

# In What do You Trust? Part 6 – Benefits of Trusting God

## 1. Introduction and Review

- a. As I read the bible, I find that God often pronounces blessings upon His people, but He also tells about curses that go along with the blessings as well. I believe that there is a reason for this.
  - i. The warnings, the curses highlight the blessings by the power of contrast.
  - ii. If you ignore these curses, it would be like removing all of the traffic signs on a dangerous road.
  - iii. And if all I preach is the blessings and ignore the curses, I am setting you up for a huge tragedy, because you will not be prepared for the curves in the road of life.

## 2. Our passage found in Jeremiah is one of those passages. It lists both curses and blessings:

- a. Jeremiah 17:5-11 *"Thus says the LORD, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the LORD. 6 "For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant. 7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD. 8 "For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit.*
- b. This passage spells out curses and blessings according to the One in whom we trust.
- c. If you think trust in God is just incidental to the Christian life, think again. Trust is central to all we do and are.

## 3. *V5: "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength"*

- a. It is really easy for us to turn this verse into one of those "its about all those non-believers" kind of message.
  - i. But I got news for you today. This warning is for Christians. It is for all of us in this room. And there is a lesson here that every one of us needs to hear.
  - ii. This verse is about trusting in the flesh – not just trusting in "other men" but about trusting in "our own flesh" as well, about making our flesh our strength.
  - iii. The New Testament calls this *walking by the power of the flesh*, or in the power of the old man, or *walking by our own strength*.
    1. Gal. 3:3 *Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*
    2. Phil. 3:3 *for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,*
    3. These passages and many more in the New Testament point out very clearly the importance of not trusting the power of the flesh.
  - iv. Let me define this New Testament concept of flesh (as I have in other sermons):
    1. The flesh in scripture relates to the fallen nature of man

- a. The sin corrupted, relationally estranged nature of humanity.
  - b. All humanity is bound up in sin and the sin nature.
  - c. When Christ died on the cross, he took your sin nature and mine, and it was crucified and died with Him.
  - d. Essentially, your old sinful nature died with Christ.
2. Most of us grasp that from a figurative point of view.
    - a. We get the *concept* that we are supposed to be dead to sin, sin is *supposed* to have lost its power over us, we are *supposed* to have been raised with Christ and have the power of the Holy Spirit to live life by.
  3. But what we miss is the practical *reality* and the implications of this powerful truth.
    - a. The two short verses I just read are indictments on Christians who began their journey of the Christian life by the power of the Spirit but are now trying to complete it in the power of their dead flesh.
    - b. Gal. 3:3 *Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*

b. THE FUTILITY OF THE FLESH: (Watchman Nee, “Not I But Christ.”)

- i. Do you ever get tired of failing, of sinning, or are you surprised by what you do or how you fail? Most of us can relate to this.
- ii. Our failures must beg a question from us: “How do you live the Christian life?”
  1. If we do it by our own efforts then we are consigned to a miserable, joyless life.
    - a. We will be living by rules and laws and performance, and we will never attain what God requires of us, never loving enough, never doing enough.
    - b. Living the Christian life was never meant to be possible.
    - c. It is impossible for the flesh to live the Christian life.
    - d. I want to propose to you today that the reason we fail is that we are trying to *perfect* our lives according to the power and strength of our flesh. (our fallen, sinful, fleshly nature)
  2. Let me explain:
    - a. You’ve probably heard the saying WWJD: “what would Jesus do?”
    - b. Folks, that is one of the worst heresy’s the church has let in.
      - i. It was meant as a reminder to let the mind of Christ rule us, but became a mantra that told us that somehow it is possible to imitate Christ.
      - ii. It is not possible to imitate Christ. Try as you may. You will fail.
      - iii. Your failure will only jade you to the teachings of Christ. +
      - iv. Any attempt to imitate Christ will be a “work of the flesh” and not the Spirit.

1. Jesus doesn't want you to do good.
2. Jesus doesn't want you to act good.
3. Jesus doesn't even want you to want to be good.
3. The miracle of the Christian life is Jesus living His life in and through us, substitutionally.
4. **We are called to live a substitutionary life with Christ.** It is also called the Exchanged Life. It is the best description of the nature of biblical Christianity.
  - a. I am not called to imitate Christ. Nowhere in the bible do we hear the call to imitate Him. We are called to follow Him. We are called to take up our cross and deny ourselves. But we are not called to imitate Him.
  - b. I am called to let Christ live in me.
  - c. That is the essence of trust.
  - d. And that why trust is the essence of the Christian life.
  - e. That is how we will be like a tree planted by the waters.
5. Jesus doesn't want you to do good, be good or even want to do good stuff.
  - a. He wants to come and to live in you.
6. Everything else apart from this is flesh.
7. Anything apart from "*I no longer live, but Christ lives in me*" is flesh at work. It is trust in the flesh. It is making our flesh our strength.
  - a. Any should do's, ought to's are flesh at work.
  - b. "Christ in you, the hope of Glory!"
  - c. Colossians 1:25-27- *so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*
    - i. It is the condition of our hearts. It is the law of the flesh.
    - ii. Sin is not a merely a matter of conduct, if you see it as such, you will try harder, pray more in order to overcome it next time. But you will be fighting in the power and strength of the flesh.
    - iii. **Sin is a law and it cannot be overcome by our will** (which is an extension of our flesh)
      1. One law can only be overcome by a greater law, the law of the Spirit of life.
        - a. "*There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.* (Rom 8:1-2)
        - b. It does not read, "the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from sin and death." (8 of 10 Christians read it this way- we read the benefits as if Jesus made me free- so its my job to do keep doing it)
          - i. It is the LAW of the spirit that sets us free.

