

Intro God saving sinners is primarily about trust. God demands that sinners trust him. The whole point of God saving sinners is about God not sinners. Sinners are saved for God, to demonstrate and declare his trustworthiness against the backdrop of all human rebellion and fascination with other gods. God saves sinners who trust him.

The battle for your trust is waged and measured in real time. Trusting God is really a big deal which is always opposed. It rarely seems to make sense. You never seem to have enough information. The risk factors consistently force you to hedge your bet, provide some sort of self insurance. It seems like you are consistently left wondering if God can handle the large, unique and personal concerns that you face. Isaiah's description of trust in 26:3-4 describes the risk and reward of trust in such a way that the more cynical among us question if this kind of trust is even possible given our real challenges.

*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.
Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.*

The battle for trust was hard in Isaiah's day as well. The people Isaiah is preaching to have been well cared for by God, they have experienced prosperity and have become complacent. The glitter and tinsel of wealth and independence is almost irresistible. The simple promises of God do not seem to stand up well against the rigors and questions of real life. The ways of God seem hard and unproductive. Trusting in human resources along with some form of trusting God is certainly reasonable. So, in Isaiah's day, turning for security to a neighboring nation such as Egypt wasn't viewed as not trusting God, it was simply being wise. It is similar to our reasoning that it is comforting to know at times, that when you really need them, you have a loving family, a good job, a decent retirement, a strong national defense, a genuine interest in God and a pretty good record of faithfulness regarding church stuff. All of these and God too.

Isaiah 28 begins a section of chapters that proclaim a series of judgments or woes with the intent of assuring the reader that God is absolutely trustworthy. The reasons we use for not trusting, the idolatrous objects of our trust and the outcomes we desire from our trust are systematically exposed in these accounts of judgment. In other words, the reader is invited to watch and listen to account after account of what has happened or will happen to the objects of trust you so highly value. You will see in clear terms the reasoning you use to not trust God come apart as foolish and destructive. These series of 'woes' sermons are a powerful call to trust God because he is absolutely trustworthy.

What about your trust? In terms of security, confidence, hope and peace, what is the foundation you are resting on? Let's trust God to use this section of his powerful word to teach us about trusting him. Chapter 28 lists a number of contrasts to challenge and grow our trust. Remember, being saved by God is about God. Your trusting God in all of your life simply is a live display of the trustworthiness of God.

Isaiah 28 teaches that your trust in God reveals his trustworthiness in three measurable ways. Key indicators of trusting God are contrasted with the prevailing indicators of self trust or not trusting God. Trusting God is measured in terms of crowns, words and outcomes. Ask God to grow your faith as you measure your trust in these ways.

1. Trusting God is measured in terms of crowns – what are you proud of? 1-6
2. Trusting God is measured in terms of words – who do you listen to? 7-22
3. Trusting God is measured in terms of outcomes – what are you expecting? 23-29

1. Trusting God is measured in terms of crowns – what are you proud of? 1-6

Read/teach 28:1-6

Note that the terms crown, glory and beauty are used both in verse 1 and verse 5. The contrast is intended to cause sober reflection on what presently appears and appeals to us as glorious and valuable seeing what happens when those things we are proud of are subjected to the judgment of God.

v.1 What we are proud of is pictured in two clear ways:

a drunken indulgent partier

an beautiful indifferent city

v.2-4 God induced testing comes in one of two ways:

A storm that submerges and destroys the pride of indulgence.

A harvest that swallows and consumes the pride of indifference.

v.5-6 God's trustworthiness is seen in the two beauties of trust:

A transformed appreciation for what is right.

A transformed dependence on strength for the fight.

I 26:8

Matt. 13:44

Gal. 6:14

What are you proud of? What is your crown that you easily identify as your pride and joy? Trusting God means seeing through the deception and emptiness of this world and self trust to ultimately find rest and peace in the prize of Christ himself.

If you were stripped of everything except the justice of God and the strength of God, would you be able to go on? Trusting God means living like you are proud of him, especially that what he does is right and the grace he gives is sufficient.

2. Trusting God is measured in terms of words – who do you listen to?

7-22

Read/teach 28:7-22

v.7 attention may be pointed/turned toward Jerusalem to the South.

