

Sermon Summary 27 August 2023

Those Who Trust in the Lord Shall not be Disappointed: by Graham Mol

Over the past week or so I've been listening to a devotion about having unwavering trust in God. The key point or idea in this devotion has been this statement: *Those who trust the Lord shall not be disappointed*, which is drawn from the following verse in 1 Peter 2:6

For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." (ESV)

For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a chosen stone, a precious (honoured) Cornerstone, And he who believes in Him [whoever adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Him] will never be disappointed [in his expectations]." (AMP)

At this point Peter is referring to and quoting a prophecy from Isaiah which is about God's Messiah. It presents the metaphor of the cornerstone. The cornerstone is a useful part of a building, especially in ancient times, because it serves as a principal stone placed at a corner of an edifice to guide the workers in their course to complete the masonry.

It serves as a foundation for other masonry layouts and that is why this building block is the most important part of ancient construction methods. It makes all construction areas align and measure correctly.

Therefore the Lord GOD said: "Look, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; the one who believes will be unshakable. And I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the mason's level." (Isaiah 28:16-17)

This is an incredible metaphor: justice the measuring line, righteousness the mason's level or plumbline which line with a weight that would hang down and was used to ensure that the building was built straight. All of this comes together in what Peter is saying about Jesus. The Church is built upon the foundation of Christ who is justice and righteousness personified. He is the rock that holds it all together, the one by which it is measured, the one who keeps it standing straight.

Eugene Peterson in his translation of Isaiah 28:16-17 spells out the implication of this promise of God:

But the Master, GOD, has something to say to this:

"Watch closely. I'm laying a foundation in Zion,
a solid granite foundation, squared and true.

And this is the meaning of the stone:

A TRUSTING LIFE WON'T TOPPLE.

Those who trust in the Lord shall not be disappointed, a trusting life won't topple. Now there's already a lot of meat to chew off the bone in just this truth but one of the things that I'm sure you have noticed is that life isn't always so simple. With our frailties and fickleness, trust for us humans is not always so straightforward, even trust in the rock solid foundation of Christ the cornerstone.

Where there is opportunity for trust there is also the threat of disappointment. Christian author Peggy Joyce Ruth makes the statement that Trust and Disappointment are exact opposites. As I considered this I found it to be a good insight but I differed from her assertion that it's an either/or thing. Rather, I find that it's a tension. We often find ourselves in between the two as we wrestle with maintaining trust in the midst of disappointments.

I did however find this statement to be keenly insightful: "If we do not learn to trust God in every area of life, we will eventually become subconsciously disappointed in God..."

Disappointment is defined as displeasure or sadness caused by the non-fulfilment of one's hopes or expectations. That word "expectations" is a key one in understanding why we can find that, if we are

honest with ourselves, we can be disappointed with God. He never fails. He is always good, always wise, always faithful. The disappointment lies in our expectations not being fulfilled.

Therefore we are presented with a choice every time there is opportunity for disappointment in our walk with God. Any time something goes wrong or it doesn't go how we hoped or expected do you give in to disappointment? Or do you trust God despite it all. Do you still place your hope and trust in Him.

There is a promise right in the midst of that decision. The promise that Those who trust in the Lord shall not be disappointed, they will not be put to shame. A trusting life won't topple.

There is a story in the Old Testament that wonderfully illustrates the tension of trust and disappointment. It shows us the struggle, the wrestling of choosing to trust despite the circumstances. My hope as we engage with this account in scripture is that it would help you in your walk with the Lord as you are faced with the choice between choosing to trust or falling into disappointment.

We go to an account in the life of Elisha, God's prophet to His people. He was the successor of Elijah who too was a man of God whom the Lord used mightily and worked powerfully through. The full story can be found in **2 Kings 4:8-37**.

In his travels Elisha stops in a little village in the tribe of Issachar called Shunem. A wealthy woman there urges him to have some food and so it happens that every time he passes Shunem because of her hospitality he stops by to have some food to eat

Then she said to her husband, "I know that the one who often passes by here is a holy man of God, so let's make a small, walled-in upper room and put a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp there for him. Whenever he comes, he can stay there."

