

# Jesus Commands: Trust & Fear Me

Adrian Warnock



**Fear and trust sound like opposites. And yet Jesus commands both from us.**

We are much more comfortable with the idea that we are meant to trust Jesus, so I will start there.

Perhaps surprisingly, when you search the gospels in most English translations, you don't actually find Jesus commanding us to trust him.

One notable exception, however, is found in the Living Bible:

“Don't be afraid. Just **trust me.**” (Mark 5:36, Living Bible)



It is interesting to see that **trust is an antidote to fear**. When Jesus was with his disciples in the boat being buffeted by a storm he asked them “[why are you so afraid?](#)” When we learn to trust Jesus our fears may not completely disappear, but they will be eased. **Whatever happens to us HE is with us.**

Almost all other translations of this verse use the word ‘[believe](#)’ rather than trust. However, in English the word believe doesn’t tend to be strongly associated with the idea of trust. We tend to think of belief being about concepts we are convinced intellectually of. But in Biblical Greek **believing, having faith, trusting, and being trusted with something are essentially entwined**, and all these ideas are contained in the same word.

So for example, the word that the Living Bible translates as trust in Mark 5, is translated ‘**entrusted**’ by many translators in one of Paul’s letters, where the Apostle says

*“we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel”*

*(1 Thessalonians 2:4, ESV)*

This verse obviously immediately raises the question will we honour that trust and fulfil the task God has given us. And note that it is [not just a task for the evangelists](#).

But when it comes to Jesus we can be certain that he is worthy of our trust and will not let us down. As we saw in the last article, our greatest confidence that we will continue in our faith is that [Jesus himself has promised to keep us](#) and he is trustworthy, always fulfilling his promises.

So I believe it is reasonable to conclude that when Jesus commanded us to

[‘repent and believe’](#), as I have written about previously, he doesn’t just want an intellectual conclusion in our minds, he speaks to our hearts and calls for **a deep sense of trust and confidence in Jesus and his goodness.**

Christians believe that God is all powerful, and that he created the universe out of nothing. We believe God created it good, and when it went bad that he started a rescue operation. This culminated in God himself becoming a man, living a perfect life, dying a death he didn’t deserve for us, and then he rose again from death, before ascending into heaven, where he is now preparing an eternal dwelling for us, and he promises to bless us abundantly both now and in the age to come.

If all that is true, then how can we not understand that he loves us?

And [if he loves us then we should love him](#), as we discovered previously.

Surely part of love is also trust. And if God has done so much for us already, why shouldn’t we trust him both now and with our future?

***If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?***

***(Romans 8:31-32)***

At times we find it hard to trust God because he doesn’t give us these *all things* immediately. Trust requires patience and an expectation that all will eventually be well, and that in the meantime God will bless us in all

kinds of ways. God's blessings really are [already but not yet](#).

When I was [diagnosed with Leukaemia](#), although my faith was shaken to some extent, ultimately trust in God prevailed and gave me strength. Its a journey I still walk along and my trust is far from perfect. But without trust in God there is literally no hope for any of us.

When bad things happen to us, then often we are tempted to doubt God's goodness. We believe that God is all powerful and so we know that he could have stopped what is happening to us. I do find the distinction important between him sovereignly turning bad things around for our good and actually being the author our suffering. This is something I speak about in my post [Giving Thanks IN Your Suffering, Not FOR It](#). However the question still arises which C.S. Lewis puts this way:

***“If God’s goodness is inconsistent with hurting us, then either God is not good or there is no God”***

***-C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed.***



Theologians write “theodicies” to attempt to answer that question. To me the best answer is that [Jesus wept & suffered for us.](#)

But we do also believe that he is graciously doing work in us through suffering. Perhaps the best expression of trust in God, and hope that he is at work planning a positive future for us is one of the most famous verses in the Bible:

***And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)***

The phrase *‘called according to his purpose’* brings us back to the gospel message. Essentially, if God has given us salvation he can be trusted with our whole lives even when it looks bleak.

There is a powerful link between meditating on the cross and resurrection of Jesus and fanning into flame both trust and hope in us. This is why I put together a playlist of what I call “[Gospel Hope](#)“. You can easily listen on both [Spotify](#) and [Apple Music](#).

I listen to this playlist often, because I find that it pulls on my heart strings and reminds me that Jesus is worthy of my trust because of his great love for me. No matter what [suffering](#) I am going through, he is with me. And he suffered far worse for me.

