In God We Trust - Part Three

# When It’s Not Easy

(Numbers 20.2-12)

Today we are in part three of our message series “In God We Trust” and we’ve been talking about trusting God when it’s difficult. Trusting God when you’re facing a financial problem, or maybe a doctor’s diagnosis, and you feel so uneasy about the future. Trusting God when there is tension all over the country because of the latest Supreme Court decision, the economy, political division, or even recent COVID-19 statistics. And so, we’ve been talking about trusting God when it’s hard, when people are speaking against you, when it seems as if the winds of your circumstances are against you, and it’s not easy to trust him.

Today as we turn to the Word of God, I want to open with an illustration from the life of Moses to take us deeper into the mind of Christ. You could say that Moses was the pastor of the Old Testament church, but just as he was drawn out of the water as a child, it actually took a lifetime to draw the leader out of him. And I think in many ways that is true for all of us, because life is constantly drawing things out of you that you didn’t know you had in you.

And so, Moses’ life is the perfect illustration of the contrast between who he is and what he would become, because he was born of Hebrew lineage, but raised as an Egyptian in the palace of the Pharaoh. Or at least that was until he stood up to protect one of his own people who was being beaten by an Egyptian. Things got out of hand and he ended up killing the Egyptian and so he flees into the wilderness. For forty years he is a fugitive, running from what could have been or should have been, when he has this encounter with God.

This was a pivotal moment in the life of Moses, because God tells them to go back to the very place he had fled from and tell Pharaoh to “let my people go.” Moses obeys, he goes back to Egypt, he reconnects with his family, and you would think it would be happily ever after, but sometimes things sound better in theory than they are in real life. After a series of false starts, Moses leads the people out of Egypt, leading them out of slavery, and yet in spite of this great deliverance, they begin quarreling and resisting the very one who had delivered them.

This goes on for 40 years, as they faced every imaginable kind of difficulty. They went through seas and deserts, famine and pestilence, snakebites and plagues, and they fought about everything. Now another generation has been born and the children are just as contrary as their parents were. In Numbers chapter 20, the Bible says,

“Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord” (Numbers 20:2-3).

“Why did you bring the Lord's community into this desert, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!" (Numbers 20:4-5).

“Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. The Lord said to Moses” (Numbers 20:6-7).

"Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink” (Numbers 20:8).

“So, Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" (Numbers 20:9-10).

“Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron” (Numbers 20:11-12).

"Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them" (Numbers 20:12).

Here we find Moses being very transparent as he shares this transformative moment in his life that I think can help encourage you to trust God when it’s not easy. You see, as we face our own struggles, adversities, and challenges in life, all of us have the tendency to respond impulsively, expressing our emotions in moments of weakness. Like Moses, many of us recognize that we have contradictions in our lives, areas that we need to develop, and where we need to grow, which makes this a good text for us to draw from.

I want to talk to you today about trusting God when it’s not easy. Trusting God when it’s not easy. You see, the truth of the matter is that there are contradictions in all of our lives which keep us at the feet of Jesus. We need his mercy and the good news is that God is the Father of mercies and he renews us day by day.

In fact, the Bible says, his compassion, his mercies, are new every morning (Lamentations 3:23). And so, whatever you are going to go through, whatever your family is going to go through, whenever you are stressed out and under pressure, God’s mercies are new every morning. That’s why he told us to pray,

“Give us today our daily bread,” because he’s got new mercies every morning (Matthew 6:11). Day by day God helps us face the challenges, the difficulties and contradictions in our lives so that as Moses said, “As your days, so shall your strength be” (Deuteronomy 33:25, NKJV).

Now, Moses was highly favored by God, but he didn’t enjoy the benefit of having the favor of those he led. There were some who feared him, some who honored him, but many who resented him and his leadership. And so, the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron, they quarreled with Moses, causing him to become preoccupied with his haters. He became focused on who resented him, who didn’t like him, who didn’t support him, and he lost sight of God’s purpose in him.

Moses became angry and frustrated and instead of speaking to the rock as he had been commanded, he struck the rock angrily expressing himself in ways that were not of God. As the Bible says, a “man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires” (James 1:20). And so, Moses dishonored God, misrepresenting him, and in his frustration, he destroyed an illustration, an object lesson for Israel, which was a symbol and portrayal of a type of Christ.

