

LIVING BY FAITH?

Message 2

INTRO: Our subject is living by faith. God's entire plan for everything is wrapped up in those who live by faith. We looked briefly at the prophet Habakkuk's two questions in the first message. First, "How can such wickedness exist and you do nothing about it?" The nation of Judah was on its last leg spiritually. To the prophet it seemed as though God was not doing anything about it. It was much like our day today. But God answered him like this: "I am already at work." When Habakkuk found out what God was doing and that He was preparing the Chaldeans to come and punish sinful Judah, he had a new problem: "Oh, Lord God, why would you use a nation more wicked than Judah to punish her?" Well, in short, through punishing Judah, God would ultimately save a nation and a people of faith.

God's whole plan stands or falls in producing a people of faith. The people God had chosen to proclaim His message were the Jewish people, and now they were going astray, and the only hope was severe discipline, and that is what God did. It was very severe. If I could describe it for you, every one of you would weep.

We also saw that sin is man's primary problem. And to bring about a people of faith, sin must be dealt with. We also saw that there are two realms. There is the visible physical realm of the five senses. It is the natural realm. But there is a spiritual realm. It is the realm in which God, the good angels, Satan and demons dwell. This realm plays a very huge part in what happens in the physical realm. I mentioned Lloyd Jones who said that to understand the physical, one must understand something of the non-physical realm.

You see, in the heart or mind of man, God and Satan are fighting out the great battle of the ages. For God, this is where the importance of bringing man to live by faith comes in. All of God's plan is wrapped up in those among mankind who live by faith.

Then we said that there is truth in both realms. In the physical realm we have objective truth that is discoverable through the five senses. In the spiritual realm God has given to man all the truth needed for life and godliness. That is, of course, the Bible. It is through the Bible that true faith is born.

We looked very briefly at the great potential of one person who trusts God by faith. All of this is wrapped up in the value God places on personhood and a person who trusts Him by faith and lives his or her life righteously. For us, as persons, it is essential to reflect on the fact that we have but a brief moment

of time to live that life of faith. It is also important to realize that if I do not come to that life of faith and then remain in it, the alternative after this life is the place of everlasting torment. Furthermore for true faith to exist, there must be true doctrine. As we will see, faith is based on teaching.

After those introductory items we went back in time to time before creation. Psalm 90:2 said, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." So we went back to before the creation of the universe, and then to before the creation of angels; and there we were in a time, when as far as we know, only God existed.

And I believe that the Bible reveals that way back there, God had a plan. When Jesus gave the parables of Matthew 13, in which He reveals, as I interpret those parables, what it will be like in the Church age, they reveal a plan. Verses 34-35 say, "All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.'" Before God created the universe, He knew what would take place, and that the Church age would come into existence.

The Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 1:20 that Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world. Paul, speaking of the elect says in Ephesians 1:4, "According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love..." God knew all about the age in which we live. And He planned that the believer should be holy and without blame before Him in love. And how is that accomplished? By faith!

So, we begin with our first point in this study of living by faith and it is this: The purpose of creation.

I. THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

A. The Creation Of Angels

1. How did creation begin?

In considering the purpose of creation, we need to begin at the beginning. When God created the universe, that was not the beginning of His creation. The beginning of creation, as far as revealed in Scripture,

is concerned, is the creation of angels. We go to Psalm 148 (read 1-6).

When were they created? We go to Job 38 (read 1-7). If the angels rejoiced at the creation of the universe, then of course they had to exist before the creation of the universe.

2. What are angels?

-Spirit beings

So let us consider what angels are. Turn to Hebrews 1 (read verses 6-7). Verse 7 quoting Psalm 104:4 says, "Who makes His angels spirits..." Angels are spirit beings, just as God is a spirit Being. So John 4:24 says, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." What does it mean to be a spirit being? It means a spirit being is a being without physical properties. So here we are in that other sphere we have talked about, the supernatural sphere. It is the realm beyond the realm of nature.

