

Therefore I Will Trust You

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Bible Verse: Proverbs 3:5-6
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Before our time in God's word this morning, I want to go back to a text that we looked at several years ago, long before many of you were coming to Truth Community Church on a regular basis, but a very foundational text for living the Christian life, and it's found in Proverbs chapter 3. Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6, and I invite you to turn there. This is for many a familiar passage, and yet for all of its familiarity, likely one that we have only known superficially without seeing the fullness and the depth and the opportunity and exhortation that is found in it. Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6 we read,

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 straight your paths.

Now this text has four principles to help you cultivate a trusting heart as you walk with Christ, and it's important to realize from the outset that the blessing of this text and the promise of this text is not at all rooted in circumstance. It's not confined by what's happening in life or our perception in life. It's certainly not a text that is captive and subject to our feelings. You know, there are those that try to live the Christian life based on their feelings, they try to assess what's right or wrong by the way that they feel about things inside, and they lead others in like manner. That is not biblical Christianity. That is not safe. That is a very dangerous way to try to live the Christian life because our feelings come and go. Our feelings are not reliable, our feelings are subject to our whims, subjects to our biases, subject to circumstance, and this text has nothing to do with any of that whatsoever and so it's important for us to set aside matters of subjectivity and to carry into a consideration of this text an openness to what the clear, pure water of the word of God is saying to us.

The beauty of this text, I do love this text deeply, the beauty of this text is that it's not subject to loss as you go through life. The beauty of this text is subject, is it is available, I should say, in joy or in sorrow. It's available in riches or in poverty. It is a promise that the aged in the sunset of life can rely upon without fear of being disappointed. When the doctor visits increase, when the physical ability decreases, as the pains and the sorrows of life accumulate, we can come back to this text and find everything that we need. But in like manner, this is a promise that young people can draw upon as well as they look forward to the future, as they're setting the course for their life to come. This is the same

text that you can go to and develop a confidence as you plan life as much as you look back on life and so whether you're setting the course for the future or whether you're, you know, that what is past is the bulk of what you have in life, this is the text that you want to go to. It's through this text and it's really remarkable. So much of Scripture is like this, it's so far more searching than you would suspect as you read it quickly, maybe on a Bible reading plan you flit through these verses in a few seconds without stopping to ponder what they're really telling us. It's in this text, beloved, that our Lord Jesus Christ asserts his authority over your inner man. Through this text, Christ asserts his authority over every single situation that you have in life. Everything about life today, and I mean literally in this day, January 7th, 2024, everything that is in your life today is brought under the authority of this text and the exhortation of this text. All of your innermost thoughts are brought under this text. And it's obvious, as you'll see, everything that you think, everything that you do, everything that is assaulting you or encouraging you, it's all found under the umbrella of this wonderful, wonderful text.

And let me just say this as well, I'll probably say this later, but this text that is central and the theme of which is trusting God, this is not your refuge that you go to when, you know, when life starts to fall apart. You know, you kind of live on your own in your own strength and your own confidence and then things get difficult and then you start to trust God. No, that's not the Christian life at all. That's not at all the kind of life that Christ calls us to. We're to trust God on the front end. Trusting God, knowing God as it's laid out for us in this text, is not a spiritual elective. This is not something that you do on the side as you do the rest of your life. Beloved, what we find here in Proverbs 3:5-6, this is a definition of the reason that you exist. What you find in here is laying forth for you the very purpose of your life. And it's so much different than what we tend to think of. You know, we think in terms of our jobs or our families, and that's what gives purpose and meaning to our life, and those things obviously all have their place, but if you miss what's in this text, you've missed the purpose even of those secondary things. God doesn't give us family in order that family would be the predominant priority that defines everything that we do and around which we wrap all of our hopes, aspirations, and joys. It's higher than that. And I've said this many times, but it's worth emphasizing, especially in a church that is blessed with so many wonderful young families. It's important to realize that your family, your children, your parents are not an end in themselves, and we know that to be the case because our Lord said, "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He who loves father, son, or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." And so Christ, for all of the wonderful instruction that he gives to us about our families and how he blesses us with our families, he makes clear that as he does that, that we are not to lose sight of the preeminent priority, the preeminent love, the first love of our heart always goes to him. And the way we handle these other things, we enjoy these other blessings and other relationships in the context of a greater, presupposed, higher priority of loving the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind and everything else falls under that.

You do not arrange your love for God, your service to God around and subordinate to your family. I heard somebody not long ago, heard it quoted to me, that somebody said, "You know, I'm done with putting God first in my life. My family's going to come first

now." Yeah, I don't know what the future holds, but that's not going to go well because our priorities, God is a jealous God. God is a God jealous for his own glory and if you try to grab hold of the blessing that he gives, the gifts that he gives, in disregard to the preeminence of the giver, in disregard to the one who first loved us, beloved, it's not going to go well and your priorities are all mixed up when that's your mindset. And so while we love our families, while we serve well in our jobs and we do all of those things, what we see in this text is that which instructs us on setting the priorities right and straight and that which gives us an anchor even when family doesn't go the way that you want it to, when marriage doesn't go the way that you want it to, when health doesn't go the way that you want it to.

