

THE GOD YOU CAN TRUST

JAMES 1:17

James introduces us to the God we can trust in James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. NKJV

Trusting God is something you can start doing this morning. May I introduce you this morning to the God you can trust, or if you know Him, may I reintroduce you? The vehicle that takes us up to meet God is His Holy Book the Bible.

Sometimes it is hard to relate to the sheer enormity of the Universe and the staggering powers displayed up there. So to help us God came here. This morning God says meet me through Jesus.

Hebrews 1:3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image (Greek character) of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, NKJV

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. NKJV

2 Corinthians 4:6-7 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. NKJV

God's Word or the Bible is the only book in all the history of earth that paints the biographical portrait of a person like Jesus. No one else was ever like Him and none will ever come that is like Him.

- Jesus Christ lived perfectly upon an earth flooded by evil.
- Jesus lived unstained by the darkest staining agents poured across His life.
- Jesus lived unmarred by the most desperate forces arrayed against His soul.
- Jesus lived untainted by the virulent infectious world into which He poured out His soul.
- All the alluring glitter never swayed Him.
- All the demons of the Pit never swept Him away.
- All the powers of Hell never succeeded in bringing Him down.

You can study every page of recorded history, spanning uncountable pages and you will never encounter anyone like Jesus. Not so for every other founder of religions and cults.

The instant their lives are examined by God's Law they are, woefully lacking in perfection

You can measure all the religious leaders the world has ever produced and they fall short not only of God's Law but even of their own religious standards they established. Millions today follow and revere lives, which if ever examined would display such imperfections, and immorality that would utterly disqualify them from reverence.

Towering over every other life lived is the perfect life of Jesus. Listen to what one student of his life has said:

In contrast¹ to all others, the life of Christ stands supreme and impeccable. The recognition of this uniqueness in the person of Christ has been readily expressed by some of history's greatest scholars, both those who are avowedly Christian and those distinctly non-Christian. How grand is a life so perfectly lived, a life that resisted every enticement of lust, greed, and power even in its most seductive forms. Pontius Pilate, the power seeker, said of Him, "I find no fault in this." The convicted criminal hanging by Him said of Jesus, "This man has done nothing amiss." The religious leaders who saw Him as a threat to their demagoguery mounted the farcical charge that He was healing on the Sabbath and therefore He was ceremonially vile.

Is it any wonder that even the outcasts of society clamored for His spotless presence and that a devout though rich man like Joseph of Arimathea offered a tomb for His burial? A learned man like Nicodemus sought Him out because he saw in Him a wisdom beyond anyone he had ever known. He whose dwelling was in the heavens attracted even those whose lives were marred and scarred by every pollution of the earth.

This One who lived with such perfection pointed to the authority of the Word when He said, "The Scripture cannot be broken." He spoke of the eternity of the Word when He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will never pass away." He pointed to the centrality of the Word when the Devil tried to tempt Him in the subtlest form of evil-to use His power for self-aggrandizement rather than for the honor of God. The Word reflected the character of God. That reflection was merely propositional in the Scriptures, but it was lived out in the life of Jesus. What good would the Law have been if its very author could not demonstrate its purity?

One may, of course, ask whether the argument is not circular. We believe the Bible because Jesus affirms it to be true. We believe Jesus because the Bible says He is the Truth. The question is a fair one. But this is where the Bible stands uniquely among other religious books claiming divine authorship.

The Bible is a book whose facts can be tested outside of itself. The historical, geographical, archaeological, and prophetic data can be verified from outside the

¹ Ravi Zacharias, Deliver us from evil, p. 199-201.

Scriptures. When sixty-six books covering a two-thousand-year span and written by approximately thirty-seven authors coalesce with such singularity, purpose, and empirical verifiability, the argument may hardly be considered circular.

So Jesus is the perfect face of God we can see. But what does it mean that He is changeless? James 1: 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. NKJV

Theologians have defined this truth about God's character as His UNCHANGEABLENESS or immutability. The proper statement of this attribute is: God is unchanging in His being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and He acts and feels differently in response to different situations. Psalm 33:1 1 The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.

