

Suspicious Minds

Just like the song *Suspicious Minds*, relationships cannot succeed where there is an air of distrust. If one party doubts the motives, ability or truthfulness of another, the relationship will soon become very frosty. This can happen on the personal level when two friends are torn apart because someone no longer has faith in a friend as they use to. It can also happen on global level where a nation no longer believes another nation is trustworthy. We would need to look no further than the Iraq war and suspicion of weapons of mass destruction.

This week, I want to suggest that in our actions we are often suspicious of God. As Christians we behave as if we doubt his motives, ability and truthfulness.

God has been gracious to us in the past and yet we act as if he will not be gracious to us in the future. He has provided physically for us in the past, yet we are anxious that he will not get us through the next bill. He has helped us through hardship in the past, yet in present hardship we look to other things. He has given us a new identity in Christ, yet we still strive to form our own identity that we think will serve us better. We are suspicious of the future actions of our heavenly Father. He has been gracious in the past, but we often behave as if he will not be gracious in the future.

As Christians we need to have faith in God's future grace. This is what Christian faith is: knowing that God has been gracious in the past and the he will be gracious in the present and beyond. A much better articulation of this is given in John Piper's book, *The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in Future Grace*. It has stuck me how much I live suspiciously towards God. I say I have faith, but I do not believe in his ability to provide for me in the future, so I worry about how I will manage myself. I say he is my joy, but I do not believe in his plans to make me happy in the future, so I look to myself and other things to make me happy. I say he is the great healer, but I do not believe in his ability to heal my present hurt, so I look for other short-term comforts that soon flutter away.

It's an amazingly liberating and powerful thing to know that as God has been gracious in the past, he will also be gracious in the future. This week, let us live in the faith of his future grace.

Matt Ford

Day 1

Exodus 3:11-15

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers-- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob-- has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

Lord, thank you that we can call you by your great name, I AM WHO I AM. As you were gracious in saving the Israelites from Egypt, help me to trust in your saving power in my life. Help me to trust in your deliverance in all harmful situations. Amen.

Day 2

Matthew 6:25-31

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

Lord, thank you that you provide for even the lowliest of your creation. As you have provided for me in the past, help me to trust in your provision today and in the future, and show me my anxious heart. Amen.

Day 3

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Lord, you have taken so many burdens from us in the past, and we thank you. Please help us to cast today's burdens upon you. Help us to trust in your ability to deal with the big burdens and the small burdens in our lives. Amen.

Day 4

2 Corinthians 1:19-24

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

Lord, thank you for all your promises in Christ. Promises to bless us and keep us. Today, help me to cling to these promises when it might be easier to trust in myself, because I know only through you will I be truly blessed. Amen.

Day 5

Isaiah 46:9-13

Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfil my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do. Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are far from righteousness. I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendour to Israel.

Lord, thank you for a being my God in the past. Help me to remember your grace that has carried me through so far. Remind me of all these blessings and help me to trust in your grace today. Amen.