

Persuaded of the assurance of your salvation

2 Timothy 1:6-12

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. 2 Timothy 1:12 (KJV)

Who can we trust?

Do you wonder who you can trust to day? Ever heard the old adage “safe as the bank”? Not any more, a quick look at the headlines suggests that it is not the banks we can trust. “Royal Bank of Scotland reports largest ever annual loss of \$34 billion dollars” screams the headline¹. Imagine that - 34 billion dollars lost - that is \$1500 for every Australian! We see one bad headline after the other: “profits slump”, “job cuts deepen”, “crisis spreads beyond banks”. Now that’s a worry, because up to now it’s been the other way around - businesses go bust before banks, but it’s now the banks going bust. Or “Money man says half of world’s wealth gone²”. Now, this is not some joke - the chief executive of a private equity company Blackstone Group suggested to Reuters that about 40% of the world’s earth had been destroyed in the global economic crisis? However, who is the “money man” and is he trustworthy. Is this some cover up and more is lost than indicated?

Some of this is a bit far removed from us - our banks are safe - or are they? The ABC³ reported on Friday “ANZ to cut 500 jobs, send them to India” - why - to save money! What about the headline; “Tens of thousands of Australians are heading for a superannuation crisis” from Business Sunday?⁴ Or “A superannuation crisis of faith: *Australians have taken to superannuation like ducks to water and it’s now the largest household asset after the family home. But the recent shock of losing billions of dollars from super balances has left many people afraid and untrusting*” stated the Herald Sun on 23rd February 2009⁵. A crisis of faith! What does this mean? Or “Mitsubishi shuts its doors in Adelaide and 500 employees lose their jobs (March 2008)”.

What about individuals. In 2008 a Reader’s Digest survey found that Australians trusted Fiona Wood, a prominent doctor in the field of burns treatment, more than any other prominent Australian. Ian Frazer, also a prominent medical researcher, came in second. In

¹ <http://www.nowpublic.com/tech-biz/rbs-reports-largest-ever-annual-loss-us-34-billion-uk> (accessed 14/3/2009)

² <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=91609> (accessed 14/3/2009)

³ For our US friends ABC is the Australian Broadcasting Commissions, a government funded media outlet. - see www.abc.net.au (accessed 14/3/2009)

⁴ <http://businessunday.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=44648> (accessed 14/3/2009)

⁵ <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/money/story/0,26887,25092879-5015813,00.html> (accessed 14/3/2009)

2005 Olivia Newton-John came second. We can understand why someone who develops a treatment that saves life can be trusted - there is clearly evidence of their trust. What about a singer and actor. I suspect the latter is based more on feelings than reality. Olivia Newton-John may be a nice person, but why trust her? What evidence do we have that she is trustworthy except she has suffered from breast cancer and we feel compassion plus she has a warm and friendly face and appears to speak well⁶. Wayne Carey (anyone remember him?) and Rodney Alder were placed 99th and 100th. Of professions, the ambulance officer and fire fighter were placed first and second, teachers 11th with politicians and telemarketers the least trusted!⁷ In 2005 interestingly mothers were placed third. Fathers were placed after doctors and pharmacists at eighth⁸. Australians clearly don't trust banks with St George being the first on the list and ranked 101 in 2005. Nor could I find God or Jesus Christ on the list.

Trusting Self

The problem with trust is that things fail. Everone we trust will fail some time. We trust as long as we believe we can derive a benefit from that trust. A broken trust is difficult to bridge: ask any marriage councillor dealing with dishonesty in marriage. Some turn to trusting themselves only, however, Solomon calls these a fool.

“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Proverbs 28:26). Why? Because the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9).

Does this mean you cannot trust yourself? No, but it is saying one needs to listen to the conscience, not the feeling. One needs to trust evidence not false hopes. One needs to trust truth not futility. Reality is truth and truth is reality. Gut feeling works well on TV but in real life, the conscious needs to be listened to. Gut feelings is really faith in faith, not faith in the evidence of things unseen.

What do we trust?

