

## Trusting God: God's Sovereignty in the Affairs of His People<sup>1</sup>

We were sleeping soundly on a Saturday morning a few months ago when we heard a phone ringing. You never want to hear a phone ringing at 5:30 on a Saturday morning. It's either a spam call or an emergency. On this day, it was an emergency. Within the space of a few seconds, we learned that Maya's mother had died. This was totally unexpected news, and it sent my wife and our family into crisis mode that lasted for several weeks. Maya's mom's death was a huge source of grief and disappointment within her family that still affects us today.

Most of us have experienced similar kinds of trauma. We or our loved ones have been through diseases, divorces, and deaths. It could be a financial disaster or a family issue. We endure suffering, pain, and loss, sometimes suddenly and sometimes persistently. If you haven't had such painful experiences yet, just wait; you will. Such things come to virtually everyone; no one is exempt. If such things are not happening to us, they are happening to others we know or others we hear about. Every day seems to bring with it a new crisis for us, our family, or our friends, our community, or our world.

Some people absolutely fall apart under the duress of crisis experiences. For them, life is little more than random chance. They believe that we are the result of uncontrolled events in a meaningless universe. We are little more than molecules bumping together, just animals pursuing our own appetites. Life is hard and then you die. When disasters strike, they often crumble.

But Christians believe that the world and human life has meaning. We believe God created the world and us for a good purpose. We believe that God is for us and that God is love and that God is powerful. So when crises strike, we seek to understand what God is doing through them.

We may be tempted to ask, "Where is God in all of this suffering? Why doesn't he intervene? Why does he allow so much pain, tragedy, and suffering in the world?"

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<sup>1</sup> This series is based on Jerry Bridges' book, *Trusting God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988).

One of the main teachings of the Bible is that God is in control of human affairs. He has a purpose or a reason for everything that happens to us. We call this idea the sovereignty of God. God is a great king, and he is ruling and reigning over all things, including over the details of our lives.

If that is true, then we must trust God through the difficult times in our lives. In our suffering and pain, we continue to believe that God is good and has our best interests in mind. We can trust God through all the pain, suffering, and sorrow of life. We must walk by faith, not by sight or by sense. We will suffer many tribulations in this life, but this life is not the end; there is more to the story. An eternity in heaven awaits those who trust in God.

Today we are starting our Summer Sermon Series, and I've titled this series "Trusting God: God's Sovereignty in the Affairs of His People." That title is not original to me. In this series, I'm following the title and outline of Jerry Bridges' book *Trusting God*.

Trust means that you have faith in something. Trust is belief or acceptance. It's a confident hope in a person or in a promise. Trust in God means that we believe in him and in what he has told us. We put our faith and confidence in God; He is the object of our trust.

The primary idea that we must affirm and keep in mind is that God is trustworthy. He is dependable, especially in times of adversity and crisis. Even when it seems like God does not hear your prayers, and even when it seems like disaster has struck, God is still dependable; we can still trust God.

In this first message, I want to consider several reasons to trust God. What does the Bible say about trusting in God?

I. You are blessed when you trust in God.

Psalm 2:12 ... *Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.*

Psalm 34:8 *Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!*

Psalm 40:4 *Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust...*

Ps 62:8 *Trust in Him at all times, you people; ... God [is] a refuge for us.*

Psalm 84:12 *O LORD of hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in You!*

Psalm 118:9 *It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in princes.*

Jeremiah 17:7–8 *Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. 8 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; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.*

The repeated statement that we find throughout Scripture is that when we trust in God, we are blessed. Trusting God is a good thing. We ultimately benefit by trusting in God.

A. We trust God for salvation.

One of the key elements of saving faith is trust. In order to be saved, you must know the facts of the Gospel, affirm the Gospel message for yourself, and trust in Jesus to save you.

We trust God to save us from our sins when we repent and believe in Jesus. Have you experienced the blessing of salvation? Have you turned from sin and trusted in Christ?

B. We trust God for daily needs.

1. Matt 6:33—*seek ye first...*

2. In that section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that we can trust in God for food, shelter, and clothing.

Ps 34:9 *O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for [there is] no want to them that fear him.*

Ps 84:11 *For the LORD God [is] a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good [thing] will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

Phil 4:19 *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

C. We trust God for wisdom and guidance.

1Co 1:18 *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

1. The wisdom of God stands in stark contrast to the wisdom of this world. We have to decide which source of wisdom and guidance we will follow—the foolishness of man or the wisdom of God.
2. We know that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So we have to trust God that what he tells us in his word is the truth and will work out best for us.
3. We believe that God's way is best; he knows what is best for us, and we believe that if we do things God's way, things will turn out best for us.