The Lord said to Moses, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them" (Numbers 20:12).

This shocking pronouncement of judgment upon Moses must’ve devastated him because this was the death of his dream. This was a traumatic moment in his life because he had been moving in this direction for forty years. But God is not going to reward Moses and promote him just because he’s got a lot of followers.

And so, we must learn from Moses’ experience, because we need to understand that when we’ve been through a difficult time, going through what someone else has been through, God is taking us deeper, he is building godly character in us. You see, experience matters in ministry, it gives you another level of empathy for people, compassion that comes into your life. But God’s not going to promote you just because you want to be promoted, but the Bible says God will promote you,

“After you have suffered a little while, God himself will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (1 Peter 5:10).

And so, if God has trusted you with pain or stress or overwhelming circumstances, you might be going through one part of it right now, one season, but after the storm he’s also going to trust you with the comfort of sunshine. In other words, there is balance coming because the Bible says,

“We know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:7).

And I want to camp out here for a moment in second Corinthians and draw a parallel between the ministry of the apostle Paul and the ministry of Moses. I want to remind you that the apostle Paul knew what it was like to deal with haters, people who resented him, because he had been imprisoned frequently.

“Been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked” (2 Corinthians 11:23-25).

And so, Paul wasn’t some pansy, he wasn’t a snowflake, he knew what it was like to face danger, and we have to respect Paul’s ability to endure suffering and great pressure. Like Moses he knew what it was like to be frustrated, stressed out, and overwhelmed by people and circumstances beyond his control.

In fact, some of you may be going through something very painful, something frustrating, and it’s impossible to quantify the amount of pressure that you are under right now. You may be feeling like you are about to explode, that you can’t survive another moment, but I want you to know that you are not alone. Certainly, Jesus knows, but the apostle Paul knew what it was like as well. He said,

“We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life” (2 Corinthians 1:8).

He said, this was just way too much, the pressure was beyond my strength, beyond my ability to endure. In other words, it’s that place where you just can’t take anymore, it’s your breaking point, and maybe you’re listening right now and you feel like I’m talking right to you. If you are in that place where it’s beyond your ability to endure, the Bible says,

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

He said, if you are in that place where you are under too much pressure, far beyond your ability to endure, you’ve got to throw it on me. He said, you’re going to have to trust me with it when you can’t handle it, when you don’t have an answer, and when you can’t fix it, because there are some mountains you can’t move.

Now, I know that’s not very popular, but there are some things that happen in your life that all you can do is trust God and walk you through it the best you can. That’s what the apostle Paul was describing, he said the pressure was so great that I despaired even of life. I know some of you don’t want to admit it because you want everybody to think you’re Superman, but there are moments in your life when you have to admit like the apostle Paul,

“Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death” (2 Corinthians 1:9).

In other words, he says I can’t handle it, it’s more than I can endure, it’s beyond my strength, so much so that I despaired of life. And we need to remember that we are not talking about Barney Fife, this isn’t Mayberry, this is the apostle Paul who wrote most of the New Testament admitting that he went through something that made him think he was going to die.

And so, he says, we were forced to trust God, because we could not rely on ourselves. “We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure” (2 Corinthians 1:8). And sometimes you can be pressed in so many different ways, pressure on the inside, pressure from the outside, so much so that you just want to give up.

I told my wife the other day as we were going to bed, that I had enough, I just needed to disengage, even if just for a couple hours. Because it had been like nonstop all day long, talking on the phone with someone who was taken to the emergency room, someone crying because their brother had died, another one was struggling with where God wanted them to be, and someone else worried about the barn on the church property, and it kept going on, one thing after another until I just wanted to go to bed. Not necessarily because I was so sleepy, I just needed some peace and quiet.

And so, sometimes you’ve just got to admit when enough is enough, and trust God to take care of it until the morning. It’s difficult sometimes because when you love people you don’t want to disappoint them and so it becomes difficult to say that’s enough. You know, kind of like when you’re at the restaurant and the waiter or waitress is sprinkling pepper on your salad waiting for you to tell them when to stop. Sometimes we don’t know how to say thank you, that’s enough. And so, it goes far beyond our ability to endure, we don’t want to let anybody down, but meanwhile we are going down ourselves.

