prophet Slain for Truth

- *that the **blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world** may be required of this generation, **51 from the blood of Abel** to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. Luke 11:50-51*
- Abel has a lot to say and a lot to testify as a witness
- If we carefully listen to him and all who are like him we will lay aside weights and sins and run patiently.
- Cain also has a lot to say... we must flee his evil works.

Those Moses Led – Witness to Failure

- *with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.”*
1Cor 10:1-11
- The application is obvious, but God said more.
- *I was angry with that generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”*
- Then comes the application for us today:
- *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. (Heb. 3:10-12).*

The True Similarity of their Testimony

- *the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*
Heb. 4:2-3
- Every time we read about the exodus, their lives testify to the danger we all face.
- *“all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”*
- Their testimony is our example of what not to do.
- God’s testimony (what He did to them) is our admonition to flee, avoid and fear.

Witnesses of Failure

- Lives that ended in God's wrath and their destruction.
- The ancient world and Sodom and Gomorrah (2Pet. 2:5-9),
- The wicked kings of Israel ending in captivity
- The curses of Deuteronomy that came upon Judah and Jerusalem. Deut. 28:15-68
- *11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 1 Cor 10:11-13*

Still Another “Cloud of Witnesses

- *For certain men have crept in unnoticed, (secretly) who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, Jude 4*
- Marked out by the testimony of those long ago:
- *Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. Jude 11*
- We could add Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-3), king Saul (1Sam. 15), King Jeroboam
- lives ending in rebellion, rejection and failure,
- Their tribe has not yet left the earth and we must beware of those who follow their example.

Heeding the Great Cloud of Witnesses

- The lives of God's saints adorn the doctrines of Scripture, helping us to make the right applications and showing us the right way.
- The lives of the wicked graphically illustrate God's wrath.
- Since *“That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun,”* (Eccl. 1:9), their lives are just as timely and applicable today.

Goodness & Severity

- *Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward you, God's goodness, if you continue in his goodness: otherwise you also shalt be cut off. Rom 11:22-23*