

24-1215a - Sermon Notes

24-1215a - *Saved by Faith*, Scott Reynolds

Bible Readers: Roger Raines and Wyatt Woosley

These Sermon Notes by Scott Reynolds

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Saved by Faith

Scripture Readings:

1st Scripture Reading (0:04 - 0:xx), Roger Raines

2 Corinthians 5:7,

for we walk by faith, not by sight—

2nd Scripture Reading (0:xx - 0:xx), Wyatt Woosley

2 Corinthians 12:2-4,

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. ³ And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—⁴ was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

Summary

Preacher: Scott Reynolds

Preliminaries

- We don't have a Preacher here so instead we have a speaker rotation of five men from the congregation and it is my honor and privilege this morning to present the lesson to you.

Introduction

The last time I was up speaking we started a new series that I'm calling, "Beginnings". It's a series on the 1st eleven chapters of Genesis. This series came about as a result of an article titled, "Why are we losing them" by Kevin Cain, JD. showing that by "compromising our position on the first eleven chapters of Genesis in order to engender scientific credibility to fit alleged scientific theories and notions" we've left young people with "serious doubts about the accuracy of the Bible, especially when it comes to Creation. In those early formative years, they were clearly left with questions and reservations about the reliability of God's word and the Creation account in particular. And now,

after years of doubting the first chapters of Genesis and years after a constant bombardment of evolution in school (and pretty much everywhere) and increasing compromises by religious institutions regarding Creation, they find themselves gone [from church] with no thought of ever returning."

So, we began our series on Beginnings by looking at the events that occurred BEFORE the Beginning. It was in that two part lesson, specifically the discussion of angels in the evening lesson that got me to thinking about the concept of faith. And specifically, Why is faith necessary to be saved? You may be thinking what has that to do with the topic of "Beginnings"?

Well, as we're discovering in our Wednesday night class on "The Truth Project," what's going on in our society and what's been going on in societies ever since the beginning is a major battle, a "cosmic" battle Dell Tackett, of the Truth Project, calls it, a battle between Truth and Lies. And our beliefs, those ideas that govern us, that we live our life by, are determined by what we believe is really real.

In the first eleven chapters of Genesis God is revealing to us some of His foundational truth claims. The Creation, the creation of man and woman, the fall, Cain and Abel, the genealogy from Adam to Noah, the increasing corruption of mankind, the flood, God's covenant with Noah, the table of nations, and the tower of Babel comprise those eleven chapters.

How do we know whether they are true or not? How do we determine the truth about anything? What is truth? And surprisingly, humans have a difficult time even defining what truth is.

So, Before we continue with our Beginnings study, let's look at the concept of faith, our beliefs. We're not going to look into the traditional aspect of being saved by faith or faith vs baptism. What I want to know is: WHY.

Why is faith necessary for our salvation.

What is faith anyway?

Hebrews 11:1-2 (NASB)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.² For by it the men of old gained approval.

Faith is assurance of things, we can be sure. Faith is not blind

The apostle Paul tells us that God has made it plain for us and He can be understood from what He has made. That is, we can see an invisible God from the visible things He has made. We call it today, "Intelligent Design." When we see evidence of a design in an object we know there must be a designer, even though we've never seen the designer.

In Romans 1:18-20 (NIV), Paul says:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

So, my question is: "why are we put in a position where we must believe the truth claims of God?" Why doesn't He just show Himself and give us proof beyond a doubt that His truth claims are true? Wouldn't we then choose to follow and worship Him? Wouldn't we do what He asks of us? If our decision to follow Him or not were not based on faith but based on sight?... What would our choice be?

It is amazing that we are even given a choice, that we even have an option, a hope, once we've chosen to sin, it's amazing the we even have a hope to be redeemed! But, if we could see God and experience God and then we chose to sin... would we then still be offered the hope of redemption?

Paul tells us in **2 Cor 7:5**, ...we walk by faith, not by sight,... The reality is that we must make our choices based on faith. Does that, possibly, have something to do with God offering the sinner the hope of salvation?

I believe the Bible actually gives us the answer to this question. And I believe we will see why we are saved by [God's] grace (i.e. His willingness to give the gift of salvation) through faith (**Eph 2:5,8**).

So, We walk by faith not by sight

The Bible tells us there are two realms. A spiritual realm and a physical realm. Unlike the Naturalist who says all that exists is the physical natural realm. In the words of Carl Sagan, "The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be." However, even the naturalist is forced to rely on faith. It is a fact that there are multiple layers of rock strata throughout the entire world. It is an assumption to say that it took billions of years for them to form. It must be assumed because we don't and can't observe billions of years. No one was around to see how the strata were formed. How they were formed is a theory not a fact.

But, right from the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 1:1 we are introduced to God. We are not told much about Him at that time and that is our dilemma, we have limited knowledge as does the naturalist. Humans are limited in knowledge.

