

LIVING BY FAITH

Message 3

INTRO: We are laying the foundation for understanding what it means to live by faith. It is my view that to rightly understand faith we need to understand somewhat of the purpose of creation and the place God has put mankind. We saw that at one point, as far as any revealed Scripture tells us, that the Triune God alone existed.

Then God created free moral agents that had the capacity of knowing His goodness, and the capacity to worship Him. These free moral agents were angels. Creation began with angels. So God created angels to worship Him, and they did. Then we asked that if God created angels to worship and adore Him, if that did not make Him an entirely selfish being? But we saw that when angels worship God, they get that which is the very best thing angels can experience, fulfillment. And so this brought about a state in which God was glorified, and the angels, in doing that for which they had been created, were fulfilled. It was perfect.

We left off in the last message with the creation of angels and that they worshipped God as they had been created to do. And when they worshipped God, He was glorified. God no longer existed alone. Now there were millions of angels, and they were created in such a way as to be able to appreciate God's good character. And they worshipped Him and as they worshipped Him, they were fulfilled, and it was a glorious union. And when they should have lived happily ever after, something very drastic took place in the realm of spirit beings.

And here is how we ended the last message, and I quote: "But, and this is a very big but. Before the mountains were brought forth, before man was created, and some time after angels were created, a most dreadful thing took place in the universe. And in my understanding, this is what made it necessary for God to create the universe and to create man in such a way that he would have to learn to live by faith. And we will begin to look at that in the next message."

Our subject is living by faith, and we are setting the stage to understand what it is all about. And our sixth question regarding angels is: What happened to angels? I would not do justice to this message if I did not draw practical applications from it for us in our time.

A. The Creation Of Angels cont'd

6. What happened to angels?

I have mentioned earlier that when God created free moral agents, He did a very dangerous thing. In order for true worship to happen, those beings must be personal beings. Angels are personal beings. And furthermore, for worship to happen, they had to be made in such a way that they could decide to not do that for which they were created, and therein lay the danger. But, we might well ask, what could ever induce a free moral agent in such a fulfilling relationship with God Almighty to choose to not continue doing that which was so fulfilling?

There is one huge danger, the biggest danger there is to all free moral agents. Only God Himself is not in this danger, because His character is entirely good and cannot be susceptible to this. You see, for God, there is nothing beyond Him He could desire. He is the ultimate. But when God created personal beings that could choose, they were always in this danger, because there is always something beyond them that they could want. And what is that? What is this huge danger? What could induce the angels to leave the fulfilment they were experiencing? It is ultimately this: to be like God. To seek His glory. So when Satan tempted man, what did he tempt him with? Listen to Satan talking to Eve in Genesis 3:4-5, "Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

And why would man want to be like God? It is that God is above him. Man always wants something above him. And what is it in man that causes him to desire that which is above him? Here it is: p-r-i-d-e, which is also the chief sin of personal beings. Now, it is important that we understand what pride is. The Hebrew word is *ga'a*. According to the TWOT the primary meaning is 'to rise'. It is a going up, it is to rise, grow up, be exalted in triumph.

The Greek NT word is *huperephanos*. It comes from *huper*, above; and *phainw*, to appear, thus to appear

above. That is the chief concern in personal beings; they want to appear above. That is why Satan told Eve they would be like God. This would have appeal to them.

Lou Suter, I think it was, pointed out that the I of pride is right in the middle of the word. In Revelation 4-5 we see God in the center of everything. But pride wants me to take center stage. And I think it was L.E. Maxwell who said that the big I needs to be crossed out. You see, the patibulum of the cross, the part that the criminal, who was to be crucified, carried, crosses out the I. And so Maxwell said the only trademark suitable to the flesh is the mark of the cross; and the cross meant certain death.

It is possible that the book of Job is the first biblical book to ever have been written. At minimum, it goes back a long way. And the reason that book is written, as I interpret it, is that it deals with this chief sin, pride. And it deals with one of the worst prides possible; spiritual pride. And it deals with that problem in one of the most righteous men that ever lived. Let me recommend our series on the book of Job, and in particular messages 7-12, and if that is too much then especially messages 11-12.

