

TRUTH

“. . . Your word is truth” (John 17:17)

September 2023

TRUSTING IN MYSELF VERSUS TRUSTING IN THE LORD

Many of us like the thought of being independent and being able to take care of ourselves instead of relying on other people. It may be that we do not feel comfortable asking others for help. Why? We do not want others to think we are weak, and we also do not want to be a burden to anyone. So, what is our approach? We just rely on ourselves to get by in life.

When it comes to planning our journey through life, including making spiritual and moral decisions, every person is going to trust in someone or something. Some choose to trust in themselves, others trust in a human leader, while yet others choose to trust in the Lord. In whom or what do *you* trust? The apostle Paul observed, “. . . we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:9)

If I trust in myself, that really involves an unspoken pride. “I do not need anyone’s help for anything. I am self-sufficient, capable of taking care of myself, and have enough intelligence and common sense to make decisions that are best for me.” Whether they admit it or not, folks who think like that are “*lovers of themselves*” (2 Timothy 3:2).

Before proceeding any further, we should ask: What does God think about people trusting in/relying on themselves? “*Thus says the LORD: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength’*” (Jeremiah 17:5). Again, it is written, “*He who trusts in his own heart is a fool*” (Proverbs 28:26).

As you probably have observed, multitudes of people trust in material riches (1 Timothy 6:17). Many who do so trust in their knowledge and power, their thinking being, “All that I have, I owe it to myself and my abilities.” God warned the children of Israel, saying that when they would be blessed with full stomachs, fine houses, and abundant crops, they should not say, “*My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth*” (Deuteronomy 8:17). The Lord told them, “*And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth . . .*” (8:18).

While trusting in their own goodness, many folks think that by being good enough, that will cause the Lord to be pleased with them. The Lord wants us to be

zealous of good works (Titus 2:14), but doing good deeds can never take away a single sin that we have committed (Ephesians 2:8,9).

God pronounced judgment on the Moabites: “*For because you have trusted in your works and your treasures You also shall be taken*” into captivity (Jeremiah 48:7). It is a folly for one who has been righteous in the past to trust in his former righteousness, thinking it guarantees a good, current relationship with the Lord (Ezekiel 33:13).

The Psalmist wrote, “*The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my god, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold*” (Psalm 18:2). The Almighty is certainly worthy of our praise and trust!

God-pleasing faith involves three aspects: (1) accept the truth/facts that God sets forth, (2) trust in God, and (3) submit to what He says. Yes, it is possible to trust in the Lord. Hezekiah did (2 Kings 18:5). Holy women of the Old Testament era, including Ruth, did (1 Peter 3:5; Ruth 2:12).

To what extent should a child of God trust in Him? “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding*” (Proverbs 3:5). When should we do that? “*Trust in Him at all times, you people*” (Psalm 62:8). If we want to please our Lord, we need to trust Him completely, all the time.

We need to trust in God to know and want what is best for us. He has great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4), and He is faithful to keep each one of them (1 Corinthians 10:13). We need to trust that He always will keep His promises, such as His pledge to be with us and bless us as we obey Him (Matthew 28:20).

If we put God and His Cause first, He will provide all we need on a daily basis (Matthew 6:32,33). If we truly trust in Him, we have total confidence that He will take care of us. Thus, we will not compromise our moral principles in order to make others happy, regardless of any unpleasant consequences we might have to face.

If we truly trust in God, we do it with the whole heart! Are you a half-way, part-time truster in God? Or, are you an all-in, full-time truster in Him?

-- Roger D. Campbell

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF KING HEZEKIAH

King Hezekiah reigned over Judah during the time when Israel was divided into two kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The Bible devotes a considerable amount of text to Hezekiah – the Biblical record of his reign spans 11 chapters and 302 verses (2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32; Isaiah 36-39).

The name Hezekiah is Hebrew for “Jehovah has strengthened” or “he who Jehovah strengthens.” God certainly did strengthen Hezekiah: “*The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went*” (2 Kings 18:7). God strengthened Hezekiah because “*he did what was right in the sight of the LORD*” (2 Kings 18:3). The Bible also says, “*He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him . . .*” (2 Kings 18:5, 6).

