

Trusting God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 May 2022

Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0 : 0 0] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! As long as I live, I will sing praises to my God while I have being.

Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth.

On that very day, his plans perish. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever, who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down. The Lord loves the righteous.

[1 : 3 0] The Lord watches over the sojourners. He upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. The Lord will reign forever.

Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord. You know, in April 1865, not 1865, April 1975, although April 1865 was a very momentous month as well.

In April 1975, my father-in-law's back was against the wall. He is a Vietnamese man. He is a pilot in the South Vietnamese Army.

Though born in the United States, he was trained by the U.S. and fought alongside the U.S. in the Vietnam War. Often gone for weeks at a time, his missions include flying into the north and dropping South Vietnamese soldiers into the jungle.

But with America withdrawing its troops from South Vietnam, the future was clear, is clear to him. The hope of a free South Vietnam is over.

[2 : 5 1] Tanks would soon roll into Saigon. He's sure to be in prison. His property and possessions are sure to be confiscated. He knows that he and his family cannot stay.

But what is he supposed to do? His back was against the wall. What is he supposed to do for his family? Wonderfully, in the months leading up to April 1975, they gathered the bare necessities, a few papers, a few pictures, a change of clothes, about \$40 in cash.

And on the morning of April 29th, 1975, he rushes home. He gathers his family of four onto a motorbike. There's no time for goodbyes.

He immediately rushes to the airport. Streets, if you've seen video footage, or I mean picture footage of this time in Saigon, streets are filled with panicking South Vietnamese citizens.

Because they're aware that if they are caught, they're sure to be imprisoned. And so they're desperately trying to get out, trying to make it to the American embassy. Unknown to my father-in-law at that time, April 29th would prove to be a fateful day in the history of Vietnam and our country.

- [4 : 08] And just over 18 hours, 1,000 American citizens were airlifted out. 7,000 South Vietnamese refugees were flown out. And so my father-in-law is trying to get out.
- I just imagine him riding onto this airport on a motorbike with his whole family. And when he arrives, there's just planes flying off.
- I wish he was here. He's a big, huge personality. He's much better storyteller than I am. But the planes are flying off around him. And he sees another plane already loaded with passengers.
- They've thrown off tons of gear that is on the plane, trying to get off as much weight as they can to add as many people as they can. And so they're desperately trying to get out, and they need a pilot.
- It just so happens that this is a C-47 plane, the very plane my father-in-law flew throughout the war. And it just so happens that he arrives at just this very moment when they need a pilot.
- [5 : 11] And so with the Viet Cong shooting at him, they take off low, he says, and soon found the freedom of the air. They land in Thailand, or later transferred to refugee camp in Guam.
- In less than six months, my father-in-law, his wife, his two young kids that did not include Kim yet, find a place to rent in Nashville, Tennessee, and go on to become citizens of the United States of America.
- But their story has always been one that fascinates me. Obviously, everything that went into getting here. But also, all that went into getting along in life here.
- What would it be like to leave all you've ever known? What would it be like to face a future where you're not regarded as a war hero, but as a stranger?
- What would it be like to start completely over? To lose all you've ever worked for? To learn a new language? To go back to school? What would it be like to not see your family?
- [6 : 23] And for your family, to not even know if you're alive for three or four years? This morning, we're going to study a fascinating psalm that confronts an unknown future.
- helps us to confront an unknown future as well. When you peer into the future, what do you see? When you peer beyond the shadows of the present, do you see a path of certainty and opportunity?
- Or a path of uncertainty and confusion? Do questions of the future leave you heavy with concern and anxiety? Does the future perhaps just hang out there with the same old questions?
- Will we ever get pregnant? Will I ever be able to provide well for my family? Will I stay pure? How long will mom live?
- Will my kids ever follow Jesus Christ? The future is often a painful place. And yet, this psalm is designed to help us trust God.
- [7 : 34] Now, this psalm is one of the final five psalms of the Psalter. That's very obvious. But it's one of the ones that is often called a praise psalm. And you see that at the beginning of verse 1.
- It says, praise the Lord. And that's the way each of the last five psalms starts. It's a praise psalm. And he says, I want to praise you as long as I live. But after declaring his desire to do that, the psalmist then urges us to consider how?
- To consider the steady reign and steadfast love of the Lord in the face of our weakness and need. So where we're going in a word is praise the Lord. He never fails to deliver the needy.
- Praise the Lord. He never fails to deliver the needy. My hope is that all of us would move closer to trusting God through these few minutes. The first is, do not trust in dying men.

