

# GOD'S SIMPLE TRUTHS (03).

**December 07, 2008.**

## **Introduction.**

According to the word of God, who is the truly blessed man? Who is the truly blessed woman? Last Lord's Day we sought to answer these questions. By way of summary, the answers we found in the Psalms are as follows :

The man who is greatly blessed and supremely privileged is the man  
whose God is the Lord;  
whose sins are forgiven;  
who is beloved and chosen by the Lord;  
who is disciplined by the Lord.

The man who is greatly blessed and supremely privileged is the man  
who has taken refuge in the Lord;  
whose strength is in the Lord;  
who greatly delights in God and His word;  
who fear and obeys God;  
whose trust is in the Lord;  
whose hope is in the Lord.

I am conscious that the content I presented to you in that sermon came like a mighty torrent from a large fire hose. I apologize for that. Sometimes it is difficult to break up a sermon without finishing the point you want to make.

## Trusting God.

Today I want to turn your attention to the last point I made : the greatly blessed and supremely privileged man is the man whose trust is in the Lord His God. I am sure you have heard the following words time and again at the end of conversations, *“but I am trusting the Lord; but I am trusting in God.”* And I am sure you have heard these words from both Christians and non-Christians.

By those words they mean, they are trusting that God would come through for them and change whatever negative circumstances they are facing. Whether they really believe that God would intervene is quite another matter.

For a lot of people trusting God means they have done things their own way and they have failed. They now want God to intervene and turn failure into success. They have made a mess. They now want God to intervene and clean up the mess. Humpty Dumpty is now scrambled egg and they want God to intervene and restore Humpty Dumpty to a perfect egg once again.

*Psa.40:4* says “How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust.” Or more literally, “Oh the blessednesses of the man who has made the Lord his trust.” What does it mean to make the Lord your trust? What does it mean to trust in the Lord? **Bruce Waltke** noted that *“Trust in the Lord ... without definition, is platitudinous.”* So, to answer the questions I posed, let us look to at what God has to say in His word.

## Testimonies.

I want to begin by looking briefly at the testimonies regarding three men who trusted the Lord. For these three men, trusting in the Lord was no mere platitude. Trusting in the

Lord was real. Trusting in the Lord was a practical part of their daily lives. The psalmist David wrote, “I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.” (*Psa.26:1*). *Psa.31:14*, “But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord, I say, ‘You are my God’.” The second example is King Hezekiah. *2Kings 18:5* says concerning Hezekiah : “He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel.” The third example is Daniel. *Dan.6:23* says, “So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.”

There are two common denominators to be found in these three men – they were men who knew God and they were godly men. Whatever their sins were, the general tenor of their lives was marked by their growing theological and experiential knowledge of God and their pursuit of holy character and holy living. The Lord’s testimony concerning David was that David walked in His ways, did what was right in His sight and obeyed His statutes and His commandments. (*1Kings 11:38*).

We are told concerning Hezekiah that he did right in the sight of the Lord as David did; he broke down and removed the idolatries in the land; “he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments.” (*2Kings 18:1-6*). The book of Daniel clearly reveals the uncompromising godliness Daniel manifested from his early teens to the day of his death. We also know that Daniel’s life was marked by complete trust in the Lord. In every challenge or crisis he faced his trust in the Lord would clearly manifest itself. The lion’s den was one of those crisis events.

The trust we find in these three men was rooted in doing things God’s way, in obeying God and embracing God’s will. They didn’t do things their own way, fail and then trust God to turn their failure into success. No! From the very outset they wanted success but they wanted success according to God’s way, according to God’s rules, according to God’s will. And so, as risky as it may have seemed, they lived their lives and made their decisions according to God’s way, God’s rules and God’s will.

The classic example of this is the first major decision Daniel made as a young teenager. The context of this decision is very vital. Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself with the pagan king's food and drinks even if it meant death by execution. (*Dan.1:8*). This pagan king was the conqueror and ruler of the known world. Hezekiah became king at age **25** and immediately he set about to do right in the sight of the Lord. (*2Kings 18:2-3*). David was chosen to be king as a teenager. He was not even old enough to be drafted into the army. In choosing David, the Lord described David as a man after God's own heart. (*1Sam.13:14*).

