

In God I Trust?

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[0 : 00] Now for the month of January we will not be looking at any particular theme.

Well the last Sunday in January is we are going to begin in the last Sunday in January our series on Ephesians following up from our study of Job last year. In the mornings we are going to be looking at Ephesians.

In the evenings we will continue looking at the Sermon and the Mount. But for the mornings until the end of January we will be doing just stand alone sermons and various people will be leading these services.

So today I want to look at I think what is a good theme towards the beginning of any year and towards the beginning of any week really. And it is a very well known verse from Proverbs chapter 3 and from verse 5.

I am sure most of you, if not all of you will know this verse very well. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

[1 : 10] And verse 6 in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths. It is a very simple text with which to start preaching the New Year.

And I am sure it is one that you are very familiar with. I hope it does not happen that familiarity breeds contempt because sometimes we talk about that, it is not really a biblical phrase to say that.

But sometimes familiarity does breed contempt. I am sure that would not be the case with a text from Scripture. But it might be that familiarity breeds thoughtlessness if it does not breed contempt.

And sometimes we look at a text like this and say, well I know this kind of text. It is very simple, there is nothing new that I will learn. It will be just going over the same old stuff. And we maybe feel that we know this text tremendously well.

And I am sure that is the case. But the great thing about Scripture is that it is inexhaustible and it will find that it does apply to us and it does challenge us as we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts and as we think of our situation and our life and the context in which we have come to worship today.

[2 : 22] You have all come, we have all come from a different context. We have all come with a different relationship with God and a different understanding which we hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will take and that this text will speak into.

What does it mean? It is pretty self-explanatory really, isn't it? Is trust, what does it mean to trust in the Lord? Is it the same as faith? Well no, I don't think it is quite the same as faith.

They are two different words and they are often used together. They are linked as words. They are linked as concepts.

When we think about having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we also talk about trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as Christians, as believers, putting our faith in Him. But this is really just a summary in many ways of what it is to be a Christian.

It is to someone who trusts in the Lord. But the difference I think is subtle. The difference between faith and trust is that faith is God's gift, is His gift which He gives us so that none of us can boast.

[3 : 30] It is the gift to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ by grace, fear, save, through faith and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God so that nobody can boast.

And we ask Him for faith and we seek more faith from Him. Trust is the confidence that we place in Him because or through faith.

So trust is more about how we respond to the gift of faith that we have been given, that we lean on, not our own understanding but we lean on God.

So trust is the confidence we have in God. The relational confidence, the fact that we believe in Him and we know Him and because of what we know and because of what we believe, we therefore lean on Him in our lives.

We trust Him, we put our confidence in Him. And so I guess the question that we need to ask ourselves in the light of a text like this this morning is pragmatically, practically as you self-examine your life, don't really worry about everyone else's life today.

[4 : 44] Just think about your own as I must think about mine. Ask ourselves in whom does our confidence lie on a day-to-day basis? Who am I, who did I over this last week and who will I over this next week lean on?

In whom is my confidence? Who am I confident in? And that really gets to the heart of this text. And so it's an encouragement, excuse me, it's an encouragement for us to move away from certain things and move towards certain other things.

So I'm going to look at moving away and moving towards this morning. So it's an encouragement to move away from spiritual independence, okay? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

That my friends is a lifelong struggle even after our conversion to trust and believe and commit our lives to Jesus Christ.

There's an ongoing battle to be spiritually and in every other way independent. That is the natural inclination of our hearts is not to lean on God, to be self-confidence, self-confidence.

[6 : 02] That's the philosophy of the fallen world in which we live, of which we're apart. The world that we'll say on the side of buses, we are good without God.

We're good without God. We don't need God in our lives, we can be self-reliant, we can rely on society, we can rely on the majority, we can rely on science, we can rely on altruism, on good works and good efforts and all of these things we can rely on them and we can trust primarily in ourselves.

We're good without God and we don't need God in our lives. There's an element which that becomes, it seems to become a very laudable way of thinking.

