

“A HANDBOOK FOR SURVIVAL”

“Blessed Assurance”

Scripture Reading – II Peter, 3:9-15a, 17-18

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation...

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.

‘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, 1:24-25, NIV

This series, ‘A HANDBOOK FOR SURVIVAL’, is based on THE LETTER OF JUDE.

To protect from harm, to guard from attack, to repulse enemies – for centuries rugged defenders have built walls, launched missiles, and waged wars, expending materiel and human resources in the battle to save nations and cities. With total commitment and courageous abandon, individuals have fought for their families. It is a rule of life that we fight for survival, defending with all our strength what is most precious to us, from every real or imagined attack.

There are many people who live in opposition to God and his followers.

They twist God's truth, seeking to deceive and destroy the unwary, but God's truth must go forth, carried and defended by those who have committed their lives to God's Son. It is an important task, an awesome responsibility, and a profound privilege to have this commission.

This was Jude's message to Christians everywhere.

Opposition would come and godless teachers would arise, but Christians should ‘**CONTENT FOR THE FAITH**’ by rejecting all falsehood and immorality, remembering God's mighty acts of rescue and punishment, and the warnings of the apostles. His readers are encouraged to build up their own faith through prayer, keeping close to Christ, helping others, and hating sin. Finally, Jude concludes with a glorious benediction of praise to God.

There are many false teachers waiting to destroy your Christ-centred life, the credibility of God's Word, and the unity of the Body of Christ. THE LETTER OF JUDE calls Christians to stand firm in their faith and defend God's truth at all costs, because nothing else is more valuable...

“BLESSED ASSURANCE”

This is the last sermon in this series on THE LETTER OF JUDE.

It has been an interesting experience to preach through THE LETTER OF JUDE, and, whilst it has been quite a challenge, it has brought great strength to my own heart. We commenced the series acknowledging that this Scripture is largely unknown and seldom read because for modern readers, the letter is a bewildering rather than profitable undertaking. However, I hope the series has proved profitable to you!

J B Mayer wrote: ‘TO A MODERN READER IT IS CURIOUS RATHER THAN EDIFYING WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE BEGINNING AND THE END’. Today we look at the end doxology of the book, and will once again reference the start of Jude's Letter.

Before we do that, we set the scene with two profound statements...

THE JOY OF THE PRESENT CANNOT DIMINISH THE HOPELESSNESS OF THOSE WITH NO FUTURE

Let me explain: suppose you are on a luxurious cruise ship cruising the beautiful islands and waters of the Caribbean. Everything is fantastic: you have all of your best friends with you; the music is magnificent; the entertainment is enjoyable; the food is fantastic; the sky is blue and cloudless; the sea is slick and calm. Everything is so wonderful that you can confidently say it is the best holiday you have ever had.

Suppose the captain then announces that you will continue to sail until all the food, drink and water runs out, and when the ship's fuel runs out, they will scuttle the ship and sink it. At that moment, with that news, the cruise feels somewhat different. No matter how wonderful the music, entertainment and food are, no matter the calm sea and the good weather, the joy would be immediately lost with such a bleak prospect for the future.

THE PAIN OF THE PRESENT CANNOT DIMINISH THE HOPE OF THOSE WITH A GLORIOUS FUTURE

Let me explain: suppose you are in hospital suffering excruciating pain and discomfort. The doctor comes to you and tells you that in one week's time, the pain will subside and whilst there may be some discomfort, you will be cured and can go home. You see, you can cope with the pain of the present when there is a prospect of a glorious future. You can overcome the suffering provided that there is a genuine hope for the future.

‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.’

1 Peter, 1:3-6, NIV

We live in a country where there are millions without hope.

It does not matter how many of the luxuries of the world they possess, without a promise of Heaven, they look forward to a dire future and an eternity in darkness and despair. There are people who are in darkness and despair right now, but they have a hope for the future – they can see the light at the end of the tunnel, and it is a glorious light, the light of God’s presence and a place in a mansion in Heaven.

This is the glorious picture that Jude portrays for us in these last two verses.

He has warned against those who are spiritual crocodiles or spiritual snakes or spiritual criminals. He has warned against apostates who have replaced the truth of God with a lie. They have fallen away, and just in case we are feeling somewhat vulnerable and questioning whether or not we will finally make it, Jude wants to assure us that we can – and we will!

‘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, 1:24-25, NIV

1. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE SAVIOUR

‘TO HIM WHO IS ABLE’

Three times in The New Testament, praise is given to the God ‘WHO IS ABLE’.

In Romans, 16:25, Paul gives praise to the God who is able to strengthen us. God alone can give us a foundation for life which nothing and no one can ever shake.

In Ephesians, 3:20, Paul gives praise to the God whose grace no man has ever exhausted and on whom no claim can ever be too much.

