

Today's Quick Word Ecclesiastes 7:14

By Bruce Christian

ECCLESIASTES 7:14 When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.

What comforting, and challenging, words these are for us today! Many God-fearing people are asking the question: "Why does our good, all-powerful God allow the present pandemic to cause such devastation to our lives, our health and the financial stability on which our lives and well-being have come to be so dependent?"

Wise King Solomon has a good and helpful response to this very difficult and perplexing question. He reminds us that, yes, our God IS all-powerful, and he IS in full control of the 'bad times' as well as the 'good times'. It reminds me of the verse in the hymn: "Peace, perfect peace; our future all unknown? Jesus we know - and he is on the throne." ... and the earlier verses: "Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin? The blood of Jesus whispers peace within. Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round? On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found." (Edward Bickerseth).

No, we DON'T know what the future holds, but we DO KNOW WHO holds the future, and that makes all the difference. It is good to reflect on Question 28 of the Heidelberg Catechism. It follows two questions dealing with what it means to say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty", and what is involved in his Providence, and adds: "Q. 28: How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence help us? Ans. We can be patient when things go against us, thankful when things go well, and for the future we can have good confidence in our faithful God and Father that nothing will separate us from his love. All creatures are so completely in his hand that without his will they can neither move nor be moved."

I find myself asking, "Is our good and all-powerful God using the present circumstances to wake his people out of our complacency and to call on us to show and express to one another more humble gratitude for the 'good times' and to look to HIM ALONE for help and rescue in the 'bad times'? Let us learn from these times to put away our child-ISH faith, and develop a more child-LIKE faith.

Today's Quick Word Psalm 34:22

By Bruce Christian

PSALM 34:22 The LORD redeems his servants; no-one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.

The word 'redeems' refers to the price that has to be paid to purchase the freedom of someone or something who/which is otherwise held in some sort of bondage from which he/she/it has no means or possibility of escape by their own efforts. In the OT it is used to describe the purchasing of freedom for a slave, and supremely to describe the LORD's redeeming of his people from bondage in Egypt.

Today, we might talk about 'redeeming' a valuable item that actually belongs to us from a pawn-broker. It is therefore an ideal word to describe what Christ has done for us when we come to him in repentance-and-faith and take 'refuge' in him - which is obviously what King David is foreshadowing in this verse. The Bible tells us that we are all born, as descendants of Adam, into a state of bondage to sin from which we cannot escape by our own efforts. Jesus tells us that we are all 'slaves' to sin (John 8:34, cf 1 John 1:8), and the Apostle Paul reminds us that 'in Adam all die' (1 Corinthians 15:22), and that in our native state we are all 'dead in [our] transgressions and sins', leading to the obvious point that 'dead' people can't bring themselves back to life, but must be 'MADE ALIVE in Christ' (Ephesians 2:1-5).

The price that Jesus paid to 'redeem' us was his own precious

blood, shed on the cross for all who belong to him. Just as an item we 'redeem' from a pawn-broker is something that already 'belongs' to us, so we 'belong' to God by reason of creation and his electing grace (cf Revelation 17:8). Nevertheless, he 'buys us back' from bondage to sin with Christ's redeeming blood! And through this perfect transaction we are 'free' and 'uncondemned'. Jesus said, "if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36), and Paul wrote, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:1-2).

"I know that my Redeemer lives! What comfort this assurance gives! He lives! He lives! Who once was dead, he lives, my everlasting Head. He lives, triumphant from the grave, he lives, eternally to save; he lives to bless me with his love and intercedes for me above. He lives, to help in time of need; he lives, my hungry soul to feed; he lives and grants me daily breath; he lives, and I shall conquer death. He lives, my kind, wise, constant friend who still will guard me to the end; he lives, and while he lives I'll sing: Jesus, my Prophet, Priest and King. He lives, my Saviour to prepare a place in heaven, and lead me there; he lives, all glory to his Name - Jesus, unchangeably the same." (Samuel Medley).

Today's Quick Word Hebrews 2:2-4

By Bruce Christian

HEBREWS 2:2-4 For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

I remember as a young Christian more than 6 decades ago, reading a tract entitled, "The Question the Bible Doesn't Answer". The question, of course, was a rhetorical one, and the one posed in the King James Version of today's verses: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" It's worth pondering on.

The Sovereign God of Creation, throughout his Word, makes the situation very clear:

- (a) He has made his will and his Laws known through his infallible propositional revelation in the Scriptures;
- (b) failure to obey him carries with it the necessary consequent punishment of death;
- (c) this 'death' means eternal separation from the blessing of his love and care;
- (d) because of his love and mercy, and consistent with his character, he has provided a way of escape from this punishment, this sentence of death;
- (e) this 'way of escape', this 'Great Salvation', was achieved by sending his Son to die and thus bear the punishment in our place as our Substitute (referred to by theologians as

'Substitutionary Atonement');

(f) the Lord Jesus 'proved' incontrovertibly who he was by 'signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit'; and

(g) the Scriptures make this all abundantly clear, along with the fact that there is no other way of escape (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

So the question is a no-brainer: "How shall we escape if we IGNORE such a great salvation?" But it is as important, and life-threatening, as it is simple. Through his death, resurrection and ascension, God the Father has installed God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as his rightful King over all Creation (cf Psalm 2:6-9; Philippians 2:9-11). So imagine coming before him on the Day of Judgement, when everything about the 'Great Salvation' he has provided in verifiable history is shown in all its time-honoured simplicity and glory, and being among those who have 'neglected so great salvation' and therefore who have no possible escape from the inevitable consequence of eternal punishment. It's not worth thinking about - or rather, it IS worth thinking about!

"I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2b). Make sure it doesn't pass 'ignored/neglected' (the Greek word means to 'un-care' - a sort of 'couldn't care less', 'nothing to do with me', attitude). To be among those for whom there is 'no escape' we don't have to be actively opposed to God, or to break his laws, we only have to IGNORE his gracious provision of salvation through faith in Jesus!