The ultimate example of trust is the Lord Jesus Christ. In *Matt.27:43*, as Jesus was dying on the cross, His enemies mocked Him saying, "He trusts in God; let God rescue Him, if He delights in Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God'." Amazingly, this mockery told the truth. The verb "**trusts**" is perfect tense and succinctly summarizes for us the whole tenor of Jesus' life on this earth – He trusted in God.

In the minds of the mockers trust in God equals help from God. If you believe in God and trust God, God will help you. In other words, trust in God meant God will rescue Jesus from suffering and death on the cross. But the flip side of this carelessly applied encouraging formula is discouraging. The flip side says if God does not help you in your troubles then, "*either you do not really trust in God, as you think you do, or God does not really save the trusting, as we thought He did.*" (**Bruner**). Did God help the Lord Jesus while He was on the cross? The answer is an emphatic "**yes**". The cross was God's will for Jesus. The Lord Jesus trusted in His Father and His Father gave Him all the help and strength He needed to endure the cross successfully.

Here is an important lesson you need to learn about trusting God. Trusting in God does not necessarily mean God will deliver you out of your troubles. God helping you may mean, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." (*2Cor.12:9*). The confidence of the three Hebrew boys was, "Our God will deliver us out of your hand, O king." (*Dan.3:17*). How God delivered them was God's business. In *Matt.4:5-7* Satan's second temptation was rooted in the promises of God. The

temptation focused on Jesus' trust in God. Jesus' answer to the temptation was, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." In other words, you cannot act presumptuously and then tell God what He must do.

### **The Exhortations & Promises.**

We come in the second place to look at the exhortations and promises found in God's word. The primary verse that can be used here is *Prov.3:5-7*, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil." There are two sets of statements that go together in these three verses. They are, firstly, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart ... In all your ways acknowledge Him"; and secondly, "do not lean on your own understanding ... do not be wise in your own eyes."

The verb "**trust**" calls upon you to rely on someone who is reliable and not deceptive. The wise man is saying the Lord can be trusted because He is reliable and not deceptive. Trust in the Lord must be "with all your heart", that is, with your whole being, with your mind, your will, your emotions.

The parallel statement in *vs.6* says, "In all your ways acknowledge Him." To "**acknowledge**" the Lord calls for personal knowledge. It calls for intimate experiences with the reality of God. **Waltke** wrote, "*Personal knowledge of God ensues from risking oneself to obey the specific teachings that pertain to all sorts of human behavior in full reliance on God to keep His promises coupled with them.*" To "**acknowledge**" the Lord calls for the ongoing cultivation of the habit of letting the Lord govern, guide and direct your thinking and actions in every area of your life. The word "**straight**" may mean ethically right or smooth. Ethical correctness keeps you from going astray or out of bounds. "**Smoothness**" means God will grant you success in your undertaking or actions.

The opposite to trusting in the Lord and acknowledging Him is firstly to “lean on your own understanding.” To lean or rest upon on your own finite understanding is comparable to leaning on a broken crutch. Actually the picture is much worse. It is relying on your thimbleful of knowledge when you have before you an infinitely vast ocean of God’s knowledge. It is relying on your own understanding that is governed by sinful and irrational urges that more than often you cannot control. **Prov.28:26**, “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.” I am sure you have heard the advice given to a person facing a crisis decision : “*trust your heart. Go with what your heart tells you.*” God says that is very bad advice.

The parallel statement in **vs.7** says, “Do not be wise in your own eyes.” Do not be a know-it-all individualist who is proud to do everything his own way. Do not think and conduct yourself as if your wisdom and your skill are the beginning and end of all things. **Rom.12:16** says, “Do not be wise in your own estimation.” **Isa.5:21** says, “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!” **Prov.12:15** says, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.” **Prov.26:12** says, “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

It is very clear from these two sets of statements that the opposite to trusting the Lord is to trust in your own knowledge and wisdom; that the opposite to trusting in the Lord is folly; that the man who does not put his completed wholehearted trust in the Lord is a fool.

