

Worthy of our Trust

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Preacher: Ruairidh Maclean

[0 : 00] Please turn back with me to Isaiah chapter 31, the chapter which we read earlier, and we'll read again the first three verses of that chapter.

Amen. The Egyptians are man and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit.

When the Lord stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together.

Who and what we trust is hugely important. If we trust somebody, if we know we can trust them, that affects our lives positively.

And when we know that we can't trust somebody, that has a hugely detrimental effect upon our lives.

[1 : 43] For instance, if a child can trust their parent to feed them, it's a great thing. But if they can't, it's a terrible thing.

If someone can trust their neighbor to tell them the truth, that's a great thing. But if they can't trust their neighbor to tell them a word of truth, then that is a terrible situation.

Fraught with difficulties. If a pupil can't trust their teacher to teach them, that's a terrible situation for a pupil to find themselves in.

But if they can trust the teacher to teach them well, then it's great for the pupil. So we see that if we can trust someone, no matter what the situation, or no matter what the relationship or the connection is, it makes a huge difference when we can trust one another.

And we recognize that the deepest and the most caring relationships are those that are all based on trust.

[3 : 06] Because without trust, there is no longer love or respect. And so we all know that the presence of trust, or the lack of it, can affect our lives hugely.

So it follows that what and who we place our trust in is incredibly important. It's foolish, and not to mention dangerous at times, to trust someone or something that can't be depended on.

Those that aren't trustworthy. And we can see how important trust is, even in day-to-day things. For instance, if you go into a house, and you're invited to sit down, and there are two chairs there.

One is a rickety old chair with uneven legs. One that's split, and the back looks like it might fall off the chair.

And there's another chair there that's steel-framed and has plush cushions on it. But we know which one we would sit in. We're not going to sit in the chair that looks like it's going to fall apart the moment we sit down on it.

[4 : 38] Because we know that there's risk of injury by doing so. And if it's important to make decisions in relation to trust in such ordinary things, you know, we act according to the thing that we trust, it's all the more important to make the right decisions in terms of spiritual and eternal matters in relation to the things of God.

And in these three verses at the beginning of Isaiah chapter 31, Isaiah is telling the people that he's preaching to how foolish they were for placing their trust in the wrong things.

They weren't trusting God to save them, as they should have been. But instead, they were trusting other things.

Namely, the military might of Egypt. And what Isaiah says to them is that there are very specific reasons why this trust is misplaced, and why they should be trusting God instead.

Firstly, the nature of the thing that they're trusting. Secondly, the character of the thing that they're trusting. These things, of course, are very closely connected. But also the actions of the thing that they're trusting.

[6 : 13] And he wants them to contrast these things with how it would be if they were trusting God. So first of all, we see that he speaks about the nature of the thing that they're trusting.

And he compares that with God's nature. And we see this in verses 1 and 3, as Isaiah challenges them to think about the nature of what they trust.

Verse 1 says, 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.

And again in verse 3, The Egyptians are man and not God. Their horses are flesh and not spirit. There's a contrast being established here in terms of the nature of the thing that they're trusting in comparison to the nature of God whom they should be trusting.

Now Egypt were a powerful military force back then. They had a large empire. They had experienced warriors. But the other enemy forces around them were just as strong.

[7 : 35] And indeed had been defeated. They had defeated the Egyptians not long before that. So they were very close in terms of power and ability.

But to be honest, Isaiah isn't really all that intent on comparing military forces with one another and asking which one is more likely to win.

He's not really interested in that at all. The comparison that he's interested in is the comparison between the nature of these armies and the altogether different nature of God.

One is flesh and the other is spirit. The force of men and the power of God.

The cold biting steel of the warrior or the sword of the spirit. Who do we trust?

[8 : 41] Do we trust God and his might? Or do we trust the power of men? Now there are all kinds of ways in which we can fall into trusting the power of men.

For instance, we might think about the state of our nation and say to ourselves, well, we long to see the situation changed. And we might say to ourselves, well, we'll set about changing it by some political action or getting our politicians to do something about it.

Now, there is something to be said for that in that we can certainly engage in political action.

But the thing is, there's a grave danger when we look at things in that way that we fall into the trap of thinking that we are going to be able to change people's hearts and minds.

But we can't. We can't turn a nation around. We can't turn a nation around morally by the power of our persuasion.

[9 : 51] But God can change people's hearts. And that's when real change comes about. When God changes people's hearts.

And so the encouragement that we have here is to trust God and to seek him in prayer, looking to him to come and to work in our day, to bring people to a knowledge of himself, to bring them to a place where their lives, their hearts, their minds are turned around.

When they may have been at enmity with God, but are turned around to looking to him in faith.