2 Ch 31:21 *And in every work that [Hezekiah] began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did [it] with all his heart, and prospered.*

D. Trusting in God gives us a sense of stability and security; those who trust God are like a tree that spreads out its roots by the river (Jer 17:7-8). The imagery of that tree implies security and stability. Such a tree does not worry about heat or drought. Such a tree continues yielding fruit in spite of negative circumstances. Those who trust in God are like that tree.

**Trans:** God is trustworthy, and we are blessed as we trust in him. We reap benefits for ourselves when we trust in God.

Are you enjoying the benefits of trusting in God, both for salvation and for everything that God supplies?

## II. It's reasonable to trust in God.

What makes it reasonable to trust in God?

A. God's character and nature make it reasonable to trust in him.

1. One of the main attributes of God is faithfulness. God will fulfill his promises to his people.

*Titus 1:2 God, who cannot lie...*

*Jn 17:17 thy word is truth.*

2. We can have absolute trust in whatever God tells us because God is absolutely trustworthy.

B. God has all power to fulfill his promises to us.

1. One of the marks of a trustworthy person is his ability to do what he has promised to do. A trustworthy person has a record of fulfilling his promises. He is trustworthy because he has proven himself to be reliable many times.

2. As humans, we often prove to be unreliable in various ways. Those who rely on us may regret trusting us.

That never happens with God. He is the expert; he never fails.

3. God is qualified and powerful enough to do everything within his will and purpose. That makes him trustworthy.

C. Others are often not trustworthy.

*Ps 118:9 [It is] better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.*

*Isa 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, [And] rely on horses, Who trust in chariots because [they are] many, And in horsemen because they are very strong, But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the LORD!*

1. Even the best of people will fail you. Even the most trustworthy person you know may betray your trust. People often fail to meet our expectations or hopes.

2. Even those who love you the most will fail occasionally.
3. You can't even trust yourself.
4. The only person in the universe who is fully trustworthy is God.
5. When we trust in others instead of in God, we may regret it.

*Pr 28:26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool...*

*2 Chronicles 16:7–9 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: "Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. 8 Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. 9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."*

*Joh 6:68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

The philosophies and ideas of this world are often faulty and wrong. The experts who claim to have the truth prove to be in error or tell lies. Do we trust the government? The medical establishment? The military? Education? Media/news? Entertainers? Athletes?

Only God deserves our full trust and confidence. Everyone else falls short.

### III. It's biblical to trust in God.

What I mean is that our trust in God must follow biblical patterns and models. We have to think about God according to the ways he has revealed in his word.

The problem is that people have unbiblical expectations of God. That is, they expect God to cater to them. They expect God to solve all their problems and fix all their issues. People often have an unbiblical set of expectations for God, and when God does not perform according to their desires or expectations, they become disappointed or disillusioned. Some even apostatize.

**Illus.:** Recently a celebrity “Christian” [Kanye West] complained that God did not answer his prayers and solve his problems as he expected. So this celebrity has now apparently turned away from God, become an apostate, and is hostile against God.

Disappointment and disillusionment with God often stems from a set of unbiblical assumptions about God. When God does not fulfill those unbiblical assumptions, people get angry at God for failing to do what they expected.

Trusting in God means that we expect God to act according to certain standards. God will act biblically.

- A. Trusting God is expecting God to act according to his character and nature.
  1. Everything about God is self-referential. Even for God, there is no higher goal than seeking his own glory. God cannot do any better than acting according to his own attributes and nature.
  2. What do we know about God’s character and nature? Above all, God is holy. Holiness is God’s governing moral attribute.  
*Ps 145:17 The LORD [is] righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.*
  3. So that tells us that God is holy and righteous in everything he does. It tells us that God expects us to be holy as well.
  4. So we trust in God to act in keeping with his holiness. We trust that God is not going to do something that would violate his holy character. We don’t expect God to help us do something immoral, something that would violate his moral will.

5. So our expectation is that God will act according to his attributes, not against them. He'll do nothing contradictory to his will and purpose. People are often disillusioned and disappointed with God because they expect him to be like them.

Ps 50:21 ... *You thought that I was altogether like you; ...*

B. Trusting God is expecting God to act according to his revealed Word.

Ps 138:2 ... *thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*

1. Even God cannot violate his word. God's word is a revelation of himself, so it would be impossible for God to contradict his own word.