**Vs.7** concludes with these words, “Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.” In the context what is the evil? The evil is idolatry, self-idolatry. This idolatry is expressed in the refusal to trust God; the failure to trust God; trusting God with half-heartedness. The idolatry is expressed in replacing God and His wisdom with yourself and your own wisdom and trusting in yourself. The man who fears God will turn away from this evil. **Psa.115:11** gives us this exhortation, “You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord.” In other words one of the characteristics in the person who fears God is their trust in God.

*Psa.9:10*, “those who know Your name will put their trust in You,

For You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.”

As we have seen in past studies, to know God is to have an experiential saving knowledge of God as He is revealed to us in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Jn.17:3*). You know from His word that God saves sinners in Christ. You know from your experience that God saves sinners in Christ. This knowing of God does not stop with salvation and must not stop with salvation. This is the beginning of an ongoing pursuit of coming to know God as He has revealed Himself to us in His word.

The name of God is more than identification. The names of God are expressions of His character or attributes, of His inmost reality. The names of God are not revealed to us in a vacuum. They are revealed to us within specific experiential contexts. God revealed Himself to Abraham as “God Almighty” (**El Shaddai**). (*Gen.17:1*). Isaac knew God as “God Almighty” (*Gen.28:3*). God revealed Himself to Jacob as “God Almighty”. (*Gen.35:11*). God revealed Himself to Moses as “Lord” (**Jehovah; Yahweh**). (*Exod.6:2-3; 3:14*). Yahweh is God’s covenant name, the name that is rooted in Israel’s redemption from Egypt. In *Isa.42:8* the Lord declared, “I am the Lord (**Yahweh**), that is My name.”

Other names of God are : “God Most High” (**El Elyon** – *Gen.14:18*); the God who sees (**El Ro** – *Gen.16:13*); the Lord (**Yahweh**) of Hosts (*1Sam17:45*); the Lord (**Yahweh**) will provide (*Gen.22:14*); the Lord (**Yahweh**) who heals (*Exod.15:26*); the Lord (**Yahweh**) our Righteousness (*Jer.23:5-6*). These names do not exhaust the names by which God has revealed Himself to us. Those who know the experiential reality of God’s name will put their trust in Him. They also have the assurance that God does not forsake those who seek Him with all their heart. *Jer.29:13* says, “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”

*Psa.62:8*, “Trust in [the Lord] at all times, O people;

Pour out your heart before Him;

God is a refuge for us.”

This exhortation to trust in the Lord is preceded by an emphatic confession of trust in the Lord from *vss.5-7*. In these verses the Lord is described as “my hope ... my rock ... my salvation ... my strength ... my salvation ... my refuge.” The word “refuge” is repeated in *vs.8* and it describes God as a place of safety, protection and security.

*Psa.4:5*, “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the Lord.”

*Psa.28:7*, “The Lord is my strength and my shield;  
My heart trusts in Him and I am helped.”

Now note the following promises :

*Psa.32:10*, “he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him.”

“Lovingkindness” is that rich Hebrew word **hesed** that speaks of God’s covenant love, unchanging love, unfailing love, God’s goodness and mercy.

*Prov.28:25*, “he who trusts in the Lord will prosper.”

*Prov.29:25*, “he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted.”

*Psa.125:1*, “Those who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot  
be moved but abides forever.”

Those who trust in the Lord are unshakeable as Mount Zion. It must be noted also that Mount Zion was more than a mountain to Israel. Mount Zion symbolized God’s presence, the privilege of covenant relationship with God, God’s help and God’s protection.

### **The Blessed Man.**

We come now to our third major point. Who is the blessed man or woman? The answer is found in the following verses :

*Psa.40:4*, “How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust,

And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.”  
*Psa.84:12*, “O Lord of hosts, How blessed is the man who trusts in You.”  
*Prov.16:20*, “blessed is he who trusts in the Lord.”  
*Jer.17:7*, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord.”

