

Trusting The Lord Through Difficulties

I. One of my favorite song writers in our hymnal, Isaac Watts, is quoted as having said “Learning to trust is one of life’s most difficult tasks.”

A. I’m not sure exactly what circumstances prompted Mr. Watts to share this opinion, but I must say that I’m inclined to agree; although if I could add my two cents I would say that the difficulties in learning to trust are:

1. First, *learning to place our trust in the right place*
2. Second, *learning to trust when it counts*; Which is our subject of discussion for this study

B. What I mean by the second is that often times it seems as though our trust works a certain way:

1. When there doesn’t seem to be very much placed at risk, it is perhaps easier to trust than in a situation where much is a stake.
2. It may be easy to trust when everything is calm or when a situation doesn’t seem all that demanding, but very difficult to have trust or confidence when we’ve been faced with great obstacles that we cannot see a way around.
3. So again we say, *it is difficult to learn to trust when it matters most.*

II. This problematic relationship with trust is the same way that we remember the closest Disciples of Jesus; they were often found at one of these two extremes. Either they were displaying great levels of trust or they showed a troubling lack of confidence.

A. Examples of Trust/Confidence:

1. Early on in Jesus’ ministry when He was most popular with the crowds, the disciples were excited and anxious to be with Jesus and at the center of all the excitement and attention; sometimes seeking Jesus out in his private and secluded moments to bring Him back for more teaching: **(Mark 1:34-38)**
2. When Jesus sent the out 70 of His disciples to preach the Kingdom, the reported back to Him with great excitement in **Luke 10:17** over all the great things they had been able to do: *Even the Demons are subject to us in your name!*

3. Even in **Mark 10:37**, when James and John came and asked to sit on the Lord's right and left hand, you could say they were showing trust or confidence: As Jesus asked them if they could drink the cup He had to drink, and be baptized with His baptism, they confidently asserted they could!

B. ***And yet as we've mentioned*** their trust was prone to vanish as well:

1. In **Mark 4:37** when the disciples found themselves in the middle of a great storm on the sea, they wake Jesus in vs **38** asking "do You not care that we are perishing?" After stilling the sea, Jesus asks why they were afraid: Did they still have no faith?
2. In **Mark 8**, when there were four thousand present to hear Jesus speak, and He once again felt compassion for the hunger of the crowds, the disciples asked in vs **4**: *Where would they find anything in this desolate place to feed all of these hungry people! You practically want to scream the same place they got all of that food to feed 5000 people and pick up 12 baskets of leftovers!!!!*
3. **And perhaps most notable** in our memories, their desertion of trust in the Garden, as **Matthew 26:56** records that all of His disciples left Him and fled:

C. **I imagine that most people can relate** to the disciples in one way or another: It isn't that we don't want to have great trust in the Lord, but unfortunately, sometimes we can let the difficulty of the situation undermine the confidence that we should feel.

III. I Want us to turn our attention to another situation where a group of Jesus' disciples were placed in a situation where trusting the Lord could prove to be difficult:

A. Read John 11:1-3

1. In these first few verses of the chapter we are told a great deal about the situation:
 - a) We have a man named Lazarus who has come down with some sort of sickness, and although we are not told exactly how severe it is, it was bad enough that they felt the attention of Jesus was required

- b) We are told that Jesus has a special relationship with this family: Mary who is described as the one who anointed Jesus with oil, and wiped His feet with her hair:
 - (1) Martha her sister is mentioned as well; we recall her and her sister hosting a feast for Jesus in **Luke 10:38-42**, and although she had to receive a mild rebuke, her devotion to the Lord is clear;
 - (2) And finally, Lazarus himself, although not much is told of him elsewhere, we are told all we need to know in verse 3: ***“he whom you love is sick”***.
This sentiment is confirmed by the author in **v5**
- c) This was a special family to Jesus; they loved Him and He them; their trust in Him is obvious from the fact that it was Jesus they sent for in their time of need.

B. But their hopes for Jesus to come and heal Lazarus from his sickness did not go as they had planned, or even in a way that they might have imagined: **Lazarus Died.**

- i. Jesus did not come immediately, **v6** telling us that he staid two days longer in the place that he was. By the time Jesus did arrive in Bethany the text says that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days (v 17), and Mary and Martha are being comforted by their friends and neighbors over the death of their brother: ***This did not make sense***
 - a) **Verse 20** tell us that when Martha heard Jesus was coming She went out to meet Him, but Mary stayed in the house: When Martha meet Jesus outside the village of Bethany, she said to Him in **v21**; Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even know I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you!
 - b) When Mary finally comes out to meet Jesus she fell at his feet in verse **32** and she also said to Him; “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died:
 - c) In verse **37** while others took notice of Jesus weeping for Lazarus, someone in that crowd of weeping people said “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?”

