

Therefore I Will Trust You

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Well, it's really overwhelming to be here with you. Things are pretty simple with me. People ask me, "Why are you here? Why are you back?" and all of that. The answer is really very simple. It was five years ago today that I announced that I was leaving Grace Life. Five years ago today and it took a few months to make our way out and make our way over to Cincinnati where I bring greetings from Truth Community Church. The Lord is blessing our church there. We're encouraged. As I like to say, there's enough progress to be very encouraged. There is so much left to be done to leave me very dependent and so I'm not up here to brag about anything like that.

When we left, there was a going-away party in the old gym before we remodeled it, and at that time, I was given a large spindle of about 100 letters from different people telling me and Nancy and our family what we meant to you. That was very sweet and very special and for the past two years or so, Phil said, "Don, you've got an open invitation to come back to Grace Life. Come back to Grace Life. Anytime you want, come back to Grace Life." And about three months ago, I got those letters out and I started reading through them and I realized that I needed to come back and just by my presence to tell you once more how much you meant to me and how much you still meant to me. That's why I'm here. It's just that Phil gave me an open invitation and I wanted to be able to return the love that I was able to enjoy once again through those very sweet and candid and lovely letters that so many of you gave to me. I picked them up in a time of, to be candid, some discouragement in ministry. The first four years were great. We've had a little bit of choppy waves in the past year or so and that's okay, that's how the Lord does it, but in the midst of those times, I pulled out those letters and went through them and I've realized what a special relationship the Lord had given us together and I had to come back at least once more to say by my presence how much I love you and how much I care for you in this time. So that's why I'm here. There's no more to it. There is no less to it than that.

So it's a privilege to be able to open God's word for you once more here today and as it turns out, we're working to go to the book of Proverbs and I invite you to turn to the book of Proverbs 3. I had chosen and printed out notes for a completely different message but a friend encouraged me to go to this passage and so I did. If this bombs, I am completely exonerated from any responsibility for what happens, but I think it's a text that will

minister to your heart as it has to mine and to our own body in recent days. Proverbs 3:5 and 6, a familiar text.

Proverbs 3, beginning in verse 5 says,

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

Look, I know this is a familiar text to you. I know that a lot of you probably have it memorized, but I'm more than willing to say that you almost certainly have treated this text superficially in your thinking and in your understanding and in your response to it because of the depth of which it goes to. There are four principles in this text that we're going to look at to help you cultivate a trusting heart, but I want to preface it by saying this: the blessing of this text, and it is a text of great profound blessing, the blessing of this text is not at all rooted in circumstance. It's a blessing that is not subject to loss or diminishment. It's a blessing that's available in joy or in sorrow, in riches or in poverty, in sickness or in health, at the birth of a newborn baby or to an aging person lying on his deathbed waiting to go to heaven. Yes, beloved, this is a text that is a promise to the aged, it is also a beaconing light to the youth who is setting the course for his future. All of these things, the breadth of this passage is astonishing and the breadth of it is only exceeded by the depth to which it plunges its examination of your heart. You see, through this text the Lord Jesus Christ asserts his authority over your every affection, over your every priority, and over your innermost thoughts. In every way, in every circumstance, in every moment of life, this text is asserting its authority over you in a way that you likely have not seen before. This text, in other words, is not a spiritual elective. It's not that you can trust God or choose not to trust God depending on what you want to do or whether life is really difficult or not. No, this text is a command like the 10 Commandments are a command. This is the divine imperative upon your soul and, beloved, what I would say is that in this text you find a definition of the reason that you exist. It is in this text that you find why you exist and that's why we need to consider it here this morning.

I'm going to give you four points. We'll go through them all too quickly. Ha, that's a joke. I never go through anything quickly but it's nice to dream. Point 1 here, I just want to take a look at the context and the context is this: God blesses obedience. This is a very important way to frame this text to look at the greater setting in which it sits and Proverbs 3 unfolds the blessing of God that comes from trusting God. God blesses obedience and at the core of what he calls us to is to have a trusting disposition toward him. So obedience cannot be separated from trust and trust cannot be separated from obedience.