We have clearly become more sceptical as a nation or at least express scepticism, but on the other hand we embrace the sceptical. Many would prefer to trust Google than their local doctor. Indeed, it is something educational institutions, especially schools need to grapple with. The average child can tell the difference between real and the pretend, or nearly so. They trust the news but understand that the movie following is made up. But then they *google* a topic and trust what it says. And adults do exactly the same. The internet makes prominent what it wants you to know and hides what it does not want you to see. Providers such as Google, News or even the ABC will give you the latest news, but should we trust these. The trust is not so much in the content, but in whether there are other important events occurring that are not being made prominent. As the editor of NZ Net Australia said a while ago *“..[what] Google has never said is [how it] (what it that: sic) qualifies information for inclusion. Anyone who claims to serve up news has to be*

⁶ <http://www.readersdigest.com.au/popular/australias-most-trusted-people-2008-readers-digest/article76692.html> (accessed 14/3/2009)

⁷ <http://www.readersdigest.com.au/popular/australias-most-trusted-professions-2008-readers-digest-australia/article77699.html> (accessed 14/3/2009)

⁸ <http://www.readersdigest.com.au/content/24454/> (accessed 14/3/2009)

open about this"⁹. And of course Australians are more likely to believe if you shake up some molecules for a few billion years a human being will jump out than to trust that God created the heavens and the earth.

The heart cannot be trusted

A heart that can be trusted is prudent (Proverbs 16:21) and trusts in God. Now, the word prudent is really old fashion, something the world of finance discarded, but wishes it had not. A prudent heart does not listen to its own understanding - it seeks that which is wiser than him- or her-self to gain insight. David when his credentials were read to Samuel included the words "prudent in matters"¹⁰. I think that this means he was not loud and boastful - had knowledge but was not a know-it-all (*A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.* Proverbs 12:23 (KJV)). David understood where he was going and clearly had a clear picture of the world around him, although he was so young. He had clearly sought and received wisdom from God; he had his eyes looking up, not down. Proverbs also explains that a prudent man does not believe everything he hears¹¹ - he examines carefully the words and weighs them up with evidence. This the early church also did - the Bereans checked everything Peter said against Scripture in order to determine their truthfulness¹².

Are we prudent?

Do we do this? A prudent man seeks knowledge - not knowledge for knowledge sake, but knowledge for the purpose of making wise decisions¹³. Proverbs also exhorts the prudent person to listen to his or her parents¹⁴, something the modern child fights against. But this requires the household to be righteous as Proverbs 15:5 points out - children know hypocrisy - the parents need to walk the talk. Note however even the most prudent goes nowhere unless he seeks God. First Corinthians points out that the wisdom of the world cannot save - it is that which is considered foolish by man that saves - the death of Jesus Christ at the cross that saves.. And this is what Paul alludes to in 2nd Timothy.

Evidence of things unseen

Note that faith is evidence based - gut feelings are likely to be based on unsound and changeable feelings. God never expects you to trust in something without evidence. The nature of the Bible is that it is a conclusive and complete archive of evidence of the very nature of God. It provides more than abundant evidence and overwhelmingly points to the fact we can trust him. This is what Paul is essentially saying in verse 12. Although Paul is about to die, he knows the Christ will deliver what he promised.

⁹ <http://www.zdnet.com.au/reviews/software/internet/soa/How-much-do-you-trust-Google-/0,139023437,120273642,00.htm> (accessed 14/3/2009)

¹⁰ 1 Samuel 16:18

¹¹ Proverbs 14:15

¹² Acts 17:10

¹³ Proverbs 12:23, 14:18,18:15,

¹⁴ Proverbs 15:5

Paul's circumstance when writing to Timothy

We all know and love the letters Paul wrote to the pastors Timothy, Titus and Philemon. However, there is a vast difference between the circumstances of Paul when he wrote the first compared with the last time he wrote to Timothy. Paul has been arrested, perhaps in Troas¹⁵ and is imprisoned in Rome by the time he writes the second epistle. His preliminary hearing has not gone well, and he awaits the final trial which Paul has little hope of surviving (2 Tim 4:7-8). Prison is hard and difficult, perhaps creating great stress on his health. Some have abandoned him (4:10) while others have come and ministered to him (1:16-18). Some of the churches have gone from bad to worse (1:15-18), travelling as he had predicted.

