

LEARNING TO TRUST IN GOD

Today's Text: Isaiah Chaps 25-27

Extracts:

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength [Is. 26: 3-4]

*Thirty-six year-old Paul Accardo was one of the 1,600 police officers in the New Orleans Police Department. He had a wife and mother, a brother and sister, and eight nieces and nephews. In normal times, Paul was one of the police department's chief spokesmen. He reported murders, hostage situations and rapes. His face was familiar on nightly news in New Orleans. Paul loved the limelight. He was also a perfectionist who insisted that everything had to be right. Then **Hurricane Katrina** struck and raging floods swallowed up the whole of New Orleans. Paul was in his patrol car. Like everybody else, he could not reach his family. Paul saw the people he loved to protect rampaging for food and shelter like refugees. His uniform commanded no respect any longer. The siren of his police van had lost its voice, and his walkie-talkie connected him nowhere. He was devastated. He put his gun inside his mouth and shot. Paul was one of the two police officers to take their lives while some turned in their badges.¹*

We may never know why Paul committed suicide. One possible answer could be that the system that he had had confidence in for so long had failed him. If he could not trust the state that he had thought was so powerful, who else could he trust? There are many of us facing similar overwhelming odds in our lives right now. Shall we take the easy way out, commit suicide and face God's instant judgment or do we trust God who has promised us that when our parents (representative of human props) forsake us, then He will take care of us [Ps. 27: 10]? In today's lesson, we shall study the subject of trust and learn how to have trust in God, the sure route to perfect peace [Is. 26: 3]

¹ Based on "Katrina aftermath taking toll on police," <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/US/09/04/katrina.police.ap/index.html> and "Amid Katrina chaos, officer commits suicide," <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/US/09/06/police.suicide.ap/index.html>

1. Can you afford to trust in man?

Think of the time that you were a baby under three years of age. Your mother would leave you in the care of a nanny while she went out to work. Each day, as soon as you heard your mother's voice, you would run outside to meet her, launch yourself into the air and she would grab you into her warm embrace before you could crash and hurt yourself. You did it not once, not twice, but so many times. Why did you take such a risk? It is because you had confidence that your mother would not let you fall down, that she would *always be there for you*. But, what if she were to develop arthritis in her hands and could no longer hold you firmly and you did not know about that new development? If you were to launch at her as usual and expect to be grabbed, you would be in for a big surprise. You could fall and injure yourself. Thereafter, would you trust her any longer? Would you be enthusiastic to jump at her as in the past? I doubt! That is why we have popular clichés like, "once bitten, twice shy."

It is the same attitude that we have towards people or things in which we have confidence. We trust in them as long as they have not let us down. The moment they do and doubts creep into our minds, our confidence may be badly shaken. Unfortunately, most of us continue to rely *only or mainly* on human gadgets and expect deliverance in times of trouble or need. Let us examine a few examples of such gadgets:

a) *Material gadgets*

These are creations of man to which we attribute high status or power. They may be material wealth, symbols of authority or power, military or political power, etc. For example, some people believe that a fat bank account is a good insurance against economic hardship after retirement. So, they will sweat or steal to attain it and put their trust in it. However, as the victims of the *Hurricane Katrina* have taught us, they had their ATM cards that would normally give them unlimited access to their bank accounts, but they were starving because there were no more banks! The floods had swept the financial houses away like everything else.