Look at the first four verses with me as we set the stage for our text this morning. Proverbs 3, verses 1 through 4 says,

1 My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments; 2 For length of days and years of life And peace they will add to you. 3 Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around

your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man.

Now simply stated, far too oversimplified, the core command in those four verses you could say is God commanding you to set your heart on his word; to let his word, to let the Scriptures now in our day, the 66 books of the Bible, to be a preeminent affection in your heart. And in the context, Solomon tells his son, "Be a kind and truthful man," and it comes with a promise, the promise is that you will have a productive and a peaceful life that brings you honor from God and from man. So there is just this setting that says God blesses obedience and so be obedient to him. Why would you not do that? Why would you not want the blessing that God promises for a heart that is oriented toward his word and toward his character?

We'll jump over verses 5 and 6 for a moment and go to verse 7, here again just setting the context for you and the context is God blesses obedience. Look at verse 7. It says,

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones. 9 Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the first of all your produce; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine.

The command, the context, live a humble life that is set on holiness; and the promise is God will refresh you and give you prosperity. You know, one of the things that I love about the people at our church at Truth Community is this and this is the highest praise that I could give them is that they are unassuming Christians. They love God's word, they love each other, people stay around for 60 minutes before we turn the lights off and tell them, "Look, you've got to go home because I want to go home." But they just stay and they love each other and they love God's word but they are unassuming Christians. There is a humility that marks the people at our church and I love them for that but the truth of the matter is that this is what true Christianity is like. True Christianity is a humble life that is devoted to the word of God, that seeks to subordinate our life and our priorities and our affections to the God who has revealed himself in his word written and Incarnate.

This is just Christianity that we are talking about here and in Proverbs, what you have here is this, it's important to remember this about the book of Proverbs: Proverbs are not guarantees about absolute cause and effect in every situation without exception. Proverbs simply give us a sense of truth from a long-term perspective. Over the course of life, over the course of cultures, over the course of many many people, over the course of time, this principle is marked out as true: God blesses his people; God is faithful to those who devote themselves to him; God is no debtor to those who seek him. Now we realize and Scripture teaches us that there are sometimes odd exceptions there in the midst of that. Job suffered, though he was a righteous man. In Psalm 73, we see the psalmist greatly troubled because the wicked are prospering in front of his eyes. So Proverbs is not a denial of those kinds of things but that's not what we're talking about here this morning, what we're talking about here this morning is in general the way that God works is that

God's people have a better life than his enemies do. You know, it's not Christians that they find dead in the gutter having fallen over from excessive intoxication or heroin overdoses or anything like that. It's not people who are living obedient lives to Christ that find their lives cut off by sin or find themselves in the misery of another failed marriage again and again and again, is it? That's what this passage is teaching us, is that there is a blessing that God has for his people when they follow him and when they obey him.

That's the basic context of this passage: God blesses obedience to his people and so that's the context in which we find verses 5 and 6 here this morning. Just a simple contrast, simple context, I should say, and all of that is necessary to get to the meat of what we want to talk about here this morning. We've talked about the context, God blesses obedience, I want to show you the contrast now that is in the text, verses 5 through 6 and this is where we're going to spend most of our time. We'll blow through the rest of it pretty quickly at the end. But point 2 is where this passage comes and addresses your heart with power and addresses it with authority and addresses you with a sense of both a sense of convicting power where you realize, "I have really strayed off the mark here," and also with a beckoning, with a promise to come and do what this text tells you to do so that you would experience the blessing that God gives to his people. Right at the core of the obedience that God blesses, is trusting him. So what we're going to see in this second point here is the contrast. I'm going to state the contrast by way of a question that you need to answer for your own life and the question is this: who will you trust? Who will you trust? That is the question that this text imposes upon our hearts and minds and souls.

Look at verse 5 with me now as we finally get into the text that we really want to consider here today. It says,

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.

