

GOD!
Message 8
Psalm. 115:1-8

INTRO: So, what have we learned about God so far? Well, we saw that the highest and holiest name of God is the name, Jehovah. And this name speaks of His self existence. He is dependent on nothing and no one. He has existence in Himself. We learned as well that God is spiritual, not physical. He cannot be seen unless He manifests Himself in some physical way. And being spirit, He is, of course, invisible.

Now we have said that He is self existent, but we want to add to that this morning that He exists in a living state. You and I, to stay alive, need sustenance. We must have an environment conducive to physical life. The temperature has to be right. The mixture of air we breath has to be right. The food has to be right and the water has to be right. Fail in any one of those, and we cease to exist in a living state. Furthermore, our living state and our very existence had a beginning. Not so with God. He had no beginning. We may say of man however, that once man comes into existence at conception, man can never cease to exist. It is only the state of his existence that changes at physical death. So after conception, one exists either in a living state or a dead state. One may exist in heaven or in hell. God can never exist in a dead state. The German theologians of the not to distant past taught that God is dead, but that can never be.

Now just how important is it that God is alive? Well, it is just as important as the fact that there is a God. If God is dead, as some of the German theologians taught, you might as well throw your Bibles away! If God could die, we would stand in jeopardy every hour. So, our subject this morning, "the LIVING God" is a very important subject. The phrase, 'the living God' occurs 15 times in the OT and 15 times in the NT. If we spent 1 minute on each reference this morning, I would be going overtime. So I will leave that to you.

4. Living - Strong's 250

So now we want to consider that our God, the God of the Bible is a living God! I should say, He is

THE living God! You see, He does not only exist, as the earth or the universe exists. He is alive!

So before we go on, we must consider the word 'life'. Since God Almighty is a living God and all other gods do not have life we need to explore the meaning of life. Augustus Strong, in his comprehensive systematic theology says, "Life is a simple idea, and is incapable of real definition." If you want to tax your brain power, try to define the word 'life'. For years I have used Funk & Wagnalls College dictionary. Let me give you their first definition of life. Life is, "The form of existence that distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic substances and dead organisms, characterized by the properties and functions of protoplasm as manifested in metabolism, growth, reproduction, irritability, and internally initiated adaptations of individual organisms to the environment." Well, that's a bit hard to digest so let me reduce that definition to English. *Life is the opposite of death and is characterized by such things as reproduction and growth.* That is about as useful as saying darkness is the absence of light.

After some years of pondering this topic I would define 'life' like this: **Life is continual, successive, active, productive and energetic existence.** Now such lifeless things as rocks have continual, successive existence, but it stops there. Their existence is not active, nor productive nor energetic. Even an unconscious person's body is active and productive. If it were to cease to be actively productive, the body would immediately set about dying.

Now the NT speaks of two kinds of life. There is physical life for which the word 'bios' is used. We get our word 'biology' from that word. Then there is spiritual life. It is zoe, and whether rightly or wrongly, we get our word 'zoology' from it. When we say God is the 'living God' it is the word zoe that is used.

Now let me explain bios and zoe life briefly. Let us start with bios life. We find it used in 1

Peter 4:2 which says, "...that he no longer should **live** the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the desire of God." The verb is the word *bioo*, of which the noun form is *bios*. In Acts 26:4 Paul says, "My manner of **life** from my youth..." He is talking about his physical life. So I define physical, *bios* life, as the continual, successive, active, and productive physical existence.

But God does not have *bios* life. He does not have a body. He has *zoe* life. Listen to John 5:26, "For as the Father has life (*zoe*) in Himself; so He has granted the Son to have life (*zoe*) in Himself." Now that life is not *bios* life. It is spiritual life. It is the kind of life we get when we get saved for the phrase 'eternal life' is *aionios zoe*. Maybe you have wondered about verses like this: John 11:26, "And whoever *lives* and believes in Me shall never die..." Now that is not *bios* life. It is physical or *zoe* life. It is spiritual life, the kind of life God has. So I would define spiritual life as continual, successive, active, and productive spiritual existence.

Now let me make a few points from these two kinds of life. We all know that we must maintain our physical life or die physically. It is maintained by the intake of the right mixture of air, food and water. It is also maintained by remaining in an atmosphere conducive to physical life. For example, if one should not be dressed for -40 weather, such as we have around here, our life would stop in a short time. So, physical life is continual, successive, active, productive bodily existence. The body consumes things and produces things, thus maintaining the unity of body and spirit, and thus, physical life.

Now, the very moment we get saved, we are given by grace through faith, *aionios zoe*, which is usually translated 'eternal life'. This life must be maintained as well. And how is this spiritual life maintained? Well, this spiritual life is both gained and it is maintained by faith. It is maintained by continuing to believe, present

continuous sense, in Him. So John 5:26 means, "Whoever continues to live in and continues to believe in Me shall never die". You see, eternal life, or *aionios zoe* is gained by faith and maintained by faith.