## **I am not alone. Nor are you.**

Jesus wants to comfort you right now with his love, and fan into flame your trust in him. And, with [the comfort we receive from him in our suffering, we are to comfort others](#). As we shall see later, offering the comfort, love and trustworthiness of Jesus to others is crucial for our salvation. And if we never do it, we should be very afraid, as Jesus takes a very dim view of those who don’t.

There are [many Bible verses which show us how trust in God](#) will help us conquer our fears. But we are also called to a greater fear that casts out lesser ones.

Our confidence that Jesus has a secure future in store for us should prompt both our fear and our trust.





## **The nature of God should inspire trust in us. But it must also inspire fear.**

C.S. Lewis links the idea of the fear of God to the idea that God is at work in the suffering he allows into our lives. We can be afraid of surgery and the pain that it will bring us, and so in that sense be afraid of the surgeon. But we can simultaneously trust that the Surgeon is skilled and will inflict damage on us with a view to curing us. In the same way we can both fear and trust God:

*“What do people mean when they say, ‘I am not afraid of God because I know He is good’? Have they never even been to a*

# *dentist?”*

## *– C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed*

Some people fear God but think of Jesus as the softer kinder version of God. But **we are also called to fear Jesus**. Once again as we have seen before in this series, Jesus takes something that the Old Testament applies only to the One True God, and applies it to himself using his title of ‘The Son of Man’. So just as we saw in [the article on Jesus demand that we love him](#), he is claiming equality with God by this. He tells us to fear the one who can destroy us in hell and tells us that it is HIMSELF:

You shall fear **only** the LORD your God (Deuteronomy 6:13, NASB)

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather **fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell**. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. **Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows**. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but **whoever denies me before men, I also will deny** before my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:28-33)

“When **the Son of Man** comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’



37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40 And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ 44 Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ 45 Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:31-46)