Look at that, beloved, teaching by way of a contrast; teaching and setting trust in our Lord versus trust in yourself. Look at it again with me. There is no reason to hurry here. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding." Here's the thing, beloved: this is where you really need to wire in and focus on. We're not here today to talk about complexities of Hebrew grammar or to talk about different aspects of Old Testament theology. What we're here to do today is to talk about the kind of life that you are living in the presence of God. What kind of heart response are you offering back to him in light of the salvation that he has brought you to in the Lord Jesus Christ. I speak today as to Christians. I speak today as addressing brothers and sisters in Christ. That's the perspective from which I am speaking here today so I'm talking to you like a brother or sister in Christ. So the question is as we come to this text is: what kind of person are you on the inside? Not just what you think but how do you think, how do you frame your perspective, what is your view of life in view of the way that God has saved you and the fact that God is who he is? What does that do to you, that's the question. Who will you trust? You see, an obedient life, the life that God blesses, an obedient life, a faithful life starts with always trusting God no matter what, always having a sense of confidence in Christ no matter what.

This word "trust," I know we toss around these words "trust" and "faith" like, you know, we say those things pretty easily and every one of you knows enough to say you know you're supposed to say, "I trust God. I have faith in God," and you look at this text and you say, "Well, that's just affirming what I already know so what's the point of looking at this?" Well, beloved, I think there is more to it than that. Let's look at it this way and, look, this just comes to us in life. This comes to us where we live and I have no doubt that I'm preaching an irrelevant sermon to you today. I have no doubt that this text is not going to matter to the way that life goes for you. There is no question about that. That's the least of my concerns here today. What is trust? Beloved, think about it this way. I don't want to give you a technical lexical definition today, I want it to be accurate and yet where we live. Trust when you think about it, trust relates to the basic way that you look to the future. Trust relates to the basic way that you look to the future. When you contemplate what lies ahead in your life either as an older man, a young seminary student just looking out on the front steps of ministry, whatever the case may be, how do you look to the future? What is your disposition? What is your attitude toward what lies ahead in your life? Do you live life with a general basic sense of serenity or do you live life with a basic disposition of anxiety? Are you marked by hope and confidence and expectation of the blessing of God, or fear and doubt and wondering if God is going to pull the rug out from you at some point in time, as if God were actually like that? That's what we need to consider. This is what we are framing. You see, that's what we're talking about because look at the text with me again here, verse 5. In the unlikely event that you think I'm overstating the case of what this verse is saying, look at verse 5 again. It says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart," with an undivided disposition of confidence in the future because you know who the Lord is and you trust him and you believe him to be faithful to his promises to bless obedience, to bless faith in him. That's what we want to talk about here.

So we're going to teach by way of contrast. The contrast is this and it's so simple and so basic. You're going to say, "You went to seminary all those years and this is how complex you can't make it?" Well, what can I say? The contrast is this: you trust God and you do not trust yourself. You trust God and you do not trust yourself and we are going to unpack this. Now, truism alert here. Life is difficult. I get that. Life is often sad and disappointing. I get that. I realize that for many of you the present day is one of great difficulty and challenge. I get that and honestly I feel for you. That matters to me. That's part of the reason why we're talking about this text is because I know that this text can help you in that, but having acknowledged that, beloved, here's what you and I cannot do, we cannot do this, we cannot marginalize this text with the fact that life is difficult. When the text says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart," you have no prerogative to say, "But you don't understand how hard life is for me right now." Beloved, that has nothing to do with it and we just need to be real honest and real candid with each other as we talk this way.

You see, trust means that you have confidence that God will bless you because you are one of his children. That's a simple way to define trust and that means that you trust God as you walk with him and you trust him that he is going to bless you; that he is going to

do good to you; and that that is your expectation as you look forward in life not because of any merit in yourself, not because of any wise or clever way that you can structure your life, remember I said I'm speaking as to brothers and sisters in Christ here so I'm making a really big presumption as I speak. You say that you belong to Christ, I believe you. There are consequences to that. Do you know your God? Do you know who he is? Do you know who he has revealed himself to be? You trust God to bless you as you walk with him and, that's the positive side, the negative side, you refuse doubt when adversity comes your way. You refuse to give yourself over to those nagging fears and those expectations that, "Something else is going to go wrong here and what's going to happen to me?" You reject that.