So, because angels are spirit beings you cannot see them. Our senses are incapable of exploring what they are. And you might say, "Well, angels appeared in the Bible, and they have appeared to people and they saw them." It is possible for angels to take on visible form, but they are spirit beings. They have no physical substance to their being. In this sense they have a likeness to God, who is also a spirit being.

-Free moral agents

Furthermore, in order for angles to be able to truly worship God, they have to be personal beings, and they have to have a free will. In our western culture, when a man seeks a wife or a wife considers a man for a husband, the normal way is that they choose a partner whom they personally desire and want, but the partner must also desire and want them. For such a decision, they both have to be personal beings, and have a free will. They both need to love each other, and they both must choose this person above all others. This is free will. Today reprobate people are marrying animals. But you see, this major element of personhood and the

ability to make such a decision is missing in animals, and every normal human being knows that.

For angels to worship God of their own free will, they must choose to do so as personal beings. They cannot be forced to worship God, or made to worship out of fear. That renders worship void. It must come of free choice. So in angels God created a personal, free, moral agent to worship Him and enjoy whatever they were able to learn of His goodness.

3. Why did God make angels?

And so we ask now, why did God make angels? Listen to Colossians 1:16, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible (the universe) and invisible (the angelic realm), whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers (speaking of spiritual beings). All things were created through Him and for Him." So we learn that angels were created 'for' Him. They were created for God's benefit. And what benefit could angels have for God?

Well, we go to Hebrews 1 (read verse 6). We would gather from this that angels were created to worship God. Then look at verse 7 (read). They are God's ministers. They are to serve Him. Now look at verse 14 (read). Let me just add here that I do not doubt God knew some of the angels would choose to disobey Him, and that in His original plan, He made the good angels in order to ultimately serve Him among mankind.

But we go now to Revelation 4-5. Let me introduce the book of Revelation. Chapter 1 introduces us to the whole book. Chapters 2-3 cover the Church age. Chapters 4-5 introduce us to heaven. Chapters 6-19 give us the tribulation time in some detail. Chapters 20-22 give us the millennium and eternity.

So chapters 4-5 are an introduction to heaven. And these chapters reveal a great deal about the purpose of all of God's creation. I want to read these chapters and point out things as we go. We begin in 4:1:

1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying,

"Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

We have here One sitting on a throne. Here is God Almighty. He is the very center of all there is. We now have a description of Him:

3 And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.

4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

In these 24 elders, in my view, we have the Church.

5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

These four living creatures are some kind of angelic beings. There are various kinds of angelic beings like Cherubim and Seraphim.

7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

8 ¶ The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

The very first thing that escapes the lips of these very high ranking angels is the holiness of the One sitting on the throne. The second is His eternality. It says they do not rest day or night saying these words.

So great and so awesome and so incredible is this one on the throne, that these angels never tire of this. This is pure worship.

Now listen to verse 9 to see what else these angels do:

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever..." So here we have the worship of angels, and here we have God's purpose for creating them.

4. What does it mean to glorify God?

Now, just what is this, giving glory? Well, we will see this in a while. But not only do they give glory, they give honor and they give thanks and we will look at that later as well. But when they do this, they ignite something in the Christians who are there in the presence of God. It says that when they give glory and honor and thanks to God, and I read:

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

Again, glory and honor and power are ascribed to God. Here is the worship of God. And we are told why they do that. It is because God created all things. And because by God's will they exist and were created.

1 ¶ And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

5 But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

6 ¶ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Now there is a question of what this seven sealed book is. Some believe it is the title deed to the earth. But what this book contains is what is revealed in the rest of the book of Revelation. So look at 6:1 (read, etc...). And now look at verses 11-14:

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Now the number of angels involved here, it says, was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands and thousands. There is coming a day, when in 7 short years the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. So look at chapter 11 (read verse 15). From these two chapters alone, it is not hard to learn why God created everything, including the angels. It was for His glory and His honor. It was for Him!

So let me explain what it means to glorify God. Since I have covered this many times, I will be brief. But we need to first understand glory. The glory of God is when we learn who He is. You cannot truly learn to know God and not say, "Incredible! Wow!" There is nothing in God, which when we learn it, we will not say, "Wow". Glory is when you recognize something positive in someone. Here is our major problem, we recognize so few new things about God.