To help me make a very important point, let me say a word about modern psychology. Modern psychology seeks to discover man's inner workings by studying man's behaviour. To the modern psychologist, psychological truths are discovered by studying man's behaviour. In the NT, the pastor is put forward as the psychologist. You see, the root word of psychology is the word soul. Modern man, for the most part does not believe in a soul, but still calls this study by the soul. In Scripture, it is the Lord Jesus who cares for souls, and the work of His under-shepherds, pastors, is to care for people's souls. I won't take time to prove this as I have done this elsewhere.

So, here is the basic difference between the pastor and the psychologist of today. The pastor studies man from what the Bible says and applies its teachings to the soul. The modern psychologist studies man from man's behaviour and then applies his human wisdom to that study of man. For the pastor, God and theology

determines how man is to be instructed. For the modern psychologist, man and human wisdom determines how man is to be instructed.

Now, it is not that man cannot discover things about man from man's behavior. It is the assumptions, conclusions and solutions that are the major problem. By the way, let me put out here a large warning about the "Caring For The Heart" movement that is sweeping our community churches. Let that suffice for now.

So, man can discover things from man's behaviour and he gives it certain names. For example, narcissism. Listen to Wikipedia on Narcissus: *In Greek mythology, Narcissus was a hunter...who was known for his beauty. He was the son of the river god [Cephissus](#) and nymph Liriope. He was proud, in that he disdained those who loved him. Nemesis noticed this behavior and attracted Narcissus to a pool, where he saw his own reflection in the water and fell in love with it, not realizing it was merely an image. Unable to leave the beauty of his reflection, Narcissus lost his will to live. He stared at his reflection until he died. Narcissus is the origin of the term narcissism, a fixation with oneself and one's physical appearance.*

Now let me show you what modern psychology has discovered from man's behaviour, behaviour that he has come to call, not pride, but narcissism. And they say that the goal of leaning about narcissism is to be able to see, and I quote, "...your and other's patterns clearly. Clarity is a strong first step toward being able to make changes for the better." So they give 6 signs of narcissism, and to come to the point I want to make, I will read their article on signs of whether a person has what they call the mental disorder of Narcissism:

Sign #1: Unilateral listening.

What I want and what I have to say are all that matters when we talk together. When we make decisions what you want, your concerns, your feelings..these are mere whispers, inconveniences and irrelevancies. So when we discuss issues, my opinions are right. Yours

are wrong or else of minimal importance. If you expect to have input, you are undermining me.

Narcissistic listening dismisses, negates, ignores, minimizes, denigrates or otherwise renders irrelevant other people's concerns and comments. A tone of contempt is particularly strong narcissistic indicator.

Another narcissistic indicator is responding to what others say by beginning with the word "But ...". "But" is a backspace-delete key that negates whatever came before, such as what someone else has said.

Sign #2 It's all about me.

I know more, I know better, I'm more interesting, When we talk, it's mostly about me. In conversations, I take up most of the air time. Almost all of my chatter is about what I have done, what I am thinking about. If you begin to talk about yourself, I link back to something in my life so that the focus of the discussion again turns onto me. Maybe that's why people say I suck up all the air in a room. When I want something, I need to have it. Never mind how you feel about it; it's all about me. I'm big and important and you are merely also here, mostly to do things for me, like a third arm.

Sign #3: The rules don't apply to me.

I can have affairs, cut into a line where others are waiting, cheat on my taxes, and ignore rules that get in the way of my doing what I want.. Rules are for other people to follow. Narcissists suffer from what I call Tall Man Syndrome. They experience themselves as above others, so the rules don't apply to them.

Sign #4: Your concerns are really criticisms of me, and I hate being criticized.