There's a positive dimension and a negative dimension that we're going to address here but how is it, beloved, how is it that you can live that way? How is it that a believer should be marked by this absolute certainty as they look forward to absolute uncertainty because we don't know what our lives are going to be like tomorrow, James 4 says, doesn't it? I don't know what my life is going to be like tomorrow so how can I know what to expect? How do I know how to deal with that? Well, here is why you look to the future with confidence. This is so basic. This is so basic. This is so fundamental what we're about to look at. It is essential to let this sink deeply into your heart. Let's just run through a string of things that you know to be true. Why can you look to the future with confidence? Isn't God loving and righteous? Doesn't God know what you need before you ask him, Matthew 6? Doesn't God know the number of hairs on your head? Doesn't Scripture say that nothing is too difficult for him? Scripture says that, right? You believe that, right? When I tell you that God is loving and righteous, you believe that, right? You see, that's just the way it is. Let's go further. Didn't your heavenly Father send the Lord Jesus Christ into this world with the specific purpose that he would give his life as a propitiation for your sins, in order to save you from the just wrath of God on you for your rebellion against him? Didn't God in love send Christ in order to save you? He did that, didn't he? Christ willingly laid his life down in order to fulfill that, didn't he? And at some point in your life, the Holy Spirit worked in your heart and opened your heart to believe the things about the Gospel and you believed in Christ and he saved you and forgave you all of your sins and washed away all of your sins and put you on a path that leads certainly to heaven. He did that, didn't he? My brother and sister in Christ, he did that, didn't he? Now hasn't he reserved a place in heaven for you that can never be taken away? Isn't there, I'm speaking metaphorically here, isn't there a graven nameplate just waiting at the banquet table of Christ for you to take your seat at? He did that for you. Soon enough, we will sit down at that banquet with him, at that place reserved for us, and we will leave all of this life behind and we will be with our Lord forever and we will look into his blessed face, we will see the blessed face of the one who loved us enough to lay down his life for us and we will have the blessed privilege of bowing at his feet and somehow saying, "Lord, thank you." And that little moment is going to be greater than anything multiplied lifetimes could have brought to you in this life. Didn't God give you the holy Scriptures where he could be known, a place where you can find your help and comfort? And as you go through life as a Christian and this word just becomes more and more precious and you kiss it because you love it so much. Didn't God send the indwelling Holy Spirit as a seal, as a down payment that there was lots more to come in

your salvation, didn't God do that to you? We're talking fundamental basic Bible truth, aren't we? These are the fundamentals of salvation we are talking about here. All of those things are true. Well, beloved, haven't you entrusted your soul to Christ based on those realities? The most precious thing that you have, the most valuable asset, the most important thing is what happens to your soul eternally? What is going to happen to you when you die? That's the only thing that ultimately matters and because you are a Christian, you are telling me, "I've given all of that over to Christ and I'm secure in Christ and I trust him and I know that he will keep me and no one will pluck me from his hand and he will deliver what he has promised and I will be with him in heaven forever." You believe that, don't you?

Well, in the language of the argument of Romans 8, those are the great things, beloved. Those are the crucial things. That's what really matters. In the midst of that, then, don't you know that if God was good enough and loving enough and gracious enough to do that, that he will do the lesser things? That he will care for the lesser things that are associated with your earthly life? Having done the greater thing at the cost of the blood of his own Son, won't he most certainly do the lesser things that are associated with the details of this temporary and passing life? Won't he do that?