Hezekiah was not an idle king. Like a few other kings in Judah, he was a reformer. And after the reign of Hezekiah’s wicked, idolatrous father Ahaz, much reform was needed (see 2 Kings 16:1-4). Hezekiah worked diligently to remove idolatry from the kingdom (2 Kings 18:4; 2 Chronicles 31:1). In his purging of idolatry, Hezekiah destroyed the brazen serpent Moses fashioned in the wilderness (see Numbers 21:4-9). The serpent had apparently been kept by the children of Israel since that fateful day in the wilderness, but it had become an idolatrous object, so Hezekiah broke it in pieces (2 Kings 18:4).

Hezekiah’s religious reforms did not stop with purging idolatry. He also, in the first year of his reign, “*opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them*” (2 Chronicles 29:3). He further instructed the priests and the Levites to sanctify themselves and the temple and to clean it up for worship to God (2 Chronicles 29:4,5). He then determined to make a covenant with God (2 Chronicles 29:10), as well as instructing the people to give tithes as God commanded (2 Chronicles 31:4).

One of the more memorable of Hezekiah’s religious reforms is his leading the nation in observing the Passover (2 Chronicles 30). The significance of this reform is seen in 2 Chronicles 30:26: “. . . *since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.*”

Aside from religious reforms, Hezekiah was also busy in other matters of the kingdom. He built treasuries, storehouses, stalls, and even entire cities to store his great possessions (2 Chronicles 32:27-29). Anticipating conflict with Assyria, Hezekiah stopped the waters of the Upper Gihon and had a conduit built to bring water into the city (2 Chronicles 32:1-4,30).

Two events during Hezekiah’s reign stand out rather remarkably and memorably: (1) the siege by the Assyrian king Sennacherib against Judah and (2) Hezekiah’s sickness and the visit from Babylonian emissaries shortly thereafter. The Bible’s account of these events is recorded in 2 Kings 18:13-20:19 and 2 Chronicles 32:1-33. In short, though originally submitting to Sennacherib’s demands for tribute, Hezekiah rebelled against Sennacherib, leading him to lay siege to Jerusalem. Unlike many of his forebears, Hezekiah took the matter to God, and “*the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side*” (2 Chronicles 32:22). During this siege of Jerusalem (at the very least, before the miraculous end God brought to the siege—see 2 Kings 20:6), Hezekiah fell ill and was told he would die. But, Hezekiah again turned to God and was healed, being granted 15 more years of life. After Hezekiah’s healing, emissaries from Babylon came to Jerusalem, and Hezekiah foolishly—and proudly—showed them all his treasuries and armouries. The prophet Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah for his pride, and he humbled himself, thus avoiding God’s wrath against Judah at that time.

In summary, the following lessons from Hezekiah’s life and reign stand worthy of notice:

- **Children need not follow their parents’ ungodly examples.** Hezekiah’s father, Ahaz, was a wicked man (2 Kings 16:1-4), but Hezekiah chose to follow the Lord. God gives everyone a choice (see Ezekiel 18:4-17)!
- **When times get tough, turn to God.** Whether facing military conflict or sickness, Hezekiah realized only God could truly help, so he turned to the Lord. Even though God will not miraculously save us today, He promises eternal deliverance to His faithful (see 1 Peter 3:12-14; Romans 8:28).
- **Even good men make mistakes, but when they do, they acknowledge such and repent.** Though a godly king, Hezekiah erred greatly in the matter of the Babylonian emissaries. But he humbled himself before the Almighty and was blessed for it (see James 4:6,10).
- **“Righteousness exalts a nation”** (Proverbs 14:34). By Hezekiah’s example and leadership in following God, his entire nation was greatly blessed (2 Chronicles 32:22).

May God give us more leaders—and men—like King Hezekiah, who trust in the Lord, hold fast to Him, and keep His commandments (2 Kings 18:5,6)!

