

## Today's Quick Word Mark 11:23-24

*By Bruce Christian*

**MARK 11:23-24** *"I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (Jesus' response to Peter's questioning of his cursing of the fig-tree.)*

This unambiguous statement of the Lord Jesus causes all sorts of problems as we wrestle with its implications in our own lives. There would be very few of us who have not experienced instances when it just hasn't 'worked' for us in the way that Jesus indicated!

This leads us then to question the 'genuineness' of our faith, and into the error of seeing our 'faith' as a kind of 'work' with which we can manipulate the will of God provided we can manage to activate enough of it from within our own resources.

The other erroneous way we might apply it is to turn our prayer life of humble pleadings at the throne of grace into arrogant demands of God to prove to him that we 'truly believe that we

have received them'. I have seen both of these errors cause much emotional and pastoral harm. When Jesus himself pleaded with his Father to "take this cup from me" in the Garden of Gethsemane, there was no lack of faith on his part, but a declared willingness to submit to his Father's sovereign will regardless of his own desires as he faced the absolute horror of the Cross. (Mark 14:36).

Jeremiah 24:1 shoed us that God's sovereign will, while always for our ultimate benefit (cf Romans 8:28-32), is often totally illogical and incomprehensible to our finite minds and from our very limited perspective. So, no matter how much faith we might have about something, we are wise to leave the outcome in God's hands. 'He loves, he cares., he knows. His love, though never dim, can only give the best to those who leave the choice with him!' I can think of several times when I have asked him for something, with considerable faith that he had the power to grant my request, only to end up being glad that he didn't grant it at the time!

## Today's Quick Word Acts 18:9-10

*By Bruce Christian*

**ACTS 18:9-10** *One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no-one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.”*

The faithful Apostle Paul continued to press on in his proclamation of the Good News of Jesus in spite of persistent and mounting opposition, especially from his fellow countrymen dispersed throughout the Roman world (see, for example, 2 Corinthians 11:23b-28!).

Corinth was no exception, and it would have been tempting, many times, for him to give up on the church-planting program to which God had commissioned him. But he could NOT remain silent (cf 1 Corinthians 9:16). He was only a channel through whom the sovereign Lord was carrying out his eternal purposes in saving those who were his. In spite of appearances, and a seeming lack of success from a very limited, purely human perspective, God had many of his chosen people, his Elect, in this godless, strategic city - and therefore nothing could prevent

him from bringing them to a vital, living faith in his Risen Son.

We see from this, that a firm adherence to the Biblical doctrine of Election will never be a deterrent to vigorous evangelism, but rather, will spur us on to greater effort to reach the lost wherever and whoever they might be. Fortunately, the identity of the ‘whoever’ and the ‘wherever’ are not revealed to us, so we must ‘not be silent’, but be actively involved in urging EVERYone EVERYwhere to turn to Jesus in repentance-and-faith, CONFIDENT in the fact that the Sovereign Lord WILL be WITH US, watching over us, and graciously using all our evangelistic efforts ‘in this city’ to bring to faith all those who ‘belong’ to him.

The responsibility to TELL the Good News rests with US - but the POWER to BRING people to saving faith rests with the HOLY SPIRIT. As Paul reminded Timothy: “... God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ ...” (2 Timothy 2:19) - even if we don’t find out till later - perhaps even in heaven - who they are!

## Today's Quick Word Jeremiah 30:1-3

*By Bruce Christian*

**JEREMIAH 30:1-3** *This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you. The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave to their forefathers to possess,' says the LORD."*

How grateful we should be to the Prophet Jeremiah (and all the other 15 'writing' prophets!) for his obedience to this command from the LORD his God! Let us never take for granted the value of the Old Testament to our understanding of the Gospel. (And I might add to this my gratitude to all who have faithfully preserved and translated God's Revealed Truth over the centuries, often at the cost of their lives.)

There are many reasons why I love the OT (cf Psalm 19:7-14), but the two that stand out for me the most are these:

Firstly, without these Scriptures I could never fully appreciate the depth of human sin (my sin) and the extent to which it offends the holiness of the God in whose image I am formed - and, flowing on from this, the 'height, length, breadth and depth' of his love in sending his own precious Son to bear, in my place, as my substitute, the outpouring of divine wrath that my sin deserves.

Secondly, I am strengthened in my appreciation of the absolute sovereignty of God in the affairs of his world (and convicted when adverse circumstances tempt me to doubt this fact!).

Through the writing prophets, God was able to reveal to us in fine detail his amazing, eternal Plan of Salvation-by-Grace-Alone, centred firmly on Jesus, and thus give us confidence in his power and faithfulness in keeping his promises. Because we HAVE the OT, we are left with absolutely no excuse for thinking that the Coming of Jesus - his Life, Death and Resurrection, - were 'accidents' of history at best, or just made-up, fictional stories at worst.

And the wonderful corollary of this is that I can have full confidence in all the NEW Testament promises: about my eternal salvation; about the indwelling, powerful, enabling, comforting ministry of the Holy Spirit; about Jesus' Second Coming in power to 'make all things new' and to rule as God's Eternal King over the 'New Heaven and New Earth' where "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4); etc; etc;

Thank you so much, Jeremiah, for being obedient and faithful in 'writing down' what the LORD told you; and thank you Paul of Tarsus, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, Thomas Cranmer, ... and countless other Heroes of the Faith down through the ages, through whose faith and faithfulness I have access to God's infallible, inspired Word. Paul's word for these discouraging times stands firm: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4).