The Bible provides evidence of the trustful nature of God

We cannot see or even feel God, but his character is revealed in Christ Jesus. The Bible therefore reveals God as he is, in Christ Jesus, and by reading carefully the narrative and sayings of Jesus Christ and the writings of those who knew him and understood him, we can build a picture of the one who we are called to trust. Proverbs 28:26 goes on and says, *but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered. Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding Proverbs 3:5 (KJV)*. Malcolm, over the past month or so, has examined a number of events that Jesus was the centre of. In every case these provided evidence that Jesus is not only a trustworthy friend, but he will always deliver what he promises. This is the key to understanding verse 12. Jesus loved us so much he was willing to pay the ultimate price - become sin for our sake and die on the accursed tree.

The reason for the second letter to Timothy

The letter is clearly urgent and Paul attempts to encourage Timothy. This he does by writing in a style that is one of confidence. Although Paul is in dire straits, he is upbeat in his attitude and writes so as to indicate that what comes next will be far better. It is in this letter we read these famous words:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Timothy 4:7, 8 (NKJV)

Why can he do this? He clearly cannot trust the legal system to protect his rights to freedom of religion. He cannot trust the churches as they are one by one abandoning him. He cannot trust individuals they are turning upon him (1:15). BUT, he writes "I know whom I have believed".

Who does Paul believe?

Who is he talking of? The answer is in verse 8 and 9. Indeed, it goes back to verse 6 where Paul reminds Timothy of his first love - that which the Ephesian church had lost (Rev 2) -

¹⁵ Fee, G.D. (1988) *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, New International Biblical Commentary*, Hendrickson Publishers, USA, pg 12.

the love of God. But at verse eight he reminds Timothy that although to the world the things of God are considered shameful they are not to God. He shows in verse nine the fact that we have been saved by grace and are all called, not to our purpose but to the purpose of God. We are not to be ashamed to this.

The tension between my purpose and God's purpose

This is the tension we all have. God has saved us to his works, but we still have the "I" within us that wants to do according to our works (9). This tension will remain until we retire self, and surrender to Christ. We in the western world little understand what surrender is. The slave of old did. He was a possession of the master, to do according to the owner twenty four hours a day. He or she worked and laboured for the master's best interest, put his interest always before their own, and satisfied his interest before their own, if ever they satisfied theirs.

We also are a purchased possession of God - not purchased with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ¹⁶. Only by understanding this will we comprehend the depth of surrender in the words Paul penned to the Corinthians "I die daily"¹⁷.

An illustration of surrender in Abraham

An illustration of surrender can be found in Abraham. Abraham left all that he had and went to Canaan - he did not question God, he did not look back as Lot did sometime later: After God's command Scripture says: "*So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him*" - wonderful words of obedience¹⁸. This is trust, which is repeated in its highest form on Mount Moriah¹⁹, and demonstrates the absolute abandonment God requires - abandonment of self, and surrender to God. This is trust.

What is our benefit in trusting the Lord

But you say Abraham had a promise - a benefit from his trust in God - he left his land with a promised of wealth and majesty. What about us? Our trust in Christ is not without reward. Paul reiterates the rewards in 1:10 and again in 4:8, speaking of the abolishing of death, eternal life with Christ and a crown of righteousness that is laid up for him. Trust in God is not empty. The surrender to God is not without foundation or reward. For these things Paul is willing to suffer. He knows Christ and through his communion with Christ has learnt, indeed, persuaded, that Christ is able to deliver. And in any case merely being with Christ is reward enough!

Paul encourages Timothy to persevere

Paul is encouraging Timothy to persevere because Paul knows the end is far better. Perseverance in our walk is not just hanging on, but it is an effort from the mind body and

¹⁶ 1 Peter 1:19

¹⁷ 1 Cor 15:31

¹⁸ Genesis 12:4

¹⁹ Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice, in obedience to God. At the last minute, God provides a substitute ram to be offered instead.

soul in order to move forward. Paul often alludes to the athlete, having been to Athens and seen the effort and perseverance these men put into their sport. Perseverance is made ever so much easier when we abandon those things that hinder us - and there is much in the world that hinders us. Satan spends considerable resources hindering us, making us ineffective and worthless vessel to Christ.