-- Chad Dollahite

Jesus — the Way, the Truth, the Life

In the thirteenth chapter of John, Jesus announced that one of His apostles would betray Him and that Peter would deny Him three times. Amid these shocking revelations, Jesus delivers perhaps the strongest blow when He tells His apostles that He is going to leave them, to go somewhere they cannot follow right now. It is understandable that near the beginning and close of this discussion, we read His words, “*Let not your heart be troubled*” (John 14:1, 27).

Their desire to hold to Jesus was built upon a misunderstanding of the nature of His reign over His kingdom. Jesus never intended to conquer and triumph in a natural or worldly kingdom. His conquest would be over Satan, sin, and death, and His triumph in the kingdom that the prophets described was one that would be everlasting in its nature (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Daniel 2:36-45). This kingdom, the church that Jesus promised to build (Matthew 16:18,19), would one day be delivered up to heaven (Ephesians 5:25-27). They would come to understand that holding on to Jesus did not mean keeping Him physically in their presence, but following Him spiritually into eternal life.

As Jesus assures that they know where He is going and the way, Thomas states his frustration: “*Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?*” To which Jesus replies, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” (John 14:4-6). Jesus leaves no middle ground in what He wants His apostles to understand and believe about Him. If they are going to hold to Jesus, they will follow the will of the Father.

He is the way: to heaven, to the Father, and to living a life that pleases God. There is no other way than through the person of Jesus!

He is the truth: this is a radical concept! Many today believe that there is no such thing as objective truth. Jesus says that truth is real, it can be known, and it will set us free from the bondage of sin (John 8:31-32). He is the source of truth, and His standard is all that really matters (John 12:48).

He is the life: as the source of both physical and spiritual life, He is the one to whom we should look for life, now and eternally. It is “*redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*” (Ephesians 1:7). It is a living hope – based upon resurrection (1 Peter 1:3), a supported hope – resting upon the return of Jesus (1 Peter 1:13), a directed hope – in God (1 Peter 1:21), and, thus, a hope to be defended (1 Peter 3:15).

-- Dave Leonard

Lessons from 1 John 4:7-11

These five verses begin and end with the same thought: love one another. In 1 John 4:7, the wording is, “*let us love one another,*” and in 4:11 it is, “*we also ought to love one another.*” Why should we do that? What is there in this section that can motivate Christians to have a sincere love for each other?

Love is of God – “*Beloved, let us love one another, for **love is of God**; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God*” (4:7; all emphasis in all quotes is mine, rdc). Here is a motivator to love one another: remember the Source of love — God Himself.

If I do not love – “*He who does not love **does not know God***” (4:8). One who truly knows God keeps His word (2:3-5), which includes the instruction to love one another. It is not possible for me to please my Lord if I do not love.

God is love – “*He who does not love does not know God, for **God is love***” (4:8). Love is His very essence/nature. As His children, we should want to be like our heavenly Father. He is love, so we should emulate Him as much as possible. All that He has ever said or done has been because He loves us. His love never changes. Observe this truth: love is not God’s only attribute. He also is light (1:5), jealous (Exodus 34:14), and a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).

God’s love manifested – “*In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that **God has sent His only begotten Son into the world**, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us and sent His Son** to be the propitiation for our sins*” (4:9,10). God tells us that He loves us, but more than that, He *showed* it. He did so by taking action that is in our best interest, which was sending/sacrificing His Son. That is the way that brotherly love operates, too. It takes action that it is in the best interest of our spiritual sisters and brothers.

Life through Jesus – Why did God send His only begotten Son into a world filled with corrupt people who lack respect for the Almighty? Hear God’s answer: “. . . **that we might live through Him . . . to be the propitiation for our sins**” (4:9,10). Through Jesus, God allows and wants us to have abundant life and remove the sin barrier between us and the Godhead. That kind of love motivates us to love, too!

Love like God loved – “*Beloved, if **God so loved us**, we also ought to love one another*” (4:11). It also is written, “*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love . . .*” (Ephesians 5:1,2). To love one another makes the church a God-like family.