Beloved, think about it and I just plead with you, you know, I'm preaching this, I wanted to preach this message today, I'll tell you. I was prepared to go back to some other things that I was in the middle of, but I wanted to just kind of start the year stepping back and to focus on something that I knew would be personally helpful to you in your own lives, your hearts, your affections. And we know each other in a congregation of this size. If we're here for any length of time, we start to know each other. We have an idea of the sorrows and difficulties and the things that afflict our hearts. And so that's one of the blessings of being in a church that's not a megachurch, you actually know people and you know what's happening. But a text like this gives us a sense of perspective on how to navigate our way through those things, to accept the sorrows without being completely derailed by them. And we all need that. And I need this text probably more than anybody else in the room. The preacher always needs to have his audience first himself as he does this. You know, I'm prone to, I've told you this, I'm prone to discouragement. I tend to be pessimistic by nature. That's not a very good trait to have in leadership, so I wrestle against that, I fight against that, and I have to come back to these things again and again myself.

And so with that spirit and that introduction in place, let's look at this text and the title of today's message, if you didn't see it in the bulletin, is "Therefore I Will Trust You." Therefore I Will Trust You. And let me just take a moment to explain the nature of the title. I want you to walk out today thinking about two words in contrast with one another, the word "but," b-u-t, and the word "therefore," because an understanding of this text leads you pretty quickly to a choice that you're going to make between using the word "but" or using the word "therefore" in light of what we see here today, and I'll explain more on that, but you can be looking forward to that, anticipating that, because the word "but" or the word "therefore" is expressive of the way that you are going to respond to this text. Are you going to hear this text and say, "But," something else, or are you going to say, "In light of this text, therefore," I will live in a particular way. I will respond in a particular way, not resisting but submitting, not fighting against but trusting. That's what we have in this text.

So as I said, I want to structure today's message around four different points and the first one is just to point out to you the context. The context of this text, the context of Proverbs 3:5 through 6, is this: God blesses trusting obedience. The context, and that's part of the point there, the context is God blesses trusting obedience and this is the nature of the way

that God deals with his people. This is the way that God works in our lives, is that he is a God who blesses trusting obedience all the time without exception.

Now we see this as we look at the surrounding context. Look at the first four verses of Proverbs 3 with me. I want to read those to you now. Remember the context is God blesses trusting obedience. Solomon 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 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

As you look at that passage and you just see what's set forth as Solomon's son chooses his course of life, your heart longs to know and to receive the blessing that's promised in it. Look at the blessing that's promised. Verse 2, length of days, years of life, and peace they will add to you. Verse 4, you'll find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Any right-thinking person and certainly any right-thinking Christian should say, "That's what I want to know in the pattern of my life. I want to know the blessing of God. I want to know full years. I want to know a productive life. I want to know success." And the promise is held out in the context of this sense of obedience and submission to the word of God. Look at verse 1 again. He says, "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments." In verse 3, "write them on the tablet of your heart, bind them around your neck." And so here in Proverbs chapter 3, God sets forth the preeminent priority of his word, sets forth the authority of his commandments and the need to respond to them with a sense of trust and obedience. He says there in verse 1, "let your heart keep my commandments," and in the midst of that, there is wrapped tightly around the command is a promise of the blessing of God that comes.

So there in those first four verses, Solomon, in essence, commands his son, "Set your heart on the word of God. Be a kind, faithful, truthful man." And there's a promise. There's a command and a promise. The promise is that God will honor you with a productive and peaceful life. Set your heart on the word and God will bless you, you could say and distill it to a very simple essence. Well, skip over verses 5 and 6 for a moment and go to verse 7 as we continue to consider the context that God blesses trusting obedience. Verse 7,

7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. 9 Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

You see the command summarized in those four verses, live a humble life that is set upon holiness, personal holiness, practical holiness, and the promise that attends to that

command is that if you will obey, if you will follow God like this, God will refresh you and give you prosperity. God blesses trusting obedience.

