

Before getting into the Word, let us pray.

Romans 8:7-8 (ESV) For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile towards God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

It is hopefully by the time we drill down to verses 7 and 8, any unbeliever or even those who think they are Christians by virtue of what they do, should be asking, "How can I please God? How can I worship God?"

In order to rightfully answer these questions, I have to go to the heart of the matter, "How is your faith in God?" or even a better question, "What is your faith in God?" My connection between worship and faith is this: "If you have little or no faith in God, can you really worship God?"

In short, the answer is no.

I feel like I a pretty trustworthy guy and I hope you would be able to take my word for it. But don't do take my word for it because as we will find out in a minute, God doesn't want you to take my word for it.

So... let's walk through the Scriptures and understand it together.

In doing so, please understand I am not about to began some series or start some rant on how to properly worship God, lest you take what I say and try to follow it to the letter. In other words, you go through a "How to worship God" checklist and check... check... check... check... done, good to go! Because the Scripture speaks against such heartless toil of religious works:

David knows and proclaim in...

Psalms 40:6 (ESV) "... Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required"

and it is God's proclamation to His people (that is you and me):
**Hosea 6:6 (ESV) For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.**

Steadfast love and knowledge especially in the Old Testament are usually terms that can be switched out. To know is to love. To love is to know. God is omniscient, He is all-knowing. God cannot know more or less and He cannot learn anything new and is shocked by nothing. While we can't be all-knowing, we know God is love and God cannot love us more or less. God loved you before the beginning of time. That is why He sent His perfect son to live the way we should live and to die the death we should have died in order that we too might be raised from death and saved to Himself forever.

With that in mind, God expounds on the what He says in Hosea 6:6 in case you don't know what He meant:

Amos 5:21-24 (ESV)

**"I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain
offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,
I will not look upon them.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.**

The truth of the matter is that some of us tend to worship God on our own terms. Either we praise Him when things are good but try to resolve our own issues when things go bad in order to give the illusion that everything is hunky dorey. Or the flip side of that is not even acknowledge Him when things are good but be so quick to curse God when things go bad. Or even worst still, some kind of jacked up mix of the two ideas of worship.

Which all leads into what is the gospel of God. Two weeks ago, we

spoke on great detail about our total depravity as sinners by deed, word and nature rebel against the will of God. Last week, we spoke about who can possibly save us from our sin and sinful nature, which is Jesus Christ. So now, you know we are sinners and that there is one person who can save us to God forever. But it is not mere head knowledge and agreement of those two facts that get you saved. It is the fact we believe, that we have faith in, that we absolutely trust in that Jesus Christ is the only one who can save us from death and more importantly, to God Himself and that He is Lord reigning over all creation including you and me.

So let me ask this: If it is not mere head knowledge and going through heartless rituals that gets us saved, how is it that heartless faith and ritualistic worship helps us grow in the likeness to Christ and gets us closer to Him?

So let's dig through the Bible to properly know and understand what faith is all about.

I. What Faith Is Not

Before I can really begin, let us dispel some myths and misunderstandings about faith. First and foremost, faith is not something you can really focus on and concentrate on like The Force and then all of a sudden, things will magically appear or things will magically go really well for you. If you immediately think of the story, from the synoptic gospels, where Jesus heals the Centurion's servant and think, "Hmm, that Centurion had faith and Jesus rewarded him because of his faith by healing his servant." then you have missed the point of the story.

Faith of the centurion

Matthew 8:5-9 (ESV) When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he

comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

So lets answer the question, "What does this man believe?". It is simply not that Jesus heals but this man truly believes and acknowledges and puts his trust in that Jesus Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords and reigns and rules over all creation. That Jesus Christ has absolute authority and this centurion understands respectful and honorable authority. He is making the parallel in his own life, "If I am in charge and care for and serve the men under my authority and I give the commands and they are done by my men, surely the Lord, who commands everything in creation and has power and authority over sin, disease and death." Some might argue "That dood didn't believe all of that" yet... keep on reading in verse 10

Matthew 8:10-12 (ESV) When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west *Who is Jesus talking about? He is refering to Gentiles to get the point across to those of Jewish descent i.e. those who think they are saved "because they are born of the seed of Abraham"... more on that in Romans 4 and Romans 9 when we get to it* **and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,** *in other words, rest in the salvation of the Lord and joyfully worship and praise Jesus Christ with all the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles and the saints, you and me, of our faith at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19* **while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**

Jesus is stating that all the nations will be blessed based on their faith just as He had promised Abraham back in Genesis 12 just as Abraham heard God's promise and had trust in God alone. But likewise, God will curse and judge those who dishonor the seed of Abraham which is Jesus Christ alone. God said blessed by the descendant of your seed not your seeds. Romans 4 tells us that it is the faith in Christ Jesus that will count as the righteousness to God just like Abraham. You are not saved by birthright but by faith alone but that is another week.