You know, I've heard people say and it's an attractive, it's an attractive philosophy where you say, well look, I'm not going to deny my personal responsibility by believing in God or by trusting other people.

I'm going to take responsibility and I'm going to make the moral decisions in my life and I'm going to do that because I recognize that I'm responsible and that's important.

[7 : 14] And you know, that sounds plausible, it sounds decent, doesn't it, that someone is willing not to simply thoughtlessly believe what other people believe or do what other people do but they take responsibility.

I don't think it's something people work through but you can see why it becomes an attractive philosophical predispositional way of thinking that people will rely on themselves and they're not going to believe in God who will make them do things they don't want to do or things that are wrong, hence despotic terrorists and people who blow themselves up and all that kind of nonsense.

Yet, that philosophy, that reliance itself leaves a tremendous weight on everyone's shoulders.

It's a crushing weight. It's a hugely crushing weight to think that it's everything in this life, everything that you do, everything that you look forward to, all your hopes and plans are entirely relying on yourself and on your ability.

It's a crushing weight through illness, it's a crushing weight through disappointment, it's a crushing weight through loss to think that it's all in your control and it's all up to you.

[8 : 28] But also it's unrealistic, isn't it, because in our lives we all rely on other people. You know, we may say we don't but we do. If you're going to go into hospital for an operation, you're relying on the surgeon.

We rely on people all the time and it's hugely important that we do so in our lives and no more so than when it comes to spiritual heart surgery and heart movement by God.

It's deceptive and destructive to think that self-confidence and self-reliance will give us freedom and choice and power in our lives.

Because that will be the argument, isn't it? It gives us freedom and choice and power to simply be in control of our own lives. Yet it is the default mentality of our sinful human natures that we think that we can be independent from the very beginning.

That isn't that, from the very beginning. That is what Adam and Eve thought that they could be spiritually independent and be like God. And that's been our battle ever since. Huge problem for us.

[9 : 39] Therefore, this simple and well-known text, Trust in the Lord with all your heart, involves a monumental shift in our mindset, in our lifestyle, in the way that we believe and understand what it means to be a Christian.

So it's a move away from spiritual independence. It's also a move away, and I'm sorry, this is not really technical term. It's not a theological term, but I think it's a term you might understand.

It's a move away from sort of independence. So we can be spiritually independent, but we can be sort of independent spiritually.

We trust in God a bit. So we're still kind of independent really, but we sort of trust in God. We pay him at least lip service. And to use this phrase in a different context, for us he's the God of the gaps.

He's the God of the bits in our lives that probably he fits. But most of life I can control and I can deal with and I'm pretty good and I don't really need God, but he's the God for the gaps, the bits that are problematic and the bits are difficult and it's a move away from sort of independence.

[10 : 59] Can I explain a little bit what I think that might look like? It might look like Sunday Christianity, where the sum total of your relationship with God is the hour that you give him out of 168 on a Sunday morning.

That's the religious component. That's the religious bit of your life. That's the segment that you give to the living God. He is worth at least that and you will do things and think things his way for at least that hour.

Sunday Christianity, where we kind of nod our head towards God, but really he's not relevant for the rest of our lives because he's tiny. He's very, very small.

We can shrink him into this one hour and pay lip service to him in this way. And we can broaden that generally to the rest of our lives.

So there's this kind of Sunday Christianity. There can also be crisis Christianity, where we cry out in sort of dependence on him, but only in a crisis.

[12 : 06] He's the fifth emergency service. He's the one that we go to when everything in our life is just in a mess, but most of the time we're not in crisis and we don't really need him.

But when we hit illness or when we become unemployed or when we had a broken relationship or when anything comes into our lives that could be qualified as a crisis, then that's when we go to God.

You see, I'm not going to bother him the rest of the time. I've got most things covered, God. I don't really need to lean on you and trust in you for the rest of the time, but in this crisis, that's to whom I will go, but you have no confidence in him the rest of the time and in his diagnosis and in his teaching and in his word for your life.