Now at this point, let me just hasten to add something here; in the book of Proverbs, you must understand what the nature of Proverbs are intended to be. Proverbs are not absolute guarantees about cause and effect in every conceivable circumstance for every conceivable person at every conceivable time, and we know that just by considering even the broader context of Scripture. We see in Scripture that sometimes wicked people prosper. For example, in Psalm 73, the psalmist struggled almost to the point of apostasy dealing with the fact that he saw wicked people prospering and righteous people suffering and he nearly lost his faith over that point, Psalms being part of the greater body of wisdom literature with the Proverbs and with Job and with Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. So you consider the full context of Scripture, you realize that this isn't saying that absolutely in all circumstances the wicked, rebellious people will always suffer for it. Scripture doesn't teach that absolutely as a matter of how things come out in this life. On the other side, think about the patriarch Job. Job was a righteous, blameless man by the testimony of God himself and yet God sent affliction to him and he suffered with grievous boils in his flesh and the loss of his wealth and the death of his 10 children and all of this happening in a day. His world was so good and then it collapsed all around him all at once and in that moment, it might have seemed like the promise that God blesses trusting obedience is, you know, something was amiss there. Well, what you and I need to understand, and this is a subsidiary, kind of a tangential point, but it's really, really important for us to recognize and to keep this in mind as we walk through life, because we're going to go through adversity. Scripture says it's through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God. We're going to have sorrows. Our hearts are going to be broken. Sometimes our crops will fail, so to speak. It'll be our car that breaks down on the freeway, things of that nature. And so we must be careful not to assess these things in the heat of the moment, in the course of a limited window of time, and evaluate everything that God does and that God has promised by such a narrow earthbound perspective. With that said, stepping back and looking at the broad general picture of things, we can say this without fail and without fear of contradiction: in general, in general, looking at lots of people over the course of lots of time in lots of different circumstances, in general, you will find a pattern that inevitably takes place, in general, the people of God who follow him with trusting obedience, they have a better life than the enemies of God, than the pagans who want nothing to do with him, of hard-hearted people who will not hear his word, who reject Christ. Listen, think about it with me and just using the most basic, obvious examples. It is not the faithful, trusting, obedient Christian that is found dead in a gutter from alcohol poisoning, for example. A trusting, obedient Christian doesn't fill himself with alcohol and gets so drunk that he has no idea what he's doing. That doesn't happen to trusting, obedient Christians. It's not trusting, obedient Christians that have failed marriages through serial adultery, for example. It's not trusting, obedient Christians who destroy their lives and families like that because a trusting, obedient Christian would live within the spirit of the command that says, "Do not commit adultery. Wives, submit to your husbands. Husband, love your wives." In the broad spirit of trusting obedience, those who follow in the spirit and the outward obedience that God's word require are going to be protected from a whole host of evils.

That's just the nature of things. You know, you think about what God promised to the children of Israel, Deuteronomy 28. I know that's probably not fresh on many of your minds but God promised them in the first part of Deuteronomy 28, "If you keep my commandments, if you keep the covenant, blessing, blessing, blessing," because God orders his providence to bless trusting obedience. But then you read on in Deuteronomy 28, and you see all of the curses, the warnings that are laid out. If they broke faith with Yahweh, if they turned against him, if they did not keep his word, all of these kinds of calamities would come upon them. The point being for this morning is that God – I love this – God has ordered the universe, God has ordered the moral universe so that those who trust him, those who obey him, experience the blessing that he promises to trusting obedience. And when men hardheartedly turn their back on him, they say, "I will go my own way. I will not have Christ reign over me. I will not submit to the preaching of the word of God." Then they go their own way, the consequences catch up with them. They feel the weight and the heat of that because this is how God has ordered it, that his people who trust him and obey him would know a quality of life that is withheld from others.

Speaking generally, speaking broadly, speaking over time, that pattern is undeniable and so we have this principle, beloved, that biblical Christians live in trusting obedience to Christ. Biblical Christians live in trusting obedience to Christ, and they experience the blessing of God as a result. That's the pattern. That's the proverbial nature of things. That is the pattern that we experience. Even though we realize that there's going to be exceptions that we see in life, there will be times and pockets of experience that we have in our own life that seem to contradict that, we look at it from the long-term perspective, we look at it from the perspective of God, we remember that he uses trials to shape and sanctify us, and we see that God, watch this, Romans 8:28 is a text, a New Testament text that you could attach to all of this, that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose. That blessing that all things work together for good is not a general promise to humanity. That is not a promise made to all men of all kinds, regardless of their response to Christ. It's a promise for the people of God who believe in Christ, who've turned to Christ, who walk with Christ, we're in the position of knowing that all things will work together for good because God blesses trusting obedience. That's the context of our verses here this morning.

Now, let's go to a second point as we look into the text specifically, verses 5 and 6. Point number two, the contrast. Point number one, the context. Point number two, the contrast. I'm going to set forth the contrast with a question for you to answer in your own heart as we go through this message and as you contemplate it afterwards. The contrast is, who will you trust? Who will you trust? That's point number two, the contrast, who will you trust? If God blesses trusting obedience, then we have to deal with the question, who or what will be the object of our trust? You don't just trust blindly into a dark room. Trust means that we're trusting someone, we're trusting some thing, and what is it that we are trusting in? Who will you trust? And here's kind of the foundational principle if you're taking notes, start with writing this down because we'll state this principle and then we'll expound it: a faithful life starts with always trusting God no matter what. A faithful life starts with always trusting God no matter what. There's no point in talking about morality

if you're not trusting God. There's no point about talking about religious rituals, there's no point in talking about what a church should or shouldn't do if we're not first starting from a context, a prior foundational controlling principle in our hearts, that we're going to trust God and have our faith in him no matter what. You could read Isaiah 1, for example, God looked at the children of Israel, he said, "I hate your assemblies. I hate your new moons. I hate your Sabbaths." And the reason that he hated that religious practice, which outwardly I'm sure looked really impressive, was that it was divorced from a heart and lives of trust and obedience; they were going through the motions while their lives were something different, while their hearts were not committed to him.

