

LIVING BY FAITH

Message 6

August 7/2016

Psalm 19

INTRO: In this series on faith we have looked first at the purpose of creation. We looked at the time when only God existed. We saw that creation began with the angels, and then looked at the fall of the angels. Then we began to look at the creation of man, and that God placed man in a material universe and made him a material being. He is locked into a physical world with five senses by which he can learn to know his physical surroundings. And the Lord chose that man should live by faith.

We then began to look at the life of faith and in the last message we defined faith. Later we will look at the difference between our faith; the one true faith, saving faith and the gift of faith. But faith in general is that which we believe. I have defined faith as, *a belief held on the basis of any given information which a person deems credible which, on the one hand, does not have certain proof, but which on the other hand gives rise to hope for something that has not yet transpired.* Without faith there is no hope. And we saw that Hebrews 11 gave faith as the foundation of hope. It is therefore of utmost importance, if there is truly life after death, that our faith is accurate, so that our hope is right. I am just reading a book on Mormonism. You can study Islam. The hope given to those of that faith is very far removed from the Biblical hope.

Living by faith, then is living by what we believe. But living by the true faith is believing what God has said, and living it. In general, living by faith is simply believing what God has said, and living by that. We saw in the last message the example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar required of them to do something God Almighty had forbidden them to do.

And when they would not do it Nebuchadnezzar gave them time to change their minds and if they wouldn't, he said, "I am going to burn you. So listen to their response: *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.*

But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

Living by faith was simple obedience to the Word of God. That is all. And so we now want to look at the primal life of faith, that is faith, in its earliest stages. We go back, of course to Genesis, the first several chapters.

We will look at these questions: When did living by faith begin? When did living by faith stop? When did it begin again? And last, how did living by faith continue? Then we will change gears and look at what the source of faith is.

A. The Primal Life Of Faith

1. When did living by faith begin?

Our first question then is, when did living by faith begin? Well, should it be surprising to find that it started right after man was created, an even before he sinned? Go to Genesis 1 (read 26-31). Here God commanded Adam. Now look at 2:15-25.

Now let me ask you a question: Did Adam ever see God? Answer? No. The Bible says no man can see God and live. That must include Adam. The Apostle John said in 1:18 that nobody has ever seen God. So how did Adam know what he was to do? Well, look now at Genesis 2:15-17 (read). God spoke to Adam. God could communicate with Adam, but Adam, like all the rest of mankind could not see Him. So, when God told Adam to do things and he did them, let me ask you, how is he living? By faith, of course!

So God said, "Don't eat of that one tree." And as long as they did not eat of that tree, they were living by faith. Notice that Eve's faith depended on what God told Adam? Genesis means beginning. It is the book of beginnings. Adam believed God and Eve believed Adam, and Abel believed them and Cain did not.

So Adam and Eve lived by faith from the day they were created. That is what man was created to do. He would glorify God by living by faith. But their faith had not yet been tested. That was soon to come.

2. When did living by faith stop?

Now we ask, when did living by faith stop? It happened like this. We find it in Genesis 3:1-5 (read). Now we must make some very crucial observations here. First, God and Satan are on even footing. Man could not see God but he also could not see Satan. Satan appeared to Eve in an animate creation. He does much of that today and people today are often deceived as Eve was. But Satan could not appear in Person. He might appear in a vision or a dream but not as a real live person.

Second, look at 3:1, "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said..." What did he do? He said. Like God, he communicated, it would seem, by audible voice. You see, the battle in man is between God and Satan, and God and Satan are on even ground.

So look now at verses 6-7 (read). That is where the life of faith stopped. What is living by faith? Very simply put, it is living in obedience to God. So Jesus said that whoever loves God keeps His commandments. That is living by faith. And what is sin but the failure to live by faith. Whenever we sin, we are not living by faith. Living by faith stopped that day in the Garden of Eden.

I think that Satan thought he had it all in the bag. From here on, how will man ever get right with God or live right?

3. When did living by faith start anew?

Well, our next question is, when did living by faith start anew? We know it did because in Hebrews 11 we read over and over how in the time of the OT they overcame by faith. And the answer to our question lies in Genesis 3 as well. Look now at verses 8-24 (read).

Now in verses 20-21 we have the history of salvation by faith begun. The first blood was shed. It was shed to cover man's nakedness; and pictured ultimately the covering of man's sin by faith. When Adam and Eve laid aside their fig leaf clothing, and accepted God's offer of clothing that had cost shed blood, we have primal salvation. Accepting this clothing pictured all that is involved in taking care of sin. You see, they repented. How do I know that? Well, they changed their

mind about their fig leaf clothing. And they accepted the clothing God had provided. How do I know that? Because they accepted the clothing.