Crisis Christianity. And the other kind of way that might be expressed is in comfort Christianity. And these maybe overlap a little bit. Hot chocolate and marshmallows Christianity, where we really are looking for our Christianity to give us comfort and a relationship with God to be warm and fuzzy.

And where there's you love the love ethos and you love the sentiment of the gospel and you love the company of Christians. You love church. You love the kind of people that come to church.

[13 : 28] You love meeting up with your good friends with them. You love the fellowship, the philosophy, the moralism. Sometimes, sometimes that kind of outward morality that you seek to live and justifies your need not to change.

Comfort Christianity. So that is kind of what I'm talking about when I talk about sort of independence. But the text is moving us in our Christian lives towards complete trust.

Not sort of trust, not a spiritual independence, but that you and I wrestle with our own hearts, natural, sinful inclination, even as believers that we battle against and we fight the remaining sin in us to be independent and to not trust in Lord.

So it's a move towards complete trust. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding and all your ways acknowledge Him, He will make your path straight.

So it's trust in the Lord. Isn't that really significant and important as a focus for us? It's in this person.

[14 : 42] It's in this living God who reveals Himself as the rescuing, the redeeming God. The Lord, see the word there that we have for Lord, it's small capitals.

That is because it's speaking of the name of God that's given as the redeeming, the covenant God, the Yahweh, the I am God, the God who took His people out of Egypt, the God who comes in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

This is the God in whom we trust. The one who will through His word and through His Spirit, expose your conscience and mind and the deception that we so often live under.

The bleak deception that we can live without Him and that we don't need Him and that we can lean on our own understanding. This same Lord who is God, who we've come to understand and to know in the person of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh so that we can begin to understand who God is that He enters into our world and into our existence.

And He makes Himself known as the one who communicates. In the beginning was the word. The word is made flesh. So we have God in the flesh and the God who communicates and the God who Himself is the Redeemer and is the Savior for us.

[16 : 09] A real God, a living God, a Creator God, not a made up God, a God who can be known. You know that's very important. That's why the word is so important.

You know the printed press, the newspapers, it's very powerful, the printed press even today in the age of social media, which still is all printed, it's on screen.

But you know when something's printed down and if it's not true, if you've ever been the subject of misinformation or deception or lies on the printed page, it's a terrible thing and you feel a great injustice and you think that's not me.

I'm not like that. It's not who I am. And so the same must be, does you not think the same must be true for God? That He hates to be misrepresented by us.

When we make Him up and we make Him in our own image and we ignore His word and we kind of chop bits out and we take the spiritual scissors to the Bible all the time, there are bits we don't like and the characteristics about God.

[17 : 12] And we misrepresent Him. He doesn't want that for us because He is real and He's a person and He is the person and He's the living God and He's made Himself known and it is to that one, that person that we're to put our trust.

So there is a sense in which it's not just, doesn't matter, you know, all roads lead to God and all paths lead to God. It doesn't matter what you believe about God as long as you believe, oh that nonsense.

It's all nonsense because that is just making out God to be unknowable and unknown and not really a real person but just someone that we model and make up ourselves just to fit our own needs.

But we have to trust in this historical, represented, revealed, communicated person being the living God who comes in the person of Jesus Christ and who dies on the cross for our sins.

We move towards completely trusting in the Lord and it's trust with all our heart. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. It's a tremendous phrase.

[18 : 24] And we see it very briefly when we look at Christ. As Christ came in the flesh, He came to live the life we couldn't live.

So He examples for us the life of perfect trust. He's God's Son. He examples what it's like for a human being. He was also God's Son to live in complete trust with the Father.

And we've got this amazing, humbling recognition of Christ in His humility at the point of greatest darkness that people say to Him, He trusted in God.

He trusted in God. Let God deal with Him now. Even to Gethsemane, even to Calvary, even to Hell, He trusted His Father.

He did His Father's will so that we could be redeemed in order to do the Father's will also. He gave all of Himself, all of His heart to trust.

