

Romans 9:30-33 (ESV)

What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.

³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

Romans 10:1-21 (ESV)

¹ Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.

⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

⁶ But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”

¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴ 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?

¹⁵ 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!”

¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”

¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

One of the benefits of the LORD’S Day is that it gives you the opportunity to remember and reflect upon what is most important in your life.

One day in seven is set aside for worship and rest. It sets a pattern and rhythm to your week, and over time, for it sets a course for your life.

Everyday belongs to the LORD but there’s something unique and special about this day of worship.

The weekdays are filled with activity and commitments. It takes a concerted effort slow down; to come to a place of worship, and to put life into perspective.

What is most important in my life? What would I be willing to give myself to and sacrifice myself for?

Then of course, we all need to ask, “Is my life and is my lifestyle consistent with what I say I believe?”

We are people of faith. Our relationship with God is to be our highest aim and our greatest aspiration. We are to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then everything else should fall into its proper place.

This morning we look at true faith and how it sets the tone for every other aspect of your lives. We’ll look at:

Zeal without knowledge

The Righteousness of God

The Heart of faith

Paul returns to the theme of his love for his fellow Hebrews; that they come to true faith through Christ.

He starts by saying how ironic it is that it is the Gentiles, not the Jews that are responding to the Gospel.

The children of Abraham have been given so much. The patriarchs, the Law, the covenants, all pointing forward to the one who would be the prophet, priest and King of Israel.

But instead of leading them to the Messiah, Christ instead became a stumbling stone to the Jews. Paul writes:

Romans 10:1-2 (ESV)

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Zeal without knowledge. It's like a song without music. A poem without words. A story without characters.

Zeal for God without knowledge is faith without content; an experience without substance. It's emotion without the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

I have grown somewhat skeptical over the years of those who claim to have had a "life changing experience."

They'll come back from a concert or an event all excited about their mountain top experience, and that's good! But a week or two later, they are back to their same old patterns.

I see this most often displayed on social media. It seems to me that a *life changing experience* ought to carry over for more than a couple of weeks.

Momentary zeal does not necessarily translate into a transformed life. Zeal for the LORD is a good thing. Yet it takes more than excitement to sustain your life and faith.

When the LORD truly changes a person's life, it will effect far more than their emotions.

Emotions are an important part of who we are as people made in the image of God.

Jesus demonstrated all the emotions of life. Extreme joy and sorrow; anger and elation, zeal and sadness.

Romans 12:11

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Enthusiasm, passion, and zeal are good, but they are a **by-product of a deeper faith rooted in Christ and His redemptive work.**

Why did Israel, and why do many formerly faithful believers go from being zealous for the LORD to being an outcast?

We're looking at the difference between sound faith and passing zeal.

The word zeal means: passion; enthusiasm; or excitement. When you are zealous about something you have more than just a passing interest.

In terms of one's faith, zeal points to fervor; dedication; commitment; or allegiance.

Someone who is zealous in their faith will be faithful and loyal. They are passionate in defending what they believe and sharing their faith with others.

One of the trademarks of the evangelical heritage is a zeal for spreading the Gospel to all people.

The heroes of the evangelical tradition are almost always full of zeal for the Lord.

From Whitfield & Wesley; to Billy Sunday & Billy Graham, we love those who powerfully preach the Gospel with passion.

But zeal without knowledge is not a good thing. In America, Charles Finney was zealous in his frontier preaching, but his theology was not so sound.

Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses are very motivated to go door to door to share their faith, but Biblical Christianity has never recognized them as orthodox.

The apostle Paul was full of zeal when he was known as Saul of Tarsus. But his zeal led to the persecution of Christians.

His own people the Pharisees, were extremely zealous for the Law and for the nation of Israel, but they were lost.

At the end of chapter nine Paul wrote that the Israelites stumbled over “the stumbling stone,” and that stumbling stone is Christ.

Romans 9:33 (ESV)

as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

What was it about Christ that caused many of the Hebrews to stumble?
Probably the same thing that causes many today to do the same thing.

The Jews sought to establish their own righteousness. They believed that they could justify themselves before God through their own efforts.

Their zeal for the Law of God was well known. But the Law of God doesn't save anybody. The Law shows our need for Christ as savior, and that's what the Jews rejected.

This grieved Paul, as it does me when I see people that I know and love who are not saved.

You don't look down on them; you don't feel superior to them; you don't think of them as bad people. But they need Jesus.

Jesus Christ remains the stumbling stone today. Those who consider themselves to be good, moral people stumble over Christ.

(Your righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisee and the teachers of the Law; or you'll have no part of the Kingdom of heaven)

Those who consider themselves to be opened minded and would see multiple ways of getting to heaven stumble over Jesus Christ. (sincerity is not enough)

(I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.)

Those who believe that science is the ultimate authority to life will stumble over Jesus Christ.

(The Bible says that the cross of Christ is seen as foolishness to those who are perishing.)

People stumble over that which they weren't expecting to be there. Jesus often shows up where you least expect Him.

