



Proverbs 3:1-12

ALL OR NOTHING

Many years ago an Episcopalian bishop was sailing to Europe on one of the great ocean liners. When he got on board, he was told he would have to share his room with another passenger. He checked out the room, then went up to the information desk and asked if he could put his gold watch and wallet in the ship's safe. The Bishop explained that he didn't do this ordinarily, but he had been to his cabin and didn't like the looks of his room-mate. The clerk took the valuables and said, "No problem, I'll be glad to take care of them for you. Your room-mate has already been here and left his stuff for the same reason."

Trust. It's an important part of life. We have a God who has made us as social beings and so much of life involves trusting others; or being wary of people who we don't trust. We come across trust in all areas of life.

Trust can be trivial – when I sat on this chair I trusted that MRBC do not put out dodgy chairs for their congregation to sit on. If I suspect a chair is dodgy, I'll check it. But how many of us will check the chairs here before we sit on them? No – we don't because we trust.

But on a more serious level, so much of harmonious life is based on trust. In family life, a good marriage is based on trust. And when that trust breaks down, we know how painful that can be – and some here I know have experienced that.

Or when a friendship breaks down because we find we cannot trust our friends – now we've all been let down there too. That person we confided in – who then broadcasted our business to the world! The person whom we relied upon who let us down when we needed help. And it goes on. And we know how hurtful it is when that happens.

Even worse when trust breaks down between Christians or when people who are not believers find they can't trust Christians. As many of you know, there are people in my wife's family who have been turned off the faith because of the way some Christians have treated us over the years. And I know that many of you can quote similar instances from your own lives. And that's tragic.

And the problem is, that when trust breaks down, we find it difficult to forgive and difficult to trust other people who come into our lives who we can trust and who we should trust. And lack of trust can have devastating consequences:

Jamie Buckingham tells about a pilot in Ecuador who was involved in a plane crash because of a passenger's fear. The wheels of the heavily loaded Cessna 206 had barely left the wet jungle airstrip when the passenger, sitting in the co-pilot's seat, panicked. The pilot had the throttle pushed all the way forward to the firewall. He had done this many times before and was confident they would clear the huge trees towering at the end of the little airstrip.

The passenger, an American who had been visiting the Indians, had never taken off from a jungle airstrip. Looking up, all he could see were the on-rushing trees filling the windscreen. Why doesn't the pilot pull back on the controls? he thought in terror. Fearful they were going to crash, he tried to help. He grabbed the wheel and pulled back. That was the worst thing he could have done. A plane needs to build up airspeed before you point the nose skyward. Otherwise, the plane will stall.

The plane did stall. It pitched up, lost critical airspeed and began to settle toward the jungle below. The pilot wrenched the controls back and tried desperately to get the nose down. But it was too late. As the airplane reached stalling speed, the heavy engine pulled the nose over sharply, and the craft spun to earth. By God's grace, no one was killed, but all were injured because of a passenger's lack of trust in his pilot. Jamie Buckingham, PARABLES (Lake Mary, Florida: Creation House, 1991.)

Which I guess gets us to where I'm going with this passage from Proverbs this morning. At the heart of many believers' problems with trust is not just a problem with trusting people – but with trusting God.

How come Christians can end up not trusting God?

- unanswered prayer
- difficulty and problems in life
- disappointment

They may often blame God for not doing anything about it or not feeling He was there. If you were here last week you'll already have realised that even if as believers we think God is far away, He's in each of us by His Spirit. He's not just close – He's intimately close. But even the most intimate Person can seem a million miles away if we turn our backs or in denial of Him. *“Lord give me eyes that I may see what You are doing, my ears to hear what You are saying and the wisdom to obey You”*

And here's my focus verses for this morning.

Prov 3:5 (TEV) Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. 6 Remember the LORD in everything you do, and he will show you the right way.

Maybe you know them in the NIV version:

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight (or He will direct your paths.)

It says the same. It's a command: trust in the Lord with all your heart. Why that command? Because in whatever situation in life, we can trust God and the writer of the Proverbs gives us his wise counsel. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart”. Notice the words “with all your heart”. It means just that – wholeheartedly because if it's half-heartedly, then we are either trusting our own judgement or someone or something else.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know.

Why do we feel let down by God and don't trust Him? Could it be because we are not trusting Him with all our heart and following our own judgement? If we are honest with ourselves then maybe we are like that passenger in the plane that crashed: we grab the controls instead of trusting the pilot to do his job. And when we've crashed we blame God for not being a good pilot. It's a case of all or nothing.