[19 : 28] No, on the cross Jesus didn't hold something back. Jesus didn't say, oh well, I'm alright. I'll give half of my divinity here on the cross. I'll just fight the evil one with half of who I am.

It wasn't half-hearted, was it? It was complete and absolute and total trust in God. God would redeem Him in that moment, as it were, would pour out His wrath on Him, but we'd be able to see redemption happening and we would see the pleasure of God in the work of Jesus Christ being revealed through the resurrection.

Jesus Christ as our example, He gave Himself wholly to what He did, the totality of His being. And that is what the simple and well-known and well-trotted out phrase means, trust in the Lord with all your heart.

It means with the totality of our being, not just on Sunday, not just on Sunday at 11 o'clock, not just some of the time, not just in our crisis, not just when we need comfort, but we're to trust in the Lord in darkness and in light, in good times and in bad times, with all of our heart.

We're to trust in His diagnosis that all of us are miserably dark and lost and fallen and selfish and self-centered without Him, even though we may be great towards one another and nice at human level and we have God's common grace in our hearts.

[20 : 55] But that we're more loved than we could ever imagine and that He wants to change and renew and give us His grace in our lives. Trust Him.

Trust His diagnosis and we trust His remedy with all our hearts and therefore that changes who we are. When we trust in Him with all our hearts, every inclination of our heart is moved towards Him, then it changes.

Now that is a battle. You don't come at faith and say, I've done it. It's no problem because the natural inclination, sinful inclination of our heart throughout our lives is the opposite.

You will fall in and I fall back into self-reliance and self-confidence and independence all the time. And so we have to have this. Tonight, I'm going to talk about prayer.

If ever there was a need, if ever there was a truth that drives us towards prayer, it's this one, that we naturally don't trust in Him and we need to be praying constantly that we can put our trust wholeheartedly with all our heart, with all our being.

[22 : 03] And I don't want to move into tonight's sermon, but there's so much about genuine prayer that is an exposure of your whole being.

What you are like that nobody else knows that is outworking of this text as well. With all our heart, in all our ways, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight.

That is a seismic life shift for you and for me. Today, we're kind of looking very much at what we're looking at scripture to do is to use it as a mirror.

Let scripture be a mirror today for your own heart. Don't think about other people. Don't think about the church or the community at the moment. Just think about your own heart and your own relationship as I must do with it.

In all your ways, that's a seismic life shift for all of us that your confidence is in Him. The confidence that you have in His person will therefore be evident in all your ways.

[23 : 18] If you're trusting in Him, then it will be impossible for that not to be outed, not to be revealed, not to be part of your life. So that we're looking for the Holy Spirit and God's spirit in our lives as Christians to influence our thinking, our conscience.

I'd be great to preach a few sermons and for us all to think about our conscience more. It's a great part of our lives. Our instincts, our choices, that they become soaked in the Word of God and the will of God, the person of God, so that in all our ways we're looking to acknowledge Him.

He makes our path straight. In all our heart, we are to trust, lean on Him rather than our own understanding. Isn't that the temptation all the time?

Is to our default positions to go back to our leaning on ourselves. Everyone lets me down. Church lets me down. God has let me down.

I'm just going to... I don't trust anyone anymore. I'm just going to lean on my own understanding. Whatever it means, at least I'm responsible. Don't let that argument, that deception take over your life and your heart.

[24 : 32] In all our ways acknowledge Him. The chapter we read, or the sects of the chapter we read, it gives many different ways in which that's how it worked, which we don't have time to look into. Love lets steadfast love and faithfulness, not forsake you.

It talks about wisdom, the wisdom of God. It talks about the discipline of God in our lives so that He loves those. He disciplines those that He loves difficult times. It talks about wealth, everything that we are, everything that we own, everything that we do.

In all our ways, in the workplace, in the university, in home, maybe most significantly at home. When we're at home, when we're absolutely ourselves.

In all our ways acknowledge Him. Whoever we are, the closest human relationships we have. In all our ways acknowledge Him, trust in Him with all our heart. So it's that move towards trusting this real person.