Those of you that are parents or those of you that have had parents, think about that. You'll think later and say, "Wow, that covered everybody." Those of you that are parents, you'll understand this even if it hasn't been your happy personal experience like it has been for me and Nancy. You give your life to caring for your kids. You love them, you are faithful to them, you feed them day after day, you correct them, you give whatever they need, you try to provide them with some measure of wisdom in your own failing frail way, and you give yourself over to them. Well, isn't it right, isn't that why Scripture says that children should honor their fathers and mothers? Obey your parents and the Lord for this is right. You see, when a parent demonstrates consistent daily faithfulness and always is taking care of the needs of the child, there is something that is perverse where if a child would say, "I don't trust you," or for a child to reject parents like that and say, "I want nothing to do with you." You understand on a human level that faithful parents should get faithful trust in response, don't you? You understand that. Do you understand that I'm not talking about earthly parents here? I'm not talking about earthly families at all. I'm talking about you in relationship to your heavenly Father. If your heavenly Father has done all the things that we have talked about here and 10,000 more beside that time forbids us to plumb the wonderful depths of, isn't it the only right and proper thing for you to do, to look up with grateful eyes, to look up, to lift up a grateful heart to this God and say, "God, thank you. And God, I trust you for whatever else may come." How could you withhold that kind of trust from him? Why would you even want to?

Beloved, here's the thing and here is where I think that a lot of us have misunderstood this passage maybe, treated it superficially might be the better way to go. You see, we think about trust in the sense of just a blind trust and, "I don't know what's going to happen but I'm just going to trust that everything works out okay." That's not biblical trust. There is nothing glorifying to God to thinking that way. Nothing at all. No, what

trust is, biblically speaking as you can see from what we have said, is that trust is the righteous confidence that we render toward God in response to revealed certainties. It is a revealed certainty that God is loving, gracious, holy, true, infinite, self-existent, and that he is good and faithful to his people. The name for him used here LORD in all caps in your English text, Yahweh, the covenant-keeping, promise-keeping God to his people. That's who God is. He keeps his promises to his people. You say you believe that, Christian, well, that should affect the way that you think about the future of life even in the most severe of circumstances, and some of them I know are really severe. I get that. We're not talking about our circumstances here that shift and change with the waves of the ocean, we're talking about who God is and who God has revealed himself to be and this is certain, this is true, this is more certain than your next breath, beloved. So when we say we trust in the Lord with all our hearts, we're saying we believe the revealed certainties about God, we believe the revealed certainties about his character, we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe his shed blood was sufficient to cleanse us from all sin and that in loving gracious promises he makes that, "If you believe in me, I'll forgive all your sins and take you into heaven." That's what we believe and it's certain. It can't be denied without sin.

So when Scripture calls you to "Trust in the LORD with all your heart," you are to know who he is, to know his promises and to commit yourself to them in a way that says, "I unreservedly have confidence that God will be good to me in the end." Period. No questions. No commas. No hesitation. You trust God like that in the midst of all of the details of life, in the midst of death, in the midst of sickness, in the midst of financial reversal. In all of it, you do not let those external, passing, temporary circumstances knock you off of your spiritual center of gravity that says, "I know these certainties. I believe them and I commit myself to them, and more importantly, God has saved me to bring me into that realm of them." So what could go wrong in the end? Christian friend, it can only come out good for you in the end. That's the only possible outcome if you belong to a good God who is sovereign over all.

Let's go back. Let's remind ourselves of these questions. You believe that God is sovereign over all, right? I know you believe that. You wouldn't be in Grace Life if you didn't. You believe God is good, right? Do you believe God is love when 1 John 4:7-8 says God is love? You believe that, don't you? Well, then how could it possibly come out bad for you in the end if you belong to him? Explain to me. That's rhetorical, I don't want anyone to stand up and say, "Well yeah, you know, pastor, I do have an idea here." That's not the point. Explain to me then in light of his sovereign power and his sovereign love and that you belong to him, explain to me how it could come out bad for you in the end, then? That's impossible. That is not going to happen no matter what is happening now.

Now, that was the easy part. The question is and you and I have all experienced this, you know that you're like me and I know that you're like me in this way: sometimes we get off-track, sometimes we forget, sometimes we spill over into anxious thoughts and that quicksand sinks down pretty quickly. How is it that you get off-track and all of these great things that should be a fortress and a bulwark around your heart, your rock and your

certainty that you always cling to, how is it you get off-track? It's because you forget the rest of verse 5 and you start to trust yourself. You start to trust yourself.