Over the past month the third chapter of Revelation has come to my mind - it is the focus of our study this semester at college. It is the church of Laodicea that comes to mind when one ponders hindrances to the Christians. The essential problem with this church was pride - it thought that it is good when it was merely vomit - strong words indeed!. AW Tozer wrote:

*The proud and lofty man or woman cannot worship God any more acceptably than the proud devil himself. There must be humility in the heart of the person who would worship God in spirit and in truth*²⁰.

Furthermore a proud and lofty man or woman cannot serve God. The problem I believe starts with the wrong notion about God. AW Tozer again:

*Perverted notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear. The long career of Israel demonstrates this clearly enough, and the history of the Church confirms it. So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards decline along with it. The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God.*²¹

Oswald Chambers really punches this idea home:

*What line of thinking do my thoughts take? Do I turn to what God says or to my own fears? Am I simply repeating what God says, or am I learning to truly hear Him and then to respond after I have heard what He says? "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?' " (Hebrews 13:5-6).*²²

What else can we do to be amendable to surrender to God?

What else can we do to be amendable to surrender to God, and God alone? Continuing on from the Hebrews passage quoted by Oswald Chambers, above:

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5, 6 (NKJV)

Covetousness is essentially idolatry²³ - and idolatry has the same effect on the relationship you have God as you would have on your husband, wife or friend, if you had a sexual relationship with a prostitute. The problem with idolatry is that destroys the relationship

²⁰ AW Tozer (1992) *Worship: The Missing Jewel*, Christian Publications, pp 4,5.

²¹ A.W. Tozer, (1961) *The Knowledge of the Holy*, Harper Collins: USA, p. 4.

²² O Chambers (1935) *My Utmost for the Highest*, originally by Dood Mead & Co, then Oswald Chambers Publications (1963), also on line at <http://www.myutmost.org/> pg "June 4".

²³ Colossians 3:5

in the same way as fornication does. This graphically described by Hosea who suffered this indecency when his wife became unfaithful. The rich and outwardly prosperous house of Hosea mimicked that of Israel, which was bankrupt morally and spiritually.

The only thing that makes us amendable to surrendering is obedience - obedience to the word of God, obedience to the Holy Spirit that dwells within us.

The reason we can trust God is because he will never leave or forsake us. He will not break that relationship and like Hosea, who is a type or figure of the Messiah, he takes his wife Gomer back, even after she bears a child to another man.

The Assurance of Christ's Salvation²⁴

Again I quote Chambers:

"I will never leave you ..." - not for any reason; not my sin, selfishness, stubbornness, nor waywardness. Have I really let God say to me that He will never leave me? If I have not truly heard this assurance of God, then let me listen again.

"I will never ... forsake you." Sometimes it is not the difficulty of life but the drudgery of it that makes me think God will forsake me. When there is no major difficulty to overcome, no vision from God, nothing wonderful or beautiful—just the everyday activities of life—do I hear God's assurance even in these?

The idea of God leaving his chosen people never enters his head. Indeed, it was so part of God's nature that it is repeated in the Law, not once, but twice, two verses apart:

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV)

The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV)

What greater hymn could be found in Scripture that that which expresses the solidness of the faithfulness of God. It is full of figures of speech, but not something anyone could miss. Habakkuk writes:

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Habakkuk 3:17, 18.

Let us close with the Hymn "I know whom I have believed" by Daniel Whittle.

I know not why God's wondrous grace
To me He hath made known,
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love
Redeemed me for His own.

Refrain

²⁴ O Chambers ilid

*But I know Whom I have believed,
And am persuaded that He is able
To keep that which I've committed
Unto Him against that day.*

I know not how this saving faith
To me He did impart,
Nor how believing in His Word
Wrought peace within my heart.

I know not how the Spirit moves,
Convincing us of sin,
Revealing Jesus through the Word,
Creating faith in Him.

I know not what of good or ill
May be reserved for me,
Of weary ways or golden days,
Before His face I see.

I know not when my Lord may come,
At night or noonday fair,
Nor if I walk the vale with Him,
Or meet Him in the air.

David L Simon (GBC - Salem 15 March 2009) Edit 20 Sep 2015
\\Pastoral Epistles\\I know whom I have believed (2 Tim 1 v 6 to 12)