And now what we see here as we come to our text in Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6 is this, with all of that context laid – oh, I love this text – "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." That's our text for today and what I want to, let's talk about it, let's approach it this way. We need to deal with what the word trust means, okay? What does it mean to trust God? Now, for the sake, for the context of this message, for the sake of making this something that we can all appropriate and develop into our thinking, I don't want to give you a big technical, lexical definition from a big, thick Hebrew grammar or lexicon, let's just deal with it in this simple way that all of us can understand. We'll put, as it were, we'll put the cookies on the bottom shelf and everyone's invited to take and get one here. Trust, the word trust, the verb trust, as Solomon is using it here, as the Bible is giving it to us here in verse 5, trust relates to the basic way that you look to the future. The basic way that you look to the future. This is overly simplistic, probably leaves out some things, but this is going to help us apply and appropriate the word of God in our hearts here this morning and so I'm very content to use that as a basic definition.

Trust relates to the basic way that you look to the future and so let me illustrate this after I say this one thing. Salvation by grace alone through faith alone changes your worldview. It completely changes the way that you look at all of life. Someone sometime ought to preach a series of messages called "Building a Christian Mind" and unfold everything that that might possibly imply. Salvation by grace through faith alone, it changes your worldview. It changes the way that you think about all of life. It changes your affections. It changes your priorities. And it changes the way that you trust and the way that you approach life. So let me get really personal right now here at this point in the message so that you can see how much is at stake with what we're considering here, and I ask it sympathetically, pastorally, I ask it to help you, not to confront you or to criticize you and again, you know, I have to deal with these questions too with my prevailing pessimistic spirit. Do you, my friend, do you live life with a basic sense of calm serenity or do you live it with a prevailing sense of vexing anxiety? Do you look to the future with hope and optimism, with a sense of confidence that all will be well because God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose? Does that control your disposition toward life and toward the future or are you one who is constantly, I say it sympathetically, beloved, I say it to help you, sometimes the surgeon has to cut you open in order to get out the disease so that you can get back to living a healthy life, doesn't he? That scalpel is

designed to help you even though it cuts and bleeds in the process. Is your life governed by your fear of what's going to happen? "I'm afraid of what's going to happen to my children. I'm afraid of what's going to happen with my job. I'm afraid of this. I'm afraid of that. I'm afraid of politics. I'm afraid of who's going to be elected." You know, this goes to the most fundamental aspects of life. Someone might say, "I see my child wandering from Christ and there's no evidence that they're ever going to come back." Some might say, "You know, I've watched loved ones and friends drift away and seemingly turn away from me, and I don't know why." And you get wrapped up in that, you get agitated about it, concerned about it, and it just starts to control, and you think about, you know, that's the predominant thought in your life are these things that are either going wrong or could go wrong. Are you filled with anxiety like that? We could state it a different way. Is your life, my friend, is your life predominantly guided by a prevailing sense of hope and optimism, or is your life governed by fear? Fear of what others think about you. Fear of what others might find out. Fear of whether you're good enough, whether you're woman enough to have children or whatever the case may be. Fear of being the right kind of man in life and wondering if the way that you've failed in the past disqualifies you from a productive, meaningful life and relationships. Fear or hope, my friends. Serenity or anxiety. See, this gets really personal, really far-reaching, really quickly, doesn't it? And remember, let me just say it one more time. I'm saying these things, I'm preaching this text today out of a great desire to help you in your Christian life. Sometimes the surgeon's scalpel has to cut. Sometimes it has to cut deeply to get to the infection, to get to the tumor, to get to the cancer that has to be removed. And if God's word cuts us in that way today, deep in our hearts, you know, the Scripture says in Hebrews 4:12 that the word of God is piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Well, if Scripture is affecting us that way, we ought to give thanks for it. We ought to say, okay, God does this, God brings this in order to help me, and I'm seeing the incisive power of the word of God in my own heart, and that testifies to me that God's word is living and active and is something worth pursuing and worth submitting to. So the contrast is, who are you going to trust?