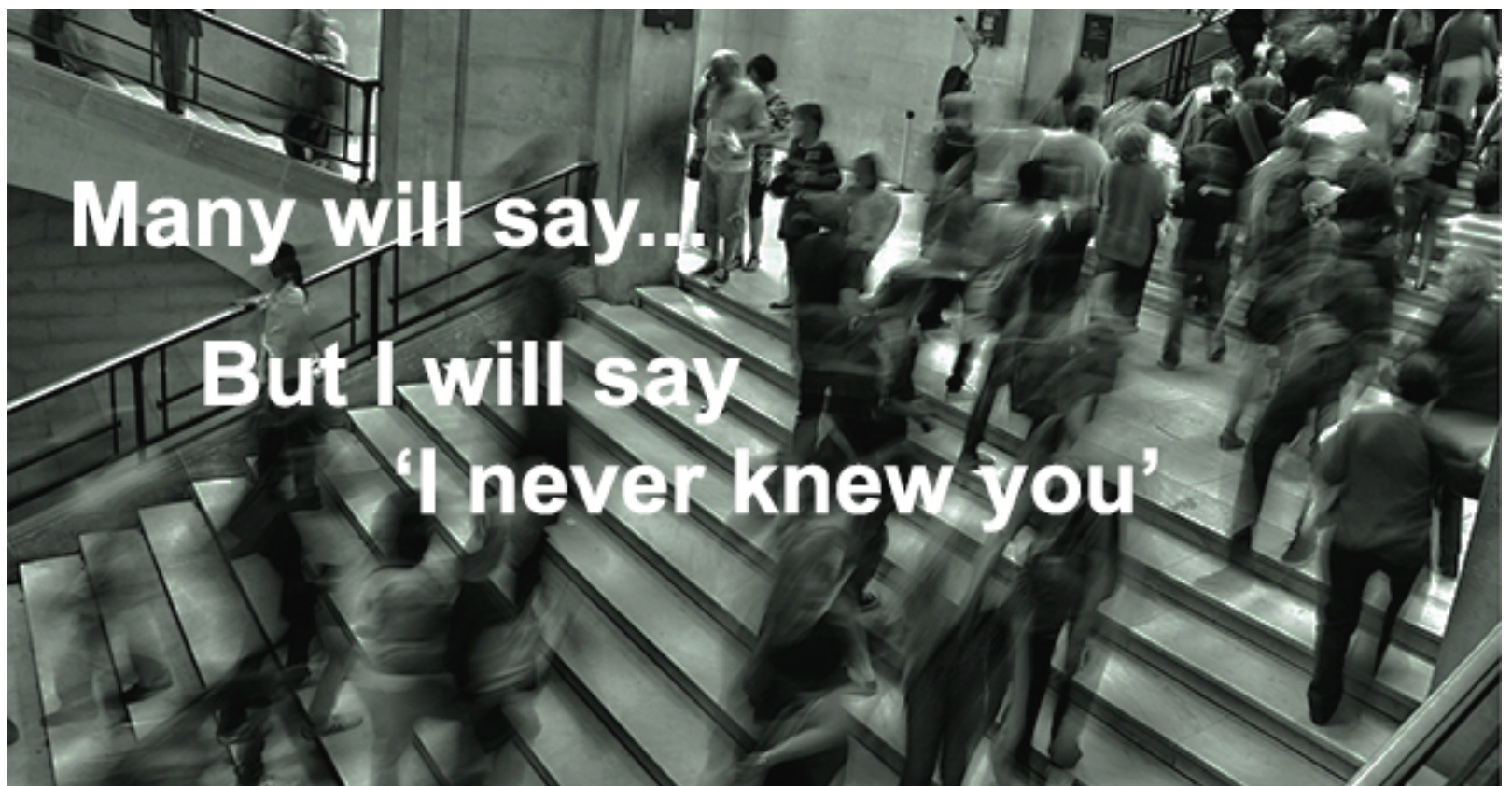


Image: Pixabay

We can see a number of things from these verses.

1. [Hell is real, and is far worse than anything we can suffer on earth.](#)

2. **Jesus is the one who decides who goes to hell.** Piper explains this:

“Jesus spoke of hell more than anyone else in the Bible. He referred to it as a place of “outer darkness” where “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12). In other words, **all the joys that we associate with light will be withdrawn, and all the fears that we associate with darkness will be multiplied.** And the result will be an intensity of misery that makes a person grind his teeth in order to bear it. . .

Therefore, give heed to Jesus’ clear demand to fear the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Hear it as a great mercy. What a wonderful thing it is that Jesus warns us. He does not leave us ignorant of the wrath to come. He not only warns. He rescues. This is the best effect of fear: It wakens us to our need for help and points us to the all-sufficient Redeemer, Jesus. Let it have this effect on you. Let it lead you to Jesus who says to everyone who believes in him, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).” ([\*What Jesus demands from the world\*](#) (p. 92, 98). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books)

3. **[Compassion towards others](#) is one of the criteria Jesus uses on judgement day.** Perhaps [Social Justice](#) is more important than many of us think. It seems he really meant it when he said that [love is the greatest commandment](#) and expects that if we have been [born again](#) we will be characterised by this love and compassion to others who are most in need.
4. Our fear of God is somehow linked with a lack of fear towards the circumstances we face. The Sparrow verse exists not on its own but in a fear of God sandwich. **If you fear HIM, then you need not really fear anything else.** Because God is precisely the sort of being that is infinitely worthy of our fear, he is also infinitely worthy of our trust. And we can be confident that because he is also for us, he

will not allow anything bad to befall us, unless he will turn that around for our ultimate good. **We both trust and fear God so we don't have to really fear anything else.**

How fascinating is that verse about the sparrows. We see that as there is no conflict between trust and fear, in fact that the two are entwined. As is so often the case Piper expresses this so clearly:

**“There is a real fear of him that can coexist with sweet peace and trust in him”**

–Piper, J. (2006). [\*What Jesus demands from the world\*](#) (p. 95). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

The idea of fear of the Lord being entwined with positive emotions is found also in Psalm 2 where we are told:

***“Serve the Lord with fear,  
and rejoice with trembling.  
Kiss the Son,  
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.  
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”***

***Psalm 2:11-12***

Serve and rejoice.

Fear and trembling with joy.

Affection for the very one who has wrath.

Refuge found in the same one who may cause us to perish.

**When it comes to Jesus, we can trust the very same one we fear.**

We come to the most powerful being in the universe. He is significant. Why



would we not be afraid as we are called into his presence?

Wouldn't we be at least a little nervous if summonsed into the presence of the Queen of England? What if when we met her we found she was a loving grandmother figure eager to welcome us into her family as she has done with those who have married her children and grandchildren? She wouldn't stop being queen even if we were adopted into her family.

Similarly a lack of fear in God demonstrates a disdain for his glory, it is as though we think he is insignificant.