And now, not only were they once more living by faith, they had been saved from sin by faith. Here is the entire purpose of creating man in a material universe! And from here on, throughout the history of mankind, Satan and God will communicate with man, and man will choose to live for one or the other. And through every person who gets saved by faith and lives by faith, God will ultimately be able to deal justly with Satan and all his followers, while the rest of angels will have been proved to glorify God by their own free will.

4. How did living by faith continue?

Our next question now is, how did living by faith continue? Well, go to Genesis 4. Living by faith and rejecting a life of faith are demonstrated in the two sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel (read 1-8). You see, God communicated His will to Adam, and Adam communicated to Eve, and Adam or Adam and Eve communicated this to their sons.

At first the message of God was carried from those who heard God to those who heard about Him from those who heard him. And all through history you will find a few who truly trusted God and lived by faith. Now, for how long was Adam able to communicate his faith? Look now at chapter 5 (read 1-5). For almost 1000 years Adam could pass on his creation experience. And those who believed him lived by faith.

Now they tell me if you put the meaning of the names of the 10 generations listed in chapter 5 together, you get the message of salvation from those names. You can check that on omniscient Google if you are interested. But the last man to hear Adam lived almost up until the time of Abraham, who lived at around 2,000 years after creation.

Then 500 years after that, Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. God at first communicated his message from generation to generation verbally, and when that was too far removed, He gave a written

record, and instructed man through His writings. From then on man lived by faith by living by the book.

C. Source of Faith

Well, with that we want to change gears. We have another topic to cover important to the subject of faith. We are going to move forward in time to the Church age in which we live. And we are going to look at what Christians believe with regard to what the source of faith is. Here is the question: Where does man get faith? This involves such views of today as the views of Calvinism and Arminianism. We are going to begin with Calvinism.

1. God

Calvinism teaches that in eternity past, in the plans of God that we have talked about, God chose that some would be saved and most would be lost. He chose some, irrespective of anything in those persons, and these He will sovereignly see to it that they get saved. They were chosen and they will get saved.

So, since they cannot choose for themselves, God has to cause them to be born again, and once they become born again, then He gives them the faith to believe, and then they believe God and in this way they get saved. Augustus H. Strong, an eminent scholar and ardent Calvinist says this, "If they get their faith of themselves, then salvation is not due to grace. If God gave the faith then it was in His purpose, and this is election" (pg. 782).

So if God chose you way back in eternity past, He will cause you to come to spiritual life. Then He will give you the faith to believe, and then you will believe, and then He will save you. Faith is a gift from God. Well, you can trace that view back to Augustine, just a few hundred years after Christ. Augustine was also the originator of much of Catholicism's heresy.

So Calvinism's conclusion is that the source of faith is God. Well, I don't think I need to tell you that view is not correct.

2. God and Man

Another theologian, with a good Mennonite name, and those are very scares as far as theology is concerned, Henry C. Thiessen says that both man and God are the source of faith. He gives the following passages to give evidence for his view and you may wish to jot them down and study them (Heb. 12:2; Rom. 12:3; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 2:8-9). So that gives evidence that God is the source of faith. We will take time to look at numerous of these passages in another message because of the error of interpretation by both Calvinism and Thiessen.

Then he says that both the spoken and written word produce faith in man (Rom. 10:17) thus the source of faith is also human. And so in his view, both man and God are the source of faith.

3. Man

It is my view that man is the source of faith. How could God be glorified if He has to give man faith as a gift, and once he has the gift, he cannot help but believe? Free will then has no part in salvation. Either you were chosen and get the gift, or you were not chosen and you cannot get saved.

I believe that God is only truly glorified when man chooses of his own free will to believe in the Lord and trust him for forgiveness of sins and salvation. It is true that God is involved in generating faith. But it is man that must believe. Faith, in my view is not a gift, it is a responsibility. Like confessing the Lord Jesus with one's mouth, believing is something man has been made capable of doing and God requires him to do so in order to be saved.

Here is what I believe: Man was created with the capacity to believe. Man has been endowed with the capacity to believe. As a matter of fact, everybody believes something, including the Atheist. It is in man's nature to believe. And free moral agents, when they are given evidence, and when they look at it objectively, they have the capacity to believe. Unbelief is a choice too. It is the choice not to believe God.

