

Trusting God: Always the Best Option

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (Pr 3:5)

He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat. (Pr 28:25)

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe. (Pr 29:25)

For several months we've examined the fear of God. I hope that this study has been as enlightening for you as for me. Like so many folks who discuss the question of fearing God, I was far too fuzzy on the concept. I must thank a faithful member of the church where I serve for nudging me to study and write on this question of fearing God. May her tribe increase.

We now move to our study of trusting God. Our studies have taken us through the tension involved in loving God and fearing God. With this chapter we will begin our study of trusting God. We will see one common thread to our prior two themes. Loving God and fearing God are not emotional reactions, but rather lifestyle perspectives and choices. Trusting God follows this same pattern. It is not a mere emotional state of mind; it is truly a lifestyle choice that builds on the firm ground of Scripture, not personal preferences and choices. Far too often contemporary professing Christians make their choices with little consideration of God or God's handbook for life, Scripture. Only after they have firmly made their decisions without considering God do they go to God, more to negotiate His approval than to seek His input in the decision. This approach to life will create a life that is primarily lived without God or His influence and blessing. Followers of this philosophy typically appear much like a "deer in the headlights" of life. The disciple of this lifestyle will dupe himself/herself into believing that he/she is really conscientiously following Scripture. The follower of this error will live in constant bewilderment because the blessings promised in Scripture to the faithful simply never appear in his/her life. The reason is obvious to all except the followers of this deceitful, and basically godless, lifestyle.

Scripture requires us to seek God's direction before we make choices, not afterwards. It requires us to order our lives according to God's handbook for life, Scripture, not our personal desires and our perception of what is good for us or "right" for us according to our private perception.

We live in an age of intense relativism. Our culture praises an "open mind," values quietly held, but not publicized, certainly never set forth so as to expect others to live according to "our" values. People flippantly speak of "my truth" and "your truth," as if each individual is the god in his/her own private universe, fully responsible for setting values, right and wrong, within their own private world. So what if the values in one world are different from the values another person sets for their world. Such mass confusion is praised in our culture, the desired spirit of a "multi-cultural" society where everyone is tolerant of all other values and cultures. This line of reasoning is fatally flawed in that it confuses morally neutral cultural perspectives with moral values. God, not we, sets universal moral values. However tolerant and relativistic men may be today, on Judgment Day God's moral values will prevail!

The sad thing is that many who profess conservative, Biblical Christianity fully embrace this godless, valueless concept. Read a Bible verse that contains a moral absolute, and you may well hear a professing Christian respond, "Oh that is just your interpretation." At their heart, the Ten Commandments are moral absolutes to be respected and followed by all. Although the judgment of the last Day will be rendered on the basis of God's law from a broader perspective, these ten primary moral absolutes embody the same moral code of God that will prevail in the final Judgment.

I raise this question of relativism in moral issues to emphasize the choices that are clear in our three

verses from Proverbs.

1. *Trusting God with all your heart is not a mindless trust.* Leaning to our own understanding is mindless trust. The cliché “leap of faith” frequently surfaces in the mindless relativism of our time among professing Christians. We are led to think that true faith requires us to “leap into the dark” and trust God for a safe landing in the promised land. Biblical faith is not a leap into the darkness, but a leap out of darkness into the light and knowledge of God. In Heb 11:1-2 we have a working definition of faith. *Substance* and *evidence* are the two key adjectives that define Biblical faith. Trusting God with all of one’s heart means bringing all of our private emotions and thoughts into subjection to the will of God as set forth in Scripture. It is not a mere sentimental or emotional “I trust God with all my heart” where “heart” is about as specific and defined as a starry-eyed young man telling his latest girl friend, “I love you with all my heart.” What is “heart”? How does Scripture define it?

2. *In the second verse cited trusting God is contrasted with a proud heart.* One causes strife; the other causes “fatness,” or spiritual and personal blessings in abundance. The person with a “proud heart” trusts in self, in his/her own emotions, more than in God or in God’s revealed will in Scripture.

3. *The third verse cited contrasts the fear of man and trusting God.* In Scripture the object feared is typically the object worshipped. The person who “fears” his boss, spouse, himself/herself, or other people of influence in his/her life functionally worships those people, not God. No wonder Solomon equates this attitude with a snare, a trap that captures and destroys a person. According to Solomon, trusting God, the point of contrast with the fear of man, brings safety. Controlling other people by manipulation, distrusting other people who do not wholly agree with, and submit to, us will promote insecurity and the desire for more control and manipulation, not a sense of accomplishment or security. For the faithful believer in God, trusting God brings the only true, reliable sense of safety. Any other choice is dangerous and will eventually prove the reality of the danger.

The book of Proverbs is not primarily a book of theology, but rather a book that describes and observes “life under the sun” with all of its myriad styles, values, and choices. For the inspired writers of the proverbs, primarily Solomon, wisdom is the ability to face life from God’s perspective—and values—and to deal with life God’s way. As exemplified in our three verses, many of the proverbs depict life as lived by people who do not consider God and His ways in their daily choices. Inevitably and clearly the proverbs reveal the calamity of choices that ignore God and His ways. Often they do so with appropriate humor.

We simply cannot ignore God and Scripture without incurring the devastating consequences of our rebellion and disobedience. *"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."* (Isa 1:19-20) God does not offer us a third option. With every choice in life, with every decision we make, we have two simple choices. Either we obey God willingly, or we refuse to obey God, the essential attribute of rebellion. One choice will bring spiritual health and spiritual prosperity. The other will bring God’s judgment and destruction of peace, joy, and a sense of spiritual well-being. The typical response to this simple life-choice is to rationalize a third or fourth alternative, but the first step down Rationalization Avenue is also the first step down the path of refusal and rebellion. The consequences are inevitable!

The proverbial “bottom line” of Proverbs urges us to trust God; more than we trust other people, more than we trust our career, more than we trust anyone or anything else, even self—especially self. The blessings are far greater than the price you will pay for the alternate choice.