

Emerson on Faith and Trust

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “**All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.**”

“Trust” is a constituent part of faith, Hebrews 11:6, “*And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*” Trust is included in this verse because of the part about “rewards.” While a faithful life is replete with blessings in the here and now, its true reward is only achieved after death. Thus, we live “by faith” in that we trust God as an eternal “*rewarder of those who seek Him.*”

But neither our *faith* nor the element of *trust* included within it, are unsubstantiated. God does not expect *blind faith* or *unmerited trust* from us. Instead, He provides abundant evidence upon which our faith is to be built, and the most substantial of foundations for our trust in Him. Note again the scriptures: “*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.***” Romans 1:20.

Get that: **all should be able to comprehend the eternal power and divine nature of God from just observing the wonders of the world that He created.** One might ask, “How so?” For anything to be created, someone must exist *prior* to create it. God is the eternal **First Cause** of creation for He existed before it— thus His power is “eternal.” As to the second part, God could have created a colorless world completely without beauty to merely sustain its inhabitants, but He didn’t. He created a world of consummate beauty and spectacular wonders to fulfill the most intense aesthetic cravings of our discerning palates. Thus, we see the *goodness* of God’s “divine nature.” He wants us to enjoy the things He created for us. All of which should bolster both our faith in Him, and our trust of Him.

There are many things that God did not choose to reveal to us. Deuteronomy 29:29 admits as much, “*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*” To spend much time in speculation, discussion, and disputes about things “*not revealed*” is pointless and foolish at best, and perhaps sinful at worst. I happen to believe that the things God didn’t tell us, but about which we sometimes wonder and speculate, were not revealed for a simple reason: we either don’t need to know, or are perhaps incapable of comprehending. *Trust* leads me to conclude that it was not in our best interest to know, or God would have told us!

This brings us back the quote of our title from Emerson, “All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.” The poet-philosopher had it right. Everything that we observe from nature, and everything God has revealed to us in His word, teaches us to **trust Him** regarding anything and everything we have not seen, and about which we have not been told!

Thus, we don’t have to know exactly what will happen when we die in every detail, **we trust Him by living as we should.** As an example of such, Noah was “*warned by God*” about “*things not yet seen*” (rain, cf. Gen.2:5-6) and thus “*prepared an ark for the*

salvation of his household,” Heb.11:7. We don’t have to know what our resurrected bodies will be like- “*what we shall be,*” in order to **trust Him** that we shall be (made) “*like Him,*” 1John 3:2. So, we do what *we can* to make our lives *conform* to His now, and trust that He will “*transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory*” then, Phil.3:21. We don’t have to know all of the parameters and details of heaven, **we trust Him by making ourselves living sacrifices here,** cf. Rom.12:1-2. And so on, and so on, and so on.

Isn’t all of this exactly what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians, “*For we walk by faith, and not by sight*” in 2Cor.5:7? I think so. Don’t trouble yourself by trying to *walk by sight*- it is utter futility. **Have faith in God,** and **trust Him**. Doesn’t everything He has done for us, and everything He has said to us, warrant it? Sure it does! Perhaps the old familiar hymn says it best, “*Trust and Obey*”... but Ralph Waldo Emerson got it right too. Do your best to understand and obey “*what is written,*” and “*learn not to exceed*” it, or to let your mind run away with things not revealed, 1Cor.4:6. Just *trust* God- He’s certainly *earned* and is *worthy* of it! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)