If we want to avoid the crash, we need to learn to trust God implicitly. Even though the winds and waves of life may then buffet us and we may get to feel a bit flight-sick with life: we will not crash if we rely on the pilot and not ourselves. I found this interesting story about a pioneering missionary to the New Hebrides in the South Pacific: a Scotsman called John Gibson Paton:

When John Paton was translating the Bible for a South Seas island tribe, he discovered that they had no word for trust or faith. One day a native who had been running hard came into the missionary's house, flopped himself in a large chair and said, "It's good to rest my whole weight on this chair." "That's it," said Paton. "I'll translate faith as 'resting one's whole weight on God.'"

Resting my whole weight on God. The writer of the Proverbs adds more: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know.* If you were here last Sunday evening, we looked at the way God led the people of Israel out of Egypt and to anyone with common sense, the whole thing looked like total madness. They left Egypt and they were trapped by the Philistines on one side, the Egyptians on the other and they ended up hemmed in by the Red Sea. God's leading did not make any sense. There was no common sense in it. They were trapped next to the sea with no escape.

Of course, we know they weren't. But we read that the people willingly obeyed where God led them. What made them so trusting: God led them forward by means of a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night and the people knew that God was with them. That gave them confidence in a nerve-racking situation. The rest is history and we are going to look at the crossing of the Red Sea this evening.

This reminds me of a well-known verse in Isaiah: *'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways,' says the LORD. 'For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so far are My thoughts above your thoughts and My ways above your ways.'*” *Isaiah 55:8, 9.* Let's be honest, God's ways are sometimes bizarre. What's spiritual common sense is quite different to ours and we often only see the sense in it a long time after the event. Lord, give me eyes to see what You are doing, ears to hear You and wisdom to obey!

The Israelites were confident because they knew the presence and the will of God with them. What about our confidence as God's people and as a church. Let me ask a question? How much do we experience the presence and have a knowledge of the will of God. If you are believer the Spirit of God is in you. But how much time do you actually spend communing with Him? In the end, the amount of time we spend individually or as a church will say something about our trust in God. In general, people and churches who don't think that prayer works, usually don't pray very much.

If we were to be honest with ourselves, we may well come to the conclusion that we have got into messes because we've not spent time with Him. When difficulties came we tried to work it out without Him and expected Him to rescue us when it all went wrong. When things don't make sense, do we cling on to God or decide to go our way.

It leads us to the next bit in verse 6: *Remember the LORD in everything you do, and he will show you the right way. We've had the negative; now here's the positive.*

OK, so if we're doing things the wrong way, maybe we should start doing them the right way. Here's the key: *Remember the LORD in everything you do.* The NIV puts it like this: *in all your ways acknowledge him.* Here's our second all. In all your ways. Not just a bit of this and that should we remember God. Not the good bits, but all the bits. It's all or nothing. If we don't acknowledge God in all our ways, we may well not see the path ahead and get bogged down where we are. It's all or nothing.

In all your ways remember Him and he will direct your paths – He'll straighten them, make them smoother for you. It reminds me of Roman Roads. The great victories of Rome and the economic benefits of Empire were wrought through the excellent Roman roads. They were straight as a die, well built, well-defended and got you to where you were going. But they went straight over steep hills irrespective of the terrain. They got you there but some of the hills were steep, the fords deep and the distances long – but they got you there. He will direct your paths – He'll make them straight, He'll get you there.

We are never promised an easy or a smooth pilgrimage through this earth – there will be difficult gradients, rivers to cross, barbarians to face – but we have a God who can get us there if we acknowledge Him in all our ways and make sure He's there on the journey with us, straightening our paths.

So we should expect the stresses and strains of life that others suffer. We will also experience the stresses and strains of being in a spiritual battle. We will know opposition, disappointment and even defeat in our lives. But *in all you ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.*

So if your way is difficult this morning. If you are feeling down and defeated. If you are frustrated and don't know the way forward in your faith – then do what you need to do – *in ALL your ways acknowledge Him.* He's here. His Spirit is in you. Recognise Him, talk to Him. Pour your heart out to Him – and He will make you path straight.

We are coming to Communion. If we have realised this morning that we are not trusting God with all our heart, this is an opportunity to find His forgiveness and to give us the ability and resolve to trust Him fully. We know that we have fallen short of acknowledging Him in all our ways which is why so often we are not clear where our path should be. As we come around the table again and find the reason why God is so trustworthy – that He has shown His love and care for us in giving His own dear Son for our redemption. He has paid an enormous price so that we may spend eternity with Him and He wants us to know His presence with Him day by day – the Holy Spirit is in each person who knows Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

This is the time and this is the place say Lord I will trust You with all of my heart and not lean on my own understanding. Give me that strength and assurance of Your love and presence to do that.

Yes Lord, I will acknowledge you in all my ways, please direct my paths so that I may walk in a way that honours You.

Lord, give me spiritual eyes that I may see Your ways, ears that I may hear Your voice and the wisdom to obey You.

Amen

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Scripture Quote NIV and TEV*