-- Roger D. Campbell

THE CHALLENGE OF WORLDLINESS (THE PULL OF THE WORLD)

Worldliness is an undue attraction and attachment to this world. It is a mindset that places more emphasis on *material* matters than *spiritual* ones, highlights *earthly* happiness rather than *eternal* joy, and ultimately gives way to fulfilling earthly desires.

In some sense, Jesus' followers are "in" the world, but not "of" the world (John 17:11,14,15). The Lord God calls on Christians to maintain a distinction from this world/what is evil. We live on this temporary planet and our bodies are made suitable for the earthly environment, but our thinking, speech, and action are not to be conformed to the ways of the world's ungodly residents.

Satan craftily uses the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life to try and pull humans into sinful behavior. With that in mind, Christians are charged not to love this world (1 John 2:15,16).

God calls us to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:14-16). Holy people are different, being set apart to God and His purposes. The New Testament also says that "*friendship with the world is enmity with God*" and warns that one who is a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4). One must make a choice: do I want to be the Lord's friend, or be the friend of the world? One cannot be both at the same time. Members of the church who try to hang onto the Lord with one hand and the world with the other one are (1) never going to find total peace of mind, (2) are deceiving themselves if they think such an approach pleases God, (3) and are setting an example that will have a negative influence on those who observe them.

What are some of the different "pulls" from the world that can be challenging to handle? First, the devil wants us to think that possessing a lot of money/material stuff is the ultimate! He wants us to equate being "a success" with being wealthy (or powerful or famous). In reality, as Jehovah told Joshua, genuine success and prosperity are found in obeying what He says (Joshua 1:7,8). On the day of judgment, if one hears the Lord say to him, "*Well done, good and faithful servant*" (Matthew 25:21), *that* would be a life that has been successful!

Satan also wants us to think that we are intelligent enough to know what is best for us, so we should rely solely on ourselves instead of trusting in God. We are reminded of these Bible truths: "*O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23). We do not have the mental capacity to "have it all figured out" without outside assistance — that direction and aid can come only from the all-knowing Creator.

The tempter further wants us to buy into the notion that "my happiness" is more important than anything else. So, the world revolves around me and my desires . . . It is all about "me." In contrast to such a self-centered approach, the Master said that those who are going to follow Him and enjoy the best life must deny themselves (Luke 9:23) and forsake all for His sake (Luke 14:33).

Like a foolish, rich farmer whom Jesus described in a memorable parable, the philosophy of the world is "*eat, drink, and be merry*" (Luke 12:19). It is a tragedy when God's children think, "Those non-Christians really know how to enjoy life. I think I will try to be just like them." That is worldliness! The Lord expressly commands His saints not to be conformed to this world (Romans 12:1,2). We are supposed to come out from among them and be separate, not join them in doing evil (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Satan wants us to view sexual promiscuity (being indiscriminate in the choice of sexual behavior) as harmless, healthy, and acceptable. In a marriage approved by God, which is a union of one male and one female, sexual relations are endorsed by Him (Hebrews 13:4). Any bed relations outside of a God-approved marriage bond are sinful. God calls them "fornication," and His standard for proper conduct will never waver, regardless of what humans think or do.

Another pull from the world comes in the form of an onslaught of advertising that encourages us to take intoxicating alcohol into our body as a supposed door to enjoyable times and "a nice little escape" from the rigors/difficulties of life. In fact, the Bible says one who is deceived by wine is not wise (Proverbs 20:1). God calls on Christians to be "sober" (1 Peter 1:13), which means to be free from the influence of intoxicants. It is foolish to ignore or deny these truths.

Satan wants us to make our choices of speech, clothing, and social activities based on what is popular with the masses, not on what is pleasing to God. Members of the Christ's church must say, "No!" to this appeal. We must strive to be conformed to the image of God's Son, not the world (Romans 8:29).

We often find ourselves bombarded with fleshly, worldly appeals. May we all stay committed to living in a manner that brings glory and honor to our Lord.

-- Roger D. Campbell

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