And here is my evidence for that. That most famous verse says, "For God so loved the world, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." What is the use of that verse if man does not have the capacity to believe and must wait for the gift of faith? All throughout the NT believing is required for salvation. God would be evil if He required man to believe, but man's ability to believe depended on whether God would give him the gift to believe. And if God chose not to give this gift to most people, that kind of god is not a good god.

But let me show you that God is a good God and what He did that man might believe. God provided all the factual information necessary for man to come to faith. So consider this first. For man to be saved according to the Bible, He has to have the right information, information that gives enough evidence for an objective person to believe.

As I see it, the very first point man must come to is that there is a God. Now, has God given man enough evidence in order for man to believe there is a God? Well, God is so good that He provided so much information to give evidence that there is a God and provided so much evidence that He exists, that only a fool can miss it. That is why the Psalmist said, "The fool has said in his heart there is no God." Only a fool can miss the fact that there is a God.

So what is this evidence? Well, once more we go back to creation. Now we do not know that any matter existed anywhere until that first Sunday evening some 6,000 years ago. Now the first day of creation begins in the evening, as every true day does. It was the first day of the week, and it was evening. Go to Genesis 1 (read 1-5). And then, in just six days, there lay this vast expanse with billions upon billions of stars and millions of galaxies.

Turn to Psalm 19 (read 1-6). 1 The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

2 Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.

3 There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard.

4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,

5 Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoices like a strong man to run its race.

6 Its rising is from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

Well, from creation on, that universe has shouted a very loud message to all of mankind. Day after day, night, month after month, and year after year all of creation shouts, "There is a God! There is a God!" You see, the heavens declare, what? They say, "There is a God, there is a God, there is a God." It never stops. Day and night the message plays the glory of God! But they do not only say, "There is a God, There is a God, There is a God." They say, "He is an incredible God, He is an incredible God etc..."

Recently I was at the eye doctor. Just the eye of man or animals too, gives so much evidence that this could not happen by accident, and that someone greater than man made it that there is no need for more. But there is more; much much more.

Richard Dawkins could learn that there must be a God without a telescope. He could learn that without a microscope. Day after day, night after night; year after year that message sounds forth. You cannot get away from it. You can learn that from a piece of sand, you can learn much more from a dandelion, you can learn yet much more from the turning of the earth; then the sun the moon, the planets, the stars and on. Only a fool says there is no God. But man learns that by faith. He did not see God make everything. But the evidence everything demands that we give credit to the vast amounts of evidence.

And God made the universe so huge, that when man discovers more powerful telescopes, and more powerful microscopes and spaceships; all he learns is that God is much, much bigger than we ever knew before.

But lurking in every shadow is the devil. And he does everything he can to distort the message. He uses the sinful heart of man, his ungodly lusts, and all else he can to distort truth, that in which true faith rests. Let me tell you how very powerful the devil becomes in lives not lived for God. He can make a male human believe he is a woman, and start acting like a woman and dressing like a woman. That is horribly, horribly wicked, is it not?

And now let me ask you, what is it that causes man to deny this inescapable evidence? What keeps man from believing there is a God? It is not for lack of evidence. It is Pride. Richard Dawkins said, "Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence." Yet he himself lives by faith, a false faith mind you, and a faith without a hope except that there hopefully won't be a God to wake up to after death. And what makes Dawkins evade thinking and weighing through the evidence? Pride!

Well, general revelation is ample evidence that there is a God. No normal person can deny it. Now theologians have drawn a number of arguments that give evidence that there is a God. There is evidence from nature; evidence from the conscience, evidence; and evidence from reason.

Now we won't go through all that. But consider evidence from reason alone. Man is a rational creature. He can draw conclusions from evidence. Consider what is called the cosmological argument which says everything begun must have an adequate cause. Here is a ballpoint pen. It must have an adequate cause. Evolution will never design a ballpoint pen. Some rational being must have made it. The universe is in existence and it must have an adequate cause. Of course there could be no less of a cause than God.

Then there is the teleological argument which says that order and useful arrangement of things imply intelligence and purpose and these do not happen by chance. So look at this pen. Order and arrangement show intelligence and purpose. It is so evident a fool could hardly miss it.

Then there is the ontological argument which says that the intuitive idea of a God proves there is a God. Why would all people everywhere have the idea of God if there is no God? The only people who don't know that are highly educated fools.