I recently watched the video on Michael and Margareta Sattler. Michael was one of the early founders of the Mennonite church. There was another man, by name of Wilhelm Reublin. He endured much tribulation and was a staunch believer. He lived to see Michael Sattler and his wife both martyred for the faith. Michael was severely tortured which included his tongue being cut out while he was alive. His wife was tied in a gunny sack and drowned in the river. This Wilhelm Reublin later rejected the faith he had so ably defended and to which he had brought many people. Through pressure from the Roman Catholic church, He failed to continue to believe. He failed to maintain the faith by continuing to believe, and became a well-to-do recanter. The NT is replete with teaching that spiritual life, *zoe*, is both gained and maintained by faith in the present continuous sense. It is maintained by continuing to believe as the Greek NT most ably contends. This is a word to those of us this morning who claim to be believers.

I want to add one other thing about man's life as a believer. While we are physically alive, like this morning, we have *bios* life. When we die, we no longer have *bios* life. But we continue to have *zoe* life. So what happens at the resurrection, do we have *bios* life again? When we are resurrected our bodies will have, not *bios* life, but *zoe* life. Let me read for you John 5:21, "For as the Father raises up the dead, and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom he will." And this life to which the body is raised is *zoe* life. 1 Corinthians 15:22 says, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Again, it is *zoe* life. So the life of the body after the resurrection will be governed spiritually not physically. It will be the kind of life God Himself has.

So, back to our subject that God is a living God. He is the only living God. There is no other such a God. Listen to Psalm 115:1-8, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth. Why should the Gentiles say, 'So where *is* their God?' But our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, The work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; So *is* everyone who trusts in them." Now what do we learn from that. We learn that these gods are not alive. Let us consider some biblical lessons from that.

JOSHUA:

When Joshua was to take the children of Israel over the Jordan into Canaan, the river was swollen and had flooded its banks. Joshua is to lead the people across the river. And in Joshua 3:9-13 we're told that Joshua gathered the people around and told them God would drive out the nations before them (read). So to assure Israel that God would do this, the priests were instructed to put their feet into the swollen river. The Israelis were assured that they would be able to conquer the giants of the land by the fact that 'the Living God' was among them. And to demonstrate or prove that the living God was among them, they needed to move ahead to cross the Jordan though there was neither a bridge nor a boat. And as soon as the priest's feet would enter the water, the flooded river would be cut off from above and the waters would pile up on the upper side as though it had run into a wall. Now let us read verses 14-17. That is evidence of a living God!

DAVID:

Let me take you to another scene. Israel was camped on one side of the hill and the Philistines on the other. For 40 days the giant, Goliath, came out to face Israel and terrorize them. He called for a man to come and fight him, and if Goliath won, Israel would become servant slaves to the Philistines. But if the Israeli won, the Philistines would become Israel's slaves. Now before these 40 days were over, young David the shepherd king came and listen to his words, "Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, 'What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who *is* this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the **living God?**'"

Israel saw themselves in comparison to this giant and they were but mosquitoes. David saw this giant in comparison to the living God and the giant was but a mosquito. Oh, yes, the Philistines had gods too. But they were not alive. Israel had the living God on their side.

When it was suggested to king Saul that David had offered to challenge this giant, Saul said, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." You see David, we are mosquitoes and you are a smaller mosquito than we are. You are not able. Then David said these words to him, "Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the **living God**" (1 Sam. 17:26)

Well, you know the rest of the story. David, as a young man, had learned that to have the 'living God' meant everything. He took his sling and went down to the brook and found five stones smoothed by the water, and then he ran to meet the giant. Goliath was very perturbed that Israel would send such a young lad. Here is what he said, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with a stick? Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field." But this Philistine whose God did not live did not

intimidate David. He said to Goliath, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands." Then, with anticipation, David ran to meet Goliath.

DANIEL:

Let me tell you another story. It took place 539 years before Jesus, and almost a thousand years after the story of David. It is, of course true, just like the story about David. Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar and now king of Babylon, was a proud man. He lived inside the safe walls of Babylon. Let me read from some devotional notes I did at a brotherhood meeting some time ago: "While Belshazzar is feasting and frolicking, another kingdom is already plotting his demise. This kingdom is already encamped before Babylon, but Babylon is impregnable. The walls of this city are 300 feet high and 75 feet thick and about 15 miles square. Inside the walls they had food enough for several years. So secure do they think they are that while the enemy is camped on their doorsteps, they are having a roaring party!

"And so, in the midst of the party, the finger of God writes the doom of Babylon on the wall. You see, Darius, king of the Medes did something the Babylonians had never dreamed of. He led the waters of the Euphrates River off for a time and marched into the city on the river bed underneath those huge walls and took the city with hardly a battle. The Babylonian kingdom had come to an end."

Now I want you to turn to Daniel to see what happened (read 6:1-3). You see, Daniel lived through the time of a number of different kings of Babylon and he always became a prominent man again. But this time he is in for trouble. Others who knew him, and knew how the Medes and Persians operated made effort to establish a law by which they would be able to do away with Daniel (read 4-9). These men knew the base nature of leaders and kings and they puffed up the image of this new king until his buttons fairly popped and he signed on the dotted line. Now the laws of the Medes and Persians was so that not even the king could change the writing once it was signed.