If you insist on my listening and taking your concerns seriously I'm likely to get mad. I hear your concerns as disguised ways of criticizing me. Criticism hurts. I can criticize others, and often do, but if you criticize me you're hurting my feelings so I'll hurt you back. So if you say you are at all unhappy, that's

a way of indirectly criticizing me. Since "it's all about me" your feelings must be about what I have been doing.

Narcissists paradoxically manifest both an inflated idea of their own importance and quickness to feel deflated by negative feedback. In addition, because they think everything is about them, they hear others' attempts to talk about personal feelings as veiled criticisms of themselves. The clinical term for taking others' concerns as personal criticism is *personalizing*. "I'm feeling lonely," gets heard by someone who is narcissistic as an accusation: "You don't spend enough time with me."

Sign #5: I'm right. You're wrong. So when things go wrong between us, it's always your fault.

I can't be expected to apologize or to admit blame. I'm above others and above reproach. If you expect me to say how I've contributed to a problem, I'll get mad at you.

Unwillingness to take responsibility for mistakes may come from confusing the part with the whole. "If I've done one thing that's not right, then I must be all bad." That's all-or-nothing thinking. Whatever the source of the sensitivity to criticism and difficulty admitting mistakes, the upshot is a tendency to blame others when anything has gone wrong. Blaming and fault-finding in others feel safer to narcissists than looking to discover, learn and grow from their own part in difficulties. While narcissists are quick to blame, they may be slow to appreciate. Appreciation and gratitude require listening.

Sign #6: I can be quick to anger. When I'm angry, that's your fault too.

You made me mad. You didn't listen to me. You criticized me. You're trying to control me. Your view is wrong. So you need to apologize, not me. If I'm mad, it's because I'm frustrated by what you are doing. My anger is your fault. I'm only mad because you ... "

Some narcissists show major charm and social agility. At the same time, these seemingly super-confident folks also can be quick to anger. When they do become inflamed, they then immediately blame their anger on others" end quote.

Now before I come to my point let me say this. All of those things we have talked about are not narcissism. They are one tiny area of the sin of pride. There is much more to pride than just that which is called Narcissism. And the Biblical way to overcome the sin of pride is by acknowledging and confession it as sin and forsaking it. This is what secular psychologists don't like. Instead of repentance they teach a *proper self-love*. So it really is not a sin. You just need some teaching and readjustment. That is all. But if, on the other hand, you call it by its proper name, sin, now there is a real cure. It is the blood of Christ. And it is applied by confessing and forsaking sin.

Well, narcissism is what man has discovered from studying man and he views it as a mental disorder. And, you see, we have asked, why would a very high ranking angel choose not to glorify God? Well, is the answer. There was a very high ranking angel, who looked in a pool and fell in love with his own image. Pride was why this high ranking angel left his fulfilling place before God.

We spoke earlier of fulfilment. Let me tell you something about fulfilment. As I see it, fulfillment is what free moral agents long for. But to seek fulfillment by pursuing our own desires and thus our own glory, which is what pride does, will never bring true fulfillment. So how do we find fulfilment? By seeking to bring glory to God.

Let me say this as well. We may talk about someone taking pride in their work. That is someone who does work well. We do not like to have someone work for us who does not take pride in his work. We are not talking about a pride that puffs up. But when a person does a good job, there is always a danger that lurks right close by every time we accomplish something good. It is the danger of taking the credit to ourselves and becoming puffed up with our own abilities. It is this

pride that is a deadly danger. In Isaiah 48:11 God says He will not give His glory to another. So we are always in danger of pride.

And so we might define pride like this: Pride is when we take the credit for what God has made us capable of doing and we consider ourselves better than others because of our abilities. When we are good at something, and we get puffed up and begin to consider ourselves better than others that is pride; bad pride. And when we have lived or live in pride, there is only one way we can come to true fulfillment. We must be shown by God who we are, and how sinful we are, and we must be smitten down to the ground like Saul of the NT and humble ourselves and confess before God.