Note the emphasis changes from crowns in 1-6 to the words of God in this section. The officers in charge of teaching God's words, teaching God's words, reference to God's words and an appeal to listen to God's words are all included in this second point of Isaiah's sermon.

v.7-13 Our challenge – God's words mocked and rejected.

Spiritual leaders responsible for Gods words are self indulgent, cynical and nonresponsive.

v.14-19 Our security – God’s words are true and dependable.

The security of scoffers cannot succeed. 14-15

God’s words are trustworthy. 16-17

Scoffer’s words cannot succeed. 18-19

v.20-22 Our warning – scoffing at God’s words is self destructive.

The scoffer refuses God’s words/rest (12) while finding his ways unsatisfying. 20

The scoffer refuses God’s help/power (16) while being in the strange position of having that same power turned toward him. 21

Appeal to the scoffer – one who rejects and mocks God’s words – listen to God’s words lest your rebellion grow irreversibly strong.

Refusing to listen to God’s words and mocking the means that God’s words are delivered ultimately tightens the bonds of unbelief. Heb. 10:26-31 1Jn. 5:16-17

If all you had were the words of God, all other opinions, plans and perspectives stripped away, would you be satisfied? God’s testing now as well as his future judgment will reveal the frustrating dissatisfaction and inadequacy of your plans and ways. God’s simple and peaceful trustworthiness is magnified by your listening to and obeying his words.

3. Trusting God is measured in terms of outcomes – what are you expecting? 23-29

Read/teach 28:23-29 2 parables of sowing and reaping to illustrate expected outcomes.

Note the call/appeal to consider and learn to trust God. There is a piling up of rhetorical questions that cause us to think and apply these principles of trusting God to our lives. The flow of thought is that God’s ways are dependable and effective in farming, therefore they are dependable and effective for all of life.

v. 24-25, 27-28 Trusting God means that current thinking and behavior will be powerfully confronted and prepared for change and new growth. Both the plow and the thresher exert force to prepare the ground/grain for greater use and effectiveness. God knows how hard, how long and which method works best to produce the best results. His will and ways are good.

v. 26, 29 Trusting God expects and embraces the challenges of life as God’s ways of being taught and transformed by him.

Trusting God is at times rejoicing when all you have is the knowledge that he is working in your life to produce the joyful sense that his words and counsel are in fact wonderful. When you feel like you have been broken, flipped over and beaten with a stick, you show the trustworthiness of God (the smart farmer) by expecting and anticipating the fruit of his good hand in your life.

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Summary . . . look at verse 16.

The Lord both says (14) and does (16). He is trustworthy.

‘Behold’ – Look at the promises of God given to build your life on. Peter and others use this verse to point us to Christ as the ultimate provision of God for rest, security and confidence. Behold, the trustworthiness of God as demonstrated in the provision of Christ.

‘Whoever believes’ – some of the greatest statements to sinners in the Bible begin with the wonderful word ‘whoever.’ Trust in the rock solid promises and provisions of God for your life. Whoever believes will be at rest with God and secure from his judgment. God delivers the one who believes/trusts from a ‘all haste, no speed’ life that leads to destruction.

Discussion Questions

1. Continue having group member’s share their ‘saved by God’ stories if they have not yet done so.
2. Discuss this statement . . . *Sometimes it is easier to believe in God than it is to actually trust him.* Agree/disagree? Why? Give examples from your experience.
3. Review the first point, 28:1-6. What are the crowns, beauty and glory referring to in 1, 5? In what ways is unbelief or self trust beautiful or glorious? In what ways is trusting God beautiful and glorious? What are you proud of . . . what are your beautiful glories?
4. Why do you think Isaiah uses the strong imagery of drunkenness and vomit in 28:7-8? What is his point? What are ways that you hear or practice the cynicism/mockery (Gods words are only for children or the simple) described in 28:9-10? How does simple trust and resting in God’s words reveal the trustworthiness of God?
5. Review the truth taught in verse 22 that a scoffer (both rejects and mocks God) is in extreme danger of strengthening his unbelief by practicing his unbelief. Pray together for any scoffers that may be a part of group members lives.
6. Review the third point from verses 23-29. What are some observations from the parables of plowing and threshing that help you understand the ways of God in your life? How do these observations help you trust him more?
7. Pray together for people to be saved by God from your spheres of influence.
8. Select a group member and help prepare them to tell their ‘saved by God story’ to the church family on a Sunday morning soon.