Now, you think about those things, those things that make us anxious, that trouble us, that cause us to be pessimistic by way of outward circumstance and here's what I want you to see, that in the midst of those life issues that are so near and dear to our hearts and so important to us, understand this, that when those life issues are unresolved, that exhortation that simply calls you to be a better person, that calls you to, you know, to love your fellow man and to, you know, do whatever, those exhortations to outward morality do no help and they have no power of persuasion, do they? They're absolutely useless when it comes to these matters of the heart. If that's all that you think about Christianity, it creates outward, legalistic hypocrites, self-righteous men and women without any power to their lives. You may be able to fool me, you may be able to fool everyone around you, but the testimony of your own heart is, "I'm dying inside and I don't know what to do with it, so I'll just try harder." We all know that's something to spit upon rather than think that that's actually going to help. In like manner, I grieve over, you know, our Catholic friends who know only an external approach to religion. Stand up, kneel down, kiss the plaster statue, take the wafer in your tongue and think that it's communicating grace to you and just go through the outward motions, maybe you go to

confession, maybe you don't. There's no power in that. There's no reality in that. None whatsoever.

Oh, it'll enslave you, but it won't deliver you and my point is that outward morality, religious ritual, those things are utterly useless if they're pursued apart from this kind of trusting obedience the Proverbs calls us to and what Solomon does, having laid, you know, having set that context, Solomon enforces his teaching by way of a very simple contrast. It's a very simple contrast and the contrast is this. This is two sub-points to point number two, the contrast, who will you trust, and what we find is Solomon setting forth this contrast, either you're going to trust God or you'll trust yourself and the question is, will you trust God or will you trust yourself? And let's look at the text again. We see that especially in verse 5 where he says, look at it with me there, as he sets two things, two principles of life over against one another. He says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." One coin, two sides. Trust God is heads, trust yourself is tails. Question is, which side of the coin are you going to live by and so we're going to consider, first of all, what it means to trust God.

Now, life is difficult. It really is. It's often sad and disappointing. It really is. Those of you that are walking a difficult, sad, disappointing path, I feel for you. I've been there, you know. Regardless of what life is like right now, I know that path. I know what it's like to, you know, you walk on the path of life and you cut your feet on the rocks along the way and it hurts and you limp afterwards. I get that and I'm sympathetic for you, but here's the thing for today, beloved, and for entering into this text and the significance of what it means: you and I cannot marginalize this text and what it teaches by qualifying it in advance with the difficulties and the adversities that we face. We cannot do that. We have to set those things aside and contemplate the greater principles of life so that we can benefit from this text, so that we can obey this text and enter into the blessing that God gives to trusting obedience. Now, so let's not think about for 20 or 30 more minutes today, let's not think about our circumstances anymore. You'll have plenty of time after you go out to think about your circumstances. Let's think about what God's word is saying to us here today in this text and focus on that for today, for the rest of this time.

Trust, I said, relates to the fundamental way that you look to the future. Let me state it in a slightly different way: trust, biblical trust, is confidence that God will bless you as one of his children. God will bless you as one of his children. Now we're talking about life trust as opposed to saving faith here today. We've dealt with saving faith in the past. We're not talking about that today. We're talking about the way that we live life and that we trust God, how we have confidence in God, how we have confidence in Christ, and I'm going to take you through a series of things to set the stage to help you respond to it properly. Trust is confidence that God will bless you as one of his children. Stated differently, you have confidence, there's a sense of inner assurance that God will bless you as you walk with him. As you walk with him, you have a sense of assurance that God will be good to you in the end. That's the way that we're to live and to think and when adversity comes, when the tables are turned against you, you're in a spirit of Psalm 73 or you're walking through trials like Job did, you do this, you refuse doubt, questions, resentment, when adversity comes your way. You say, "I'm not going to go there in my

disposition toward life just because some difficulties have come my way. You know, the Lord gave, the Lord's taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord," Job 1:21, I believe.

Here's the question. Solomon's telling us, you know, you've got to trust God, trust God with all your heart. On what basis, beloved, follow me here, this is life-changing if you will have it, on what basis do we trust God? Why should we trust God? You tell me to trust God, it's a fair question to say, why should I do that? Let's just lay it out in basic principles here. Why should I trust God? Well, let's just walk through some things. I'm not even going to take you to all of the Scriptures that would underlie this because time is not our friend right now. Why do we trust God? I'll address the question to believing Christians who are trusting him. Let me just remind you of why we trust God. Why do we trust God? Well, first of all, by nature, he is a loving, gracious, generous God. He is a good, great, generous God in everything that he does, in the very nature of who he is. By nature of who he is, we should trust him because we see in Christ, we see at the cross, we see in the way that he governs the universe, he is good, he is wise, he is loving, he is kind to those who don't even deserve it. That's who he is. As part of that, Scripture tells us in Matthew 6, God knows what we need before we ask him and this could shorten your prayer life probably for some of you by 80 or 90%. You don't have to go and pray to God and explain the whole situation to him and just rehearse it all in your mind while you're supposedly praying. Jesus said, "Your Father knows what you need before you ask." So let your words be few, get to the point, say it, and God knows what you need before you ask. That's a reason to trust him. And not only does he know what you need, he knows every detail of every situation and every fiber of concern and things that are in your heart. He knows, Scripture says, the number of hairs on your head. I mean, who counts that? Who cares about that? But God does. He knows these kinds of details. He knows the fluttering of the leaf on a tree in the Amazon forest. He knows the falling of sparrows. He knows it all. He is intimately acquainted with all of our ways, Psalm 139 says.

