

Read also Acts 12:5-11. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

There are times in life we have high hopes. A young man and young woman fall in love and plan to be married. They have what you might call stars in their eyes. “He’s perfect,” she says; “She’s a princess,” he says. Then they marry. Do you think after a year he will still be perfect and she will still be a princess?

There are times in life we have high hopes. We can remember presidents who brought hope, but with time the memory fades and we wonder what happened. Remember William McKinley? Then, Theodore Roosevelt, William Taft, Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton—eighteen of them. That’s just one country—there’s Charles de Gaulle, Napoleon, Churchill, Mao Tse-tung, Stalin, Chiang Kai-shek. Some were influential; some were not. Some were men of integrity; some were not.

Integrity. You know the story of the serpent tempting Eve. The serpent challenged God’s integrity. He said to Eve, “Things won’t turn out the way God said. You won’t die if you go against God. God just wants to keep you down; God just wants to keep something from you.”

The serpent was a liar. He was not a snake of integrity.

Not a human on earth has constant integrity, for we have an enemy who tempts. But God is a God of integrity. God’s integrity is sure and can be trusted. The Psalmist grasped it.

Sometimes we don’t grasp it. Peter was in trouble. King Herod had thrown him in prison.

- Peter was asleep,
- Fastened solidly with two chains
- Between two soldiers.
- Others stood guard at the prison gate.

This is about as secure as it gets. He was trapped.

But the God of Angel Armies had a different plan.

- An angel materialized out of thin air in the cell.
- The angel struck his side to awaken him, “Quick, get up!”
- The chains simply fell off. (They were still fastened to the two soldiers.)
- “Get dressed, put on your sandals, now your coat; follow me,”

Peter followed orders, *even though he thought it was a vision*. Can you imagine dressing yourself while looking down at the sleeping soldiers?

They lit out.

- They passed the first and second guard posts
- They came to the iron gate which opened for them all by itself.
- They started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him.

Peter finally came to his senses and realized it is true! He was so excited he went to tell his friends. They were overjoyed! They celebrated! Then, they let him in!

What are you facing that you need the power of God? Is it doubt? Is it a hard heart? Is it a hard circumstance? Do you need more purpose? Your God made the heavens and earth—the dark sea and all that is in them— Listen for what God does for those who trust in him. READ Psalm 146.

What is integrity?

It's moral character, honesty, guilelessness, good faith, blamelessness, purity of heart

God is a God of integrity. Better to trust in God than men, even powerful ones.

Sometimes, God's Spirit kicks in without your even pleading, like God did for Charles Lindberg. Lindberg was flying from New York to France. It was a solo flight, 3,600 miles—the longest ever flown non-stop. He was meticulous about the plane; had completely mapped out his flight plan; knew exactly how much fuel was needed. But Lindberg had no control over the weather. Not long after he took off he ran into immense cloud banks.

He could not see a thing. It began to rain, then ice. He had to fly lower. Four hours in he considered turning around, but didn't. The storm clouds built. A few hours later he again considered turning around, but now he was so far that he might not make it back. He was shaking off sleep, having slept little the night before. He had to fly so low he was just above the giant waves of the sea. He reached his hand out the window to splash water on his face to wake up. Then stars appeared through the clouds, which directed him. Suddenly some beings appeared—they were like phantoms. There were several of them traveling behind him. One at a time they came up near to him and spoke to him, guiding him, keeping him awake, helping him navigate. Their voices were familiar; comfortable. He felt like he had known them before.

They were spiritual partners in his quest; a gift from the God who helped him.

God made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. God willingly helps.

- God gives justice to the oppressed
- God provides food to the hungry
- God frees the prisoners
- God opens the eyes of the blind
- God lifts up those who are weighed down
- God protects the foreigner
- God cares for orphans and widows
- God keeps every promise and reigns forever.

These are reasons to rejoice!

Jesus did many of these things literally—healing, feeding, lifting up; frustrating the wicked. Jesus has done more to impact the world than twenty centuries of presidents. Yet he did not come as king. He came in the humblest way and when he died it seemed that all came to nothing.

Don't put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there.

Every one of us at times faces the decision to go it alone, like Adam and Eve. Everyone is tested with difficult situations where we have to choose, *am I going to rely on myself or other humans because God may not come through? Or, am I going to entrust myself to the Integrity of God?*

Am I going to trust in mortals—people who die?

People who die say, “Go for the gusto, this is all there is.”
But the person of God says, “There’s more than you can see.”

People who die say, “I structure my own truth.”
But the person of God says, “God’s truth lasts forever and is reliable.”

People who die say, “God has caused this problem. He does not care for me.”
But the person of God says, “God cares for me. God will get me out of this problem.”

The person of God is very joyful about this good news! The person of God is so joyful when he or she realizes what God does, they cannot keep it to themselves but must share it with others.

The person of God is so blessed he or she must join God in partnership, since God first joined you with the intent of saving your life. God’s person must:

- Feed the hungry – we’ve taken thousands of sandwiches to Austin Street Shelter and raised a quarter million dollars for Duncanville Outreach Ministry
- Lift up those who are weighed down
- Heal the sick
- Help the foreigner and care for orphans and widows

Condoleezza Rice said, “The community of people called Christians would minister to the sick and disabled and build hospitals, pursue universal education, spread teaching through universities, and lift up the poor in faraway places, “for they would inherit the earth.”¹

Satan is the one who says, “Don’t trust God, don’t try, he won’t help you.” Powerful people say, “This is all there is; you better take care of you.”

There is a saying, “God is in his heaven; all is right with the world.” G. K. Chesterton said that’s not true—*God left his heaven to set the world right.*

Trust in the God who will not break one promise—ever!

Happy is the person—joyful is the one who trusts in the Lord. Is that you?

AMEN

¹John Ortberg, *Who Is this Man?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 8.