Listen to Isaiah 6:1-4, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims (angelic beings): each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." You see, the angels in heaven recognize things on earth we fail to see. They say, the whole earth is full of the glory of God.

So to explain glory briefly let me use a Canadian game as an example. For Canadian hockey fans of any age, they will have heard of the Canada Russian series in 1972. Canada expected an easy win, but it came down to the last minute in the last game to decide who the winner was. And a man by name of Paul Henderson scored the last Canadian goal in the last moment of play and all over Canada people lifted out of their seats and

they were ecstatic with joy. It was Canada's and Paul Henderson's moment of glory, and Canadians and many others entered that moment of glory with him.

Now imagine that game with no spectators. What would Paul Henderson and Canada have received if there were no spectators? Think of a great artist and nobody to see what he painted. Think of a great architect and nobody to appreciate what he built. Well, that is what one would conclude it was like for God, before He created angels. God is a being indescribably wonderful; awesome in the truest sense of the word, that is to beings that can appreciate that which is truly good. But He was all alone. There were no personal beings to appreciate Him.

And then God did something incredibly huge but also incredibly dangerous. You see, way back there God had a plan. That is clear from Scripture. And this great and dangerous thing He did was to create angels. Angels are personal beings, and they have the capacity to recognize some of the awesomeness of God. But what made this dangerous? If God created a personal being to glorify Him, that personal being had to be a free moral agent. If he was not a free moral agent, he could not truly glorify God. And being a free moral agent, that personal being must have the capacity to choose to do what he was meant to do, but he must also be able to choose to not do what he was meant to do, and therein lay the danger.

Now let me go back again for a moment to our illustration of Paul Henderson's last goal in Russia. Here is the potential in glory. Paul Henderson's and thus Canada's moment of glory can be lived and relived and relived. When the story is told it is relived. But when the radio broadcast of those games are replayed, it is relived in even greater pleasure. But when the video is seen, it reaches its height of glory. And God's glory will reach its zenith when we see Him, and that time is coming, as we will see. And when that moment comes, faith will be over. It will have served its eternal purpose!

And when we come to the glory of God, there are literally zillions upon zillions of things we will in

this lifetime never know about God. God wanted angels to experience Him and what He is forever. God wants you and I to experience that forever. And that time is coming for some. And let me add this. It is not coming for those who have accepted Christ. It is coming for those who have repented, accepted Christ and have lived their lives by faith. I think a better question than, "Have you accepted Christ"? is the question, "Are you walking the narrow path?"

But in creating a being to worship Him, the most dangerous thing of all was that such a being must be free to choose not to do so. You see, a free moral agent must also have the right *not* to honor and glorify God if they chose to do so. And it is just such a being God created.

5. Is God not supremely selfish?

And now we must ask this question: If God made all things for His own glory, does that not make Him extremely selfish? Is that not absolutely and fully selfishness? Let us say I do whatever I do in order to receive glory from others. I buy the car I buy because of what others will think of me. I build my house the way I do because of what others will think of me. I do whatever I do because of what others will think of me. I must have the most beautiful wife, because of what others will think of me and on and on. Now I ask, is that not straight plain selfishness to the core? The answer of course is a resound, "Yes! That is selfishness to the core!"

And so, that brings us back to our question. We have gleaned from the Scriptures that God has created everything for His own glory, and we must ask, does that not make Him a selfish being in the extreme?

First off, let us ask ourselves, who is this God of the Bible? Is He not Jehovah God? Yes, He is. And just what is this Jehovah God like? Well, we know Him by His attributes which reveal His character. And I have said that I believe that God's chief attribute, the attribute above all others is His goodness. He is good. He is good in every possible way you can think of a personal being. Others see His holiness as the chief attribute. I think God is holy because He is good.

