

LIVING BY FAITH

Message 5

July 24

INTRO: Our subject is living by faith. Our first main point was the purpose of creation. We looked at the creation of the angels, and that they are spirit beings and were created in the non-physical realm. We saw that sin took place in the angelic realm, and because they are in the presence of God and see Him, they cannot be saved. We considered that God had to deal with evil in a way that left the angels that remained with God in such a way that they serve Him of their own free will, without fear of judgment should they decide not to do what they were created to do. And yet, God, to remain just, must deal with Satan.

I have recommended that this is where the creation of man comes in and that God created man in a material universe in which he could not see God. Man, like the angels, was created a free moral agent and was also created to worship God.

Let me cautiously suggest what may have happened before God created man. Turn to the book of Job. In the book of Job we are given some fascinating information that gives us a window into the spiritual world, and the communication between God and the devil. You know the story. Look at verse 1 (read). Now look at verses 6-11. This is an amazing window into the other side. Now here is Satan's position. "God, Job only serves you for what he can get out of it. If he did not get all this good stuff from You, mark it down God, he would not serve You. But touch his wealth, his health, his family, and he will curse you to the face!" There is a revelation of the thinking of Satan.

Could it be that God talked to Satan about His plans to man man. And Satan said, "If you make a free moral agent in such a way that he cannot see into our realm, bah, when I offer him sin, because the nature of free moral agents, man will be so prone to pride I will win and You will lose hands down! Not only would I win one, I would win them all. You see God, I know free moral agents. I am one. And we free moral agents, we have our pride. And if you lock him in a physical universe and he never sees you and he cannot get outside of those five senses, and he has such tremendous capacities, as You have said You will make him with, and if I offer him something that appeals to His pride, and you don't let him look into this side, he will never serve You!"

And maybe God said something like this: I will make a free moral agent that cannot look into our side of things, and I won't show myself to Him and nor can you, and I will tell you what; there will be those who will serve me simply by faith alone. And if that should happen, I will win and you will lose and to top it off, if you lose, you will be sent to hell forever. And maybe the rest of the angels covered their mouths, so to speak, in awe and said, "It can't be done. We too are free moral agents. But if God is right in this, we will serve Him of our own free will forever. We will never be tempted by anything ever again." So look at Job 1:12 (read). And so God created man, and the very first pair fell into sin.

Well, let me sum Job's story up in his own words in the midst of a long nightmare in which he lost everything including his health and he did not yet know the outcome, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." May I ask you, in whatever circumstances you may be, is that your response? Or are you ready to throw in the towel?

This morning we want to work on a definition of faith. I believe the history we have covered will help us to understand what faith is. Our discussion of faith will be faith in general. In a later message we will look at different aspects of faith.

II. THE LIFE OF FAITH

A. Definition Of Faith

1. Biblical definition

What is faith? Let us begin with the biblical words. It is surprising to find that the word faith occurs only twice in the OT in the KJV. And Habakkuk 2:4 is one of those occurrences. It is the word *emoono*. It has been translated as faithfulness 18 times, truth 13 times, faithfully 5 times, office 5 times, truly 1, verily 1 and faith 1 time. The Online Bible says it basically means, firmness, fidelity, steadfastness and steadiness.

Now if the word faith is used very little in the OT, the word *to believe* occurs many more times. The word faith comes from the word *aman*, which means *to believe*. The verb of faith is to believe. So faith is basically what one believes. The TWOT says at the heart of the meaning of this word is the idea of certainty. Such words as Amen, verily, truly, firmness and truth are

all closely related to this word faith. With the idea of firmness or certainty we have something that does not move.

So the word to believe is very closely related to the word faith, and the word to believe occurs 108 times. It is the word '*aman*'. We get our word *amen* from the idea of this word. The word 'truth' falls in with these root ideas.

Now, of this word 'to believe' TWOT says, "...it basically means 'to cause to be certain, sure' or 'to be certain about,' 'to be assured.' In this sense the word in the Hiphil conjugation is the biblical word for 'to believe' and shows that Biblical faith is an assurance, a certainty, in contrast with the modern concepts of faith as something possible, hopefully true, but not certain."