In our last study we focused on *Psa.40:4*. Note carefully the opposite of trusting in the Lord. It is trusting in the “proud”, that is, in those arrogant people who have a high view of themselves and / or their positions. The “proud” does not exclude you. You may be an arrogant person with a high view of yourself and / or your position and so your trust is in yourself. “Falsehood” is literally “lies” and speaks of putting your trust in ideas, plans and promises that are lies or in people who are liars. It also refers to putting your trust in idolatry.

We noted in our last study that *vs.5* sets before us the reasons why we must make the Lord our trust. *Vs.5* says, “Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count.”

God is the God of wonders, that is, He is the God of the extraordinary. He is the God of the difficult. He is the God of miracles. He is the God of marvelous works. The Lord’s “wonders” are the manifestation of His thoughts toward His people. The Lord’s “wonders” are incomparable. The Lord’s “wonders” are too numerous to count. The verb used here may mean they are too numerous to be counted and / or they are too numerous to speak of them. The most extraordinary, the most difficult thing God has accomplished in your life is your conversion to Christ. The greatest ever miracle God would ever work in your life is your conversion to Christ. In saving you God brought the dead to life. He made the blind to see and made the deaf to hear. He delivered you from slavery to Satan. He changed you from old creation to new creation in Christ.

We have been told several times in God's word that nothing is too difficult for the Lord to do. In **Gen.18:14**, when Sarah laughed at the idea of bearing a child in her old age, the Lord said to Abraham, "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?" In **Jer.32:17** Jeremiah confessed in prayer God's great power manifested in creation and declared, "Nothing is too difficult for You." In **vs.27** the Lord responded to Jeremiah, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?" In **Zech.8:6**, within a context of promises concerning peace and prosperity for Zion, the Lord declared, "If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?" declares the Lord."

After the discipleship demands the Lord placed upon the rich young ruler, we are told he walked away grieved. The disciples were astonished and asked, "Then who can be saved?" And the Lord answered, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (**Matt.19:26**). Mark wrote, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God." (**Mk.10:27**). Luke wrote, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God." (**Lk.18:27**).

When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, the message he gave her astounded her. She knew the impossibility of becoming pregnant and having a son without having a husband. Gabriel's answer was two-fold : firstly, this would be a miracle that God will accomplish through Mary. Secondly, the proof that God can do this is barren Elizabeth conceiving a son in her old age. Gabriel concluded his answer to Mary with these words, "For nothing will be impossible with God." (**Lk.1:37**). An alternative translation is, "For not any word will be impossible with God." The declaration is emphatic and means "*nothing at all is impossible*" for God. This recalls for us **Isa.46:11** where the Lord declared, "Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it."

The practical questions that arise are : Are God's words trustworthy? Are God's promises trustworthy? Can God be trusted to fulfill His promises? The answer is an emphatic "**yes!**". The problem is that far too often we quote and apply God's promises

without any due regard for their meaning and contexts. We do with God's promises what I stated at the beginning of this study regarding trusting God. People say to you, "*I am trusting in the Lord; I am trusting God.*" But their trust is not rooted in Biblical faith. Their trust is a leap into the dark unknown.

A man has a job in which he is experiencing problems. So he leaves the job and says he is trusting the Lord to provide his immediate needs and another job. He may have left his job without any objective Biblical examination of the problems he is experiencing and possible solutions. Add to this the fact that he may not have sought for any objective Biblical counsel. Note also the Bible does not allow you to leave a job you have and trust the Lord for the provision of your immediate needs and another job. That is a violation of the command to work. You cannot take sinful or presumptuous or foolish actions and then say you are trusting God to come through for you. Jesus demonstrated this fact when He rejected the temptation to jump off the pinnacle of the temple. (*Matt.4:5-7*).

People enter into an unequal yoke relationship and then say, "*I am trusting the Lord.*" People take loans they cannot repay and then say, "*I am trusting the Lord.*" Young people do not study for an exam but they are trusting the Lord. Trusting the Lord is the rationale and solution for all kinds of irresponsible plans and actions. You do not trust the Lord to bless foolishness, to bless irresponsibility, to bless a lack of planning and preparation, to bless disobedience, to bless ingratitude, to bless a lack of integrity. Trusting God does not mean that you can manipulate God. Trusting the Lord does not mean you have to abandon your mind. Mindlessness is not synonymous with faith or godliness. Even a cursory study of God's word will show you that God has emphatically rejected mindlessness.