- ii. A law only needs to operate to have effect.
    - iii. Our flesh interferes with that law's operation.
  - c. This is why trust is a key ingredient to the Christian life.
    - i. God doesn't need our help. He doesn't need our efforts. He doesn't need our ability...but rather, our availability to trust Him.
    - ii. Are you afraid that God is not big enough to deliver you from a temptation?
    - iii. God is able to make you victorious without the help of your resolutions.
    - iv. This LAW IN US of the Spirit will deliver us from the Law of sin.
    - v. It is an act of trust, of REST that permits us to experience this Law.
      - 1. Not activity but rest. Trust is rest. It is not resistance, but rest.
  - d. Our failure or success is not important. Our trusting in Jesus is!
  - e.
- d. Temptation's purpose: (to arouse the flesh to take control)
  - i. When temptation comes its purpose isn't really entice us to sin. (bet you thought it was... as if failure would separate you from the love of God?)
    - a. Temptation's purpose is to cause you to act on your own (strength).
    - b. The goal of temptation is not to get us to sin, but to get the old, crucified, dead, carnal flesh to act.
    - c. **Temptation's purpose is to get the old man (flesh) to resist temptation.**
      - i. Notice, I didn't say "get the old man to give into temptation" but "resist it."
      - ii. That is what happens when we make our flesh our strength.
      - iii. The bible says our old man is crucified and dead.
    - iv. Temptation wants it to act, to resist on our behalf so as to remain in control and for us to **depend upon something already DEAD!**
      - d. There is no greater impediment to the advancement of the kingdom of God than the fleshly efforts of Christians.
        - 1.
  - e. Christians are to resist temptation not by refusing to move toward it or by moving away, but instead by an act of trust, by looking to Jesus.
    - 2. We must learn to look up, not to do something.
      - a. **3 choices when faced with temptation knocking at our door:**
        - i. Answer it (give into it)
        - ii. Don't answer it (resist temptation)
        - iii. Ask Jesus to handle it (trust in Christ who dwells in us)

- b. Yes, oversimplified, but nonetheless, boils it down to flesh (1<sup>st</sup> two) or spirit (last choice).
- c. Defeat is not caused by too little work on our part, but by too much of our own efforts.

4. . 6 *"For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant.*

- a. This will be the result of living and acting and working in the strength of our flesh:
  - i. "He shall be like the (dead) bush in the desert"
    - 1. Heb. "kearar"; a blasted tree, without moisture, parched and withered.
    - 2. If we trust in man, rather than God, we can end up like that.
      - a. We put all our energy into survival, so we cannot spare any to give fruit.
      - b. We cannot have those qualities in our lives that bless others.
      - c. We become dry, with nothing to give.
      - d. We live only to try to survive.
      - e. That is not God's plan for His children!
  - ii. *And will not see when prosperity comes* – which describes the dead tree will not come back to life when water is given because it is incapable of life now that it is dead.
    - 1. A salt land, a desolate place.
    - 2. This is the curse of Christians (not just non-believers) who think that they can begin in the power of the Spirit and try to finish in the strength of the flesh.
      - 3. Are you feeling dried up, worn out, defeated, without hope? Do you feel like temptation overcomes you too easily, and wonder what a victorious Christian looks like because you haven't seen one in a long, long time?
      - 4. If you are, you are in that desert. You are in danger of drying up, parched and withered. You have been trusting your own strength.
      - 5. Are you ready to cry out for Jesus? Are you ready to say "enough!" I will trust in You Lord! I cannot do it alone anymore.

5. V7-8 *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD. 8 "For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit.*

- a. **Draw out this picture.** Trees by streams have a constant source of refreshment.
  - i. We have a creek that flows through our property. It flows from an artesian well that during the 1800's people would come from all over to fill up containers of water. I wouldn't do that now, of course.
  - ii. But along that creek, that stream, are trees that never lack water. They grow taller than the rest of them in the area. They have more nuts, (fruit), their leaves remain green during droughts, because they are by the source of water.

b. **Three blessings for trusting:**

i. **No Fear**

1. Fear/heat: Heat is a trial, it is turbulence to our lives. It is the thing that tests us. Yet in the middle of it, if you are fully trusting Jesus, fear will not even enter your heart.

