By Faith

Ponder: What kind of faith pleases God?

Scripture: "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" (Heb. 11:4, NKJV).

Ask a dozen people what faith is, and you may get thirteen different answers! Among the hundreds of times that faith, belief, and related words are used in Scripture, we certainly find several shades of meaning. Ordinarily, though, faith consists of confident, obedient trust. A financial advisor says, "Trust me; your money will grow if you make this investment." A physician says, "Trust me; this medicine will help you get better." If you have faith in them, you do as they say.

Faith in God involves far more than mentally accepting that a Supreme Being exists. One with Biblical faith demonstrates trust in God by obeying His word. Abel possessed such faith; his brother, Cain, did not.

"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" (Gen. 4:3-5). Since the inspired Hebrews writer says Abel made his offering "by faith," and since "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), we know God had told the brothers what to offer. Some have speculated that this was a sin offering, and that Cain erred by bringing his crops rather than a blood sacrifice. Equally possible, Cain may not have brought the best of his harvest, whereas Abel offered the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. In either case, Cain's erred through lack of trusting obedience. By contrast, Abel trusted and obeyed God, and the Lord accepted him and his sacrifice.

Though Christians don't burn sacrifices on altars, Abel's example provides instruction for us. "He, being dead, still speaks." If we truly live by faith, we must learn what God says in His word, confidently trust Him, and obey!