“The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them" (Numbers 20:12).

In other words, we felt the sentence of death in our hearts, knowing that we should not rely on ourselves. Paul said, I despaired of life itself, the hardships we suffered, the pressure was far beyond what we could endure, but he recognized,

“This happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God” (2 Corinthians 1:9).

I wonder if there are some of you who are taking on too much responsibility yourselves, trusting yourself more than you should, instead of relying upon God? You know, maybe you try to handle everything, you don’t delegate anything, and you’re trusting in yourself more than you should?

The Lord was very specific in his words to Moses, he said, “You did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy” (Numbers 20:12).

And so, we need to recognize the importance of humbling ourselves before God, surrendering our will to his, so that when we come to him in prayer it’s not about getting our own way, it’s about relying upon him, trusting him. And that’s what prayer is, it’s a reminder that we’re not in control, and as we press in season after season, trusting him, it keeps us close to the one who is in control.

Paul recognized that it was those times when he couldn’t do anything but rely on God that helped him to know God in a deeper and more intimate way. And that was his testimony, he said,

“He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many” (2 Corinthians 1:10-11).

This is the profession of the apostle Paul, a man who trusted God in his weakness, because he knew that God has delivered, he will deliver, and he will continue to deliver us. And all three of these are working in the life of a believer at the same time. He has, he will, and he will continue to deliver. Therefore, the apostle said,

“I’ll boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

And so, let’s go deeper, he has delivered, he will deliver, and he will continue to deliver us. You are delivered right now, and the Bible says in Colossians chapter 3, verse three,

“Your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

And so, Jesus died, and your baptism was symbolic of you dying with him, your sins are removed, you are delivered from the grip of sin and death, it is complete, it is finished, and it is done. And when Jesus rose, you rose with him out of the baptismal waters, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

When you understand that you were delivered, past tense, it is history, and that is your position as a believer. You are delivered and your life is hidden in Christ with God, and so Paul says, not only,

“Has he delivered us… But “he will deliver us…” (2 Corinthians 1:10).

In other words, the God who has delivered me, is still delivering me. That is great news when I might not feel like I have been delivered, when I might not see it, might not understand it, but he is delivering me.

And so, he has delivered me in term of my position, but he is delivering me in relation to my conditions, and verse 10 says,

“On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us” (2 Corinthians 1:10).

That is one of the reasons why he gives the Holy Spirit, to continue this work in the present world, to continue the delivering process in our condition. This progressive regeneration or sanctification of the soul is an ongoing process, and so even though I have been redeemed positionally, I am still being redeemed conditionally, and there is a progressive ongoing relationship that continues to exist between me and Jesus.

Therefore, whatever we are going to face tomorrow he will continue to deliver us. Whatever we’re going to go through next week he will continue to deliver us. Whatever my family is going through, whatever my finances are going through, whatever we are going through, he will continue to deliver us. Every time the enemy thinks he’s got me backed into a corner, every time I am stressed out and overwhelmed, he will continue to deliver us.

This is such good news, because whatever you are facing, whatever is ahead of you, God is getting ready to deliver you. And Moses didn’t stay angry, he didn’t remain frustrated, and he didn’t throw in the towel, but he continued on because God continues to deliver. Moses went up the mountain and the Lord said to him,

“See the land I have given the Israelites” (Numbers 27:12).

In other words, you can be confident that God is working in all things because he has delivered you, he is delivering you, and he will continue to deliver you according to his purpose.

“On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us” (2 Corinthians 1:10).

That’s important because the enemy will tell you there is no hope for your future because of what happened in your past. He wants you to believe that because of what was done to you, or what you did, means that your life can never be restored or repaired again. He wants you to give up hope, thinking that you are beyond help, that there is nothing that Jesus can do, but the Bible tells us,

"With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

And so, I want you to know that God is planning to deliver you, to heal you and restore you so that he could be your obsession. He wants to deliver you, releasing you to love and worship and serve him with the rest of your life.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

June 26, 2022

(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*