

## **Introduction: Gullible**

Pain, and not innocence, is what makes us gullible. A 2006 University of Leicester study suggests that those who have suffered tragedy and extreme hardships in their lives have a much higher level of suggestibility. That is, they are more easily misled or conned than those who have been sheltered from such hardships. This finding seems to fly in the face of the stereotypical wisdom that says hardship toughens you up. That says those who have not been burned are more likely to be duped than those who have been around the block once or twice.

Yet the reality is need drives us to trust in that which is untrustworthy. If you are fearful of the future because of past abuse, you are more likely to trust an astrologer who claims that the position of Venus is a good omen for you. If you are struggling financially, you are more likely to be conned out of your money by a get rich quick pyramid scheme. Those who are in shape don't buy overpriced diet pills. And those who are in a healthy marriage relationship aren't getting "catfished" by someone pretending to be Taylor Swift on the internet. Despite conventional wisdom hardship and pain don't make us better judges of character and trustworthiness. In reality physical, emotional, and relational needs make us more susceptible to deceit. It is our need that drives us to trust those who are not worthy. Our pain makes us awful judges of character. So then how might those in need know who to trust?

Our passage for this morning is addressing the problem of trust in a world of need. And in particular it is addressing our desire to trust in man when the Lord alone is worthy. The book of

Psalms begins with a contrast between two ways of trust; the way that leads to blessing and the way that leads to destruction. The way of blessing is to delight in the law of the Lord and the way of destruction is to walk, stand, and sit in the counsel of the wicked. Life is presented as a choice between these two paths; blessing or curse; life or death; salvation or destruction. This choice runs throughout the Psalms including Psalm 146. Look at verses 3 and 5. There we read the contrast,

*Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.*

*Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God,*

Here is the contrast: Trust in princes, no salvation. Trust in the Lord, eternal blessing. The choice is clear however our needs continue to drive us to make the foolish decision. We keep believing the false advertising because we need a deal, we continue to follow fad diets because we need the weight loss, we trust the lender because we need the cash, we trust the politician because we need the stability, we trust the boy because we need the affection, the girl because we need the attention, the prince because we need the salvation he offers.

We all have a longing, a desire to trust. And that desire is ultimately a good thing. Trust, we will see, is the path to blessing. But the question is, what is the object of your trust? Who or what will you trust? When our need drives us to trust in the wrong thing it will only lead to destruction. But what Psalm

146 will reveal to us is that when we trust in the Lord then our longing will lead to life.

### **Point One: A Longing to Trust a Person**

Now the first thing I want us to see in our Psalm is that we all have a longing to trust in a person. It is built into the very core of our personhood to find a person upon whom we might rely. A mother, a father, a friend, a spouse.

Yet in verse 3 we read,

*“Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.” (Psalm 146:3 ESV)*

It would be a rather sad life indeed if we took this verse the wrong way or without qualification. If we take the approach to life that says, “Don’t trust anyone.” Yet there are many in this world who through hurt or abuse have come to a place where they are unwilling to trust a soul. This distrust makes true and genuine relationships impossible. But the Psalm is not telling us that we are to trust no one. Rather it is teaching us that there is only one person we can trust with the ultimate need of our life.

You need to trust your mom to care for you. It is healthy to trust your dad to provide for you. You should trust your spouse to love you. If you want to have friends, you are going to have to be willing to trust that they will have your back. It is not wrong to trust in man for somethings. But it is folly to trust in man for one thing, salvation. Psalm 146 isn’t a jaded reflection of an

isolationist. It is a clear objective statement of who we must trust for our ultimate needs.