Consider with me the following example. *Prov.31:11* says concerning the excellent wife, "The heart of her husbands trusts in her." Why does this husband trust his wife? Is it because he is madly and blindly in love with her? The wise man went on to give us from *vss.10-31* all the objective rational reasons why this husband trusted his wife. It is clear that this husband's love for his wife was very deep and very strong. But

his love was also anchored in the many powerful reasons his wife gave him for trusting her and loving her.

True Biblical trust in God is the fruit of a life that is (1) actively pursuing a theological and experiential knowledge of God and (2) that is pursuing a life of godliness that is rooted in obedience to God's word. This brings us right back to *Psa.1:1-2*, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night."

Let me demonstrate these truths from a few promises Jesus made. In *Jn.14:14* Jesus said, "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." In *Jn.16:23-24* Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."

Let us note a few points in these verses. *Firstly*, note the solemn "truly, truly." They also tell us what Jesus is saying is true and important. *Secondly*, note the verb "ask" in the expression, "ask and you will receive." The verb "ask" is a command in the present tense and says we are commanded to ask continually, repeatedly, perseveringly. (cf. *Matt.7:7*). *Thirdly*, note the repetition of the word "anything". "Anything" sets no limits to what the Lord or His Father will do or give. *Fourthly*, we can ask Jesus in His name or ask the Father in Jesus' name. The most important common denominator in both passages is asking in Jesus' name. What does that mean?

**Leon Morris** wrote, *"This does not mean simply using the name as a formula. It means that prayer is to be in accordance with all that the name stands for. It is prayer proceeding from faith in Christ, prayer that gives expression to oneness with Christ, prayer that seeks to glorify Christ. And the purpose of it all is the glory of God, a glory that is "in the Son"."* In others words, it is prayer that says you

are saved in Christ, that you are seeking to become more like Christ and your goal in life is the glory of Christ.

Another prayer promise that is often quoted is *Jn.15:7*. Jesus said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." "Ask" means "ask for yourself". "Whatever" removes the limits. The clear condition here is the verb "abide". What does it mean to "abide"? Taken literally, the verb means "to remain in." Taken literally, it means to remain in Jesus.

Now note *vs.10*. Jesus said, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Abiding in Jesus is not something that is mystical. In the words of Morris, "It is simple obedience." It is obedience to Christ's words or Christ's commandments. If you make the claim that you are trusting the Lord to answer your prayers, that you are trusting the Lord to deliver you, that you are trusting the Lord to help you, what does that mean? It means you are not living your life your own way. It means you are living your life according to Christ's way; according to Christ's will; in obedience to Christ's commandments.

When you say, "I am trusting the Lord; I am trusting in God", do you mean that you are hoping that God will come through for you and clean up your mess? Do you mean you are trusting God to come along and pick up the pieces that remain from your rebellious life and put them back together for you so you can continue in your path of rebellion to Him? Far too often trusting in God means God is your divine genie. God is simply there to carry out your wishes, wishes that you express by pretentiously kneeling in prayer before Him.

Trust in God must be rooted in a life totally surrendered to God. In practice this means you have surrendered to God's word, way and will for your life. In practice this means you are coming to God and His word continually for counsel and guidance and you are making choices and decisions that honor and glorify God, regardless of the consequences

facing you. Trusting in God is a whole way of life. It must be the whole tenor of your life. Trusting in God must not be something you do when you are in a crisis and have no way out.

If you are not a Christian today, whom or what are you trusting for your salvation? ***Prov.14:12*** says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." This verse sums up for us what most people are doing when it comes to their soul's eternal salvation. They are following a way that seems right to them but that way will end in eternal death in the lake of fire. The religious Jews were no different. They forsook God's way and set about to establish their own way. (***Rom.10:3***). Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." (***Jn.14:6***). "No one" means you. There is only one way of salvation God has given to us. And that way is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Any other way of salvation is the broad way of death. (***Matt.7:13-14***).