Then in verse two we are introduced to the Holy Spirit. We don't know much about Him either at that point, but we do know He is a Spirit. And a spirit is not part of the natural realm. Later we learn from Jesus that God too is spirit (**John 4:24**).

In **Hebrews 1:7** it says that God makes his angels spirits. So angels are created beings and they too are spirits like God and the Holy Spirit.

We only know there is a spiritual realm from God revealing that fact to us. This brings up an interesting point...

We cannot see the spiritual realm

- The apostle John tells us, "No one has seen God at any time..." (1 John 4:12)
- And, in fact, God told Moses, ..."you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." (Exodus 33:20)
- Paul says God is eternal, immortal, and invisible. (1 Timothy 1:17)
- God... who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see... (1 Timothy 6:16)

- And he tells us that the things we can see are temporal (ie physical, temporary) things, but the things we can't see are eternal, ie spiritual (2 Corinthians 4:18)
- John again emphasizes that God is invisible when he poses this question, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20)

There are occasions when God "opened" human eyes to see the spiritual

We have sensors, our eyes, that can see in the physical realm. But they cannot see the spiritual realm unless God allows it.

- One such person is Balaam, a non-Israelite prophet from Pethor. In the account he is hired by the king of Moab to curse Israel. On his way to Moab he is confronted by the Angel of the Lord who stands in his way, but the Angel of the Lord is invisible to Balaam. Balaam's donkey, however, can see the Angel of the Lord standing there with a sword. The donkey swerves three times to avoid Him. After each time Balaam beats the donkey for veering off the path. After the third beating the Lord opens the donkey's mouth and it speaks to Balaam asking him why he is beating it. Balaam said if he had a sword he would kill it. The donkey asked Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" Balaam replies, "No." And then in Numbers 22:31-33 it says,

Numbers 22:31-33 (NIV)

Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown. ³² The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. ³³ The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it."

If you want to see the rest of the story, read Numbers chapters 22-24.

- A similar account is where Elisha's servant's eyes are opened by the Lord to see the spiritual warfare going on around them. It is recorded in 2 Kings 6:15-17.

But normally... The spiritual realm is hidden from us and deliberately so

Paul tells us that some information in the spiritual realm is not permitted in the natural realm.

In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 (NASB), he says,

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. ³ And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—⁴ was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

- This hiding of information is similar to how the fact that Jesus was going to die for our sins was kept hidden until after His crucifixion. And it is Paul who tells us why in...

1 Corinthians 2:6-8 (NASB), he says,

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; ⁷ but we speak God's wisdom in **a mystery, the hidden wisdom** which God predestined **before the ages** to our glory; ⁸ the wisdom which **none** of the rulers of this age has **understood**; for **if they had** understood it **they would not have crucified the Lord of glory**;

So, Why is information that is readily available in the spiritual realm hidden from the physical realm? The result of hiding information is that it effectively divides the two realms into a Realm of Sight & a Realm of Faith. (That's not an answer, but an observation)

So, Why Are There Two Realms?

And why hide the spiritual from the natural,

but allow the spiritual to see and interact with the natural?

I believe it has to do with God's plan of salvation.

- God made a plan before the creation of the spiritual & physical realms, before time began. The plan involves salvation, this implies God would...
 - Create beings that are sentient (able to perceive & feel things) & conscious (aware of and responding to one's surroundings)
 - Give His creation the ability of choice. To choose to accept, follow, & worship Him or reject Him
 - Giving a choice implies some would accept & some would reject God from BOTH realms
 - What is planned for rejection?
 - Are the lost from both realms treated the same?
 - What is your expectation? That they are treated the same?
- Should an angel who is a spirit living in the spiritual realm who can see God as He is, who can experience His presence and glory who rejects God not out of ignorance but with full knowledge of who He is be offered redemption?

Let's see what the Bible says...

Jude 1:6 (NIV)

And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

2 Peter 2:4 (NIV)

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment;

It appears there is no plan of salvation for angels... but there is for humans, and that's why the writer of Hebrews says this...

Hebrews 2:14-18 (NIV)

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil —¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.¹⁶ **For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.**¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

The answer to that question, "Should an angel with full knowledge of God be offered redemption", which the Bible answers: No, could be why humanity is prevented from seeing the spiritual realm and why any knowledge of the spiritual realm to us has been made a matter of faith with no direct experiential knowledge and why we do not walk by sight. Rejection of God by humanity involves a certain amount of ignorance of actually experiencing God. Perhaps this is why Jesus prayed as He was dying on the cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

So, we live in the realm of faith. And, it is because we humans must walk by faith that we are even offered salvation... We are saved by faith. That's how I see it, what do you think?

We're going to stop here

- Tonight we're going to pick back up with God's planning before the beginning and follow the plan as it was played out until the fall of angels and the fall of man.
- The created from BOTH realms fall. And as we just mentioned one is offered redemption and the other is not. That's tonight.

Now

We are extending the invitation to anyone who is subject to it. Come as we stand and sing.