The NT word for faith is *pietho*. This word comes from *pistis*, meaning to convince by argument. In my interpretation, faith is a belief held on the basis of any given information which a person deems credible. In the NT faith is the word '*pistis*'. It is the conviction of the truth of something. The word 'to believe' is very closely related and instead of being '*pistis*', a noun, it is '*pisteuw*', a verb. So, to believe something is an action. That which one believes is a noun, the substance of what one believes. So faith and believing are very closely related because one's faith is simply what one believes.

So, in brief, faith is what a person believes. What one believes is not verifiable by the senses, especially sight. When you can scientifically prove something, it is no longer faith. It is knowledge and provable by the senses. For example, please do not think I am good at golfing, but a few years ago I shot a hole in one on hole three on our local golf course. Not until this year has anybody else ever done that. I won't tell you how many balls I shot into the lake between the T Off and the green. Now let me ask you how many of you believe what I just told you? How many of you saw this to verify the truth of what I am saying?

I might convince you that I am telling the truth, but you could not prove I did what I said. You could calculate all the possibilities and so on. You could check out my character and in the end either believe or not believe me, but you could not positively know that I did this. I am telling you I did it. You can only believe it or disbelieve it. And if you had seen me do it, you could no longer say you believe it. Now you don't believe it, you know it.

So let me give you the difference between science and faith. Science means, what? Knowledge. What you believe may or may not be true, but what you know must be true. You must have verified it. Now we pass off as knowledge a lot of things we have not verified, but others have and we believe them. It is, in that sense, faith. For example, news reporting. You can only believe or disbelieve what you hear on the news. There is much distorted news reporting. And because you were not there to verify what was reported, you can only believe or disbelieve or hold in question what was reported. History is like that.

So faith is what you are persuaded is true, though you do not have scientific proof of it.

2. Personal definition of faith

Now let me give you a personal definition of faith. Some years ago I defined faith like this, *Faith is 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.*

So first, faith is what one believes. Second it is based on any given information which one deems credible. In the last message, when I asked you who of you believed me that there was a big jet airplane in this little room here, nobody believed me. Why not. You did not deem the information credible. When we deem something credible, it needs to have evidence that the information is in the realm of possibility.

So, for example, the Mormon faith and the book of Mormon claim this book is a history of early America.

It claims the natives of the USA are Jews from the lost tribes of Israel. Anthropologists for years said that those claims did not have evidence. Then along came DNA and DNA adds a lot of evidence to what anthropologists said all along. That is, of course, if you believe DNA can give strong evidence. This DNA discovery shook up the Mormon world, but they survived it because of pride. It is too hard to acknowledge error once you are as far in as they are. How much evidence is there that the history of the book of Mormon is true? About the same as for the faith of evolution.

Now, what is the evidence for the Bible being the word of God? I said a while ago a message was available on sermonaudio.com/mecl called Ten Proofs That The Bible Is The Word of God. I was called about that and was in error. It is listed as, "Is The Bible The Word of God." In this message we give ten kinds of evidence that the Bible is in fact the Word of God. The evidence for the veracity of the Word of God is so strong, that it is credible to the most inquisitive rational mind. The evidence in comparison to that of evolution is so great it should satisfy any truth seeker.

So listen to the article I read as given by David Cloud, recently in his Friday Church News had an article on Dr. James Tour. As I have told you he has written over 590 scientific research articles. And this scientist admits that science knows very little on the subject of where things come from. I would go further and say that science knows nothing of where things come from. Not one thing. Well, this scientist writes, 'With each added step difficulties are compounded by improbabilities so overwhelming that no other field of science would depend on such levels of faith...'" So what he calls science is faith, and thus no longer science. What is the teaching of evolution? It is a faith, it is not science. By passing it off as science they have gained credibility. The truth is it is a faith, and one with no ground at all.

So here is the definition of faith once more: *Faith is 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.

So, faith, simply put is that which you believe, but cannot prove with absolute visible certainty. You believe it and are convinced of its truth and it is your faith. One may have a true faith or a false faith, but it is a faith.

Now, let me ask you another question. How many of you believe there is a God, capital G? Now let me ask you a second question: How many of you have seen God? Nobody? Now let me ask you another question: What do you base your belief, your faith on that there is a God? What information do you deem credible? The credible information is the Bible.