Ps 119:89 *For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*

2 Ti 2:13 *If we believe not, [yet] he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*

2. So in trusting God, we expect God to act according to his revealed word. We trust God to do what he said he would do.

C. Trusting God is submitting yourself to His will.

1. First, submit to the *revealed* will of God. That means that we trust that God will be whom he reveals himself to be.

2. Second, submit to the *providential* will of God. We don't know the providential will of God; it's hidden because it's still future. That's why we pray "If it be thy will, we will do this or that" (cf. James 4:15). Jesus prayed "Thy will be done."

3. In trusting God, we believe that God is acting to fulfill his own purposes and plans. God's will may not line up with our will. We have to trust God when his will is different from our will.

D. Trusting God is especially important during the crises of life.

Job 13:15 *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: ...*

Job 23:10 *But he knoweth the way that I take: [when] he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

Rom 8:38-39 *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Trials, troubles, and tribulations will normally be part of our lives. The will of God for us may include suffering. Cf. 1 Pet 4:19.

In the midst of suffering, we trust God. We believe that God has good, morally adequate reasons for allowing us to suffer. “When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

Lamentations 3:37–38 *Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?*

We affirm that both calamities and good things ultimately come from God. If God is sovereign, and if God’s providence rules over all things, then we believe that both blessings and calamities ultimately come from God. God has a morally righteous purpose even in calamities and disasters. Trusting God is the most difficult in times of crisis and disaster, but that’s what we must do. We must believe Rom 8:28 and Eph 1:11.

- E. Trusting God is believing that He knows everything about us.
  1. The Bible affirms that everything about us is “naked and open” before the Lord (Heb 4:13). Before a word is on our tongues, he knows it altogether (Ps 139:4). God knows the most intimate details of our lives; he knows all our needs.
  2. Even when we pray, we are not informing God about anything.
  3. So God is dealing with us from a position of full, complete, absolute knowledge. He knows every detail of our lives.
- F. Trusting God is believing that God is carrying out his purpose and plans for us.

Eph 1:11 *[God]... worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*

1. We believe that “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord” (Ps 37:23). We believe that if we delight in God, he will give us the desires of our hearts (Ps 37:4).
2. So when something happens or fails to happen, we take it as an outworking of God’s will. Even crises and calamities are part of God’s providential will.
3. On the other hand, we also believe that we reap what we sow (Gal 6:7). Our actions and choices have results. If we sow “according to the flesh,” we will reap “destruction.”
4. We expect God to chastise and discipline us when we violate his laws. If we are experiencing chastisement, we also trust that it is good for us.

*Heb 12:11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

We trust that God is training us through discipline.

G. Trusting God is spending time in prayer regularly.

1. One way that we express our trust in God is through regular prayer. In prayer, we ask God for our needs and pray for God’s blessing on ourselves and on others.
2. We submit ourselves to God in prayer. “Thy will be done.”
3. If we believe that prayer has results, it’s because we trust that God is listening to us and is responding to our requests. If we didn’t believe that, we would not pray.
4. Every time we pray, we are affirming our belief that God has the power to do something, even miraculous things. If we didn’t trust that God could work, we would not pray.
5. When we pray, we expect God to answer according to his will, not according to ours.

1Jo 5:14 *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

6. If we don't receive what we request in prayer, we believe that God has a better plan. We don't get bitter about it; we submit to God will because we trust that God loves us and is working out all things according to his purposes and plans.

When we are healthy, happy, prosperous, and satisfied, it's pretty easy to trust in God. But in times of crisis and disaster, trusting God can be difficult.

Our attitude should be like that of Job: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." We must believe that God is for us and that he is working everything out for his glory and for our ultimate good. "Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord."

**Quote from Bauder:** The greatest comfort, however, is this. These calamitous circumstances were ordained by an all-wise and loving God. They were ordained for His glory. They were ordained for our good. God knows what He is doing, even if we do not. He still deserves our adoration, our praise, and particularly our gratitude. God could have protected us from the evil, but He chose not to. We can only trust Him, that what He is doing will be better, and that it will produce greater glory and greater good. So we humble ourselves before Him and accept His dispensation as if He were visibly before us directing events. We have thanked Him in the past when events seemed good to us. Now it is time to thank Him when events seem bad. To Him alone be glory.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kevin Bauder, "It's Time to Live It," *In the Nick of Time*, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, 17 May 2024.