That's when the real change comes. We see this change coming about through the power of God's word. Now, even on a human level, we hear the adage, the pen is mightier than the sword.

And if you look, for instance, at the history of certain totalitarian states, for instance, the communist state in Russia in the past, they suppressed free speech.

[11 : 15] Maybe things haven't changed all that much, but maybe I shouldn't say that just now. But they suppressed free speech. People's words and thoughts were suppressed by the regime.

The TV and radio stations were brought under state control. The newspapers were either shut down or taken over because words have power.

Even on a human level, words have power. And if the words of men have power, how much more the word of God?

Because his word brought us into existence. Everything from nothing at his word.

His nature, his divine nature is infinitely great and infinitely dependable. Something that can't be said for us as human beings.

[12 : 18] We can't depend on soldiers or armies to keep us safe.

But God is the one who sets limits. He limits the abilities of armies and empires to do damage.

He limits the power of Satan to do damage. He is the one who has sovereign control over all things.

Because he is God. And his nature is altogether different from the power that we see, the other powers that we see at work in this world.

So where is your trust? What do you think that you can depend on in life? Do you rely on merely human power, either your own or that of another?

[13 : 27] Or do you look to the Lord to be the one who works on your behalf?

to bring salvation and to preserve your life? You know, we can be so caught up in the things that are immediate.

The things that are tangible. The things that we can touch. We can be so caught up in these things because they're so immediate. But you know, we can't base our lives upon that.

Because these things are transient. They're passing. But God is eternal. And in his very nature, unchanging.

He is the one who is absolutely trustworthy. Secondly, we see here that Isaiah highlights the character of what is trusted.

[14 : 39] He challenges the people to whom he is delivering this message. He challenges them to think about the character of what they're trusting. And to compare that with the character of God.

He contrasts the foolishness of the Egyptians with the wisdom of God. So why were the Egyptians foolish? To mention those many of those who were around Isaiah at this time.

Well, it wasn't because they were intellectually incapable. Looking at the Egyptians for instance, we can see that the Egyptians at this time were a center of learning.

And they were a fairly well-governed society. Their foolishness was to be found in another way in a principle which essentially governed their lives and affected practically every area of life for them.

At the end of verse 1, Isaiah says this, that they do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord.

[15 : 55] the Lord. That's a powerful statement. They do not look to the Holy One of Israel nor consult the Lord.

This was the ultimate in foolishness. It was akin to someone in the matter of personal finances saying to themselves, the taxman doesn't exist.

I've never seen him. I think the letters that come through the post are fake. I think that they're just scare tactics or a scam to try and get money out of me.

Unless I see that taxman in a suit with his briefcase or however he might come, with proven credentials, I'm going to live as though he's just a figment of my imagination and I'm not going to pay any tax.

Now anyone daft enough to think in that way is eventually going to find out that the taxman or the tax authorities are very real and they're very powerful and they're not to be trifled with.

[17 : 13] Now would you trust a person who behaved that foolishly? You wouldn't trust them I don't think with an awful lot if they behaved in that kind of way because they wouldn't be worthy of your trust because they would be demonstrating their character as a character that was flawed and foolish.

In contrast Isaiah describes God as the one who is wise and who will not allow such foolishness to go unpunished. He is the one who is worthy of our trust because his character commends him to us.

I'm sure that most of us have a bank account. Now in today's climate I guess maybe it's not necessarily particularly easy to know which bank to trust more.

But you might hear some claims from certain organisations and you think I don't know if I could trust them because they're making pretty bold claims.

And you know there are some of us I'm sure who can remember the bank that collapsed BCCI it was called if I recall correctly and the local council here had an awful lot of money invested with them.

[18 : 45] But that bank had been behaving foolishly. And I suppose you could say similar things happened in connection with the financial crash as well.

Banks were behaving foolishly, investing foolishly or speculatively and risking the loss of the money that they had. Now if we know that our bank is behaving in that way and they're behaving foolishly we're not going to trust them.

We're going to take our money out as soon as we can and try and preserve our money because we recognize that they're not worthy of our trust. Now if we behave in that way and that's sensible if you do recognize that's what's happening you'd be very sensible to take your money out of that bank.

If we recognize that in terms of our money we should also recognize that we should respond in a similar way in terms of our souls because our souls are worth inestimably more than any money or wealth that we might invest.

It's so much more important when it comes to the matters of the soul to make sure that our soul is placed in the care of a wise and trustworthy care.

[20 : 09] God is the only one who can truly give that care and protection to our souls. He's the only one who can keep our souls safe and God's character calls us to trust him as the one who is ultimately worthy of our trust.

Do you see his character? His goodness? His justice? His wisdom? His holiness?

And have you compared that to other things that you might trust in life? How do they compare? Well they don't compare very favorably.