How can we deal with pride. The way up is down. In Matthew 5 Jesus gives a number of statements that begin like this, "Blessed are..." and then He goes on to describe the blessed person. I have done a number of messages on these statements and they are available on sermonaudio.com/mecl for those who might be interested. Here is how I define the word *blessed*. It does not mean 'happy'. One could translate like this, "To be envied are the poor in spirit..." etc... Why are the people in the conditions Jesus describes here enviable? Poor in spirit, mourning etc... Because this is the path out of pride and into fulfilment. We cannot overcome pride without becoming poor in spirit, mourning our sinfulness, etc...

So we have the pride or satisfaction that comes from fulfilment; and we have the pride that puffs the fulfilled one up and he takes the glory to himself. And there we have the chief sin of the universe. And it is for this that people will leave the place of true fulfilment. It is for this that some angels left their place. It is this that is the gravest danger in all free moral agents.

And before God created man or the universe, a very sad moment came to the realm of millions of free moral agents. Most of you are well familiar with the passages, but we go to them. We begin with Ezekiel 28. In chapters 25-32, Ezekiel speaks out against a number of nations. There is Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia,

Tyre, Egypt and Assyria. And the most time is give to Tyre. Of seven nations dealt with in 8 chapters, three chapters are given to Tyre. And there is some information given of the king of Tyre that Bible scholars have long held, speak of this event before the creation of the universe, when this sad moment took place among the angles of God. And we will read 28:11-17:

11 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Now this is a strange way of speaking of a human king. So it seems we have something more here. But note the next statement:

13 You were in Eden, the garden of God;

Now this could not be said of the king of Tyre, explicitly. It could be said of the one we know as Satan. We go on:

Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers;

Now we learn that whomever God is speaking about, it is one of the class of the Cherubim, and the Cherubim are a high class of angelic beings. You see, there were different ranks and orders of angels, and Cherubim were one of those. We go on:

I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you.

Again this could not be fully said of a human being. Nobody after Adam was perfect after birth. But

furthermore, this is after creation. This Cherub was created. And he was perfect. And then something happened. It says iniquity was found in him. Sin took place in the angelic realm. Here we come to that sad moment we have mentioned. We go on:

16 "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones.

For time? Again reference is made to sin. And God says He cast him out as a profane thing out of the mountain of God. This angel lost his position. And then God says, "I destroyed you." Now let me make a comment here. Some hold that there will be no hell because Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Since God destroys both soul and body in hell, then mankind is burned up in hell and he is gone. Now it is not just the cults that hold to this, some, whom we would call fine Christians hold to this view.

So, let me say this about destruction. God created both angels and man for His glory. An angel that sinned was destroyed immediately. He was not annihilated. He was destroyed. Let me give you an example of destruction (hammer and glass). Now, did this glass cease to exist? No! But is it destroyed? And that is what happened to this Cherub the day he sinned. He was destroyed, and like Humpty Dumpty, he will never be put together again. The purpose for which he was created can never be again. He is destroyed. We read on in verse 17:

17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you.

Now, when it says his heart was lifted up, I ask you, what sin is that? Yes, it is pride. He sought the glory that belongs to God, for himself. Here is the primal sin of the universe, and the one that is a danger to

every free moral agent. And here is the saddest moment of all of God's creation.

We go now to Isaiah 14. In chapters 13-23 Isaiah too spells out denunciations against numerous nations. He writes judgment against Babylon, Philistia, Assyria, Moab, Damascus. Ethiopia, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, Jerusalem, and Tyre. Now the verses in chapter 14 that seem to have special significance to what happened before creation in the angelic realm are verses 12-15 and we will read and comment as we go:

12 *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!"*

Now we are introduced here to a being called Lucifer. This name means 'shining one' or 'light-bearer'. It is interesting that Jesus will later say, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." Like lightning, a shining one.

Then he is called 'son of the morning'. Without going into detail, let me say that I think that the morning is a reference to the beginning of creation, and son of the morning, the first of God's created angels. Here is the angel above all angels.