The state power that we exercise or the military weapons at our disposal intoxicate some of us. However, sooner than later, we may find that they cannot save us. The police uniform is a piece of cloth sewn by a tailor. In normal times, the criminal minded will see it and behave! However, under the state of siege that New Orleans faced recently, the police uniform could not stop officers from being drowned like everybody else. Therefore, it is limiting to trust in chariots and horses [Ps. 20: 7], weapons [Ps. 44: 6] or wealth [Ps. 49: 6-7] because they all have a limited lifetime.

b) *People*

Some of us put their trust in family or friends, the colour of their skin or the religion of their ancestors. Again, these are things that cannot last forever. For example, until the French Revolution, it was a good thing to be of noble blood in France. After the revolt in which the king and his family were beheaded, royalty became odious! That is why the word of God has warned us, “Do not put your trust in princes; nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; in that very day his plans perish” [Ps. 146: 3-4].

c) *Self*

Some of us claim to be self-made! They cannot trust anybody else but themselves. They have position, power and talents. They do not need anything from others. These are the rich recluses who are hiding themselves from reality. The word of God for such people is “because you have trusted your works and your treasures, you also shall be taken” [Jer. 48: 7], that is, made helpless in time of trouble. It is no wonder that Jesus always condemned those “who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others” [Lk 18: 9].

Can you afford to trust in man? No, for “cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord; for he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inherit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited” [Jer. 17: 5-6]. According to an African proverb, you have to stand before you can help others to stand. Since human beings or human-designed gadgets cannot last forever, they can only guarantee us limited protection, especially in times of need. Why should you put your trust in somebody or something that cannot last?

2. It is only in God that you can put your trust!

On 11 September 2001, I was in a Geneva restaurant with an American colleague. Fortuitously, we had been discussing the growing unrest all over the world and America’s role as the only super-power. He was bold in his assertion that terrorists might be able to hurt American interests abroad but that they would dare not step into continental America because of that country’s military intelligence. You could imagine the shock on his face when CNN began to show pictures of the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York. Since that date, we have witnessed massive power cuts across the Northeast states of America, stretching to Canada, and hurricane devastations in the South. Increasingly, Americans are beginning to lose confidence in their government’s ability to protect them in times of trouble. If that is the situation in a super-power nation, can you imagine the fears in the Third World countries where most nations are already failed states?

In today's lesson, Isaiah points us to God. He says of God, "You will keep in *perfect peace*, whose *mind is stayed on You*, because *he trusts in You*. Trust in the Lord *forever*, for in YAH, the Lord, is *everlasting strength*" [Is. 26: 3]. From that verse, we see why we should trust in God:

a) *God lives forever*

Empires, such as the Egyptian, Greek, Roman and British, have come and gone. Old Russia is dead and America is "tottering". Our parents are either dead or on their way. The ideas on which we raised our children are no longer applicable to those that our children will use to raise theirs. Therefore, nothing human lasts forever and you cannot put your trust in transient things. However, God lasts forever. He does not wear a wristwatch nor use a calendar because *eternity* is His clock. He knows the end of everything from the beginning, and there is *nothing* that we can hide from Him [Ps. 139: 7-16]. He made us in His image and likeness and knows our expected end. That is the One in whom I would like to put my trust!

b) *He has everlasting strength*

God does not only live forever; He also has everlasting strength. The earlier empires fell because they had lost strength and power [both material and spiritual]. For the God of all flesh, nothing is too hard for Him [Jer. 32: 27], and anytime we call upon Him, He is ever willing to show us great and mighty things that we do not know [Jer. 33: 3]. Those who know this God shall be strong and shall do exploits [Dan. 11: 32].

Most powerful people throw their weight around and force us to fear or respect them. On the other hand, God has given us the free will to *choose* or reject Him. He does not force us to trust or worship Him. The choice is ours! Therefore, when you choose to trust Him, it is because you are convinced that He is trustworthy. That is a superior kind of trust!

c) *God is the only one who can keep us in perfect peace!*

A person who is not at peace cannot give peace to others. Rich persons cannot find peace for fear of losing their wealth. Poor people cannot find peace because of hunger and lack. Young people are too ambitious to be at peace. Old people are too afraid of sickness or death to enjoy peace. It is only the rich, the poor, the young and the old who trust in God that can have perfect peace. Such peace may take the form of joy [Ps. 5: 11-12], or deliverance [Ps. 22: 4-5] or safety [Ps. 56: 4, 11], or guidance [Prov. 3: 5-6], or mercy [Ps. 32: 10] or inheritance [Is. 57: 13]. Your heart will be where your treasure is also [Matt. 6: 21]. If perfect peace is your treasure, then your heart must trust in God!