We go further, we read in Scripture, nothing is too difficult for him. If he, in his spiritual being, looks upon nothing and speaks a universe into existence, there's nothing that's too hard for him. If he can create, he can moderate. He can operate what he has created. So nothing's too difficult for him. Think about it from a New Testament salvation perspective. We're asking ourselves, why can we trust God? Well, he's really great. He's really loving. He's really powerful. Nothing's too difficult for him. He knows all the details. Well, go to a higher level, he so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. God in human flesh left heaven, came to earth, lived for some three decades with his face set for Jerusalem knowing that at the end awaited not only the physical adversity of the cross, but the spiritual storm that would come upon him as the wrath of God was laid on his shoulders as he bore the sins of his people in order to save and deliver them. That's who he is. That's who God is. As revealed in Christ, Christ being the very imprint of the nature of God, Hebrews chapter 1, we see who God is in Christ and we see the sacrificial love that secured our well-being at the cost of his own life and shed blood and the effect of infinite eternal sufferings being placed upon him as he died for you and me by name.

That's who God is. Can you trust a God like that? If Christ came and did that, did the greater thing, won't he take care of the lesser things to ensure blessing to us? Think further. How do we know these things? Well, we know these things because God's given us a perfect revelation in the 66 and no more books of the Bible, given us the Scriptures that make a man sufficient for all manner of godliness. Not only that, he sent the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have, as believers, we have the Spirit of God dwelling within us as a down payment guarantee that what God has started he will finish, he will perfect the work that he began in you until the day of Christ Jesus. Beloved, hear me in light of these things, by what God has done in Christ, by what God has revealed in Scripture, his goodness is a settled fact that governs everything that ever happens. His power, his wisdom, his greatness is in control of it all. Scripture says that he works all things after the counsel of his own will, Ephesians chapter 1.

Now let me ask you, I ask you, those of you that name the name of Christ, have you not entrusted your soul, your eternal soul to Christ based on these revealed certainties? Revealed certainties, beloved, things which nothing can contradict. Satan cannot overturn the goodness, the greatness, and the generosity of God. He can't. Satan cannot overturn the work of Christ on the cross. He can't. Satan cannot take away the salvation of the redeemed. He can't. He does not have that power. It's guaranteed to us and so I ask you, have you entrusted your soul to Christ based on these realities? Don't you know, Matthew 6:25-34, look at the birds of the air, the flowers of the field, don't you know that God will care for your life, all manner of everything that pertains to your life, that God has said, "I will take care of that as well"? If he takes care of, if he causes a flower in the field to flourish during the day, even though it wilts at night, won't he do much more for you, oh you of little faith? If he feeds the birds, will he not feed you? If he gave you children, will he not somehow take into account your affections for them, for what will happen to them? We could go on and on, couldn't we? Probably should, but we won't for now.

Here's the point, beloved: if you are safe in Christ like you say that you believe that you are as you testify to your conversion, then the point of Proverbs 3:5 and 6 is, think like it. Live like it. Live like, think like you actually believe what you say you believe. You can't say that you believe these things and continue in this prevailing sense of pessimistic anxiety looking to the future. The two things are completely inconsistent. The prevailing pessimistic anxiety is a contradiction of what you say that you believe. Now, here's what I want you to see. Proverbs chapter 3, verse 5, it is not calling you to a blind trust. You know, just trust that everything will work out okay. There's not a blind trust at all. This is trust in the LORD, all caps in the English text. Trust in Yahweh. Trust in the covenant-keeping God who has revealed himself in his acts in history, his acts in Christ, and in the written word. Trust in him. You have to be emphatic. We have to take ourselves by the collar as we look at ourselves in the mirror and say, "Look at me," I've heard of mothers who deal with their children this way, and I love it. I absolutely love it. A child is being disobedient, too hard to get their attention, kind of grab them and say, "You listen to me. Hear what I have to say," and asserts her motherly affection and authority in a way that the child responds to. Good for her. Good for moms like that everywhere. Well, in a greater sense, beloved, you and I, Scripture comes to us and God says, "Look at me. Pay attention to who I am, what I have said, what I have done, and respond." This is not a

blind trust. Trusting God is not a lifeless resignation that says, "Well, you know, whatever will be will be. The future is not ours to see." No, it's nothing like that. This call of this text is to respond righteously to revealed certainties and at the core of a righteous response to these revealed certainties says, "I will trust God. I will look to the future with confidence. I will repent of my prevailing pessimistic anxiety because that's not worthy of the God who saved me and gave his life for me on Calvary. I can't live that way as a result."