Look at verse 5 with me again, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding." Oh, you see, trust is is like a two-sided coin. We've been talking about the positive side of trusting God, knowing God, knowing his promises, loving that and giving ourselves over to it. Where you have forgotten to bake the cake, where you have forgotten to flip the pancake so that the other side of also warms up and becomes what it should be, is that you have not sufficiently abandoned your confidence in your own thinking and judgment.

Verse 5, look at it again with me, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding." There is a positive and a negative here and you've got to get both sides right if you're going to be the kind of Christian that God calls you to be. Positive command: trust in the Lord. Negative command: do not lean on your own understanding. The word "lean" is just a word, where do you find your support? You know, "I lean on this pulpit and it supports my weight." Where is it that you are putting the weight of your confidence in order to be able to have confidence as you look to the future? Well, in the spiritual realm, to lean on your own understanding – I can't tell you how important this is. I would stand on this pulpit to emphasize it just to try to make the point. This is really important for you. In the spiritual realm, to lean on your own understanding means that your sense of confidence rises and falls based on your perception of your circumstances. We can do this in simple ways, we can illustrate this with the difficult things. Simple enough. Right now I am just consciously relying on the Holy Spirit to work in your heart because there is nothing about my feeble words that can convey the importance of this to you or persuade you that it's true. I'm helpless here. You have a sense, a disposition, maybe you don't even consciously think about it like this that says, "Well, we have our health, we have money in the bank, this coming year is going to be pretty good." What are you doing there except for the relying on your own perception when Scripture says, "You fool, you don't know what your life will be like tomorrow." But you have the sense that all is well because I feel good and I've got some money and therefore everything is well. You're leaning on your own understanding when you do that and as understandable and as easy as that is to fall into, Scripture says don't do that.

Think about it another way, beloved. Look, I'm here to help you. This is the only reason I'm here. I'm here because I love you and because I want to help you and I've got to help you, I've got to be able to speak directly to you. Leaning on your own understanding can look like this, "Why does God treat me this way? This is too hard for me." Put it in a different context, spiritual context, "What if my loved one never comes to saving faith in Christ? What am I going to do then? What about? What if? What if? What about all of that?" You see, when you are like that, when you're thinking in those kinds of realms, it's very tempting to want to illustrate that another dozen ways but I'm not going to, you get the idea. You see, beloved, and this is always the problem, this is always the problem with people who have a lot of Bible knowledge and think that that equates to having personal trust in God at all times like this calls us to. There is more to trust in God than simply acquiring more and more Bible knowledge. There are a lot of people with a lot of

Bible knowledge whose lives are a mess; who give you no sense of calm serenity as they go through life. So let's make sure that we understand what we're talking about here, let's love each other enough to be honest and not make excuses for each other here. This is so important. Here's what happens: you hear the great truths about redemption in Christ, you hear the wonderful truths about the character of God and the unchanging nature that he is, and to that because I'm speaking to brothers and sisters in Christ, right, you say, "Amen!" Great. You should say amen to that. You need to know the great truths of redemption. You need to know the great character and attributes of God. We're talking about something a little bit different here today, though. When it comes to your life, beloved, right where you're at right now today, here's the question and here's how you can find out if you are trusting in your own understanding or not, or if you are trusting God like Scripture calls you to do. Easy. What is the next word out of your mouth when you say amen to all those things? What's the next thing that you say as you are contemplating life and your dwindling bank account, contemplating dealing with the latest bad prognosis from the doctor, the sorrows, the accumulated sorrows, the chronic pain of life that just never seems to go away and there is no prospect that it will? What's the next word out of your mouth? I'll tell you what it usually is for far too many of us. Having heard the great character of God, the great redemption in Christ, wouldn't you like me to just get to the point? "What's this word? I've got to hear it. I want to know." The person who is leaning on his own understanding can be identified by this one word because he'll hear the character of God, he'll hear the promises of Christ, he'll hear the future of heaven and then he or she will say, "But. I know all of that is true but you don't understand my circumstances. You don't understand that life is hard. You don't understand. But you don't see that my problem can't change." Everything is but, but, but. "I know that's true but my situation is different." What do you mean your situation is different? What kind of boastful, self-centered pride is that when Scripture says you trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding, where do any of us get off saying "but" in response to divine revelation like what we've been luxuriating in here this morning? How can you say "but" to that? Do you know what the word "but" is? "But" is a word of contrast. "But" is saying, "That's true but this is also true, this is equally important and this is where I'm going to center my thought and attention at. I know that's true but life." And somehow and in fairness and in kindness you've probably never thought about it that way, but that's exactly what you're doing.