The word *salvation* in verse 3 means deliverance from need. And throughout the Psalm we see what need he might have in mind. The oppressed will receive justice, the hungry food, the prisoner freedom, the blind sight, the bowed down relief, the sojourner protection, the fatherless and widows care. The Psalmist says, “Do not trust in princes or man to bring you salvation from the needs of this world but trust in God. For the Lord alone is the one who will bring deliverance from all these needs.” For we read in verse 5 of our Psalm,

*“Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God,” (Psalm 146:5 ESV)*

When you come to a place of desperation in your life. A place of need that is beyond your control then you must trust in God alone. For,

*“The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue.” (Psalm 33:16–17 ESV)*

But

*“[the Lord] has delivered me from every trouble,” (Psalm 54:7 ESV) “...from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation,” (Psalm 62:1–2 ESV)*

We read in Matthew's Gospel that John the Baptist came to a point of desperation in his life. He had been arrested and was sitting in prison. He needed salvation. And so he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the one for whom they had longed. If he was in fact God's messiah who would bring God's promised salvation spoken of here in Psalm 146.

*“And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.” (Matthew 11:4–5 ESV)*

When you are in need you will long to trust in someone to deliver you, a savior who will free or heal. Yet your need will blind you and will it will drive you to trust in the wrong people. You will long for a political figure who will deliver, a doctor who will cure, a financier who will pay your debt. When we are in need, we are gullible. We are susceptible to false saviors, false messiahs.

But our trust for salvation must be in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. For *“... there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 ESV)*

For the ultimate need that we all have is salvation from the guilt of our sin. For by our sin we are imprisoned. We are sentence to death. Therefore, we must trust in God alone to save us. We must look to Christ for salvation.

We all have a longing to trust a person, and that person is the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Point Two: A Longing to Trust a Promise**

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of performing the marriage ceremony for Ross and Sherry Meyer. And as I always do in a wedding, I lead them through the vows, the promises that husband and wife make to one another. We are familiar with these promises, “In the name of God, I take you, to be my wedded wife/husband; to have and to hold, from this day forward; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness, and in health; to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live.”

They are wonderful promises, that form the bond of marriage, but even within the marriage vows we realize there is a limit to our promise... as long as I live. We can't make promises that extend beyond our lives. And every human promise that is made has this implied termination point.

This is why Psalm 146 says that we are not to trust in man for our ultimate needs, because death will end their promises. Look at verse 3 and 4,

*“Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.” (Psalm 146:3–4 ESV)*

No matter how well-intentioned no person has been able to overcome this limitation. A general cannot lead beyond the grave and a husband cannot have and hold once he perishes. So the Psalmist says in verses 5 and 6,

*“Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever;”*  
(Psalm 146:5–6 ESV)

In John chapter 11 the Lord Jesus makes this promise. He says,

*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? (John 11:25–26 ESV)*

The world is filled with people making promises that all die with them. Yet there is one man who made a promise will never pass away. For yes all men die, but one died and came back. One went to the grave but then rose from the grave to seal every word and promise he ever spoke.

We all long for a promise, a guarantee that will assure us of a future benefit. A bond that will never expire. But it is the Lord alone who keeps faith forever. We have a need that makes us desperate to believe all sorts of outlandish promises. Sin and death have taken hold on us. We are all rushing toward the grave, but a promise has been given, if you turn from trusting in the powers of this world and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall never die.

Hope that is built upon that which passes away is doomed to failure. Despite what we might want to believe about ourselves or others we are but secondary agents in the unfolding drama of redemption. The outcomes of life and death, salvation and judgment, are not ours to control but the creator God alone unfolds his eternal plan. Therefore, we must trust his promise. We must trust his word because he is the only one who keeps faith forever. Heaven and earth may pass away but his word, his promise will never pass away.

It is important to be able to trust a promise. To trust someone's word. But the promises of others will only help for a short period of time. In the end they will be overruled by the grave. I think of it this way. When you get certified to scuba dive you are trained in a technique called buddy breathing. Now buddy breathing occurs when one diver has run out of air and needs to share the oxygen from another's tank. The two divers pass the regulator between the two of them. But this is very important. The first thing you must do once you start buddy breathing is to head to the surface. You don't keep swimming. Why? Because your buddy is going to run out of oxygen as well. You can trust his tank as a stop gap but eventually you will both need to go up to the source of air.