2. **And up to that point in the story** that is probably a good description of how many people there felt: Here was a group of disciples who were special to Jesus. This family both loved and was loved by the Lord, and in their time of need they asked for help: But Jesus waited; and when He came these disciples were struggling to understand why.
 - a) The words of Martha, and to some extent the unnamed person in the crowd, probably best sum up how many people today find themselves feeling: They trust the Lord; they believe that Jesus is the Christ, they know that God listens to Him and that He has the power to fix any situation; and yet, in spite of that knowledge, **they still find it difficult to hold on to that trust.**
 - (1) They don't understand; Perhaps the Lord seems distant, that He is still waiting for two days; ***The difficult of their situation is working to undermine their confidence.***
3. **But we know the rest** of the story:
 - a) Jesus commanded in vs 39 to "Remove the stone". Martha, still struggling to understand objects: He has been dead for four days! Surely there will be a stench by this time.
 - b) But in verse 43 when Jesus called out "Lazarus, Come Forth!" and a man who had died came walking out of the tomb; Mary, Martha, and even that person from the crowd knew that their trust had not been misplaced.

IV. In the remaining portion of our study, let's briefly draw out a few lessons about Trust from John 11

A. Lessons in Difficult Trust:

1. **Trials try to tell us that the Love of Christ makes little difference** in our lives:
 - a) If Christ really loved Lazarus as much as the text claims, then why was Lazarus sick in the first place? Jesus staid with this family, He ate with this family; they were friends: How could the Lord let something like this happen to someone He loved?

- b) If He really loved Lazarus, why did he not immediately get up and make a straight path to Bethany? Or, perhaps as is demonstrated elsewhere, just speak the word even from a far off distance and heal Lazarus that way? Sitting around and seemingly doing nothing doesn't seem like love.
 - c) The truth is, **Christ's love makes all the difference** in our lives: As **John 3:16** states in was the Love of God that sent His Son to die for us so that we might live:
 - (1) **Romans 5:8** reminds us that this Love was demonstrated when Christ died for us while we were yet sinners:
 - d) The Lord's love is not demonstrated by keepings us in perfect health, which would essentially strand us on this Earth where sin is rampant; Christ's love in demonstrated in that when we die, a price has been paid so that we can live again.
- 2. It can be hard to Trust when it seems like Christ's promise aren't true:**
Read verse 4
- a) Jesus said that Lazarus had a sickness that wasn't unto death: And yet Lazarus died:
 - (1) Knowing the rest of the story, we know what Jesus meant. But to those who were with Him up to that point, they surely had to find it difficult to trust following those words:
 - (2) But in spite of what we would call overwhelming difficulties; Jesus' Word still came true:
 - b) What about you and I? Do the Lord's promises of peace, joy, contentment seem like they aren't coming true? It may be that we ourselves have some growth to do, or it may be that we are at a point in our lives like these Disciples, where God's providence is working to set up the end of a particular chapter in our lives where we will see that His Word is true.
- 3. When our lives are difficult, it can seem that Christ's instructions or commands don't make sense: Read John 11:7-16**
- a) Nothing about Jesus' approach to this made sense:

- (1) First He decides to stay where He is for two days: Perhaps those with Him attributed this to the threat on His life:
 - (2) But then, He decides that they should go back to Judea: His disciples remind Him: This is the place where they are trying to stone you to death!!
 - (3) Then with His talk about Lazarus sleeping, but not sleeping, bend dead but not dead; they were thoroughly confused:
 - (4) I don't know if it was trust or exasperation, but Thomas essentially says in vs 16, If Jesus is determined to go see a dead man, and in turn wind up being a dead man, then lets just all go with Him and at least we will all be dead together!
- b) As Jesus had already stated** in v 4, what was happening was for the Glory of God:
- (1) The situation played out like it did to further God's plans:
 - (a) The Resurrection of Lazarus achieved two important results:
 - i) First, it brought many of the Jews to a point of belief in Jesus
 - ii) Second, it pushed the Pharisees to continue their plan to kill Jesus
 - iii) In every way, God knew what He was doing:
 - (2) We will find ourselves in situations where trusting in God doesn't seem to make sense: And following that path may not achieve the exact result we thought we wanted: But what we have to remember is that God is in control: and ultimately, whatever the outcome is, it will bring Glory to God: