

TRUST: Trust God With My Future

Hebrews 6:13-20

INTRODUCTION

In this series on trust, we have explored practical ways to apply these verses from Proverbs 3. Let's say them together:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5 & 6)

The Trust series graphic depicts a young man leaning against a wall. When he began this series on trust, Pastor Richard pointed out to us that we lean on things when we have no strength to stand on our own. We all have things we lean on in our lives, it may be good health, a wonderful family, a keen intellect, an ability to make money, a sense of self and plans for the future, or good looks. That's what I usually lean on. 😊

As we have seen together, if we do not first trust in the Lord and lean on Him, we cannot share the life that He has designed for us to have. **The life He's designed is a life characterized by *peace*, as we put our hope in Him; *strength*, as we trust God with our greatest difficulties; *abundance*, as we learn to gratefully trust Him with our material resources; and *assurance*, as we trust that God is greater than all.** It's a "daily bread" lifestyle that approaches God with childlike faith.

FUTURE FEARS

Generational trends are very interesting to me. Many experts say that the defining characteristic of a generation is a national tragedy that they all share as a point of reference. For instance, my grandparents' generation had their formative years during the great depression. I had grandmas who washed and reused plastic sandwich bags and used plastic bread bags as galoshes to protect my Sunday shoes from the Ohio winter snow. I think in my mom's generation, their tragedy was the assassination of JFK but then they were also impacted by the Vietnam War. In my generation, the tragedy was the space shuttle challenger disaster. But the great tragedy of the generation under me was 911.

911 changed everything for everyone. Some of you in this room are mature enough to remember air travel before 911. Others of you in this room served or have family members or friends who served during Operation Desert Storm. Some of you may know someone whose family member died in the attacks on the World Trade Center, the

Pentagon, or the crashing of United Airlines flight 93. I believe any American watching television that day felt a sense of helplessness and paralysis. There was a surge in church attendance, albeit brief, in the wake of 911, as people prayed for the safety of our nation.

As a parent of then 5 and 6 year old girls, what I remember most was the terrible feeling that I could no longer protect my family or predict my daughters' future. Of course, I couldn't and I can't anyway, but all sense of normalcy seemed to vanish in an instant. Suddenly the future was full of fear. [Slide: Future Fears]

Have you ever been afraid of the future? Are you now afraid of the future? What do you do with fear of the future? From legitimate financial advising to questionable fortune telling, there are various ways to deal with them, and various sources to lean upon when shadows from the future loom on our present moment.

FUTURE GOD

When God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, He called Himself I AM. We are fond of saying, "not I was, not I will be, but I am." And it is true that God is present with us in this very moment. But because He is I AM in every moment we have assurance that our past has been forgiven and in the future we will not be forsaken. He is God for the weak but He is not a weak god. He is God for the hopeless but He is not a hopeless god. He is God for the needy but He holds the wealth of the whole world in His hands. He is God of the lonely but He has a universal family. He is God of the weary but He is the one who gives us strength to run and fly. In our moments of weakness, hopelessness, need, loneliness, weariness, strength, joy, abundance, and victory He is I AM: past, present, and future.

FUTURE GOOD

Hebrews chapter 6 reminds of a couple who could possibly be called parents of the faith: Abraham and Sarah. They faced a future full of question marks.

Abraham was an old man when God first appeared to him and promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and that he and his descendants would possess the land on which he now journeyed as a nomad, in between city states and territories of oligarchs and despots (Genesis 15:5, 7). It was a beautiful future, but Abraham's present circumstances didn't seem to indicate that this was actually his future. Yet in the midst of his doubt, his imperfection, and his own pre-cross version of "the Christian stumble" the Scripture say that "Abraham believed the

Lord, and the Lord credited it to him as righteousness.” (Gen 15:6). God confirmed this promise by making a covenant with him, and declaring once more that He would do this for Abraham: he would cause him to have descendants who would possess the land from the Northeastern border of Egypt to the Euphrates River (Gen 15:18-21).

This is such a familiar story, isn't it? We have heard it many times. Sarah really didn't understand this plan at first so... God clarified with Abraham and Sarah that the *two of them* (“daboatayous” as they would say back East) would have a son. Abraham laughed the first time God told him, and when Sarah heard the promise with her own ears, she laughed, too (Gen 18:12).

FUTURE FAITHFULNESS

God gave Abraham and Sarah a promise. The Scriptures tell us that when it came to conceiving and bearing children, Abraham and Sarah were as good as dead. But somehow by the power of God and the faith of Abraham and Sarah God caused them to conceive and give birth to their son Isaac. God tested Abraham of course. Now that I have given you Isaac, Abraham, would you be willing to sacrifice him for me? When Abraham passed the test, God reiterated His promise: “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” Our English language does not convey the intensity of how God said this to Abraham. It was something like, “I will bless bless bless you and blow your mind with how many descendants you will have.”

Why? Because God promised. He said, “I will do it,” and He confirmed it with a covenant.

Fast forward from Abraham and Sarah to us... you and me. Like Abraham and Sarah, when it comes to creating new, abundant, eternal life... we were as good as dead. BUT “GOD raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in heavenly places.” (Ephesians 2:6). All who are born again have been bought at an incalculable price and sealed with the Holy Spirit, given to us as a deposit – the Scripture says – of what is to come!