Do not trust in dying men. You know, the psalm, or the body of the psalm, if we could put it that way, the body of the psalm kind of begins in a jarring way.

[8 : 38] It begins by saying, who not to trust. Look down there in verse 3. Put not your trust in princes and a son of man in whom there is no salvation. It's kind of a jarring, sudden, surprising point by the psalmist.

But I think the connection seems to be that if I'm going to praise the Lord as long as I live, then I must not trust in anyone or anything else.

And so he says, put not your trust in men. Simply saying, he says, do not trust men. Now, he says princes there, or we could say rulers is another way to translate that word.

But I think we should just say all influential people is what the psalmist is talking about. Don't trust in any influential person. You know, people who are powerful and successful and wealthy, they naturally attract our attention and confidence.

So whether it's Black Widow or Steph Curry or Joe Rogan or Donald Trump, these are people that we naturally begin to look up to. But the psalmist warns us they are just men.

[9 : 52] They are just and they always will be just men. And, you know, the scripture gives us many reasons not to trust in men. But this psalm gives us one.

Look in verse 4. He says, put not your trust in men. And then in verse 4, he says, when their breath departs, he returns to the earth. On that very day, his plans perish.

Now, behind this psalm, there's a little bit of a play on the beginning of the Bible. When it says, don't put your trust in man, literally that word is Adam.

That's what man, that's what man is in Hebrew. And so, don't trust in your man. And so, the background here, if you remember, you probably remember the story of Genesis 1, the story of creation. When God created man, he formed him.

He brought him to life. He literally formed him out of the dust. And then he blew breath into his lungs. So it's just an incredible saying. God forms him out of the dust, forms man out of the dust.

[10 : 56] And so, the psalmist is reminding us of that. And he says, all men are just that. They're just dust with breath in their lungs. All men are just that.

They're just dirt that has been formed and made to breathe. And all men will soon draw a final breath.

That's what the psalmist is saying. When his breath departs, he returns to the dust. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, is the biblical reference there.

And so, the psalmist is saying, don't trust in men because they die. But really, I think the psalmist is also warning against idolatry.

Now, I don't know. Idolatry is not a topic we talk about all the time. But what do you think about when you hear the word idol? Maybe you think about the Old Testament.

[11 : 55] You think about Baal and the Astoropoles. You think about boxes or wooden idols. You know, I've been to Vietnam. And so, you can think about, in a Buddhist situation, burning incense to ancestors.

It's a form of idolatry. And so, we often think of idolatry as something out there. This thing that we worship. Maybe this golden thing. Maybe the golden calf.

That was an idol, you know. All these things we think about. But the psalmist is really warning that even men, and really anything can become an idol because he's saying there's no salvation in those things.

And so, the psalmist is helping us see that the idol is not a piece of wood merely. An idol is anything we look to give what only God can give. An idol is anything we look to give what only God can give.

So, idols often are not bad things, but are good things we want too much. Now, I think one of the most common struggles of man, one of the most common things we want too much, is to be liked.

[13 : 04] I remember as a younger kid, I remember getting in my stocking one year for Christmas, a biography on John Gotti.

I don't know if anybody knows who John Gotti is, but he was a leader of the Gambino family. So, when I was real young, I wanted to be a gangster. I mean, quite obviously, didn't you?

You know, and I wanted, you know, I found it fascinating. I think part of it, I found fascinating, I wanted to be a gangster because I wanted to find a place to fit in. I wanted to be a part of a crew, you know.

Now, later on in my middle school and high school years, I wanted to be a part of the club. And so, in my town, we had some social clubs in our high school. Very elitist, wouldn't recommend it, kind of dumb, you know.

But I was a farmer. And so, I had this t-shirt that I could wear around the high school, and everybody knew I was elected into or chosen to be in this club. And it felt good for a little while.

[14 : 00] Then I went through a hippie phase and grew everything on my head and face out really long and chased after fish and radiohead and different bands because then I wanted to be a groupie.

And really, all my life, you laugh, but you've probably done some of the same things, maybe not in the same ways. But my life, in so many ways, was trying to fit in. You know, trying to be liked is not a bad thing.

