

Today's Quick Word Jude 1:21, 24-25

By Bruce Christian

JUDE 1:21, 24-25 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. ... To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen.

Jude had really wanted to write to his fellow believers in a positive way about the amazing salvation in which they shared (3), but instead he felt constrained to warn them about the apostasy from within the Church that was already threatening its life and health.

He addressed these believers as "those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and KEPT by Jesus Christ" (1). He was fully confident of their security in Christ because of the Father's covenant love and because of God the Son's power to 'KEEP' them! So he is able to conclude the short letter by saying that, in spite of all the subtle but powerful pressure on their natural inclinations to be drawn back into the thinking and

ways of the world, his God is the One "who is able to KEEP you from falling"!

The doctrine of 'the perseverance of the saints' is a great comfort, and is really the only basis on which we can have assurance of salvation. Paul also was able to declare his confidence in the fact that "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6).

But the greatest THREAT to this assurance is COMPLACENCY, a 'resting on our laurels', a being unaware of how easy it is to be seduced by the world. It seems to me that this could be one of the biggest threats to Western Christianity today, as it seems it was in Jude's day. This is why he challenges us in verse 21: "KEEP yourselves in God's love". We are 'KEPT' by God, and because of his 'power and authority' he is able to KEEP on KEEPING us; but we have a God-given responsibility to 'KEEP [y]ourselves in his love'. This means spending time daily in his Word and in prayer, enabling us to stand firm, "to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (3), and in doing this, to 'speak the truth in love' (Ephesians 4:15).

Today's Quick Word Deuteronomy 5:32-33

By Bruce Christian

DEUTERONOMY 5:32-33 So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. Walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

We are living in troubled days - and perhaps the most troubling thing is the feeling of uncertainty about the future. How long will the threat of the Covid-19 last, and how long, if ever(?), will it take to recover from its effects on our economic stability and our future prosperity? What lies ahead for our children and their children? And the most troubling aspect of this uncertainty is that we have totally ridiculed, ignored and discarded the 'roadmap' that is absolutely necessary for our prosperity and even our survival!

When the Sovereign Creator of all things was preparing his Covenant People to live and prosper under his blessing in the Promised Land he had prepared for them, he gave them specific, detailed Written Instructions to ensure their success (cf 4:7-8 - "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?"). It was such a simple and beneficial equation; but, did they keep their side of the bargain? No!

I wonder why we never learn, even from their sad history! As

the Apostle Paul reminds us: "These things happened to them as examples and were WRITTEN DOWN as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come." (1 Corinthians 10:11). If only we would bow humbly in repentance and faith before our Creator, acknowledging our dependence on him and submitting to his Scriptures as the only reliable roadmap for our future, we could discover the truth of his promises.

It needs to be emphasised, however, that such a commitment to obedience **MUST** be predicated on our recognition of a need for his gift of faith. Our innate sinful condition renders us **UNABLE** to obey his Word in our own strength. We need the power of the Holy Spirit working within us, and this is only possible by our accepting Jesus as our Saviour and submitting to him as the Lord of all our lives. Some of the saddest words in Scripture are what Paul had to say about the failure of his own people to take this first step: "For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who **BELIEVES**." (Romans 10:2-4).

Let us all make a start back on the road to health and prosperity by teaching our children and grandchildren, through **PRAYER**, **PRECEPT** and **EXAMPLE**, to put their trust in **JESUS**, and to make the **BIBLE** their 'roadmap' for **LIFE**.

Today's Quick Word Isaiah 10:13

By Bruce Christian

PSALM 89:30-37 “If [David’s] sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging; but I will not take my love [chesed] from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness - and I will not lie to David - that his line will continue for ever and his throne endure before me like the sun; it will be established for ever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.” Selah

What a comfort these verses would have been to Jesus during his earthly ministry as he interacted with the weakness and duplicity of his disciples, and as he ‘looked down the barrel’ at what he would later have to reveal to John about the long-term vicissitudes of his Bride, his Church. The Book of Revelation spells out the often very painful process involved in perfecting his Bride to “present her to himself as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” (cf Ephesians 5:27).

In spite of the dark times the Church has been taken through in its long history, we have God’s promise: “Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness - and I will not lie to David - that his line

will continue for ever and his throne endure before me like the sun ...”; a promise that was confirmed by Jesus himself: “And I tell you that you are ‘Rocky’, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” (Matthew 16:18).

The Church is under attack today, and many aspects of its corporate life fall a long way short of ‘holy and blameless’, but we can be sure that our Triune God and faithful heavenly Father “will not violate [his] covenant or alter what [his] lips have uttered.” And we have the additional information which could only be a future hope for the author of Psalm 89: we KNOW that this inviolable ‘covenant’ was sealed with the precious blood of Jesus when HE bore all the ‘punishment’ of OUR ‘sin’, OUR ‘iniquity’, OUR ‘violat[ion] of [his] decrees’ and OUR ‘fail[ure] to keep [his] commands’, on the Cross of Calvary! I grieve over the Church’s track record before a watching world, but I am greatly encouraged and comforted in the face of that world’s ‘mockery’, because when Jesus comes again the mockers will see “the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride BEAUTIFULLY DRESSED FOR HER HUSBAND.” (Revelation 21:2)!