So the only wise thing for us to do is to turn to the one who is perfect in his character and to trust ourselves to his care.

And that's what Isaiah is essentially encouraging us to do through these words at the beginning of chapter 31. Lastly we see that Isaiah highlights the action of the thing that is trusted.

[21 : 25] You can see a kind of progression here. The nature of something really dictates its character and the character dictates the action or demonstrates even the action, demonstrates the character and the nature of the thing that we trust.

And so he challenges us to consider the actions of both the Egyptians and of God. Human force and God's power.

In verse two he describes the Egyptians as evildoers. And that word is loaded with meaning. Now the actions of the Egyptians were well known.

They were an idolatrous nation. They worshipped all kinds of crazy gods that they made up. They even worshipped their king, the pharaoh.

And they were well known for all kinds of immorality, incestuous marriages amongst the ruling classes, oppression of slaves, not least of course the Israelites a few centuries before this had been oppressed by them.

[22 : 40] They were a cruel military power who sought power through expansion. corruption. And even during the lifetime of the father of the king in Isaiah's day, they had proven their unreliability.

And if they had betrayed them in the past, why on earth were they trusting them again? It just didn't make any sense.

Because their actions confirmed the nature and the character of the thing that they were trusting. And seeing these things, it made absolutely no sense whatsoever to trust in the Egyptians.

But God, on the other hand, had a proven record. He had always done according to his nature. He had always acted according to his character.

He had proven that he was absolutely worthy of trust. And that still stands through today. He has proven his reliability and his trustworthiness.

[24 : 01] He is the God who saves. He saved Israel in the past and his covenant promised to them was that if they would return to him, that he would return to them and save them.

And that word still stands through because God is always through to his word. Now, Isaiah goes on to speak about the imminent military threat.

and he mentions the possibility of return, of repentance and salvation because if they returned to God, this was what they were assured of, that he would save.

If they trusted him, he would save because God is the true source of salvation and he is always through to what he has promised. And so we are encouraged to look to him.

Now, Christ tells a parable of two sons and these two sons were given a command by their father. One said he would do it and he didn't.

[25 : 21] And the other said he wouldn't do it that he did. And one way in which we can think about that parable is that actions reveal our character.

Or they help to reveal character. Of course, sometimes we might say that there are actions that are out of character, but generally speaking, our actions reveal our character.

And in that particular parable, the actions of the sons reveal their true character. their words seem to say something else, but their actions show what they were really like.

And God's action shows what he is really like. And the action above all other actions that show that shows us the character of God in a way that we see it almost nowhere else, at least in the fullness that we see it in this action, is in Christ coming to die upon the cross at Calvary.

A bleeding, dying saviour, giving his last breath on the cross for his people, does more to convince us that God is truly worthy of our trust, than maybe a thousand assurances might.

[27 : 09] And part of that is not that God's words aren't worthy of trust, but that we are so slow to trust his word to be true. But he demonstrates how true his word is, in that he acted in this way.

He demonstrates that his word can indeed be trusted. it's fascinating when we look at how we act in relation to others.

Sometimes, in a way at least, when we do things for others, we maybe instinctively almost expect some kind of favour and return.

Maybe we're not always like that, but, you know, we expect that there's going to be a positive result out of it most of the time.

But what have we, what do we have that we can give to Christ? We have nothing that he needs. He didn't need to save us.

[28 : 33] He didn't need to take anything to do with us, but he did. And that's one of the key reasons why we can trust him. He knows what we're like.

He knows that we don't deserve his blessing. And everything he looks for from us, he has provided for us in Christ.

He looks for righteousness, holiness, and we have none of our own. He has given it in Christ. He looks for holiness, and we see in our lives that our lives are not as holy as they should be.

But he has given us perfect holiness in his sight through Christ, if we trust him. That is grace.

He gives us what we don't deserve. He wasn't looking for something in return. This is a free gift.

[29 : 47] It's an amazing gift. gift. And we need to come humbly before God and acknowledge before him that this is the case.

Acknowledging that we have nothing if we haven't received it from him. We have so much reason, so many reasons to praise him because he is so worthy of trust.

He has shown us such grace, such mercy, and what he has shown us in Christ, what he has done for us in Christ becomes the true foundation for our trust.

And the reality is that spiritually speaking, we face graver enemies than mere armies of soldiers.

The forces of evil are seeking to destroy, seeking to bring about destruction in any way that they can.

[31 : 37] Athens of heaven forever.

But the Lord stands by. veget personage Because he is the one who is worthy of all trust. Because of his nature and his character and his actions that show beyond a shadow of a doubt that he truly is worthy of our trust.

So the question remains, is our trust in him? Let's pray.