But when we want to be liked too much, it's incredibly dangerous. Scripture says again and again and warns about this. And wanting to be accepted and approved is a good thing.

I mean, we should want to do things that bless and affirm other people. That should be a natural desire. But if we wanted too much, it could be a really bad thing. If we want to be liked by someone too much, we'll say the things we shouldn't say and do the things we shouldn't do if they will like us for it.

If we want to fit in with the group, we may ignore our conscience, laugh at crude jokes, disobey our parents, and many other things. If we want to impress others, we'll exaggerate our strengths and hide our weaknesses.

[15 : 16] We'll exaggerate our stories and hide our failures. Like all idols, wanting to be liked can turn the whole world upside down.

Heaven becomes a certain person's approval. Hell becomes their rejection. Our Savior becomes what this person thinks about us.

And so the psalmist is saying there's no salvation in man. There's no salvation in man.

There's no salvation in anyone or anything other than God. Not success, money, savings, education, or being liked. So I think the psalmist is pressing us to say when you look into the future, is there anything you're wanting too much?

Is there anything you're waiting on too much? Maybe a promotion, a specific sales goal, a slimmer waistline, a season of normalcy where the obstacles don't keep coming.

[16 : 25] We can just want peace too much. Maybe obedient children now that school is out and it's family Sunday. You know, this psalm invites us to turn and trust the Lord.

Point two, trust in the living God. So do not trust in dying men. Trust in the living God. Trust in the living God.

The psalmist continues and tells us who to trust in. Look in verse five. He says, blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is the Lord his God.

Blessed. So this is what he's trying to say is the one who trusts in man, the one who trusts in an idol perishes, but the one who trusts in God is blessed forever.

That's the contrast that's bringing together. The one who trusts in idol and trust in man perishes, just like man, all his plans perish with him, but the one who trusts in God is blessed and secure.

[17 : 25] What the psalmist is saying, outside of the Lord there is no Savior, no salvation, no security, no contentment, no rest. In one form or another, we're all left hanging on the empty promises of man.

But the Lord, look down there in verse six, keeps faith forever. So the Lord reigns forever. His promises never fail.

And so that's how we trust. Blessed is he whose help is in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord, his God. I remember one time reading a Calvin and Hobbes, a little commentary talking about words that, that sometimes you can take a word and turn it upside down, kind of like a cup that you would turn up a cup and turn it upside down.

All the contents would go on the floor. Well, words can get like that too. And one of those words is hope. Hope is an incredible word.

But hope is a word we misuse. We say, I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow. I hope the Celtics win tonight.

[18 : 38] I hope I get in Miss So-and-So's class next fall or whatever it is. But hope biblically is not a wish. Hope is a certainty.

Hope is a conviction and a confidence that good things are coming to us because of Jesus. And so the psalmist says, blessed is the man who trusts the Lord, whose help and hope are in the Lord, his God.

And so it's wonderful news, right? Blessed is he whose help and hope is in the Lord. But how can we be confident that that blessing is ours? How can we be confident that that blessing is ours?

And I want you to see something in verse 6. I think we have it for you right here. But he says, blessed is he whose help is in the Lord, or in the God of Jacob, the hope of the Lord, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever.

So he says, the reason you have confidence, you trust in the Lord, is because he made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them.

[19 : 47] There at the beginning, everything that your eyes see was created by his hand and for his glory. And so we rejoice in that. And we may think, that's wonderful, Lord.

But how do I know that this will help me? What's the sea got to do with my anxieties? What do the animals of the earth got to do with me being fearful? And the psalmist wants us to see something here.

If you notice this, he says, blessed is his help is in the Lord, who made heaven and earth, and the sea is all that is in them, who keeps faith forever. So he said, who made all these things, past tense, the Lord made all these things, and we see all these things, but he still keeps faith, present tense, forever.

He keeps and upholds all things. I mean, I think what the psalmist is helping us see, that it's wonderful to look out at creation and say, look at all that God has made. I love going outside.

I love to hike, to see all the wonderful things that God has made. But I think what the psalmist is saying, that he didn't merely make all these things, but he keeps faith forever.