One day, as Elisha stopped to stay in his room there he asks his servant, Gehazi, to call the Shunammite woman. He wants to thank her for her kindness by doing something for her. She essentially says that she's fine so Elisha asks Gehazi for any ideas and he points out that this woman is childless and it's unlikely that she would have a child. Elisha then calls her and tells her "At this time next year you will have a son in your arms."

Pay attention to her response:

Then she said, "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your servant."

This was such a deep desire of her heart but one that she likely come to terms with not happening. She replies in this way because she doesn't want to get her hopes up and be disappointed. Yet you can sense a wrestling in her heart – she wants to trust but fears disappointment – it's a tension.

The woman conceived and gave birth to a son at the same time the following year, as Elisha had promised her.

That's not the end of the story however. A few years later the miracle child is out in the field with his father and the harvesters and suddenly complains about pain in his head. He cries out: My head! My head! The father gets his servant to carry the child to his mother. She cradles him on her lap until noon when he dies. It's a tragic moment, such sadness and disappointment. This child miraculously given is now taken away.

Yet there is a sliver of hope in the mother's heart. She takes the child and lays him on the bed in the room set up for Elisha. She closes the door and with determination in her heart she heads downstairs and asks her husband to organise a servant and a donkey to take her to Elisha (about 32km away).

Her husband is confused and asks her why go today? It's not the New Moon or Sabbath? He thinks it's for some religious observance or something, he unaware that their son has died.

The woman states “All is well.” In one sense it’s a lie so that she can get going without delay. But maybe it’s a prayer of hope too.

She saddles the donkey and instructs the servant to go fast and not slow the pace unless she tells him. They head off to Mount Carmel where Elisha was staying. Looking out from the mountaintop, over the valley, Elisha sees the woman approaching and sends Gehazi to meet her and ask: “Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the child?”

He maybe suspects something is wrong but doesn’t know. The woman tells Gehazi “All is well”. This time she wants to see Elisha to bring her appeal to him directly.

And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came to push her away. But the man of God said, “Leave her alone, for she is in bitter distress, and the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me.” Then she said, “Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me?’”

You can picture her there. She’s held it together until that moment. Now she’s clinging to Elisha, you can hear the bitter tears in her voice. The implication: Why give me a son and then take him from me? Was the disappointment of being childless not enough that I had to experience the deeper hurt of having a child and then losing him?

I am sure that Elisha’s heart was moved. He sends Gehazi ahead with his own staff – a symbol of his authority and power – with instructions not to stop on the way and chat, and to lay the staff on the face of the child. The mother tells Elisha that she’s not leaving him and so he gets up and follows her back to the home in Shunem. Gehazi goes on ahead, follows Elisha’s instruction but nothing happens and he returns to report this. Finally, Elisha arrives and heads up to the room.

When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the LORD. Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

What Elisha did may seem strange and it’s not that he’s following some special formula but rather this is an earnest intercession. This is fervent prayer, desperate pleading for the Lord’s mercy. He must have had in his mind what his master Elijah had told him when he himself had prayed fervently for the Lord to revive a widow’s son. A widow who had opened her home and shared the provision of the Lord with him. Elijah had stretched himself over that child, pleading with God. And like it happened with Elijah, the Lord answered Elisha’s prayer.

Then he summoned Gehazi and said, “Call this Shunammite.” So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, “Pick up your son.” She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out.

The Bible can often be epitome of the understatement. What joy must have filled the heart of the mother! And gratitude and relief! Trust had been rewarded, disappoint dispelled in that moment. All was well... in the end.

One of the things that this story teaches us is that it can be hard in the face of the facts, in the face of unmet or thwarted expectations, to maintain trust and not give in to disappointment. The reality was that there was both trust and disappointment, a tension between the two, wrestling inside the heart of the Shunammite woman. But – she chose to trust despite the doubt. Despite that voice inside saying: It was too good to be true. Despite the flickering and faltering of hope in the darkness of disappointment she made a choice to trust in God.

What will you choose?

As you face the challenges, the ups and downs of life. Whatever you may be going through, whatever you may be hoping for. Will you choose to trust in Jesus, our foundation, our cornerstone?

Because there is a promise: Those who trust in the Lord shall not be disappointed. Those who trust in the Lord will not be put to shame. Those who trust in the Lord will not be shaken.

A trusting life will not be toppled.