See, if God is just a figment to you, or if He's just a malleable historical character that you can change to fit your own moods, which we often do, then it will be difficult to trust in Him because usually trust means trusting when it's difficult, trusting when it's tough, trusting when it's, there are alternatives for us.

[25 : 44] So it's a move then towards complete trust. And I just want to finish with moving away again. Maybe that's not a good tactic. It's not a good tactic to finish with moving away, but it's just following on from moving towards Him in complete trust, which is what we need to do by His strength and His spirit.

We also need, again, to go back to the beginning kind of images, we need to move away not just from spiritual independence and sort of independence, but when we are trusting in Him and seeking to trust Him with all our heart, we will also move away from spiritual isolationism.

Now here I am focusing on the reality that as we trust in Him personally and individually and privately in our own one way relationship, face-to-face relationship with God, that will mean, it will not mean more spiritual isolation, monasticism, for example.

Holiness doesn't mean you become less involved. To trust in Him is a move away from spiritual isolationism. So confidence in God doesn't make us less confident in His people and in His Christian community.

It shouldn't be the way it is. As we change our attitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, as we trust in Him with all our heart, it moves us towards Him and it moves us, it should move us towards His people.

[27 : 20] We are relationally warming up. That's very important because I think sometimes there's been a monastic type of idea in us which says the closer we are to God, then everyone else is just so far away from God that I can't stand them.

And they are sinful and they don't see what I see and they don't understand what I see. As if the holiness makes you monastic and makes you separate from, you know, get out of the time for people who leave churches.

The leave churches because it's full of people that are faulty and rubbish. Not like me, that's why I'm moving.

You know that whole idea that closeness somehow makes us more judgmental, shouldn't be the case. It moves away from spiritual isolationism. So as we trust in the Lord, we trust in this Trinitarian God, okay?

It means that we, as we learn more about Him, we learn more about the glory of divine community.

[28 : 26] God isn't an individual. He isn't a solitary. He's God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and this marvelous eternal communication and we are adopted into that.

We become part of this Trinitarian family in a marvelous way that we are brought into community, divine community. And that that is hugely significant because it reminds us that Christ is also the head of the church of which we've been brought into once you were not a people, but now you are a people.

Because as we trust in the Lord God, we begin to live our lives differently and we live in community with His people. There's a corporate, okay? So it's this hugely individual responsibility with a corporate outworking.

So if we're trusting in the Lord, it changes what we think about church and one another as Christians together hugely because the more we know our own hearts, the more we are able and the more we know our own forgiveness, the more we are able to live with others and serve others as Christ wants us to do.

And that works out itself briefly in conclusion, two ways. It means that because Christ is trustworthy, trusting the Lord with all your heart because we've come to know Him, we've come to believe in Him, we've come to accept Him because He's trustworthy, He is straight, He's not a liar, He's not a cheat.

[30 : 01] So we can trust in Him even when it doesn't look good for us because of that. In order to be like Christ, we too are to be trustworthy.

It's not good to be a Christian and a dishonest businessman or a liar or a cheat in anything in our lives, practically in our workplace or in our home where these things don't matter.

We are to be trustworthy because Christ is. Take Paul's advice to Titus to give to his church, to the people and to this, for example, the slaves in his church.

He said slaves, teach the slaves to be subject to their masters in everything to show. And it goes on to say to show that they can be fully trusted so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

That's the gospel because Christ is trustworthy and because we trust in Him, we within the community of people are to be trustworthy Christians.

[31 : 05] Not just in the Christian community, but in the world outside. Whoever is maybe over us, whoever is our boss or whoever we speak to or whoever we know that our life is trustworthy at a very practical level so that they can see that the teaching about God our Savior is attractive.

Isn't that great? Isn't that great? And isn't it hugely conscious striking? Isn't it hugely challenging that the light of the gospel shines in our hearts and they were kind of sitting uncomfortably in our seats as we read God's Word and he says these things.

He says you be trustworthy within the Christian community so that it's attractive, so that you're like Jesus Christ. I don't care what your natural inclination is.