- [21 : 04] What the psalmist is trying to say to us, is that when we go out there, we say, oh, look at all the things that the Lord has made, and sustains forever, and ever, and ever, and ever.
- So what he is saying, the contrast is coming together, where man, there's no salvation in him, because his breath departs from him. The Lord is alive yesterday, today, and forever, and upholds all things with the word of his power.
- So there's very few things we need to learn more than this reality, than that God is alive, standing at the control center of the universe, ready to turn the knobs for you.
- I remember one night, this is when we lived in Knoxville, and all our rooms, well, they're all close together here too, but, you know, my son's room was right across the hallway, and it was the middle of the night, most of the time in the middle of the night, if the kids wake up, I don't even hear it, I sleep like a log.
- But on this particular night, I was deep in a couple REM sleeps, and I heard a moan from my son's room, my older son's room. He's like, I'm like, man, okay, I guess I gotta go check on him.
- [22 : 26] And I make it into his room, and I'm like, man, I sit down on his bed, he's curled up in the fetal position, I said, man, what's going on? What's going on with you?
- And he said, I need God. I was like, yes, I do too, man, totally, 100%, but what is going on right now?
- And I have thought of that again, and again, and again, and that's what the psalmist wants our lives to be like. That our hope is not in medicine or mommy, or in daddy to straighten things out in our room.
- Our hope is in the Lord, who sustains and upholds all things forever and ever and ever. You know, the air we breathe ignores God and makes him into little more than a well-meaning grandfather in the sky.
- But this text says he's alive. He's in control. He, no one can stop him. Nothing is hard for him. Yes, blessed is he whose help and hope is in the Lord, because the Lord never dies.
- [23 : 45] And there's one more thing we need to see from this passage, and that's point three, how trusting God works. So don't trust in dying men. Trust in the living God, how trusting God works.
- And I think this psalm just kind of explodes into what trusting, or the secret ingredient to trusting God, if we could say it that way. And that's what he focuses on in verses seven to nine.
- And if you look with me in verse six, if we go back to what he's all made, it talks about past tense. The Lord made all these things, the heaven, the earth, the sea, then all that is in them.
- And then if you look in verse 10, he goes forward and says, the Lord, he will reign forever and ever. So we have the past. The Lord made everything that we see. The Lord created all these things, made them wonderful.
- And the Lord will reign forever and ever. And then suddenly in verses seven to nine, there's just tons of present tense things. So the Lord made all this.
- [24 : 45] The Lord will reign forever. But right now, the Lord is working these things for sinners. And so talking about how he, what he's up to right now, you want to know what the Lord is up to right now.
- You want to know what is on his to-do list this morning. Look at verse seven, the Lord sets the prisoner free. That's on his to-do list. Next week, his day planner, he opens the eyes of the blind.

He lifts up those who are bowed down. The Lord loves the righteous. He watches over the soldier. No, the world is not spinning into orbit, just kind of doing its thing so that the laws of gravity might do their thing.

No, the Lord is watching over the sojourner, upholding the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked, he brings to ruin. And so the psalmist wants us to see that the help and hope is the Lord.

Now, I know that's quite obvious, but it's emphatic. He uses the covenant name for God here. The Lord, L-O-R-D, all cats, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord sets, the Lord opens, the Lord lives, the Lord loves, the Lord watches, the Lord upholds.

[25 : 52] The Lord is doing all these things. Trusting God does not exalt the faith and resolve of men. Trusting God exalts the boundless power of God.

Trusting God is not about the faith you can muster. It's about the power he wields. And notice who he helps. What do these have in common? The oppressed, the hungry, the prisoners, the blind, the bowed down, the strangers, the widow, the fatherless.

Who are the ones the Lord helps? The weak. He defends the defenseless. He sustains the hungry. He frees the prisoner.

He restores sight to the blind. He raises the cast down. He watches the wanderer. He supports the widow. Fathers the fatherless. He loves the righteous. And I don't think that's all. I think the psalmist has given us a sampling.

The point is, all who are weak find everything they need in the Lord. The only ones he doesn't help is those who don't ask for. You know, I made it through high school when I was a farmer, I guess, but I made it through high school on cliff notes.

[27 : 03] It's a sad reality. The number of good books I was assigned that I never read. Right now, I regret that. Because I had more time to read back then. But one of the books I did read, actually, in high school, and fell in love with, and have read multiple times since then, is a book called To Kill a Mockingbird.