Matthew 8:13 (ESV) And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment. *It is by faith that this Roman centurion was saved and given new life. That life is evident in his household and those under his command.*

There is another misconception and misunderstanding, especially to the world, that faith is not blind.

You might have heard that in order to believe in a religion, you have to have jump into it and not know anything about it in order to believe it. That is a totally awesome thought except that worldly idea cannot be apply to Christianity. In fact, the Scriptures say over and over and over again to not blindly have faith in Christ.

Acts 17:10-11a (ESV) The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness,

Paul and Silas, trying to develop the same ninja skills as Jesus (look it up: John 8:59; John 10:39), and had to sneak into Berea in the wee hours of the morning. They went into the Jewish synagogue and start preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in which Bereans were freakin' estatic that they were hearing the Word of God preached. 2 Corinthians 2 says that we, who preach and proclaim the gospel, are aroma of Christ to God, either the fragrance of life to those are being saved and the stench of death to those who are dying. But check this sucker out:

Acts 17:11b (ESV) examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Bereans were are all throwing down big block parties upon hearing the gospel but they go home and do what? Studied the Word of God and then what happened?

Acts 17:12a (ESV) Many of them therefore believed...

They did their due diligence and pressed into the Word and find what Paul and Silas was preaching to be good news indeed and they believed and trusted in the God of the gospel.

And this acceptance and trust in God is not some one time all sustaining thing when you are saved to God. If we simply talk about justification, then that would be an incomplete gospel. It is that we are now justified before God and that God gives us a new heart and new life or God regenerates us in order for us to live like Christ did on this earth. God instructs us this way in:

1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 (ESV) Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good.

1 John 4:1 (ESV) Beloved, that is you and me as believers do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

So then unbelievers hear the Word of God, they press in and then they believe. But ah ha, this is a two-way street. Check out:

Romans 10:14-15 (ESV) How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

This is the Great Commission. This is what we have been commissioned to do. These are our orders from God himself. We are to go, proclaim the gospel and raise up disciples in Christ. If the unsaved never hear the gospel, how can they believe and if they don't believe in Him then how can they call on Him for salvation? Likewise, how can we preach the gospel of God if we are not trained up, sent out to preach it. Beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. Why? Again, 2 Corinthians 2, brother. We are the messengers who bring the aroma of Christ which is the aroma of life and salvation to those who would be saved.

Remember what Jesus told Paul in Acts 18?

Acts 18:9-10 (ESV) ... "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."

That is the way that God saves people. He uses men and women who are faithful in Him and walk in the Spirit and are obedient to His word in order that the good news might be proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

Jump to verse 17 and let's us answer the fundamental question, "Where does faith come from?"

Romans 10:17 ESV So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

It is through our words and deeds that proclaim and preach the gospel of God. It is through our worship to God in our lives.

II. Where does faith come from?

Romans 12:3 (ESV) For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think...

That is we are to live our lives humbly before the Lord and to love, serve and lay our lives down for our neighbors whomever they may be.

... but to think with sober judgment, (rely on the wisdom of God) each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

It is Jesus Christ, the founder and author and perfecter of our faith and assigns us a measurement of that faith to each of us in order that we might believe in Him. 1 Corinthians 2:12 says that we can understand the things freely given to us by God. God gives us wisdom and faith in order for us to grasp even what salvation is.

Paul fully expounds on this thought in:

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

In other words, faith is not born out of your will, what you do, how hard you believe or how hard you try. Faith is assigned and given to each us according to God.

So you might be thinking to yourself...

III. How do you grow your faith?

We already covered one part. Hearing the word of God preached. This along with other spiritual disciplines along with prayer, praise and reading the Word all works together to grow your faith in Christ.