- So that we may say that God's character never changes, but His dealings with men change as they change from ungodliness to godliness and from disobedience unto obedience.
- "God's immutability is not that of the stone, that has no internal experience, but rather that of the column of mercury that rises and falls with every change in the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere. When a man bicycling against the wind turns about and goes with the wind instead of going against it, the wind seems to change, although it is blowing just as it was before."-Strong².
- If God could change it would mean He was either imperfect or would become imperfect. Because of His perfections in His person, promises, and purposes - He is absolutely and eternally unchanging and worthy of our trust and worship.
- Only the Scriptures present a god who is both infinite and personal. He is greater than all His creations and is immeasurably beyond them all. Yet He is so personal that we can communicate with Him as a person. To Him we pray, worship, trust and adore. From Him we receive love, rejoicing and truth.

What are seven characteristics of the unchanging nature of God? Let's note these fixed reference points that build security and stability:

1. GOD'S WORD DOES NOT CHANGE. Psalm 119:89 Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Listen to the testimony of one who experienced the amazing grace of the power of Christ's blood:

Who³ am I? My godly mother died when I was a young child. Reared by a sea-captain father, taken to sea at age eleven, I soon forgot the Scriptures she had taught me.

Several years later, I was pressed into the British navy and became a midshipman. By then I had earned the reputation of being able to curse for two hours straight without repeating a word. Restless and wild, I tried to desert, was

² Evans, Great Doctrines, p.

³ Swindoll, *Shedding Light*, p. 100-101.

caught, stripped, whipped severely, and degraded to the ranks. I eventually ran away to Africa, but only so 'I might sin my fill.' And I did.

Debauched and distant from God, I fell into the hands of a Portuguese slave trader. For months the chief woman of the trader's harem treated me like an animal, beating me and forcing me to grovel in the dirt for my food.

Reduced to a mangy cur of a man, I finally escaped and made my way to the shores of Africa. Picked up by a passing ship I earned the position of first mate because I was a skilled navigator. But while the captain was ashore one day, I broke out the ship's rum and got the entire crew drunk. When the captain came back, he was so furious he hit me, knocking me overboard.

I would have drowned were it not for a sailor who pulled me back on board by spearing my thigh with a boat hood. The wound was so large that it left a scar big enough to put my fist in. Some weeks later, when the ship neared the coast of Scotland, it sailed into a storm and almost sank. For days I manned the pumps below deck in what seemed a hopeless nightmare.

It was then that I desperately called out to God. He answered my helpless cry, and I emerged from the hold of that ship to later become the chaplain of England's Parliament and even to preach before the king. I am the vile blasphemer whom many would subsequently refer to as the second founder of the Church of England. And it was I who wrote:

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,

Was blind, but now I see.

These were the lyrics born out of my wayward, free-versed life. And to my ears, there is no sweeter sound than grace in all the world. Who am I? John Newton.

- GOD'S WORD IS DIVINELY BACKED: Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (KJV)
 - GOD'S WORD IS ETERNALLY SETTLED: Psalm 119:89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven (KJV)
 - GOD'S WORD IS ENDLESSLY SECURED: Psalm 119:152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever. (KJV)
 - GOD'S WORD IS UNFADINGLY POSITIONED: Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever." (NIV)
 - GOD'S WORD IS UNCEASINGLY PROTECTED: John 10:35 If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came -- and the Scripture cannot be broken -- (NIV)
2. GOD'S LIFE DOES NOT CHANGE. Psalm 90:2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (NIV) First Timothy 6:16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen. (KJV)

In the context God the Father is presented to us as the One who transcends all time. He lives in present, in the past, and in the prospective tenses of time. He cuts across all the ages of time. Hold on this is deep: To Him the past is very much alive. As Dr. Irwin A. Moon of Moody Institute of Science says,

All of us have looked up, on a clear night, and seen the sparkling, twinkling stars. But, how many of us have realized that we cannot see the stars as they now are?