The word of God says, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; and its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit” [Jer. 17: 7-8]. That is why you should put your trust in God.

3. Learning to trust in God

Trusting in God is not something to take for granted; it *has to be learnt!* To learn implies a schooling process. Unfortunately, God is not a teacher! A teacher will first give you the curriculum to be covered within a fixed time period, such as a semester or a few weeks. Then, s(he) proceeds to teach you the subject matter. Finally, at the end of the study term and due revision, the teacher gives you a test on the material that s(he) has taught you. Your performance depends on your brilliance and how much you have learnt. That is why some students score top grades, some average and some fail woefully.

In God’s case, He does not show you the whole curriculum. For example, His word as published in the Bible is not all that He is, but just a glimpse of Him that He has revealed to us [Deut. 29: 29]. We can only know or prophesy in part [1 Cor. 13: 9]. Then, He lets us encounter trials and tribulations *before we even know what is going on!* That is like giving you the test before the subject is taught. That is why nobody can pass! But, after failing, He lets us learn the lessons by ourselves. Therefore, what we can learn depends on us and it is a lifetime of learning through tests, trials and tribulations. That is good news because we all are on a level-playing field.

Are you ready to learn how to trust in God? Try out the following steps:

□ Let go and let God!

If you refuse to completely surrender your life to God, then you are not ready to trust Him for you cannot serve God and mammon *at the same time* [Matt. 6: 24]. Isaiah admonishes that your mind must be stayed on God [Is. 26: 3]. Joshua challenged the children of Israel to choose between God and the idols of the people that they had conquered in the Promised Land, and said definitively, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” [Josh. 24: 15].

I have heard believers say that trusting in God does not mean that we should be foolish. After all, God also gave us a sound mind [2Tim. 1: 7]. However, the sound mind is to be exercised within the framework of faith in God because “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 *diligently seek Him*” [Heb. 11: 6]. When you walk by faith, many things you say or do

may look foolish to a rational, logical person! So, it is your choice to let go and let God.

□ *Seek a close encounter with God*

God is near to all who call upon Him in truth [Ps. 145: 18], and those who know their God shall be strong and do exploits [Dan. 11: 32]. Therefore, you should seek a close encounter with God and let Him speak to you [Num. 12: 5-8; Acts 2: 16-21]. This is the meeting ground between faith and fact. God becomes real to you and like Paul, you can say, “I know whom I have believed” [2 Tim. 1: 12]. Since no one has seen God at any time except Jesus Christ who is in His bosom and has declared Him [Jn 1: 18], *giving your life to Christ is your closest encounter with God.*

□ *Make trusting in Him your nature*

Trust begets trust. The more you trust in God, the closer He gets to you. For that, you need to show Him appreciation and gratitude [Ps. 50: 12-15; Is. 25: 1; Is. 27: 13]. However, when you get complacent or begin to attribute privileges to yourself from your close relationship with Him (a form of idolatry of pride), God can jolt you with bigger trials. For example, when Nineveh was not destroyed in forty days according to Jonah’s prophecy, he wanted God to take his life [Jon. 4: 1-3]! That is why we are admonished to “let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good as to a faithful Creator” [1 Pet. 4: 19]. For example, at the height of his suffering, Job cried out, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” [Job 13: 15]. God does not owe you any explanations for His actions!

4. Conclusion

Learning to trust in God is a lifetime assignment. You will have moments of doubt, at moments of great trials, when He seems to be silent on you. But always remember that He will not let you drown, no matter the floods of any hurricanes that your enemies may rain upon you. He will not let you burn no matter the fires of life around you. No matter your circumstances, continue to give Him thanks and praise. That way, He knows that you *in deed* trust in Him.

When you have done your part, leave the rest to Him!