In Jude, 1:24-25, Jude gives praise to the God who is able to keep us from falling and present us before him without fault and with great joy...

Jude writes about ‘HIM WHO IS ABLE’ who is ‘THE ONLY GOD OUR SAVIOUR’.

These verses have to do with the Sovereignty of God. We do not use the word ‘SOVEREIGN’ much nowadays, but it usually refers to a King – one who has complete control, supreme authority, and ultimate power over his Kingdom. In ancient times, people accepted ‘THE DIVINE

RIGHT OF KINGS’, but problems arose when the monarch acted in ways that were contrary to the law of the land, or the welfare of his citizens...

King James I wrote: *‘The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth; for kings are not only God’s lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God’s throne, but even by God himself are called gods... Kings are justly called gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth: for if you will consider the attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a king. God hath power to create or destroy, make or unmake, at his pleasure, to give life or send death, to judge all and to be judged nor accountable to none; to raise low things and to make high things low at his pleasure, and to God are both souls and body due. And the like power have kings: they make and unmake their subjects, they have power of raising and casting down, of life and of death, judges over all their subjects and in all causes and yet accountable to none but God only... It [is] sedition in subjects to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power. But just kings will ever be willing to declare what they will do, if they will not incur the curse of God. I will not be content that my power be disputed upon; but I shall ever be willing to make the reason appear of all my doings, and rule my actions according to my laws’.*

James’ words were not acceptable and as the English barons and people revolted, he was forced to sign the Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215.

What does ‘SOVEREIGNTY’ mean when it refers to God?

It recognises that he alone is King. He is the King against whom there can be no uprising. He is the King who is able to do anything that he needs to do, wants to do, and ought to do. Being God, the Almighty always acts in a manner that is right. He is completely and utterly able.

‘We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.’

“THE SALVATION ARMY ARTICLES OF FAITH”, Doctrine 2

You are going to make it to heaven not because you are able but because ‘HE IS ABLE’.

The God who is able, created the universe and the world upon which we live in just six days. Because God is able, the Israelites escaped the pursuing chariots of Pharaoh’s army through the waters of the Red Sea. Because God is able, the Israelites claimed the Promised Land that God had promised on earth to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jesus took water and turned it into wine. He took something simple and through a miracle made it into something wonderful. God is able to perform a mighty miracle in you today.

Jesus fed over five thousand people with two fish and five loaves. God is able to take that which you offer him today and multiply that simple gift to meet the needs of many others.

Jesus healed a man of the deadly disease of leprosy. God is able to heal all manner of diseases – or give us the grace and strength we need today to carry them with dignity.

Jesus stopped a raging storm when he spoke a few words. God is able to bring peace into the midst of the storms of life today.

Jesus opened blinded eyes. Although Satan has blinded the spiritual eyes of people today, God is able to open eyes to the truths of the Gospel.

Jesus healed those who were deaf and dumb. God is able to empower us so that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and speak words of testimony with boldness and power.

Able to save, able to keep, yes, my Lord is able.

Giving me grace, giving me power, yes, my Lord is able.

He has turned the darkest night to day, that's the reason I can say:

He's able to save, able to keep is Christ, my Saviour.

Norman Bearcroft, SACS I

2. THE SECURITY OF THE SAINT

'TO HIM WHO IS ABLE TO KEEP YOU FROM FALLING'

Far too many Christians live without the knowledge of their eternal security.

You would have become a very insecure child and would probably have had a nervous breakdown if every time you did something wrong you were left to wonder whether or not you were still a child of your mother and father. There are Christians who believe that every time we sin, God throws us out of his family – but this is a belief that has no Scriptural support!

As a child of God, I may disobey him and he may chastise and discipline me as a result, but I am still his child; I am still united with Christ, my brother; I am still a member of the family. Remember, in THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON, when the wasteful child returned home to his loving father, he was still part of the family and, on his return, was treated as such.

My security is not based upon me holding on to him; I trust God to hold on to me.

'Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.'

Jude, 1:1-2, NIV

THE FATHOMLESS LOVE OF GOD

Jude wrote his Letter 'TO THOSE WHO ARE LOVED BY GOD THE FATHER'.

The **KJV** uses the word 'BELOVED'. Beloved is a great word because it means that there is a finished action in the past that has an effect on the present. It is something that cannot be changed. It is fixed, it is settled. We are God's beloved – for ever!

God cannot love you any more, nor any less. He does not love us because we are valuable – we are valuable because he loves us. There is nothing you can do to make God love you more. There is nothing you can do to make God love you less.

God loves you and me as much as he loves the Lord Jesus!

'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!'

I John, 3:1a, NIV

John found it difficult: 'HOW GREAT IS THE LOVE THE FATHER HAS LAVISHED ON US'.