So how is it that we all get off track? Every one of us gets off track here. I'm certainly not up here saying I've mastered this. I doubt if any one of you would say, "Well, I really don't need this because I never struggle with anything like this." How do we get off track? We get off track because we forget the rest of verse 5. Look at the rest of verse 5 with me, and I know there's four points. I know how long I've gone. The last two points aren't nearly as long as these have been. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart," you give the fullness of your inner man to trust God like this and you accept nothing less from yourself, then you look at the other contrast, "and do not lean on your own understanding." Solomon says, "Trust God," then he says, "do not trust yourself." Do not trust yourself and we see a great collision with the self-esteem movement that pervades everything, that says, you know, you can trust your feelings to tell you what gender you are without regard to your physical body. You know, what we're seeing here is something that is utterly catastrophic for the worldview that governs the environment in which we live. It's that great of a collision for Solomon to say, "do not lean on your own understanding."

This verse teaches the meaning of trust through a simple contrast. Like the other contrast we had, positive and negative, Solomon says, "don't lean on your own understanding." What does that mean, to lean on your own understanding? Well, right now, I'm leaning on this pulpit, right? You're not supposed to do that as a public speaker, but I find joy in breaking all the rules of public speaking; whatever it is, I try to break it at some point. Now I'm leaning on this pulpit. It is sustaining my weight. It is supporting me. It is holding me up as I lean upon it. That's what "lean" has a sense of physically. Well in the spiritual realm, to lean on your own understanding has a meaning something like this, when you're leaning on your own understanding, your confidence, your sense of well-being, your sense of anxiety, it's all rising or falling based on your perception of the circumstances and what you think is likely to happen going forward. So a prosperous family could have, and it's very subtle, we wouldn't even speak this way necessarily, but a prosperous family could say, we have our health, we've got resources in the bank, this is going to be a good year. On the other side, someone who's struggling, difficulty, sorrows, saying, "Why does God treat me this way? This is too hard for me." In both instances, positive and negative, people having their assessment of the nature of life based on their perception, what they see around them, and leaning on that to support them as they go forward.

Now, you and I, we may mentally know the promises of God, but not really trust him. Let me say this, and it's important to say this in a teaching church: trust, biblical trust, is more than the simple acquisition of biblical knowledge. I was around a lot of seminary students

back in the day, they grew in mental knowledge, not all of them were paradigms of trusting God as shown sadly by the subsequent course of their life and teaching. We're not simply talking about learning more doctrines and learning more Bible facts, and I'll just stop it there, because I think the point is clear. Trust is more than that. Trust goes beyond what your mind holds into what your heart rests in. And so over the course of the years, those of you that have been with us, you've heard different teaching and expositions about the nature of redemption in Christ. The shed blood of Christ washes away all your sin. Praise the Lord, it does. Christ lived a perfect life and on that basis our righteousness is secure before God. Amen. You hear those things and you say, "Amen. Amen, pastor!" And you hear all those things, you hear all the things that I recited before about the goodness, the nature of God, his eye is on the sparrow, he knows the number, all that stuff. You say, "Amen." But here's the thing, beloved, and here's the contrast that I've been wanting to get to this morning. What is the next word out of your mouth as you contemplate life today? What is the next word that comes out of your mouth in response to that? The man who is leaning, the woman who is leaning on her own understanding, says something like, "But. I hear all of that pastor, but you don't know how hard I have it at home. You don't know my circumstances. You don't know my spouse. You don't know how long this has been going. But you don't know that my problem can't change." And after hearing all of these wonderful truths, the one who's leaning on his own understanding comes up and says, "But," and says, "But I'm going to dismiss all of that so that I can talk about what's happening here today." That's leaning on your own understanding. It's saying that the way I am to understand these revealed certainties is conditioned by my perception of my circumstances. So I hear the revealed certainties, but there's other things that we need to consider, and the whole force of the passage is lost.

Biblical trust, my friends, uses a different word altogether. Biblical trust hears these revealed certainties of which we've spoken and says, "therefore." Not "but, therefore." It looks at all these revealed certainties and says, "therefore. Here's my life, but here are these revealed certainties, therefore, in light of these revealed certainties, I am going to trust God. God is who he is. Christ has saved me forever from sin, therefore, I will trust him even though I don't understand what's happening around me. Therefore, I will be confident. Therefore, in light of these revealed certainties," beloved, and the scalpel is going in, and I don't care how much it cuts, as long as it cuts out the infection of your distrusting disposition toward God. Trust says, "in light of these revealed certainties, I will persevere without complaint, without resentment, without retaliation, and when my heart becomes anxious, I will repent and return to these things again. Therefore, I will trust him." "But," opposes the truth, makes exceptions, makes contrasts, makes an exception for itself to justify, and look, look, beloved, look, this isn't easy, this requires actual spiritual effort to respond to life this way. This isn't easy. This means that we have to rely on the help of the Holy Spirit. We have to stir ourselves up to this kind of faith. It doesn't happen in a passive response. We actively remind ourselves of these revealed certainties and say, "Oh yes, this is what I believe. This is who God is. This is what Christ has done therefore I will trust him no matter what. No matter what. No matter what." I was at a graveside yesterday. We had a member of our extended family died, she was 90. But you stand at a graveside and you say, "I see it, everything around it, but I

remember these revealed certainties, therefore I will trust God despite the mound of dirt in front of me." That's how far this goes.

