

Today's Quick Word Exodus 34:5-7

By Bruce Christian

EXODUS 34:5-7 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."

These are not just idle cliches which Israel's Covenant-keeping God, the LORD, spoke to his fickle, rebellious people through his humble servant, Moses. God's essential 'compassionate, gracious, patient, loving, faithful and forgiving' nature was continually revealed to his people through countless acts of mercy for subsequent generations ... and then supremely to the whole world in the costly gift of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible to reflect on the Cross of Christ, where his precious blood was shed for rebellious sinners such as you and me, without being confronted by his deep compassion and unmerited, yet unlimited, love and grace! "When I survey the wondrous Cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride." We depend so much on his mercy and grace day by day.

But, sadly, it is therefore too easy to take these things for granted without consciously acknowledging them. Perhaps that is why, in saying this to Moses, the LORD added the words: "Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished"! Perhaps he sends the coronavirus pandemic to remind us all how dangerous it is to take him for granted. Perhaps we had failed to observe the

more infectious and more deadly 'virus' that has been spreading so effectively throughout our world during my lifetime (this is my eightieth year). I refer, of course, to the widespread sin of ignoring God and giving him no place in our calculations. We debate 'climate change' vigorously and globally, but give no consideration to the fact that he has revealed himself as having absolute control over floods and droughts, seedtime and harvest (see eg Genesis 6:11-14; 7:4; 8:21-22; Psalm 107:28-39; etc.). We search for 'scientific' answers to the question of how the Universe and human life began, and why things are the way they are today, but give no thought to the eternal truth God has revealed in Genesis 1-3 - the truth that explains it all quite adequately, consistently, and in a way that fits perfectly with our scientific investigations and observations.

At the beginning of my lifetime, whole nations were called to prayer, to plead with God for peace from the world-wide conflict that was costing so many young lives. What has happened to public 'calls for prayer' in the face of the devastation caused by COVID-19?

It seems to me, in the light of what God said to Moses, that we are quite obviously under God's Judgement at the moment. I am so glad that, because of his compassion, grace, mercy, love, patience and forgiveness, he has provided a refuge from his wrath in Jesus, who bore it for me. As a forgiven, redeemed, protected sinner I will continue to thank God ... and plead with him in prayer for our crazy, messed-up world, because I know that, whatever happens, it is ALL in HIS powerful and compassionate hands.

Today's Quick Word John 14:1, 27

By Bruce Christian

JOHN 14:1, 27 Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ... Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

It is good for us, in these confusing, troubled times, to go back and reflect on these words of Jesus that can easily have lost their impact on us through familiarity and 'ordinariness'. Firstly, I notice that Jesus repeats the phrase, "Let not your hearts be troubled". It seems that he KNOWS very well that the 'default' position for my sinful heart is to be 'troubled' (and he's not wrong!). What I hear him telling me is to be pro-active in not allowing my sinful heart to just adopt its default position. And he gives me a good and valid reason why I should take this action: because I can (and should) trust his promises IN MY HEART, and not just in my HEAD!

In my head, I have no doubt that God is the Sovereign Creator who rules over every part of the world he has created - every thing, every event, every occurrence, every predicament. My head has absolutely no problem with any of this, because God's ongoing, faithful rule has always been so evident everywhere. My head doesn't need any more proof of this - it already has more than enough. "Did you hear that, heart?" No matter

how confusing and perplexing the circumstances, a Father who loves me enough to send his Son to die for me, is in full control of everyTHING, and is using everyTHING to fulfil his loving purposes for me (Romans 8:28)! As Paul reminded the Thessalonians: "Give thanks in each THING, for this THING is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

And, just in case, heart, Jesus gives you another reason,. "My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives." The 'peace' that Jesus promises is not like anything the world can offer. It is a peace that is accompanied by God's personal presence with and in us: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." (16-17). Have you grabbed that clear message and promise, heart?

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin? The blood of Jesus offers peace within. ... Peace, perfect peace, the future all unknown? We know that Jesus reigns upon the throne. ... Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours? Christ Jesus conquered death and ALL its powers." (Bickersteth).

Today's Quick Word Proverbs 12:16-18

By Bruce Christian

PROVERBS 12:16-18 A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult. A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies. Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

How good and helpful it is for us today to be able to communicate with each other so quickly and easily across vast distances and wide audiences using social media and other technologies. But how potentially dangerous and harmful it also is!

It would be good if we reminded ourselves often of Solomon's simple wisdom in today's verses - particularly verse 16! What great, and long-lasting (even permanent) harm is done to relationships by an ill-considered response to an (often assumed) 'insult', instead of having a cooling off period, allowing us to reflect on the great and lasting benefit to be gained from just 'overlooking' it and getting on with our lives. Perhaps the Apostle James was reflecting on this verse when he wrote: "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. ... The

tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." (James 1:19-20; 3:6-8).

I think it would also be extremely beneficial to the general well-being of our society if the various news media took notice of verses 17-18. Personally, I much prefer 'relaxing' by doing the washing up rather than watching, or even listening to, the ABC news coverage at the end of a busy day! It is obvious that the way the news is presented to us is designed to stir up our emotions and turn us against one another (and against the government), because that is what gives the media further opportunity for ongoing 'sensationalised' reporting. Let us be among those who abide by Solomon's wisdom: "The lips of the righteous nourish many, ... Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones." (Proverbs 10:21; 16:24).