You see, beloved, this is so vital, this is so central to your spiritual well-being. Do you know what the word "trust" uses? Do you know what the word of trust is? Trust doesn't say "but" and thereby push the character of God away and push the redemption in Christ away and push the hope of heaven away, but, but, but, leaving yourself to your own circumstances and resource, trust uses a different word, trust says, "Therefore." Trust says, "Therefore." Trust can look at its life and say, "This is really bad, this is really difficult. Didn't see this coming. I feel like a freight train has run over me." Trust in that here's the character of God, loving, gracious, knows the hairs on your head, knows what you need before you ask, no one will pluck them out of my hand, heaven and earth will pass away but my word will not pass away, trust hears that and says, "Ah, therefore I believe those things. Therefore I am going to look at my circumstances with confidence

in the future because I know that God always blesses his children and I am one of his children therefore he will bless me too despite what it looks like right now."

So ask yourself, help yourself. This is the bridge from what you know to be true about Scripture and theology, this is the bridge between that revealed truth and how it plays out in your soul. Are you going to trust God enough, do you believe him enough to say, "Therefore I'm not going to be afraid. Therefore I will look forward to the future with confidence. Therefore I will persevere without complaint, without resentment, without retaliation against those who have wronged me." You see, this shapes everything. You can look at the wicked things that people did in your past and say, "God was over that therefore I'm going to trust him going forward." You can look at reversals now, you can look at the way you have been passed over for different stuff and say, "Do you know what? God loves me. God is over it all therefore I'm going to trust him and I'm not going to be angry, I'm not going to be bitter, I'm not going to be jealous, I'm not going to argue, I'm not going to fight back." But or therefore. You see, trust says "therefore."

My brother and sister in Christ, I'm affirming you as I say these things. You believe in who God is, you believe in Christ, you belong to him. I can't say the next word for you, I can only tell you what it is. The next word out of your mouth ought to be, "Therefore I will not be afraid. Therefore I will trust him. Therefore I will not even fear death because I trust him all the way. I trust him without condition, without qualification. I just trust him." You see, in the days to come, I want you to stop and think about this. In light of what we're saying, in the context of what we're talking about, the word "but" out of your mouth opposes the truth. "Therefore" submits to the truth and puts its confidence in it. What's it going to be for you, "but" or "therefore?"

Now, third point. Now we're going to go a lot more quickly. There's a lot to go through here. Let's go on to verse 6 and see point 3: the call, and the call is an intimate walk with God. We've said the context was God blesses obedience; the contrast is who will you trust, God or yourself; thirdly, we see the call and the call is to an intimate walk with God. You see, beloved, what we're talking about here, this intimate walk with God, trusting God, it is a comprehensive approach to life. This is what you do all the time in every circumstance. This is why I said at the beginning this passage is defining why you exist. There is no circumstance in your life where this does not apply.

Look at verse 6 in the simplest and plainest of language it says,

6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

It says here's what you do, in all your ways acknowledge him. Here's the promise, he'll make your paths straight.

Now, in English you and I think about the word "acknowledge" in kind of a superficial way, at least that's one way that "acknowledge" can be used here. We think of "acknowledge" as a matter of like superficial recognition. You know, you pass a stranger

in the aisle at the grocery store, you might nod at him and acknowledge his presence. "Hello." "Hello." You just nod your head and you acknowledge him by nodding at him. This word and what this is talking about here is not that superficial approach at all. This Hebrew word in this context is expressing intimate knowledge. It's the same word that is used in Exodus when God says he has known Moses by name, "I know him." It's the same word that's used in Psalm 139 when the psalmist tells God, "You know when I sit down and when I rise up." What could be more intimate? What could be more close than that? A God that knows when you sit down and when you rise up? The point here is not divine omniscience, it's the meaning of this word "know," it's talking about an intimate knowledge, a thorough intimacy with him.