"But" makes exceptions. "Therefore" is a word of submission. It is a word of trust. "God is great, God is good, therefore I will trust him even though I don't understand what's happening. I'm not leaning for support on what I perceive. My heart is leaning on the word, the written word of God. My heart is leaning on Christ. He'll never leave me nor forsake me. He never could. I'll trust him no matter how fast the cancer spreads. I'll trust him despite this bankbook ledger. I'll trust him despite the opposition, the criticism. I'll trust him despite the sorrows. I'm not going to let these lesser passing things of earth overturn what God has revealed as certainties upon which I have built my life." "But" or "therefore," beloved, which one will you walk out of the building rehearsing in your mind today? It's come to a point of decision in your heart, hasn't it?

Now thirdly, the call. We saw the context, we saw the contrast, thirdly, we see the call. It's an intimate walk with God, and I do promise you these last two points will go much more quickly because we've laid down the foundation necessary to wrap it up. The call, an intimate walk with God. What this passage in Proverbs 3 teaches us is a comprehensive approach to life in your inner man and in your outer man, all of it is called into being. Proverbs chapter 3 verse 6, look at it, "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." In everything that God brings to your life, you are to respond in this way. All your ways. Every path that your foot goes down. Every relationship, every difficulty, every joy, all of your ways are brought into this and he says to acknowledge him. Earlier in verse 5 he said, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart." Everything in your inner man, everything in the circumstances of life, all of it is comprehensively brought under the authority of the word of God here and he says there in verse 6, "In all your ways acknowledge him."

Now just a quick word about that word "acknowledge." We think, at least I do, I tend to think about the word "acknowledge" in superficial ways. You know, you're walking down a supermarket aisle, somebody coming the other way sees you, you don't know them, but you nod at them, "Hi," and you acknowledge their presence, and then you quickly move on to other things. You know, you pass somebody on the street, tip your hat at them in the old days. You acknowledge a stranger by nodding at him. But this word is not that. In this context, this Hebrew word expresses an intimate knowledge, a thorough knowledge. In Exodus 33, this word is used for God to say that he has known Moses by name. Same word, he's known him by name. Psalm 139 verse 2, the psalmist using the same verb says to God, "You know when I sit down and when I rise up." It's an intimate knowledge, not a superficial passing thing. This is the intimate knowledge of a thorough ongoing intimacy that God calls us to. Trust him with all your heart. Know him in all your ways so that, beloved, here's the point, so much quicker and briefer than everything I've said up to now. What's this teaching us? Day by day, situation by situation, relationship by relationship, in all your ways you recall these revealed certainties and you lean your confidence for God to bless you for your trusting obedience as a result. A lot of times we don't understand. I have so many relationships in my life

where I say, "I don't understand a thing that's going on here. I don't understand any of this." That's okay. I don't have to. I know the God who's Lord over those relationships.

And so it's a thorough intimacy that you're called to, to bring, to bear your knowledge of God on all of these situations, all of these relationships, and say, "I will be confident in the outcome even if I don't see it now." I have a pastor friend who says you have to live by the outcome that's guaranteed by the character of God, not by what you see in the moment. And so trusting God is not a last refuge when earthly life goes wrong. Beloved, I've come full circle with what I said at the beginning, knowing God like this, trusting God like this, it's the reason you exist. This is why God created you was so that you would know him in this intimate way through all of those things in life. All of a sudden, everything, all of these adversities, all of the joys are infused with a higher, more noble purpose than the mere enjoyment or suffering of them in the moment. I am here. God has appointed me in this life to know him in the midst of it all, to find my satisfaction and my joy in him alone, and to trust him no matter what. Whether anybody observes it and sees it or not, I'm to know him intimately in all my ways. That's why you exist. The earthly container of the circumstances secondary to this greater purpose.

Well, fourthly, the comfort. We saw the context, the contrast, the call, and now the comfort. The comfort is that in all of this, God will bless you. God will bless you. God promises to bless the one who walks with him in this way. Look at verse 6 with me, "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." He'll lay the path forward. It may seem crooked and uncertain as you stand on it looking ahead, but God will guide your steps. God will provide. God will deal with those relationships in his time. This is what he does. He loves us. He cares for us. He saved us to bless us. He could do nothing other than make our paths straight in the end.

And so my friend, I ask the question, what word will you use, "but" or "therefore"? The Puritan commentator Matthew Henry said it this way, and with this I close, he said, "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 be ever toward God. Those that put themselves under a divine guidance shall always have the benefit of it."

Let's pray together.

Father, bless these dear people with that intimate knowledge of God, and may you help each one say in light of these revealed certainties, "therefore I will trust the LORD." In Jesus' name, amen.

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