And last, the moral reason argues that man intuitively knows there is right and wrong. How could that be except man was made that way? And if man was made that way, somebody made him. We could spend a lot of time on each of these. The evidence is so undeniably strong, the Bible says the fool has said there is no God (Ps. 14:1; 53:1).

So Psalm 19:1-6 shows there is a God. It speaks of general revelation. And we ask, is there sufficient evidence in the universe to believe there is a God? Well, we must conclude there is a superabundance of evidence. But, once man comes to the conclusion that there is a God, he is not out of the woods. He now comes to the next great question he must answer. It is this. How many gods there are or if there is only one, who He is.

Did God give evidence for that as well? Well God went further than giving man the world book, or creation. You see, for man to be saved he has to know who this God is, and he has to learn how to come to Him. And so, what did God do? He spoke to man in words. We saw that in Genesis. He gave not only the World book to prove He exists, but the Wordbook to give evidence as to who He is.

God spoke first to Adam. Later He spoke to others like Abraham and so on. Then after 2500 years, when the original spoken word had too much time to get distorted, gave man the Word book. He began with Moses and continued for the next 1000 years to give us the 66 books of the Bible.

So we go once more to Psalm 19 once more. We read verses 1-6 earlier. They spoke of the world book. But the rest of the Psalm now gives us the Word book, the Bible. You see, for man to be saved, He must know who this God is and how man can be right with Him. And so look now at verses 7 and on:

7 ¶ The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.

12 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.

13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

You see, the World book shows us there is a God. This is general revelation. There is part of the faith necessary to be saved. To be saved one must believe there is a God, capital G. But the Word book, the Bible tells us who God is and how to be saved. So Scripture says, "So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." There is saving faith.

So God did yet one more thing to help man to come to faith. He sent His only begotten Son into the world. Here was God who had become man. He is the one Person

who has been on the other side, and came to man's side, and told him what is on the other side, the immaterial realm.

Go to John 20. You see, after Jesus was crucified and resurrected, some of the disciples said to Thomas, doubting Thomas said in John 20:25 "We have seen the Lord." And Thomas said, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

And John 20:26-29 says, "And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace to you!' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.' And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

And we of all people have the greatest revelation of God and truth man has ever had. We have the world book. We have the Word book, and we have the history of the life of Christ. And today, that which we have called science gives us more and more and more evidence all the time for a Creator. When we look at all that, we have every bit of evidence necessary for true faith. BUT we must make the choice to believe. We are the source of faith. Only when we truly believe do we bring pleasure to God. The just shall live by faith. God has made us with the capacity to reason and weigh evidence, and He has given us sufficient so that the just can live by faith.

So, what is the source of faith? Well, God has given to man the ground of faith. He has given all the evidence necessary and then some. But man has to believe it. So listen to Romans 10:10-17:

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

12 ¶ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

I will not take time to give evidence that the Bible is the Word of God. That would be appropriate right here. Let me just refer you to our message on the internet at sermonaudio.com/mecl, and to the message, "Is The Bible The Word Of God?"

CONCL: We covered two sections in this message. First, we looked at primal faith. We saw that it began with Adam and Eve before they even sinned. They believed God and did what they were told to do or not to do. That is living by faith, simply put.

But then another voice came from the immaterial world, and they obeyed that voice as well, and now sin had come into the world, and living by the true faith had come to an end. And then God offered salvation to Adam and Eve, and for the very first time, saving faith, that we will be looking at, took place. And living by faith was restored. And from there, man chose to live by faith or live in sin. And Hebrews 11 gives a list of OT people who lived by faith.

Then we considered a few questions Christians wrestle with. Where does faith come from? Is it, as Calvinism says, a gift from God? Is it true that God elected some in eternity past to

salvation and reprobated others to hell, and it all depends on whether God had elected them or not? Does it depend on whether God sends one the gift of faith, and if one is not one of the elect, God will not send it?

Or is it as theologians like Henry C. Thiessen say, that faith comes from both God and man. By the way, Thiessen uses the same type of verses Calvin uses to prove his point and all the references used speak of the gifting of the Christian, not saving faith.

And last we considered the possibility that faith comes from man. It is my view that God has created man with the capacity to reason and to believe. Everybody believes something including the Atheist. We cannot live without believing something. But I believe that God gave to man truth, both in the created universe, and in the written Word. And for spiritual truth, all that pertains to life and godliness is contained in the Word of God, and it is 100% man's responsibility to believe that Word. God's part was giving the Word, man's part is to believe it. Man is the source of faith. Man has the capacity to believe the right thing and if he does not he will go to hell for it.