In life we need to be able to trust the promises of others. But ultimately those promises run out. We need to go to the source of life.

We are all longing to trust in a promise, Psalm 146 says, "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob."

### **Point Three: A Longing to Trust a Purpose**

We all have a longing to trust. We long to trust a person, we long to trust a promise, and finally we long to trust a purpose. We desire to place our trust in a movement or a plan that is bigger than ourselves. We all want to be a part of something that has meaning and transcendence. And so, we long to live for something beyond ourselves. This is how cult leaders attract followers. Marshall Applewhite, Jim Jones, David Koresh gave their followers the promise of purpose and meaning. Such people prey on those who are in need of identity and call on them to trust in a higher purpose no matter the consequences. It is also this longing for purpose that political leaders will exploit to achieve power. Politicians will propel people toward division and hatred for a purpose. There is an end goal. A utopian existence that awaits those who will trust in the ideals of the party.

And humanity is in such a need for purpose that we continue to foolishly trust in the purposes of a prince, of a politician, of a cultist, of a theorist, of an author, of a philosopher. But our need has blinded us from our true created purpose.

Psalm 146 begins and ends with this true purpose. Look at verses 1 and 10,

*“Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.”*

*(Psalm 146:1–2 ESV)*

*“The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!”  
(Psalm 146:10 ESV)*

We were created for this one eternal purpose, to praise the Lord. And it is here alone that we will find the satisfaction that our hearts desire.

Today, America is a nation that is searching for purpose, for a cause. And that presents us with both a challenge and a great opportunity. The challenge is that those with a need for purpose are extremely susceptible to destructive purposes. We are gullible toward any number of movements that promise ultimate significance. We will save the country, we will save the planet, we will save the culture, we will save the future, we will cure the disease, we will end the hate. And if there is collateral damage along the way so be it. A people who need purpose are extremely dangerous.

But there is also a great opportunity, because the glory of God is the *true* purpose that we were created for. It is why we exist. It is our chief end, to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. People are thirsty for this purpose and you who know Christ have the drink they so desperately need. Because the person, the promise, and the purpose that we all long to trust is the Lord Jesus Christ and the forgiveness that he has won for his people on the cross. For it is here that we will find deliverance and salvation from the hurts and needs of this world.

## **Conclusion**

Yet you might say to me, “But there is still injustice, hunger, prisoners, blindness, hatred, disease, and death. I have trusted in the Lord, but salvation hasn’t come. My wife still died, my children still live in turmoil, my bank account is still over drawn, I am still addicted. I am still not saved!” So, in what way does God bring salvation? How do we who still feel the needs of this world trust God? Is it not the Christian who is gullible to believe?

It is true that we Christians continue to wait for we believe a promise that has not yet come to pass. This is what the word of God calls faith. It is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. It is by faith that we taste from afar the reality of what is to come. And so, we trust in the Lord by faith believing the promise that he has made for us in Christ.

However, this faith is not blind belief. It is rooted in the unchangeable promises of God, it is accomplished in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it is witnessed to by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

If you believe that the promise of Christ is that you and your loved ones will never see sickness or hardship or the grave, then you misunderstand the promise of salvation and you will feel that the Lord has let you down. You will then foolishly run to someone who promises immediate solutions. Your need will drive you to princes, doctors, politicians, or false religious teaches who promise your best life now. But the reality is we have eternal needs that will only be fulfilled by eternal solutions.

Immediate needs will drive us to trust in men and women who promise immediate solutions. But eternal needs will only be met when in faith we trust in the eternal God.

Some might say Christians are gullible, because we choose to trust the one eternal God to bring us salvation. Might I propose that it is a bit more gullible to trust in any other savior? For all men die and with them their promises. But only one man died and rose again, and he will reign forever and ever.

“Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation”

(Psalm 146:3 ESV) But trust in the Lord who keeps faith forever!