The Law says, "Thou shall not kill." Jesus taught that if you hold anger in your heart, you've broken that commandment. When was the last time you allowed your anger to get the better of you? (did you stumble over JESUS, or did you just ignore him?)

The Law says, "Thou shall not commit adultery." Jesus taught that if you hold lust in your heart, you've broken that commandment."

You can hide what's in your heart to others, but JESUS knows what you've been looking at and thinking about. That will make you stumble.

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked him about eternal life, Jesus not only pointed to the commandments, but he said, "leave everything, and follow me." That's not what this young man had in mind.

Jesus will trip you up if you think that you can live by your own rules and follow your own standards.

His righteousness makes our good works look like filthy rags. His purity exposes our motives. His sacrifice makes our best efforts to be tainted.

Zeal without knowledge won't save you. What kind of knowledge are we talking about?

The word **knowledge** involves every aspect of knowing. Knowledge involves your mind, heart and soul.

It involves the intellect, the emotions and the will. Knowledge includes facts, concepts and understanding.

To know God is more than just being acquainted with the Bible or being aware of God's existence.

Knowing God is entering into a relationship with Him. It's coming into covenant with God based on the perfections of His character.

The RIGHTEOUSNESS of God

Romans 10:3-4 (ESV)

For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

What the Israelites didn't see was that Jesus was the end of the Law. He's the fulfillment of the Law. Christ is everything that the Law was pointing to.

Jesus is what God had in mind when He made His covenant with the Israelites.

To bring about a new creation out of the old. To form a people who would reflect His character and His grace in this fallen world.

Paul says that what's lacking in his fellow Jews in the knowledge of God's righteousness. That's what's lacking today as well.

Romans 10:3 (ESV)

For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

I can't tell you how many people I've dealt with over the years that follow their own version of God that doesn't even resemble the righteousness of God in the Bible

In the end, each one of us will stand before God either in our own righteousness, or in the righteousness of Christ.

To the one, the Lord will say "well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter now into the joy of thy salvation." To the other He will say "depart from me, for I never knew you,"

True faith points us to our union with Christ. It is His righteousness that saves us.

But a righteousness by faith isn't just picking what team you want to be on. It's not a matter of saying the magic words so that you're in the club.

A righteousness by faith is forsaking one way of living and embracing another way of life.

We're not just talking about lifestyles here or following a bunch of rules.

Saving faith is embracing the free offer of the Gospel. It's forsaking any sense of self-righteousness, and embracing everything about Jesus Christ.

Salvation is all about Him. His life, his work, his sacrifice, his resurrection and his glory.

His righteousness becomes your righteousness when the Gospel takes hold of your heart.

You stand justified before God, not because of anything you have done, but because of what Christ has done for you.

That's not ignoring your sin or taking it lightly; it's knowing that God's mercy and grace is greater than your sin, and that's what changes you.

If you try to justify yourself before God you come to him looking for a bargain.

“Look, I've done these things for you; I've tried to live a good life, now, what are you going to do for me?”

The Gospel doesn't work that way. I don't have any faith in my own righteousness. All my eggs are in another basket. I rise or fall, I sink or swim, I live or die in Jesus Christ.

If He doesn't save me, I'm not saved. If His atonement doesn't pay for my sin, then I'm still lost. If He doesn't make me His child, then I don't have any hope.

Are all of your eggs in one basket? Let's conclude with the HEART OF FAITH.

Romans 10:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Confessing with your mouth and believing in your heart. It's not complicated, but it is profound. Your confession of faith is a statement of identity. It's who you belong to.

The human heart is the seat of our emotions and the center of our affections. The heart can be deceived and it can be the deceiver.

Absalom the son of David captured the hearts of the people of Israel, and led them into rebellion. The human heart can be deceitful above all things. As a man thinks in his heart, so he is." (Proverbs 23:7)

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

The heart of faith is trust. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.

The heart of faith is repentance and submission to the will of God. "Not my will, but Thy will be done."

And the heart of faith is joy.

Romans 14:17 (ESV)

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

There are times when in the providence of God, He will allow exceeding sorrow to enter into your life.

When the things of this world which prop you up are taken away, it's then when true faith will act like a compass pointing you to Christ so that you will know the joy of the LORD, which will become your strength.

For the joy of the LORD is not dependent upon circumstances that can change from day to day. It is focused on what Christ accomplished on the cross.

The heart of faith is when you know that you are not your own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to your faithful Savior JESUS Christ.

True faith is a saving grace. It comes from God, and it changes your heart.

No longer will you want to just go through the motions of being a believer when your heart isn't into it.

No longer will you find any lasting satisfaction in doing that which is contrary to God's Word. The world and the flesh will lose their luster.

The heart of true faith is deeper and richer than the passing emotions which ebb and flow like mood changes.

Do you believe in your heart that JESUS died on the cross for your sins, and that God raised Him from the dead?

If you believe that, then confess with your mouth **and with your life** that JESUS is LORD, and you will be saved.