

I. Setup

a. Trust Fall

- i. When things are going well, I really have no problem in believing that God has everything in hand.
  1. When I was in school, one period was always a joy:
    - a. The homework was easy.
    - b. The subject was in my wheelhouse and I had no problem understanding it.
    - c. I really enjoyed that time of the day because it required extraordinarily little from me.
    - d. God is good.
    - e. But then lunch would be over and I would have to go to math class, a real trial!
  2. When the going gets tough, faith becomes a real challenge, and trust becomes the real test.
- ii. For me, life is really full of a lot things that I am powerless to overcome, and when I can't see a way out or beyond I have developed the discipline of doing a "faith trust fall."
  1. Now, do you all know what a trust fall is?
  2. Well, if we did not have social distancing I would illustrate, but COVID-19 and the liability insurance will not let me do that at this point.
  3. A Trust Fall is a team building exercise where a group of people learn that the team is there to catch them.
    - a. One person stands in front of another.
    - b. The person in front then just falls back and trusts that the person behind him or her will not allow a resounding thud to be heard.
    - c. That's a trust fall.
- iii. So What is a "spiritual trust fall"?
  1. Well, I am so happy you asked!
  2. I have brought along a video to help me illustrate:
    - a. Play the movie.
  3. "I can't. I won't." Trusting Jesus is easy when the period is lunch and you know that mom has done your homework by making you your favorite snack. It is easy to proclaim that God is good.
  4. But faith as a discipline calls us to proclaim that all the time, even when the world does not make sense or

we can't see or plan our way out, that God is still good, has our backs, will catch us when we fall.

- b. For me, a spiritual trust fall is what the hymn writer Fanny Crosby, who was born blind, called "Blessed Assurance". Assurance that Jesus is ours and we can fully trust God through Christ to be there for us no matter what we are going through.
- c. Which, for me, brings us to our scripture for this morning.

## II. Text

- a. Apart from the serene nature of the pastoral setting, this scripture spoke to me because of one notion that has become increasingly important for me, in my 58<sup>th</sup> year of life to be reminded of for it says in verse 4: "When [the Good Shepherd, Jesus,] has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice."
- b. Why is this verse so important to me?
  - i. Well, it reflects other parts of scripture in both the Old and New Testaments that underscore the theme of God going out before us.
  - ii. Why can I trust God to lead me?
    - 1. Because Jesus has walked out before me into the valley I must traverse, has spied out the land that my feet must walk over, in order to get to the pasture God has prepared for me before all time and forever.
  - iii. What do I need to do?
    - 1. I need to listen to and for his voice.
    - 2. Listen to Jesus by reading the scriptures and opening up my heart to where God might be leading me in the midst of life.
      - a. I wish that I could give you a formula for this, but I can't.
      - b. I can say that the more you trust Jesus with, the more you are sensitive and can discern his voice leading you through the competing voices in your life.
    - 3. The more you trust, the better able you are to hear our Savior calling, guiding, and directing you in your life.
  - iv. But it won't happen if you don't start working on your spiritual trust fall.
- c. While I have used this as an example text, there are others.

- i. In the New Testament, Jesus assures his disciples that Lazarus' illness will not end in death but is for the glory of God. Jesus was ten steps ahead of them.
- ii. In several places Jesus tells his disciples that he will suffer and die for them. They can't imagine it. What they are thinking who knows. Either it is because they have their own end of the story in mind, probably not far from my lunchbox idea of the perfect class, or they don't want to contemplate life without someone they love. But God, in Jesus, has walked that valley ahead of them, knows that they must go through some dark times, but the glory of eternal fields lay at the other side.
- iii. My final reference is found at the very end of the Gospel of Mark: An angel assures the women who have come to the tomb on Easter morning with the words that they are to take back to the disciples "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

  - 1. The ultimate assurance, "Jesus is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."
  - 2. Jesus, God who runs ahead.

### III. Conclusion

- a. So, I know that I can trust God because at every corner of my life, when it seemed like I could not see a way out, well, I survived all of them. More than that, I can see how God has either grown me or blessed me beyond my own understanding at the time.
- b. I have also found that I begin to look at difficult times and people with a different perspective. Rather than dread, I enter difficult situations with a view to what God is trying to teach me or say to me. I find myself listening more for the voice of Jesus calling me out of perceived chaos. The other gift of trust is that I realize that my solution is only one of a variety of solutions that are possible. This lets me not only allow other people to have different perspective but allows me to let God be God and show a different path.
- c. Ultimately I know that the God who goes before me, who calls me to follow, only has the best intentions for me and the world of God's creation. Sometimes I am given a foretaste of glory divine in seeing

what God sees, but at other times I must trust that I only can see dimly this side of perfection. Yet, finally God has a master plan and goal for this creation that God has run ahead of, and God has all things in hand, so I can trust and be content.

- d. I want to close with a hymn that is one of my favorites. I am sharing it with you in its more contemporary version.
  - i. Play the movie. (<https://youtu.be/rwGW8qRqz4I>)
  - ii. "The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose  
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, I'll never, no never,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"
- e. The One who goes before us, calling through the valley's of life, is the One who will never forsake us no matter "though all hell should endeavor to shake." Don't be distracted by what you perceive about you, listen and look to Jesus, the Good Shepherd who has walked the path before you, and can be trusted.
- f. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN.

Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup>Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup>and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"  
<sup>4</sup>But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup>As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.  
<sup>6</sup>"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup>But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

John 10:1 "Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup>The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>But they will never follow a stranger; in

fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

1. How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!  
What more can he say than to you he hath said,  
Who unto the Savior, who unto the Savior,  
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?
2. In ev'ry condition—in sickness, in health,  
In poverty's vale or abounding in wealth,  
At home or abroad, on the land or the sea—  
As thy days may demand, as thy days may demand,  
As thy days may demand, so thy succor shall be.
3. Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,  
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.  
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,  
Upheld by my righteous, upheld by my righteous,  
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.
4. When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow,  
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,  
And sanctify to thee, and sanctify to thee,  
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.
5. When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,  
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, thy dross to consume,  
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.
6. E'en down to old age, all my people shall prove  
My sov'reign, eternal, unchangeable love;  
And then, when gray hair shall their temples adorn,  
Like lambs shall they still, like lambs shall they still,  
Like lambs shall they still in my bosom be borne.
7. The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose  
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, I'll never, no never,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!