A key passage in understanding the fear of God is [Psalm 36](#). Tim Keller reflects on this psalm explaining his concept of how we all too often “**shrug at God**”:

“Fearing God (verse 1) is not mere belief in him. It is to be so filled with joyful awe before the magnificence of God that we tremble at the privilege of knowing, serving, and pleasing him.

**Sin shrugs at God.** Its essence is **failing to believe not that he exists but that he matters**. This attitude is deadly. Fear of God and self-understanding grow or diminish together.

**Indifference toward God is a form of self-conceit** (verse 2) and self-deception (verse 2). To feel no need for God is to be out of touch with reality—such people have “ceased to be wise” (verse 3). What starts as mere overconfidence can grow into dishonesty and cruelty (verse 4). Sin is spiritual cancer.”

*Keller, The Songs of Jesus* (image: Flickr)



The Apostle Paul takes up a similar theme of mixing faith in God with fear of him when he says:

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always **obeyed**, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you**, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

(Philippians 2:12-13)

We fear because God is at work in us.

We trust because God is at work in us.

We work hard to learn how to obey because we know God is at work in us.

And he works in us for good not evil.

And so we see that,

***Our peace does not come from our removing the God of wrath from our thinking, but from his removing his wrath from us. He has done that by sending Jesus to die in our place so that, for everyone who believes in Jesus, God's wrath is taken away.***

– Piper, J. (2006). [\*What Jesus demands from the world\*](#) (p. 95). Wheaton, IL: Crossway

# Books.

The bible is full of references to fear of God. We simply cannot escape it or explain it away. Here are a few more to be meditating on:

- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10)
- “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. . . For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” <sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:19-22, 30-31)
- “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord . . . Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:14, 28-29)
- “We make it our aim to please Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. (2 Corinthians 5:9-11)

## **Fear and trust combined make respect.**

I will close this article with the words of one of the psalms which talk both of the fear of God, and us taking refuge in him with great trust and confidence of the protection he offers us:

**Transgression speaks to the wicked  
deep in his heart;  
there is no fear of God**



before his eyes.

For he flatters himself in his own eyes  
that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.

The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit;  
he has ceased to act wisely and do good. . . .

Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,  
your faithfulness to the clouds. . .

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!

The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your  
wings

(Psalm 36:1-3, 5, 7)

## After you have suffered a little while...



When life deals its worst in your direction, it is actually a time when God wants to **establish** you, or firm up your foundations. As we learn to be truly followers of Jesus, we will be those who find when troubles do hit us, we are not shaken to the same degree as those with no hope.

## Why are YOU so afraid?



In a huge storm that terrified hardened fisherman, Jesus slept. He seemed distant, uncaring to them.

Yet this was the very same Jesus who wept. Jesus knows we are frail humans who will find the storms of life fearful. But he wants us to **teach us how to still our hearts just as he stilled the storm . . .**

# Jesus Wept with Compassion



Image: Tamasin Warnock

Surely this shortest Bible verse is one of the most powerful statements in Scripture, and the most moving: JESUS WEPT. THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE WEEPS FOR US. All the pain that sin and death has ever caused gets distilled into one moment . . .

## All the Hell You Shall Ever Have!



Here and now, you have your hell. Hereafter you shall have your heaven! This is the worst of your condition; **the best is yet to come!** All the troubles, afflictions, and sorrows of this life, in comparison with eternal happiness and blessedness, are but as the point of a pin compared to the starry heavens . . .

## Can a Christian Lose their salvation?



Often when we worry about whether we can lose our salvation it really reflects a concern about whether we ever had it in the first place. The most important question we ask ourselves: **Does Jesus really KNOW me?** We must not be complacent about this . . .

Don't miss the series "**Jesus Commands**"



**Jesus said that if you [obey him](#) your life will be established on a firm foundation when the storms come.**

**Follow the [link](#) to read all the articles, or subscribe to our newsletter to be notified as they are published.**

**Complete the form in the top of the right hand column, or below if you are visiting on a mobile device.**



Adrian Warnock is [author](#) of Raised with Christ (Crossway, 2010) and Hope Reborn (Christian Focus, 2014). He blogs at Patheos and served on the leadership team of Jubilee Church, London. Adrian is a medical doctor and was [diagnosed](#) with chronic lymphocytic leukemia in May 2017. He is passionate about helping Christians learn to approach [suffering](#) with hope and compassion. Adrian began a series on [the commandments of Jesus](#) in January 2018.

Images: Pixabay except where indicated