Let me give you one of the ten evidences that the Bible is the Word of God: Prophecy. This fall the United States of America will elect a president. But nobody can predict with certainty who the president will be. Man simply does not know the future. But in the life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ, over 100 prophecies of the OT were fulfilled. For example there is a prophecy that says not a bone in his body would be broken. But the two thieves who were crucified beside Christ had the bones in their legs broken, while Christ did not. You can read all about that. But who could predict that 1,000 years before it happened? Nobody, but a divine being. And God gave that prophecy 1000 years before the event.

We cannot predict with certainty what will happen in a few months in the US election. In prophecies related to Christ we have mentioned one wee little piece of the whole of the prophecies made, never mind hundreds of other prophecies. We could spend several years of Sundays if we were to cover all the prophecies of the Bible, and prophecy is only one evidence, when there are many more. Prophecy alone is enough to persuade any logical, objective mind.

So, faith is a belief. It is based on information deemed credible by the one who believes it. It is

faith because it does not have scientific or certain proof. But it has enough evidence to make it credible. And here is the next point. We are talking about religious faith, of course. And the next point is that faith gives rise to hope.

Go now to Hebrews 11, what has been called the "Hall Of Faith." It is the faith chapter of the Bible. We begin with verse 1. It says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Many take this as a definition of faith. It actually is not. When it says that faith is the substance of things hoped for, which is often given as a definition of faith, it means something else. The word 'substance' is *hypostasis*. It means that which stands underneath, like a foundation. I think it could be rendered, "Faith is the foundation of things hoped for..."

So that does not tell you what faith is, but rather what it does. It stands as the foundation of hope. Hope is always future. In this chapter of these men of faith, what they hoped or looked for was a city whose builder and maker is God. Look at verses 8-10 (read). Now look at verses 13-16 (read). The hope of the Christian's faith is to go to heaven when we die, or to be raptured if we don't die before the Lord comes. But we too look for a city, the New Jerusalem, which will someday come down to earth, and God will dwell with man in that city. We too have a hope, and it is built on the foundation of our faith.

Now the verse goes on, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for..." and here is the rest, "...the evidence of things not seen." Faith is the evidence of things not seen. Now the word translated 'evidence' is worth considering. It is 'elegkos'. It is used only one other time in the NT in this form and that is 2 Timothy 3:16, listen to it: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..." Now you can't guess which word it is, can you? It is the word 'reproof'. Now, how could this word 'evidence' and 'reproof' be the same word in the original?

Well, it comes from the verb *elegko*. And this word is used 17 times in the NT. The KJV translates it reprove 6 times, rebuke 5 times, convince 4 times, tell (one's) fault 1, and to convict 1, and a few other minor ways. The root idea is that of persuasion or conviction or to be convinced. And I think this verse might well be translated, "Now faith is the foundation of things hoped for, the conviction (the faith, the belief, the persuasion) of things not seen."

The Christian faith is grounded on the Bible, and gives the believer hope of both resurrection and of eternal life. On the other hand, atheism is a faith as well. It is based on the information that there is no God. That certainly has no scientific proof so it is a faith. In Hebrews 11:6 we saw that the Christian faith gives rise to hope. We have a most wonderful hope. And a huge dilemma for the atheist is what hope does their faith generate? What do they have to live for? Their faith has a tendency to despair. But I think they have an unspoken hope. It is the same as their faith. Their faith is that there is no God and their hope is that there is no God. That gives them the hope that they will not be held accountable for anything they have done or do, and that means they have the freedom to do anything they want to do. Why do people believe in evolution? Bottom line, they are not accountable for their sin.

We, as Christians, so, have a conviction, a persuasion, a belief that the God of the Bible is the only God, and the hope that that belief gives us is that of eternal life. If we should see God before we die, we would not be able to hold that as a faith anymore. We would have seen Him. You see, we can only be saved by faith, and without faith it is not possible to please God. In the last message, Lord willing, I will show why God chose that the just shall live by faith.