If you haven't read this book, by all means, this is your assignment. This Memorial Day weekend, read this book. It's totally fabulous. One of the main characters of the story, it's set in Alabama, I think.

One of the main characters of the story, is a man named Atticus Finch. Atticus is a deeply godly man, a man of integrity and moral courage, living through the racism and prejudices of 1950s South.

A lawyer by trade, much of the book chronicles his defense of a black man named Tom Robinson. Tom Robinson lives on the wrong side of the tracks.

He has the wrong color, and is wrongly accused of raping a white woman. Though this woman is far from well-liked and well-loved in the town, all the town rallied against Tom Robinson, ready to give him justice.

[28 : 23] But Atticus Finch takes up his case. As soon as he does, the threats and opposition come pouring in. Why would you defend a poor, guilty black man?

Like, what's in it for you, Atticus? Who cares what happens to Tom Robinson? So they're just leveling accusations, trying to oppose his case.

Atticus builds his case, defends Tom Robinson. Tragically, the prejudices are too great to overcome, and Tom Robinson is convicted by the court. Atticus fails in the court of law, but succeeds where it really matters.

The final scene of the book is Atticus and his kids and his wife feast, or actually not his wife, Atticus and his kids feasting with Miss Robinson and her family.

They're rejoicing. And you think, why are they rejoicing? Why is Tom Robinson's wife rejoicing, even though Tom is in prison?

[29 : 42] And the reason is, Atticus took up their case. They're rejoicing because a white man in the 50s South took up their case.

Well, here's what this psalm is telling you. The Lord has taken up your case. Like a lot of cases came across the table, the Lord plucked out your file and said, I'm taking that case.

I'm putting it on the line. I'm not sending angels, ministering spirits to work for me. The Lord, I am coming. I am coming with my power. God loves. The Lord loves you.

The Lord loves the defenseless, those who have no defense and no hope. The Lord loves the weak, the needy, those who cling to him. The Lord does not help those who help themselves. The Lord helps those who cannot possibly help themselves.

And this psalm is in the Bible saying, the Lord has come to help you. The Lord has taken up your case. The Lord has come to help you. And it's precisely here that we see better than the psalmist.

[30 : 47] Because we could keep adding to this psalm, the Lord loves the lost. The Lord goes for the poor and the hungry. The Lord searches out the tax collectors and sinners. The Lord doesn't just go to the weak and preach to them.

He becomes weak. He's forsaken by all his friends, mocked and ridiculed. The mobs rally against him and take him out. He endures the shame of the cross, gathering crowds around him, laughing at him, saying he saved others.

He cannot save himself. He trusts in God. Let God deliver him. What kind of Savior is this? This is a Savior who takes the cause of people that have no hope. And yet as weak as he became, his weakest moment proved to be his strongest, his sure defeat proves to be his victory.

Through the weakness of the cross, he crushed all power of sin and death. All this so that the sinner, the weak, the helpless, and the needy might find certain rescue in his wound to deliver us from our greatest problem and every other problem as well.

All this so that we might see that he never fails to deliver the needy. So praise the Lord. He never fails to deliver the needy.

[32 : 03] Now, I don't care how old you are. This psalm alerts us to a certain reality and that you feel weak.

You face challenges. I don't know where you're almost ready to throw in the towel. I don't know where anxieties bother you through the night. I don't know what you're most afraid of.

I don't know what prayer you're afraid to pray. I don't know what prayer you don't want to pray because you've prayed it so many times, but I know it's there. I know it's in my heart.

And regardless of your age and regardless of what's going on, the Lord is inviting you to trust him. The Lord is inviting you to lean, not on your own understanding, but in all your ways, acknowledging him, trust and he'll make straight your paths.

The Lord is inviting you to this life where he is active and he is upholding and we can rest in him. You know, one of my favorite verses, being a dad, has been working through the realities of active trust in God.

[33 : 16] Psalm 56. When I'm afraid, I put my trust in you. That's probably been quoted in our house hundreds of times. It's a simple prayer that invites you.

I don't know what verse you need to get functional in your life, but you need a verse to take you to trusting God again and again and again.

Let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we thank you for this day. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for the privilege of sitting under your word and thinking carefully about these things.

We praise you. We give you all the glory that you deserve. And Lord, we want to be a people that trust you, that cry out to you.

and cling to you. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

[34 : 23] For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.
Trinity Grace Thank you,