Now think of this: If God is who He says He is then He is fully righteous. If He is wholly good, He has to be completely righteous. So if He is completely good and righteous, and He made the angels for His glory, then that must be good righteous, and could not be selfish at all. And not only is He entirely righteous, He is entirely just. He is absolute love, agape love. He is entirely kind. He is entirely benevolent. He is entirely wise. He knows absolutely everything that is good. He is entirely sovereign. He is entirely holy, He has no sin and cannot sin. He is all powerful. He is entirely faithful. And whatever else you can think of as a positive personal trait or characteristic, that is God, the God of the Bible.

Now if all that is true, could He be selfish? Of course the answer is a resound, "No!" So we must then answer, how could He make everything for His own glory and still be this God the Bible puts forth? Is that possible? Or is that a contradiction?

I think the outcome of free moral agents who learn to worship God is the answer to our question. What is the outcome or result of glorifying God? I think it can be described in one word. It is this: Fulfillment. And fulfillment is the chief desire in every normal, created, personal being. This is what we all seek. From reading Revelation 4-5, it appears that it seems clear that it is the same for angels. And how is man truly fulfilled? Man is truly fulfilled when he does that for which God created man; that is to glorify God. So when created personal beings glorify God, God gets what He created them for; and they get that which fulfills them.

So as I see it, here is how God set things up. When man learns to know God and man loves Him and obeys Him, God is glorified. So listen to 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." And when man glorifies God, there and there only can man truly find fulfillment. So listen to Matthew 6:31-33, "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly

Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." When man puts God first, in that, and that alone he finds true fulfillment. So is God selfish? No! It is all for man's good as well!

For personal created beings, glorifying God is the most fulfilling, the most gratifying existence they can experience. So when free moral agents glorify God, then God receives what God made them for. Someone to appreciate His full divine goodness. But on the other hand, that free moral agent, when he or she glorifies God then receives that which is fully fulfilling to a free moral agent. It cannot get better than this. Both are mutually rewarded by their unified existence.

Now, when God created angels, that is exactly the way it was. We do not know when God created the angels, but to this very day, and beyond this day, the angels that glorify God are fulfilled and they do not tire day and night of this incredible God they serve. They are there in the presence of God and the interaction is so divinely fulfilling that they simply repeat some things over and over again. And the ecstasy of total fulfillment is so enjoyable that they simply cannot cease. And when ten million years times tens of millions of years have gone by, their fulfillment will not diminish. What is more probable is that it will grow!

So, was God selfish when He made angels and man to worship Him? No! That is the very thing that is also the best for the free moral agent! And all of it is wrapped up in true goodness; true righteousness; true love; true holiness, true kindness and on and on.

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.

CONCL: And so we conclude. A.W. Tozer says in the little booklet, "Worship: The Missing Jewel of The Church", "Now, these plain people of whom I speak believe that God created things for a purpose. He created the flowers, for instance, to be beautiful; He created birds to sing; He created the trees to bear fruit and the beasts to feed and clothe mankind. And in so saying, these people affirm what the Holy Scriptures and Moses and the prophets and the apostles and saints since the world began have all said. God made man for a purpose and that purpose is given by the catechism, the answer is, 'To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever'. God made us to be worshipers. That was the purpose of God in bringing us into this world.

"I believe there is good sound reasoning back of all this. I believe that He created man out of no necessity. God being the God He was and is, and being infinitely perfect and infinitely beautiful and infinitely glorious and infinitely admirable and infinitely loving, out of His own inward necessity had to have some creature that was capable of admiring Him and loving Him and knowing Him. So God made man in His own image; in the image and likeness of God made He him: and He made him as near to being like Himself as it was possible for the creature to be like the Creator. The most godlike thing in the universe is the soul of man.

"The reason God made man in His image was that he might appreciate God and admire and adore and worship; so that God might not be a picture, so to speak, hanging in a gallery with nobody looking at Him. He might not be a flower that no one could smell; He might not be a star that no one could see. God made somebody to smell that flower, the lily of the valley. He wanted someone to see that glorious image. He wanted someone to see that star, so He made us and in making us He made us to worship Him" (6-8) end quote.

Well, in this message we have come to where God created angels. And God was glorified and the angels were fulfilled. We do not know how long that continued, but then something most dreadful happened, and we will look at that next time.