Every time we look, we are looking into the past, seeing them as they were. The nearest naked-eye star, Alpha Centauri, is about four light years away. The most distant naked-eye object, the Andromeda Galaxy, is maybe about a million-and-a-half light years away. This means that the light has been traveling four light years or maybe, over a million years to reach us.

As a result, we are looking into the past. But this works both ways. If you were on one of the stars you would - assuming an adequate telescope - see the earth as it was sometime in the past. From the star Sirius, you could see what you are doing nine years ago, because, in a profoundly true scientific sense, you are still doing it.

Yes, everything you have ever done, you are still doing- The ghost of your past haunts the universe. But remember ... God is omnipresent. This means that, for God, every sin you have ever committed, every evil thing you have ever done, you are still doing, and will continue to do forever, apart from God's forgiveness. Only the omnipotent, eternal God, who controls all the factors of time, space and matter, could ever remove sin. "

3. GOD'S CHARACTER DOES NOT CHANGE. James 1: 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (KJV)
4. GOD'S WAYS DO NOT CHANGE. Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (KJV)
5. GOD'S PURPOSES DO NOT CHANGE. Hebrews 6:13-18 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: (KJV)

6. GOD'S LOVE DOES NOT CHANGE. Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. (KJV)
7. GOD'S SON DOES NOT CHANGE. Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. (KJV) Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (KJ-V)

So what do we do with our lives when we trust God? Give Him the most precious possession we have, our time invested for His interests. Here are 9 investments God promises will pay eternal dividends:

1. GOD REWARDS OUR STEADFAST USING OF OUR GIFTS GOD GAVE US. Matthew 25-14-28 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16 "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 "And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' 21 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 22 "He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' 23 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, (knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground, Look, there you have what is yours.' 26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 1 Peter 4:10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
2. GOD REWARDS OUR STAYING FAITHFUL TO THE END OF OUR LIFE. Luke 12-43-44 "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 "Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. Revelation 2:10 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

3. GOD REWARDS OUR SERVICE FOR GOD EVERY DAY. 1 Corinthians 3:8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. Hebrews 6: 10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.
4. GOD REWARDS OUR SEEKING PERSONAL PUR" FOR JESUS. 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown, (Can You dress more modestly? Can you avoid more defilement?)
5. GOD REWARDS OUR SACRIFICE OF PERSONAL COMFORTS FOR CHRIST WHENEVER POSSIBLE. 2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.
6. GOD REWARDS OUR SAVING EVERY MOMENT WE CAN FOR CHRIST. Ephesians 5:16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Do you have a lunch half hour? Are you reading your Bible or memorizing? In the car do you listen to Rush or God ? Do you spend more time wasted experiencing sin on TV or invested in experiencing God in the Word ?) Colossians 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.
7. GOD REWARDS OUR SPEAKING ABOUT CHRIST ALL YOU CAN. Philippians 2:16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.
8. GOD REWARDS OUR WINNING SOULS FOR JESUS. 1 Thessalonians 2-19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?
9. GOD REWARDS OUR SUFFERING FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST. 1 Peter 4:13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

BABY DEDICATION

Luke 2:21-22 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord NKJV

SIX GOALS OF OUR PARENT/CHILD DEDICATION

The church is portrayed in Scripture as a family. We love and minister to one another. One of the great ministries we can have is at the arrival of new children to our families.

A parent-child dedication is an opportunity for parents of infants and toddlers to have:

1. The prayer support of the congregation.
2. They can make a public dedication of themselves to the Lord.
3. They can publicly dedicate their children to Him. This meaningful moment of oneness with God's people is sometimes confused with baptism, an ordinance reserved in Scripture for those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. In reality, at this dedication the parents:
4. Pledge to seek to win their children for Christ by their teaching and example.
5. The congregation prays with them, and for their children.
6. As we perform this sacred ministry, we become partners with them in the work of discipling their children for Christ.