

THE LIFE OF TRUST

A sermon delivered by Batsell Barrett Baxter on August 22, 1965 at the Hillsboro Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, and heard over radio station WLAC at 8:05 P.M.

We live in a dangerous, precarious world. This is not more so than in previous generations, in fact, it is far less so. However, in spite of man's efforts for many generations, our world is still dangerous and precarious. Accidents of many kinds can suddenly and without warning take our lives or cause us to spend costly, painful months in the hospital. Diseases of many kinds are constantly near at hand. In spite of all that we can do to prevent accidents and illnesses, both are still very common. In spite of the building of many hospitals, the development of many drugs, and all of the other preventive and curative activities of modern medicine, we still are plagued with disease.

Financial disaster is also very common and very real in our world. The loss of possessions, unemployment and inadequacy of income constitute a burden to the masses of mankind. In spite of all that we can do to save for old age, to insure against death, illness, and disaster, and to cushion the shock of financial loss, we still are vulnerable. Nature itself also adds to the uncertainties of our world through storms, earthquakes, fire, and the like. Ultimately, each of us faces death. When all of these are considered, it is obvious that ours is a precarious world, in spite of all that man has been able to do through the centuries to prevent disaster and to prepare for disaster.

Something More Is Needed

Along with all the precautions and preparations that man can make, something more is needed. Each of us must develop an attitude of trust in the Lord that will undergird his life. It is certainly not wrong for us to try to avoid accidents, carefully insure our lives against economic loss, and do all of the other things mentioned, for the Lord expects us to do all that we can to protect and sustain our lives. However, when we have made all of the preparations that we can make our world is still a dangerous, precarious world. In addition, we need to develop the attitude of yielding our lives completely to the Lord and leaving our affairs wholly in his hands. There are many situations beyond our control. It is only by yielding ourselves completely to the Lord and by trusting in his constant care that we can ever have the peace of mind that we desire. The life of trust is our only real security.

Many years ago Ashley S. Johnson wrote a little book entitled, *The Life of Trust*, in which he said on one of the early pages, "There is a critical point in the life of trust which is difficult to pass. On this side of the line there are doubts, hesitation, and uncertainty; on the other, trust, unselfish service and peace." (P. 11).

It is a little like when a person learns to swim. At first he holds solidly to the edge of the pool. He will walk out part way, but will not get far from something to which to hold. However, there comes a time when he launches out in the shallow water and swims for a few feet. Then he does it again and again and again. After a time he no longer needs to stay in the shallow water or near the edge of the pool but can swim in the deep water. Similarly, in our lives there is a tendency to hold on to the material things of life. Ultimately, however, when we realize how transient these material things are and how solid are the promises of God, we launch out into the deep, committing our lives fully to the Lord and trusting the Lord to take care of us in every emergency. Reading again from Ashley S. Johnson, "After reflection and prayer we decided to change our plan somewhat. We had a home and our real needs were neither numerous nor pressing. We therefore decided to put ourselves, our possessions, our earnings, where they really belonged, although we, like the majority of Christians, had not realized it. In other words, we went into business for the Lord and took him as a partner. I fear you will, if you do not understand the word on this point, think this irreverent, but this is just what we did. We resolved to put in, as our part of the capital, ourselves--body, soul, spirit, life, earnings, and honor--and trust the promises of the Lord for the rest. This was, although I had been preaching successfully for over fifteen years, a new experience to me; indeed, it was like starting life over again." (pp. 6-7).

Promises of God

The wisdom of trusting in the Lord is one of the dominant themes of the entire Bible. It is demonstrated in the lives of many people and recommended by the writers of the scriptures over and over again. For example, in his thirty-fourth Psalm David wrote, "I sought Jehovah, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears ... This poor man cried, and Jehovah heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Oh taste and see that Jehovah is good: blessed is the man that taketh refuge in him. Oh fear Jehovah, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him ... The eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry ... Jehovah redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that take refuge in him shall be condemned." (Ps. 34:4, 6-9, 15, 22)

God's promises are also prominently mentioned in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Romans, "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose ... If God is for us, who is against us? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or

sword? ... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:28, 31, 35-39).

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, “But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt. 6:33). In his letter to the Philippians Paul said, “In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus ... I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth (Phil. 4:6-7, 11, 13). These and many other passages indicate that the Lord will take care of those who commit their lives to him.

### An Example From the Old Testament

A concrete example of the great blessings that come to those that trust explicitly in the Lord is that of King Hezekiah of the Old Testament. His story begins, “Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother’s name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah: and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan (a piece of brass). He trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. For he clave to Jehovah; he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which Jehovah commanded Moses. And Jehovah was with him; whither so ever he went forth he prospered; and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. He smote the Philistines unto Gaza and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city.” (II Kings 18:1-8).

Here we have a young twenty-five year old king beginning to reign at a time when Judah was a tiny little buffer state between mighty Egypt and mighty Assyria. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up against Samaria and carried the people into captivity. His armies then came to Judah, but he died and Sennacherib took his place before Judah had felt the pressure of the siege. Sennacherib sent his spokesman Rabshekeh to convince Hezekiah and the people that it was futile to stand against mighty Assyria. In his speech Rabshekeh asked, “What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? ... Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou hast rebelled against me? Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust in him. But if ye say unto me, We trust in Jehovah our God; is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem? Now, therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. Hear ye the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he will not be able to deliver you out of his hand; neither let Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah, saying, Jehovah will surely deliver us, and this day shall ye not be given unto the hand of the king of Assyria ... Make you peace with me, and come out to me; and eat ye everyone of his vine, and everyone of his fig-tree, and drink ye everyone of the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and of honey, that ye may live and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, Jehovah will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, or Hena, or Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of my hand that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?” (II Kings 18:19-23, 33-35).

### To The House of The Lord

With this ultimatum before him, king Hezekiah turned to the Lord, “And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Jehovah.” He sent messengers to Isaiah and from him they brought back this word, “Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land ...”

Immediately king Hezekiah received a letter from Sennacherib, “And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up unto the house of Jehovah, and spread it before Jehovah. And Hezekiah prayed before Jehovah, and said, Oh Jehovah, the God of Israel, that sittest above the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, Oh Jehovah, and hear; open thine eyes, Oh Jehovah, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, wherewith he hath sent him to defy the living God. Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. Therefore, Oh Jehovah our God, save thou us, I beseech thee, out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou Jehovah art God alone. Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, Thus saith

Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed unto me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard thee.” (II Kings 19:1-6, 7, 14-20).

Immediately upon receiving such assurances, Hezekiah went out before the People and said, “Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid nor dismayed, for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him, for there is a greater with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is Jehovah our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.” (II Chron. 32:7-8).

The story closes as Sennacherib brings his host and besieges Jerusalem. Here is the final event of his campaign. “And it came to pass that night, that the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred four score and five thousand: and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.” (II Kings 19:35-37).

### Conclusion

From the beginning of time God has been concerned for the welfare of his children. Those who have followed his directions and have trusted in him have been blessed. King Hezekiah is only one of the many examples of the protective care that God has lavished on those who are his. Isaiah wrote, “Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in Jehovah forever; for in Jehovah, even Jehovah, is an everlasting rock.” (Is. 26:3-4,)

As wise man we need to protect our lives in whatever way we can. We need to insulate against foreseeable dangers and avoid death and destruction whenever possible. However, we need so to commit our lives to the Lord that we will not be upset no matter what may come. When we have yielded our wills to the Lord and have obeyed his commands to the best of our ability, we have the assurance that he will take care of us in this world and in the world to come. The life of trust is the answer to the problems of a dangerous, precarious world.