Now I want you to look at a man of truth; a man of integrity. Look at verses 10-11 (read). You see, these wicked men knew Daniel. They knew that even a decree that would cause his death would not change his devotion to God Almighty. So, let's read in verses 12-17 what happens (read).

Now it is very apparent that when Darius met Daniel, that his respect for this great saint of God shot way up. It is evident that he put great store by this man and he wanted him to be part of his government, and he spent a sleepless night. Let me tell you this about a leader like Darias. He could watch multitudes being butchered and have all the better sleep for it. The lives of others just did not mean that much. But this man Daniel was special. Look at verses 18-19 (read).

Now there is no doubt that Darius had conversed with Daniel about his God. I suspect that Darius has heard other stories about Daniel as well. And I want you to notice how he acknowledges the God of Daniel in verse 20, "And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, 'Daniel, servant of the **living God**, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?'"

You see, gods of the imagination, gods carved of wood or fashioned of metal, though they are made with hands and feet, have no hands or feet to

save anyone from a den of lions. There is only one possibility to be saved, and that is if Daniel's God was truly the living God. Can you imagine what feelings must have coursed through Darius when Daniel answered! (Read verse 21-23.) Can you imagine what it must have been like when he got to look down into this sure grave and there lie these huge ferocious beasts and there they lie as if contented from a full belly and a rich feeding! And there sits Daniel and all is well!

Well, the laws of the Medes and Persians had not been violated and it will free the king to do something else. Let us read it in verse 24 (read). And now that one law of the Medes and Persians has been fulfilled, another will be made (read 25-27). Notice again the reference to the 'living God in verse 26 (read).

In the NT there are a number of references to the living God as well. In Matthew 16, just shortly before Jesus went to the cross, He questioned His disciples to see if they knew who He truly was. So He said, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man am?" And they said, "Some say you are John the Baptist, some Elijah and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." And then He got down to the crucial question: "But who do you say that I am?" And it was Peter who answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

Let me sound a few warnings given in the NT on the "living God". Hebrews 3:12 says, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the **living God**..." Now let me tell you that there is never any danger in departing from all the dead gods this world has imagined. No, as a matter of fact, that will do you nothing but good. But to turn from the living God, this is a danger unparalleled anywhere else. So listen to a verse, written in the context of a believer turning from the living God, Hebrews 10:31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the **living God**."

Now on a different note, some of us in these days have learned a little about suffering reproach. Suffering reproach is when you are reviled or upbraided or things are wrongfully charged against you. No, no, we have not resisted unto blood, but we have resisted going along with that which is wrong. Now why would a person suffer reproach? Why not just give in to the pressures? After all, then one could have peace! Yes, Michael Sattler's friend, to have peace with the Roman Catholic church had only to give in to wrong. That's all. Then he could become wealthy, as he did. Listen to 1 Timothy 4:10, "For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the **living God**..."

So let me close with one last Scripture on the living God. It is almost unfathomable. Let me read it for you: "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the **living God**. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among *them*. I will be their God, And they shall be My people (2 Cor. 6:16)."

I will expand on that verse in a later message, but for now, consider this incredible truth, declared by the Bible: As a believer, God Almighty has made His home in me. He dwells in me and He walks among us!

CONCL: So in conclusion, let us briefly summarize our thoughts on the living God. The God of the Bible is the living God. I defined life as continual, successive, active, productive and energetic existence. There are two kinds of life; physical and spiritual. When we are born, we are born with physical life. but Jesus said we must be born again. When we repent of our sins and believe the Gospel, then we are born again. That is spiritual life. This is the kind of life God has.

So we considered the living God and its importance in Scripture. It was of utmost importance to Joshua when he led the children of Israel into the promised land. God, to prove to Israel, that He, the living God, would drive the inhabitants of the land out, would do something incredible. He would override the laws of nature and stop the waters of

the Galilee from flowing downhill until Israel had crossed over.

When Israel faced one of the most formidable foes ever, a young man, with a sling and a stone, a young man who trusted in the living God, slew the giant Goliath. It was a day, in which against all odds, humanly speaking, God revealed Himself as the living God, both to His own people and the unbelieving Philistines.

Then Daniel, one of the greatest men of God of all time, ranked by God with Noah and Job, was preserved by the living God in the den of lions. Darius, ruler of the world, came to call out in a lamentable voice, enquiring if the living God whom he served had been able to save him. When he discovered Daniel alive, he cast Daniel's enemies to the roaring lions, and decreed that prayer be made to the living God alone.

This morning, every believer here is the home of God Almighty. He dwells in you. And when we are evil spoken of, we do not give in. Why not? We suffer reproach because we trust in the living God! And this morning, as believers, we take warning not to depart from the living God because it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Now let me ask you, what trying circumstance do you have in your life? In light of what we have seen, is there anything in your life that is harder than stopping the waters from running downhill? Is there anything harder than stopping the mouths of lions? Is there anything harder than meeting a giant with a slingshot? Then why not surrender your circumstances into the hands of the living God?