You don't care what mine is. What our weakness and strength is. Don't use it as an excuse. We're to mould whatever is the weakness in our lives towards Jesus Christ and be like Him and be trustworthy and straight.

Don't be a duplicitous Christian. And that obviously leads to an atmosphere within the community of openness and honesty and a willingness to forgive and be forgiven.

[32 : 22] It doesn't mean that we're naive about other people. It doesn't mean that we idolise other people. It doesn't mean that we are dependent on one another at the expense of our relationship with Christ.

But it does mean in Christian community in the church that we're not suspicious all the time of one another. That we're not quick to judge and condemn and slow to forgive.

But we're to have this sense of openness and honesty and a realistic leaning on God that helps us to depend on one another.

Because we're above all people in this world, we're realistic. Because we've come to know that Christ knows our hearts. And you know today and I know today that I have failed Christ.

That I've let Him down. That I've broken trust with Him. And probably you might have done at some point in your life as well. You do it daily. And yet we so often get onto our divine throne and are quick to judge everyone else when they make the same mistakes.

[33 : 37] But we're to be Christ-like in that response. And not leaning our own understanding. Our own understanding is to say I'm hurt.

I can't possibly trust again. I can't possibly give myself to others. They simply let me down. Isn't it great that Christ doesn't say that to us? Isn't that great that He doesn't give up on us?

How often do we forgive one another? Jesus says 70 times 7. What does that mean? It just means we keep on doing it. Because we're leaning on His understanding.

Not on ours. Our way and the world's way is forget it. Give up. Talk about don't trust. Don't involve yourself.

But Christ's way is to build trust, is to be forgiving, is to be honest. And that is where very often a simple throw away memory verse like this, where the rubber of a verse like this hits the road.

[34 : 40] Where it's hugely challenging. Where the easy road of self-reliance and self-trust is challenged by the living God who say, Look, I am asking you today to do the impossible.

Amen. Praise God that He asks us to do that. Because that drives us to prayer. Because the way of grace is impossible. But it's what will cause people in this world and in the church to find Christ attractive.

To find Christ attractive. What a great challenge it is for us. It's a great comfort. It's a wonderful verse. And as it will throw all of us onto prayer, if you've come today and you thought, I have no need for prayer, I can't think what to pray for, run out of stuff.

Verse like this, the truth of God's word might throw you in your own heart and soul, in your own life, to examine what it means to trust in Him and to challenge us about half-hearted trust or leaning on our own understanding.

It's a huge battle and we really need the Holy Spirit and the help of God in order to change our hearts. And if you haven't come to faith, then that is a huge challenge for you also to believe, not just in our heads, what God has done in Christ, but to entrust your life and eternity to Him and to follow Him in all your ways and with all your heart.

[36 : 20] Let's pray our heads and pray. Father God, we ask and pray that you would help us to live for you, to live like you, to live knowing that we have been gifted an incredible salvation, wonderful, free and full and that you honour us and ennoble us by giving us texts like this because we can live this way, by your grace and with the help and life of the Holy Spirit in us.

Father forgive us for our failure, for our shabbiness, forgive us for keeping you at arm's length, for not letting you near our own hearts, for leaving our hearts so often stony and untouched and unmoved, for so often being deflective or deflecting and looking at the perceived failure of others and judging or comparing ourselves by them, alongside them rather than allowing the perfection of God's standard to bring us to our knees and say Lord please forgive me and give me freshness and love and grace and newness and help us to be Christ like with all the challenge that that means but yet all the joy that it brings because our paths are straight and our ways are full and the blessing of God is upon us.

We didn't even look at the blessings that this chapter speaks on and yet we pray and ask that you would remind us of all the good things and the blessing that we enjoy as we seek to follow and give our whole life and beings to you.

We ask it in Jesus' name. I mean maybe that's something actually that you can do at home is just to look at the twelve verses that we saw and see the command but also then the blessing that comes from it and what God is looking to do in our lives and the encouragement that that brings.