

“The Trustworthiness of God”

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by

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1. The title of the lesson this morning = “The Trustworthiness of God”
  - a. As human beings, our safety and security are very important to us.
  - b. As Americans, we have traditionally felt invincible – invulnerable to the attacks and destruction that the rest of the world fears.
  - c. Then came the 9/11 terrorism on American soil, and suddenly we realized that we are not as safe from attack as we thought.
  - d. Then came Hurricane Katrina, and suddenly we realized that we are not as safe from natural disaster as we thought.
  - e. Now the stock market has crashed, and suddenly we’re realizing that we’re not as financially secure as we thought.
2. The Bible teaches us that all perceived safety and security, that’s not based on God, is an illusion.
  - a. Let’s turn to Zephaniah 2...
    - i. Here God is pronouncing judgment on Israel’s neighbors; Assyria in particular.
  - b. Zephaniah 2:15 = “This is the carefree city that lived in safety. She said to herself, “I am, and there is none besides me.” What a ruin she has become, a lair for wild beasts! All who pass by her scoff and shake their fists.”
    - i. Whether Babylon, or Assyria, or Persia, or Greece, or Rome, or America – all the kingdoms of the world eventually fall.
      1. Only the Kingdom of God is eternal – totally safe and totally secure!
    - ii. That’s why there’s rising fear, and even some panic in America today.
      1. Because so many Americans are basing their security on the wrong kingdom.
        - a. Q: What does it say about us Americans when Christmas shoppers recently trampled a worker to death at Wal-Mart to save a few dollars?
        - b. Q: What does it say about us Americans when two men shoot each other to death at a Toys-R-Us?
    - iii. As Christians, we must not allow fear and panic to lead us into sin! (Whether overt violence or subtle selfishness that stops us from giving to others).

- iv. We've got to be different!
  - 1. We've got to show the world a better way!
- 3. Transition => This morning, I want us to overcome our fears by meditating on the trustworthiness of God.
- 4. Let's turn to Daniel 3... (Some overlap with Alex Hamilton's lesson; but it's a relevant subject)
  - a. The book of Daniel is about "trusting in God":
    - i. Chap 1: the king orders one kind of food, and Daniel orders another, and Daniel is miraculously healthy and vindicated by God.
    - ii. Chap 2: the King has a dream that no one can interpret, so Daniel prays to God, and God enables Daniel to interpret the dream.
    - iii. Chap 6: Daniel is thrown into the lion's den, but the hungry lions don't even touch him, because Daniel prays and trusts in God!
- 5. Daniel 3 (all)
  - a. These guys trusted in God because they knew God!
  - b. Specifically, they knew 3 things about God that we must know if we are going to be able to really trust him:
    - i. God is able
    - ii. God is willing
    - iii. God is wise
- 6. God is Able (verse 17 = "The God we serve is able...")
  - a. Q: How "able" to protect us, how "powerful" is God?
    - i. The bible says: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1)."
    - ii. Q: Ever stopped to think what that means?
      - 1. One ton = 2,000 pounds
      - 2. The Earth weighs approximately 6 sextillion tons (That's a 6 with twenty one zeros after it)
      - 3. The closest star to us, our Sun, is as big as 1 million earths!
      - 4. A Galaxy has ~100 billion stars!
      - 5. These numbers are tough to grasp...
        - a. Q: How big is a billion?
        - b. A: "If a billion kids made a human tower, they would stand up past the moon."
        - c. "If you sat down to count from one to a billion, you would be counting for 95 years."
        - d. "If you found a goldfish bowl large enough to hold a billion goldfish, it would be as big as a stadium."
          - i. ...You get the idea... (a billion is a lot ☺)
  - 6. Review: A Galaxy has ~100 billion stars!
    - a. Now get this: there are over 100 billion Galaxies in the Universe!
    - b. Q: What does that mean?

- c. A: That means that: there are more stars in the sky than grains of sand in the whole world!" (I think Alex said "3x as much" actually)
  - 7. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."
    - a. God is POWERFUL!
      - i. M.P. = He's powerful enough to protect you & I!
        - 1. So, there's no reason to be afraid!
- 7. God is also willing (refer to Daniel 3:17) "...he will rescue us from your hand..."
  - a. God's track-record shows that he is willing and able to rescue us from every danger we face.
    - i. Joshua 21:43-45
    - ii. Numbers 23:19 = "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"
      - 1. Rhetorical question – because God is trustworthy!
    - iii. Psalm 77 (all)
    - iv. God's track-record shows that God is in control!
      - 1. God is in control of events in this world
        - a. Proverbs 21:1
          - i. your boss
          - ii. your parents
          - iii. your teacher, or professor at school
          - iv. the government (refer to Rom 13:1-5)
        - b. Basically, anyone who has authority over your life!
          - i. (God guides their hearts concerning their interactions w/ you!)
      - 2. God is in control of events in the church
        - a. Colossians 1:18
          - i. Jesus is the head and we are the body.
            - 1. We are inextricably bound together!
            - 2. Innate care! ("after all, no one ever hated their own body, but he feeds and cares for it (Eph 5)")
            - 3. M.P. = Jesus leads the church!
  - 3. God is in control of what your enemies can and can't do to you.
    - a. Job 1:6-12
    - b. John 19:10-11a
  - 4. God is even in control of the mistakes of good-hearted people in your life.
    - a. Genesis 40:20-23 (Joseph)
  - 5. God is in control of everything in your life!
    - a. Luke 12:6-7
      - i. So, do not fear! You are valuable to God!

