



# Biblical Reflection

## Blessed is he whose Help and Hope is in the LORD his God

by Rev. Canon Dr. Steven Abbarow

### Trust is earned, not given away flippantly

Trust cannot be demanded. It must be earned. Whom can we trust? This is a question Malaysians faced when we went out to vote in the 14th General Election. What have the various stakeholders done to earn my trust? As I went out to vote, I decided to trust in God. God alone is able to make all things work for the good of those who are called according to His purpose. I felt peace and blessed. Peace, because I know God is in control. Blessed because I am able to trust God and be at peace with whatever the outcome.

### Overview of Psalm 146: Trust, God and Idols

Psalm 146 is among the last five in the Psalter. Each of the Psalms (146-150) begins and ends with "Hallelujah" or "Praise the LORD" and together they are known as the Hallelujah or Praise Psalms. The Psalmist in Psalm 146 encourages us not to trust powerless men, in comparison to the omnipotent God. After proclaiming praise to God and warning the reader not to trust the gifts of God (the princes and mortal men), he calls the reader to trust the giver of these gifts, God himself. The essence of idolatry is to disregard the real Giver and acknowledge His gifts as god(s). The gifts are transient and

perishable. The Giver is omnipotent and immortal.

### Blessed: To Trust is to be Blessed

Let us look at verse five more closely. I have reorganised the verse in this way to help in our reflection;

Blessed is he  
whose  
help is the God of Jacob,  
hope is in the LORD his God,

It starts with the word "Blessed..." The Psalmist proclaims that when the believer turns away from other means and trusts in God alone, the believer is already blessed.

This kind of a state of blessedness is not dependent on the success narrative of the world. The very act of being able to put our hope in God and expect our help from Him already gives us the spiritual resources and energy to break out from the chains of living up to false expectations: of ourselves and of others. It frees us from having to prove something to someone and everyone. We are not driven by these false expectations. Rather, we are drawn to a state of rest and peace in the firm belief that all is well when we are trusting all that we are and have in His hands.

## **God our Basis for Trust: Help and Hope Forever**

The God of Jacob never gave up on Jacob. Jacob had a shadow side to him. Jacob means the “supplanter”. He deceived his brother, twice, to procure the birthright and blessings that were due to Esau. Everything seemed to be lost. He ran away to escape the wrath of his brother. God appeared and made a covenant with Jacob. He found himself caught up in intrigue, love, cunning and deceit while taking refuge with his uncle, Laban. Through all this, Jacob experienced God’s protection in the years he spent with Laban and prospered.

Upon his return to reunite with his brother Esau, he “wrestles with God” and is now named “Israel”—one who contends with God. God renewed his covenant with Jacob. God is forever faithful. Jacob continued to wrestle with God in trusting Him, but he did trust in Him in the end. No shadow in Jacob’s nature could turn God away from keeping His covenant. There is no shadow so dark that it can turn God away from us. God is faithful and covenantal. It is this God that the Psalmist calls us to set our hopes on and expect our help from.

## **A Challenge: Trust the Giver, not the Gifts**

As we approach this Christmas and New Year, we often wish one another a “Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year”. We receive gifts from people in this season. Often, we hear it said that it is not the gift but the thought that counts. This is especially helpful as we teach children to appreciate the gift not for the sake of the gift itself, but the thought and love that comes through the giver of the gift. In Christ’s birth,



*Rev. Canon Dr. Steven Abbarow is married to Anne Swinitha Rajaratnam and has two children, Ruel and Naomi. He has been a Priest in the Anglican Diocese of West Malaysia for the past 28 years and was seconded to the Malaysian Theological Seminary as a Vice Principal in 2012. He is also the Acting Team Vicar of St. Mark's Church, Seremban.*

death and resurrection, we see God’s ultimate expression of His love for us, the gift of salvation. This season of Christmas and New Year, let us receive the gifts that people bring to us—their needs, their love, their appreciation—and respond by setting our hope on, and expecting our help from, the God of Jacob. Blessed Christmas and New Year. ■

‘Nisi Dominus Frustra  
(Everything is in vain  
without God)’

Rev. Canon Dr. Steven Abbarow