Now some refer to him as the morning star here. It is not new to Scripture to refer to angels as sons of God or as stars. Job 38 speaks of angels in this way in verse 7, "When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?" We go on:

13 *For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north;*

14 *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'*

We now are given some indication of what happened in the heart of this free moral agent. He looked in the pool and saw his own image and fell in love with himself. And once again, and now out of his own mouth, we have the crime of this angelic being. Five times he said, "I will". By this he shows what he wanted. And

the final desire was to be like the Most High. He wanted to be like El Elyon. He wanted the glory.

We come then to verse 15:

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

Now let me mention one other thing. Angels are sometimes referred to as stars as we saw earlier. Revelation 12:1-5 in this terminology indicates that Satan took one third of the angels with him when he fell. You can well imagine that a major battle took place between the angels, and that 2/3 said, "No, we will not go with you." As free moral agents they stayed with God, and in Revelation 4-5 we saw that they are still doing what they had always done.

7. Why did God not send Lucifer to hell back then?

We come now to our final question regarding angels, why did God not send Satan to hell when he sinned? The question is sometimes asked: Why did God create the devil? The answer is, He didn't. He created the highest most beautiful most perfect being ever created. And another question we might well ask is: Why didn't God cast him into hell when he sinned?

Well, we might give several reasons. But let me come to the one most crucial to our point. Here is our question: Why did God not cast Satan into hell when he first sinned? And I want to propose this answer to you. He could not. Not because He was not able to, but because He would have had to break his character to do it. He had made a free moral agent, and if God had cast him into hell right there, He would have destroyed his free moral agency, and that of all the rest of the angels. No doubt Satan knew this.

Let me explain. God created the angels to glorify Him. So they had to be free to not glorify Him, otherwise it would not be glory. Now if God sent them to hell as soon as they chose not to glorify Him, they would know they had to glorify Him or they would be dealt with. And so God had to find a way to deal with their rebellion in such a way that the angels that stayed true to Him still worshipped Him of their own free

will. If they knew the day they did not do that anymore, they would be cast into hell, their worship now would be motivated by fear, not by free will.

So, if our theology is correct, two thirds of the angels have not yet fallen. But if God would cast Satan and those angels that followed him, into hell, the rest of the angels would know one thing: They were not free moral agents. If they were cast into hell the day they sinned, their free moral agency was gone. They now HAD to glorify God because if they didn't, they immediately went to hell.

On the other hand, on God's part, if He is fully good as we proposed that He is, everything God was and had was dependent on His remaining righteous and just and holy and merciful and kind and so on. And if God is truly righteous and just, how could He allow sin to remain unpunished? He could not. That would destroy His righteousness and justice and holiness too, and He would cease to be God! And so we have a dilemma. But, God had a plan. We have already shown that. And God was never taken by surprise, otherwise He ceases to be omniscient.

And so, how will God handle this dilemma? God had a plan. Here, as I see it, is that plan: "The just shall live by faith." And if I have the picture right, right there, way back in the beginning was this plan. He would create another free moral agent in a realm different from the spiritual realm. Those free moral agents would never see Him. They would have to learn to live by faith. His plan is wrapped up in this: "The just shall live by faith!" And I believe that through those among mankind that will live by faith, God will be able to finally deal with Satan in justice, while the remaining angels will remain free moral agents in their worship of God, and God will remain just, and all unrighteousness will be punished. And the accomplishment of all this is wrapped up in the just who live by faith. This is our subject and this, I believe, is why you and I exist.

CONCL: And in conclusion, all of God's plan is dependent on leaving man a free moral agent. You and I, in the midst of all that life brings, have the choice to acknowledge, confess and

forsake our sins and follow God; or choose to go our own way. Look at those who live around us. Look at those who you know are choosing their own happiness in the way they want. How many of those do you see? Then look at those you see who are choosing right, and they forsake sin and follow righteousness. And then you will see a good number who think they are doing the right thing, but they have been deceived and are actually following Satan.

When I observe man, I marvel that God made man a free moral agent. One thing I have learned from that: God places a very, very high value on the just who live by faith.