- ii. (Q: How do you treat things of value? Carefully!)
8. TRANS =) Q: But, if God is able and willing to do me good all the time, then why do bad things happen to me so often?
- a. A: So many reasons!
    - i. To test us
    - ii. refine us
    - iii. humble us
    - iv. draw us...
    - v. Many more reasons we won't know till we get to heaven, but we can trust God, because God is wise!
    - vi. This verse helps me: Genesis 50:19-21
      1. Some other helpful verses:
        - a. Ecclesiastes 7:14
        - b. Lamentations 3:37-39
        - c. Isaiah 38:17
    - vii. Note: for excellent material on "the problem of pain and suffering", read Lee Strobel's book, "The Case For Faith".
  - b. Q: How wise (intelligent) is God?
  - c. Think about how intelligent God must be to have created life on earth...
  - d. (Dr. Hugh Ross, a Ph.d. in Astronomy, lists 24 examples of how God has fine-tuned the earth for biological life in his book, "Creator and the Cosmos")
  - e. Let's consider just a few of these:
    - i. "The universe is expanding at just the right rate of speed for life to exist. If it were expanding any faster, then galaxies, stars and planets could not form. If it were expanding any slower, then the universe would have already collapsed by now, prior to any star formation. This rate of speed cannot differ by more than one part in 1,055 from the actual rate. How difficult and delicate a balance is this to achieve? An analogy that still does not come close to describing the precarious nature of this balance would be to imagine a million pencils all simultaneously positioned upright on their points on a smooth glass surface, with no external supports."
      1. That's just some idea of the delicate balance that God has struck in his creation of the universe!
    - ii. The tilt of the earth upon its axis: if this tilt were just a little bit more or less, it would either be freezing on earth or scorching hot – too extreme to sustain life as we know it.
    - iii. If the thickness of the earth's crust were much thicker or thinner than it actually is, the oxygen content in the air would be either too small or too great to sustain life.
    - iv. Even the amount of earthquake activity is crucial. If it were much greater, too many life-forms would be destroyed. But if it were much less, the oceans would soon die out for lack of recycling of nutrients.

- v. Other crucial forces on earth include:
    1. the strength of the magnetic field
    2. the rotation of the earth
    3. the ozone level in the atmosphere
    4. and the earth's gravitational interaction with the moon.
  - vi. No wonder the bible says in Proverbs 3:19: "By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place."
    1. Point = God orchestrates both good and bad for our ultimate good and for his glory. (Never mutually exclusive; always interwoven.)
  - f. God's ways are sometimes mysterious to us (we don't understand why)
    - i. (Rom 11:33 = "Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out.")
    - ii. Especially when God's will involves personal tragedy.
    - iii. Consider the lives of the apostles James and Peter:
      1. were best friends before Jesus called them (Luke 5:10)
      2. were both called to be disciples at the same time (Matt 4:18-20)
      3. were both part of Jesus' inner circle (J's 3 best friends!)
      4. Then, Acts 12 tells us that:
        - a. James is put to death by Herod (vs 2)
        - b. Peter is miraculously saved the same fate by an angel (vs7)
      5. Put yourself in the shoes of Peter's wife, and then James' wife:
        - a. if you're Peter's wife, you're rejoicing
        - b. if you're James' wife, you're grieving
        - c. But in both cases, God's will was done.
          - i. Q: Why?
          - ii. A: Because God knows best!
            1. Romans 8:28 = "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him..."
            2. Therefore, 1 Thes 5:16-18 = "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances..."
  - g. Q: What happens to your faith:
    - i. during times of bad news?
    - ii. times of challenge?
    - iii. times of adversity?
    - iv. And especially times of tragedy?
    - v. M.P. = We must learn to trust God –even when we don't understand.
      1. Prov 3:5-7
9. Let's close with a great passage of reassurance and comfort:

10. Isaiah 41:8-14 = "But you, O Israel, my servant,  
 Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
 you descendants of Abraham my friend,  
 9 I took you from the ends of the earth,  
 from its farthest corners I called you.  
 I said, 'You are my servant';  
 I have chosen you and have not rejected you.  
 10 So do not fear, for I am with you;  
 do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
 I will strengthen you and help you;  
 I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.  
 11 "All who rage against you  
 will surely be ashamed and disgraced;  
 those who oppose you  
 will be as nothing and perish.  
 12 Though you search for your enemies,  
 you will not find them.  
 Those who wage war against you  
 will be as nothing at all.  
 13 For I am the LORD, your God,  
 who takes hold of your right hand  
 and says to you, Do not fear;  
 I will help you.  
 14 Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob,  
 O little Israel,  
 for I myself will help you," declares the LORD,  
 your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

Close:

-Brothers and sisters:

1. Times are tough... (the economy, world affairs, always challenges in our personal lives...)
2. But let's not be afraid!
3. Because our God is:
  1. powerful enough to create a universe with over 100 billion galaxies,
  2. intelligent enough to precisely fine-tune our earth to sustain life as we know it,
  3. and loving enough to promise he will take care of us.
    - a. That's a God who is ABSOLUTELY TRUSTWORTHY!