Let me put it this way. You run into a complete stranger, say in even your church. You guys have no friends or associates in common. They don't know the same people you know and vice versa so there is no one going to vouch for this guy. So are you going to let the guy watch your kids or housesit for you? Probably not. Yet, for many, many of us (dare I say 99%) here didn't accept Christ the first time we heard the gospel. But it was after several times we heard the gospel, engaged with those sharing, asking questions, going back and thinking, asking some more, reading, studying, cursing, whatever until Christ got a hold of us and we trust in Him. So much more does your faith and trust in God builds when you study Him, engage with Him, give thanks to Him and hear Him speak to you through His Word and His Spirit. That is why Paul says we are to train up like a soldier, a boxer, a runner and all-around totally super-conditioned athlete who is running after the finish line that is Christ and in that training, we will grow stronger in grace and strength and might of Jesus Christ.

Part of the disciplines of that an athlete goes through is self-discipline and it some of our own self-discipline may get us started but without coaches and trainers (that is teachers, preachers, those

who have walked a while in Christ), it is very very likely that we might be a bit off target. This is why we don't go out on our faith, our beliefs, our doctrine, our lives alone. We build community with fellow believers and every believer building each other up through prophecy and encouragement and having believers sharpening each other and let teachers correct us by faithfully keep our feet pointed in the right direction according to the Word of God.

Lastly...

IV. What is the true power of faith?

In other words, "Awesome, I have all of these faith, what do I do with it?". Remember what we covered at the beginning. Faith is not, "If I have large amounts of faith, then God will give me boatloads of money and He will cure my cancer and sickness when I need it. Likewise, if I don't have a lot of faith, then I won't be rich and wealthy and I will be death and sickly all the time?" Faith is not some sort of liquid to be measured like buttermilk that we use to make delicious and edible God pancakes.

A. Faith like a grain of mustard seed

Matthew 17:20 (ESV) He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

Jesus uses the mustard seed analogy because to his audience, it was the smallest seed they knew of in that region. Jesus is saying, "If you had just this much **pinch your fingers down in order to hold a seed about 1mm in size** then you could have moved mountains and cast out demons and above all, know that I am your Lord and I will take care of you and I can get you through this situation and this season.

What is your faith in? Let me contend that if your faith is in Jesus Christ as your saviour from death, your redeemer from despair and He is Lord and King and rules every single part of your life and you know without any shadow of a doubt that He is so good and holy and righteous and just and loving and merciful and gracious and

compassionate and no matter what the circumstances you are going through now and no matter what struggles you are dealing with that God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is ruling and reigning and has absolute power and might and it is in His hand that it is to make great and to give strength to all and He has done it all to overcome Satan, sin, demons, hell and death and He rules over all creation and nothing ever can separate you from Him ever.

To tightly sum up faith, James Denney, Scottish Theologian from the late 1800s / early 1900s pointedly remarked, "The simplest word of faith is the deepest word of theology; Christ died for our sins."

If your faith, focus and your heart i.e. your trust is in Christ alone and not just in what He can do for you, then I promise you, your heart will overflow with love not just for your God but for everyone and thus fulfilling the commandments that Jesus laid down as He quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 and expounds upon it Luke's gospel:

Luke 10:27 (ESV) And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

Matthew 22:40 (ESV) On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.

Mark 12:31b (ESV) There is no other commandment greater than these.

This is how you truly worship God. This is how you live your life in spirit that is of God and in truth that is by God alone that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners and that you and I rejoice in His salvation that you and I have received mercy for this reason, that in you and me as the foremost, the chief of all sinners, that Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience for anyone in the world that would believe in Him for eternal life. Your faith in God and every waking second of your life is worship to Lord God Almighty and this will serve as a testimony to all-powerful and all-sufficient grace of God. That in fact, He is good enough and big enough and powerful enough and loving enough to rescue you and

you and you and you and me and save us, not just from hell and eternal torment but save us to Himself so that we might live in His glory forever and ever.

It is **Romans 1:17** boldly declares, "**For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."** If you view your faith as in how the Word of God declares it to be and you properly view worship to God, not in just the singing part of Sunday morning, but the reading of the Word, the driving to and fro to our jobs, the fellowship with believers and non-believers, the time we spend with our spouse and our children and the way we boldly proclaim the gospel of God in deed and in word.

This might be daunting if we go at it by ourselves. But Christ is always with us through the power of the Holy Spirit. God boldly promises He is always with us. He will never leave us nor forsake us. And God just so happens not to be in the business of breaking promises.

Let us pray.