So, finish 2 Corinthians 5:7 for me, "For we walk by faith...? not by sight." In this physical world we walk by sight. That is our primary means. But we cannot see the spiritual world, we can only believe it. Now

finish 1 Corinthians 13, that great love chapter of the Bible for me in verse 13, "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is...? love." And why is love is the greatest. Well, faith will cease when we see God. Hope will cease when we are in heaven. But love? It will never cease!

So, let me show you that faith and hope will cease. I take you to the book of Revelation, chapter 22. Let me tell you where we are in the prophecies of this book by the time we come to chapter 22. The Church age is over. The tribulation is over. The millennium is over. The final battle is over. The final resurrection is over. The city, the New Jerusalem has come down to earth. God has moved in with man, and eternity has begun in a brand new way. And now look at chapter 22 (read 1-4). Are these not incredible words! Faith is over. We see Him! Hope is over, He is with us forever! What remains is love; an unchanging God in all His divine glory. That is why verse 5 (read).

CONCL: And so, as a final point, and by way of conclusion, let me show you faith in general at work in the lives of several godly men. And if you listen carefully, you will find that they had a *belief which they held on the basis of certain information they had been given which they deemed credible which, on the one hand, did not have certain proof, but which on the other hand gave rise to hope for something that had not yet transpired.*

We turn to Daniel 3. Now there are different kinds of faith, and we will look at those later. But ordinary, day to day, faith, the kind of life the Christian is to live, is simply that of obedience to God. When I obey Him, I walk by faith. Let me show you that from Scripture.

1 ¶ Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

2 And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

3 So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all

the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

4 Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,

5 "that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up;

6 "and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

Now you see, Babylon was a kind of a Canada. It had many peoples, many nations, and many languages. Could it be that Canada is beginning to seek to squeeze its people into one worship? So Mr. Could the day be coming for us when we will be required to worship that which we do not believe in? You can tell here that our counties leaders are getting their promptings from the same source as Nebuchadnezzar got his from. So the the passage goes on:

7 So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

We are grateful for our country, but when one watches our leaders today, one gets concerned. And it goes on:

8 ¶ Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews.

Oh yes, it is the Christians again. It is their fault. Why would a man murder all those people down there in the states, a Muslim man? Well, the answer is clear, it's the Christians, man! Can't you see that?

9 They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever!

10 "You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image;

11 *"and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.*

12 *"There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."*

13 *Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.*

You know how it is. We see it in our day. It goes like this: "Come on. Be quiet and just kind of go along with things. Don't stand for truth. There are different ways of doing things. Besides, when you take a stand, oh my, it just causes so much hurt."

Well, when some people in that whole mixture of peoples and languages said, "We can't worship that way. We have the true God", listen to Nebuchadnezzar:

14 *Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?*

15 *"Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"*

You see, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-Nego, I am a lenient kind of guy. I don't mean any harm. I will give you another chance. Come on, this is not such a big deal. But I give you a warning. You are toying with no little man here. Bow, brothers, or burn. That is your option. Well, here come the voices of faith:

16 *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.*

17 *"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.*

18 *"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."*

Oh blessed men of faith. They took a stand, and they stood. No compromise. No fear. Just godly Faith. I will tell you when you take a stand for truth, behind all the trouble that will come your way stands a dark hooded figure, with a face contorted in venomous anger.

19 ¶ *Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Some of you have seen the change on people's faces when you take a stand. It is not pleasant. We go on: He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.*

20 *And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace.*

21 *Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

22 *Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.*

23 *And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

Good riddance! What a bunch of trouble Christians are. They disrupt the peace and are always contrary to everything. It is nice to hear the fire cackle, I mean crackle. But, hey, wait a minute?

24 *Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, (Maybe he's thinking, "What's wrong with my mind? Am I losing it? Please tell me I'm not seeing things!") "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."*

25 *"Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (Please, please tell me I'm not losing it.)*

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here."

Ah, Almighty Nebuchadnezzar has found some faith. Servants of the Most High God he now called them. Really. Well good for you Nebuchadnezzar, you are now in the realm of faith. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire.

27 And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

28 ¶ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel (the fourth man in) and delivered His servants who trusted (had faith) in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!

29 "Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this."

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

And my favorite part of all this are these words: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

17 "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.

18 "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." The just, shall live, by faith! Amen, and Amen!