The language of this covenant is expressed for us vividly in John's gospel. “To those who received Him,” referring to Jesus Christ, “to those God gave the power to become the children of God, even those who believe on His Name.” (John 1:12) and the words of Jesus that many know by heart, let's read it together,

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

FUTURE HOPE

Turning our attention back to Hebrews 6, look at verses 18 and 19.

¹⁸ God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.

¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰ where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf.

After Jesus' resurrection and ministry among His followers, He ascended into heaven. This fact is critical, because not only has God sealed us with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our future, but in Christ, we have a promise of our future that pulls us upward to heaven. When Christ ascended into heaven, He took our hope of present and future salvation with Him there. Verse 19 says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters in the inner sanctuary behind the curtain."

The inner sanctuary behind the curtain is a reference to the holy of holies in the temple. But that curtain, you remember, was torn from top to bottom when Christ died. And the temple no longer stands today.

In the first century, larger ships would put anchors in smaller boats and the boats would row out to the best spots for an anchor nearest its destination, and would let down the anchor. This Scripture refers to that... Jesus our forerunner went ahead to let down the anchor. And where did he drop the anchor? IN HEAVEN. We are anchored in the throneroom of God in heaven. That, sisters and brothers is a secure future.

That is why the Psalmist says, "When I am afraid I will trust in You, O God, whose Word I praise; what can mere mortals do to me?" (Psalm 56:3) Nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing, can take that kind of hope away. And it is yours through the iron clad promise of God the Father, through the sacrifice of God the Son, and guaranteed both by His ascension to God the Father, and the sealing of God the Spirit. The unchanging God cannot lie. Your ultimate future is secure.

FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE

But what about tomorrow, on earth? The God who has secured your future in heaven can provide for you on earth as well.

There was a time, early in our marriage, when Christina and I weren't sure how we were going to make it. Oh we were madly in love with each other. Then we were madly in love with one baby girl, and then two baby girls. But we were really struggling with

money. I remember early on I took a pay cut in order to do what I felt was what God was calling me to do. And there were many months when we would look at my paycheck on one side of the table and a mortgage and pile of bills on the other side of the table and our checkbook in the middle and we would cry and pray.

God faithfully met our needs. He mostly did this through the community of believers we were part of. We never ever mentioned a shortage of money. But generous brothers and sisters in Christ just followed God's prompting and shared their gifts with us, and God used them to meet our needs. Many of those brothers and sisters are scattered all over the country, a few have preceded us to heaven, and some of you are seated before me now. As I look back at those moments of despair then and how God provided, I know He will continue to provide in times of need.

Christina and I have always tried – imperfectly on my part – to keep God first in our lives: to give money generously, and not just money, but also to invest our lives, energy, and even our future in God's work, especially in the church. And I can look back and say, God has always been faithful. Based on His faithfulness in the past, His covenant to us in Jesus, and the sealing of His Spirit, I know He will be faithful in your future, too.

Our part is the part of Abraham and Sarah: to trust His promises, surrender to His Spirit, and do what He tells us to do.

CONCLUSION

I was recently given a great illustration for this message on trusting God for the future. I think by now all of you know that I recently had right hand carpal tunnel surgery. Even though it was routine for my surgeon, there were lots of unknowns for me. There was even a 1 in 100,000 chance that the surgery would be a complete bust and I would lose all use of my right hand. I admit I was worried.

I received a short email from a sister in Christ – Carolyn Sloan – that encouraged me. She told me she had had the same surgery and now her hand is fine – no lasting effects and the carpal tunnel is completely gone, and she was praying my experience would be the same. Other sisters and brothers assured me of their prayers and of course I prayed.

In spite of that encouragement, I still wasn't quite sure what to expect after surgery. My doctor told me to do this (make a fist-like motion) ten times every hour. I'm not sure I did it ten times every hour, because the first two days, when I was conscious, it

hurt like crazy and I could barely move my fingers, let alone bend them! But the next two days I could bend them a little more. And the next two days a little more.

I'm not ready to win a boxing match, but I can now make a pretty decent fist with my right hand. My stitches were taken out this week. The numbness from surgery is lessening every day, and I have been able to type half of this manuscript with two hands! This is because of the power of God – power which He built into our bodies naturally, and also because of the power of prayer that sisters and brothers in Christ, including my own family, have lifted up for me.

I was worried after day 2 if I would be able to make a fist again. It seemed inconceivable that I would ever be able to touch my piano or shake a hand. I'm still not playing or shaking, but I am confident I will be soon... because of Carolyn's encouragement and the prayers of many, my hope for this is anchored in a future when the effects of this surgery and the carpal tunnel will be gone.

And in big and small ways, God, through His promises, anchors our hope in a future He knows and wants for us. And He has promised, even in the darkest moments, "I will never leave you, or forsake you."

When I trust God with my future, I experience peace, strength, abundance, and assurance because Jesus Christ has gone before me – through every trial I can face, including death – and has anchored my hope with God in heaven. One day, in His glorious timing, He will come again in glory and perfect justice, riding on a white horse, with the names Faithful and True emblazoned upon Him. (Revelation 19:11) He will gather His own to Him, and begin a new eternal future so incredible it's beyond imagination or explanation.

In the days following 9-11, this phrase became popular in the church I served, and I have seen it in various forms in other places:

I don't know what tomorrow holds, but I know who holds tomorrow.

Knowing Him, His goodness, His faithfulness in providing, protecting, and keeping promises, inspires us to trust, surrender, and obey His voice in our lives. May we look to and lean on Him for our future... for He is I AM in every moment. Amen.