Look at verse 5 again, verse 5 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart." Verse 6 says know him, "in all your ways." Do you see, beloved? Do you see that this is calling you to a thorough pervasive knowledge of God, a lifelong pursuit of a deeper understanding of him and trust in him and communion with him that covers all of your activities, all of your affections, all of your priorities. Everything in life falls in here, doesn't it? Trust in the LORD with all your heart. In all your ways know Him closely.

Jesus said, "The greatest commandment, love the Lord your God with," what? "All your heart, all your soul, all your might, all your mind." Pervasive. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, what does it say? You tell me. "Whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." You see, there is this thorough-going intimacy of which Scripture speaks and which Proverbs 3:5 and 6 apply to. What that means is this, among other things it means this: beloved, trusting God is not your last refuge, it's not your last appeal when everything else has failed. It's not where you go when all of life has gone wrong. No, trusting God, knowing God, acknowledging God, knowing him, that's what you do on the front end. That's what you do now. That's where without the pressure and without the appeal and without the temptation of earthly circumstances around you, you say, "I'm going to set my heart and mind to know him and this will be the pattern of my life. This is the fundamental core commitment of my heart, to know him and to trust him. Everything else is secondary. Everything else is details." That is the claim on your heart that the Lord Jesus Christ makes. Christ will own all of you. Christ calls all of you to come in submission to him, to come in trust to him, to come in loving adoration to him. No division of life. No pockets where, "Okay, this area of sin is okay because I like it and I'll give God everything else." No, in all your ways you know him. "You don't know how bad it is." No, in all your ways know him, acknowledge him, trust him, be confident in him, rely on him even when you can't see the outcome. Beloved, don't you understand that trust would be meaningless if you could always see the way it was going to work out? Then trust would be meaningless. Then there is no love of character, there is no knowledge of the character of God built in that. Any non-Christian can be confident in the future if all of his circumstances are lined up to his liking. The call on you is to be different and for you to have a fundamental sense of serenity and confidence because you know who this God is.

"In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." I say it one more time, beloved: knowing and trusting God is the reason you exist. This is your

purpose in life and God gives you different life circumstances and things work out differently, you just take it all. This is the life that God has given you in which you will know him and you will trust him. Okay?

Final point. The comfort is this, the comfort is this: he will bless you. He will bless you. God promises to bless the one who walks with him in this way. Look at verse 6, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." Matthew Henry says this and with this I'm going to close, he says, "In all our ways that prove fair and pleasant, we acknowledge God with thankfulness. In all our ways that prove cross and uncomfortable, we acknowledge God with submission. Our eye must ever be toward God. Those that put themselves under a divine guidance shall always have the benefit of it."

But or therefore, beloved,

Let's pray.

Father, we believe what you have revealed in your word, that you are a loving, gracious, sovereign God. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world and that only in his righteousness and shed blood can any man be reconciled to you and find their sins forgiven. We believe those things. Indeed, we have received Christ, we have rested in him, we trust in him for our eternal salvation. And God, today we present hearts before you that bow before your word and say therefore in light of those things, we are confident even as we look to an uncertain future and we extol and we magnify your name. For those of us that are experiencing the finer side of life and relative peace and harmony and security, Lord, we thank you. For the far greater portion of us, Father, feeling the weight of severe adversity, betrayal at people that we thought were our friends, other things not even needed to be mentioned, Lord, we don't look at those apart from your character and your plan. We view them in light of that and we say therefore we trust you. We believe you enough for what you have done to trust you for what you have yet to do. And Father, though we have spoken to Christians, I know there are unbelieving people in this audience, I pray that your Holy Spirit would lead them to Christ, the one who made a blood atonement for sinners just like them, and that they would receive him and rest in him, repenting of sin that they might find the same eternal life, the same promises, the same blessing that you have given to so many of us here. Lord, we love you, we honor you, we commit all of these things to you. And Father, I thank you for the precious privilege of being here one more time to see these blessed faces of such long time dear friends. Bless them as they go. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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