ii. **No anxiety**

1. Anxiety comes from worry and fear. It is wondering where the next paycheck, where the next supply will come from. But when you are grounded in Christ, your roots dug deeply into dependence upon HIM, there is no anxiety.
2. This week, I struggled with anxiety over the upcoming summer and the huge number of things that will be happening. I began to become fearful about having enough time to do everything and God used these verses to show me my fear and anxiety were the result of trusting my ability to accomplish things. So I made a choice to give it to the Lord. I yelled a few times “God I give it to YOU!” And every time the thought arose in my mind to dwell upon or think about those issues, I called upon the Lord. I didn’t even try to chase the thought away. I called upon the Lord. I let HIM chase the thought away.

iii. **Got Fruit?**

1. Just about anyone can put up fruit in good times. You can smile, be kind, and be generous when your life is full. But when there is tough times, you will not have it in you, unless you are grounded deeply in Christ.
2. The purpose of a fruit tree is to bear fruit. Fruit is something that others (other than the tree) benefit from. That is what Christ wants to do in our lives.
3. The word for “send out its roots” means in the Hebrew to “thrust out” (an active act) with intensity and purpose.
4. Our calling is to trust, which is the active act of digging our roots deep down into who Jesus is.

c. **We are all carrying around way too much fear and anxiety. As a result, we are all bearing way too little fruit. It is a function of trust and flesh. Will you seek a change today?**

**6. Prayer:**

- a. “Lord, I trust you to live in me. I trust you to be humble for me. I trust you to overcome for me. I trust you to manifest Your life in me. I trust you to live my life for me.”
- b. Lord I choose to trust in You, to depend upon You. I cannot do it on my own. I can’t even live for you on my own. Live through me. I surrender now! I lay everything, I lay myself totally in your hands, in your arms and let go. I look to YOU alone.
- c. In Jesus Name, amen.

- d. Notes: In fact, our flesh will resist every effort to die and let Christ live in us.
- e. "Did you ever think, when you were a child, what fun it would be if your toys could come to life? Well suppose you could really have brought them to life. Imagine turning a tin soldier into a real little man. It would involve turning the tin into flesh. And suppose the tin soldier did not like it. He is not interested in flesh; all he sees is that the tin is being spoiled. He thinks you are killing him. He will do everything he can to prevent you. He will not be made into a man if he can help it." - C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
- f. Conversely, our flesh will resist the transformation into Christ that comes from Christ living in us. Our flesh would kill the Spirit (if it could).
- g.

IF WE WILL PUT OUR TRUST IN THE LORD, WE ‘WILL BE LIKE A TREE THAT IS PLANTED BY THE WATER THAT SENDS OUT ITS ROOTS BY THE STREAM.’”

THE HEBREW WORDS “SENDS OUT” IS A VERB THAT MEANS TO “THRUST OUT” TO INDICATE THAT SENDING OUT THE SHOOT TO THE LIFE-GIVING WATER SOURCE IS DONE WITH INTENSITY AND WITH GREAT VIGOROUS ACTION.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT ONE FOR COWARDS AND WHIMPS. IT TAKES A SENSE OF UNWAVERING SURRENDER, UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, AND UNBREAKABLE DEVOTION.

If we trust in man, rather than God, we can end up like that. We put all our energy into survival, so we cannot spare any to give fruit. We cannot have those qualities in our lives that bless others. We become dry, with nothing to give. Our interactions with other people do not leave them blessed or strengthened or encouraged. We do not display the beauty and the holiness of Christ in our lives.

Such a person is like the tree by the water. God provides an endless source of blessing and strength, flowing all the time, no matter what happens in life. Just as the tree can develop roots to reach along the banks to take full advantage of all the water, so a person could develop spiritual roots to reach out and receive all the blessings that God is wishing to give to them. At times when God comes close they know it and are able to be close to him, to spend time with him and enjoy him. They do not rely on themselves for survival and blessing, but on the one who gives them their water, their nourishment, their blessings.

ut this flourishing tree is not just growing for its own benefit. It grows tall and strong, and is leafy, so that people can shelter from the fierce heat of the sun under it. Fruit grows, a valuable source of food, vitamins and nourishment.

A fruit tree must have lots of water to produce fruit. This is the living water that God provides for us. A fruit tree must have nitrogen as fertilizer. We are fertilized with Gods word. A fruit tree must be pollinated. A Christian must associate with other Christian to be fruitful. And a fruit tree must be pruned. And that pruning

hurts sometimes. But we must be pruned to produce better and more fruit. The Lord wants a tree that produces fruit with the blessings that he provides. He expects us to be strong because we live within his dome of care.

The flesh is a built-in law of failure, making it impossible for the natural man to please or serve God. It is a compulsive inner force inherited from man's fall, which expresses itself in general and specific rebellion against God and His righteousness. The flesh can never be reformed or improved. The only hope for escape from the law of the flesh is its total execution and replacement by a new life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark Bubeck, *The Adversary*, Moody Press, p. 28

Based on this meaning of the word flesh, to be carnal means to be characterized by things that belong to the unsaved life (Ephesians 2:3).

There are some who are saved, but lack intimacy with God, still living in the "outer court"; restricted by the veil of their own flesh, they cannot draw near unto the new and living way. (John Bevere, *Drawing Near*)