It is as if he just cannot, no matter how hard he tried, find the words to describe the full measure of God's love. He was struggling with super love, or fantastic love, or colossal love, or spectacular love. We are loved with supercalifragilisticexpialidocious love!

God loves you, dear friend, and you are secure and God's sovereign love.

'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Romans, 8:38-39, NIV

THE INFINITE POWER OF GOD

Jude wrote his Letter 'TO THOSE WHO ARE KEPT BY JESUS CHRIST'.

I have always liked the word 'PRESERVED' because so many Christians look pickled. However, 'KEPT' is a much better word. The idea behind it is not of a prison guard keeping watch over prisoners – the Bible uses a different word for that – but it has the idea of a mother who is watching over a little baby with tender loving care.

'Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one".'

John, 10:27-30, NIV

Just as a shepherd protects his sheep, Jesus protects his people from harm.

While believers can expect to suffer on earth, Satan cannot harm their souls or take away their eternal life with God. There are many reasons to be afraid here on earth because this is the devil's domain. But if you choose to follow Jesus, he will give you everlasting safety.

'Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.'

II Timothy, 1:12b, NIV

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

Jude wrote his Letter 'TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED'.

God has called us because he has a sovereign purpose for our lives. When Jude uses the word 'CALLED', he is using it in the sense of 'AN OFFICIAL SUMMONS'. Christians are those who are called by God. The Greek for 'CALL' is 'KALIEN' and it has three great uses...

'KALIEN' is used for summoning a man to office, to duty, and to responsibility.

The Christian is summoned to a task, to duty, to responsibility in the service of Christ.

'KALIEN' is used for summoning a man to a feast or a festival.

It is the word for an invitation to a happy occasion.

The Christian is the man who is summoned to the joy of being the guest of God.

'KALIEN' is used for summoning a man to judgment.

It is the word for calling a man to court that he may give account of himself.

The Christian is in the end summoned to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

'We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.'

Romans, 8:28-30, NIV

'HE IS ABLE TO KEEP YOU FROM FALLING', and it is vitally important because:

'It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.'

Hebrews, 6:4-6, NIV

Noah may well have fallen over and fallen down many times in the ark, but he never fell out of it! God had put him in there, and the Almighty himself had shut the door and sealed it. Christians today are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is an inheritance guaranteeing the deposit we have made in him. We are 'SAVED AND KEPT BY THE GRACE OF GOD'!

3. THE SUFFICIENCY OF SALVATION

'AND TO PRESENT YOU BEFORE HIS GLORIOUS PRESENCE WITHOUT FAULT AND WITH GREAT JOY'

Because God is sovereign, I am secure. Because I am secure, salvation is sufficient...

God has decreed that those who belong to Jesus will one day see and share his glory.

Jesus Christ himself will have the special joy of presenting his Bride, the Church, before the Father's throne. It was the anticipation of this joy that helped Jesus endure the sufferings of the Cross. The purpose of salvation is not simply to rescue sinners from Hell, as wonderful as that is. The grand purpose is that God may be glorified for all eternity.

Today, there are spots and blemishes in the Church, but on that day God's people shall be blameless. Satan will find nothing to accuse. The Bride will be arrayed in the righteousness of Christ to the glory of God.

Therefore, the believer has strong motive for living for Christ and obeying his Word. We want to bring joy to his heart today as we anticipate the joy he will have when he welcomes his bride into heaven.

'Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.'

1 John, 3:3, NIV

Jude is looking forward to the rapture of the Church, when the Bride is presented to Christ...

An old-fashioned eastern wedding was much different from our weddings today...

THE PROPOSAL

The groom would leave his father's house, go to the house of the bride. There he would court her and propose marriage to her.

THE PURCHASE

The groom would then have to purchase the bride. Back in Bible times, the groom would have to save up and then approach the father in order to negotiate a price for the bride. If the price was agreed upon, a special cup of wine was poured out and a blessing said over it. Both the groom and the bride would drink from the cup.

This was the betrothal. Although the marriage had not been consummated, the bride and groom were now considered as belonging to each other.

THE PARTING

Now the groom would leave the bride with the promise of an imminent return. The groom would go back to his father's house and prepare a place for his bride. If his father was very wealthy, he would build a special place for his son, if he was poor, he might build a small room on the top of his house for his son and bride.

Whilst apart, the bride would design and prepare special garments for the actual wedding ceremony. It was laborious work, but the joy of what lay ahead would spur the bride on. She would seek to get things ready at the earliest opportunity and then wait patiently for her betrothed's return.

THE PROCLAMATION

When the special place was built and the wedding feast was arranged the father would tell his son to go and get his bride. He alone would decide when that time would be, he alone had the authority to set the date.

The friends of the groom would sound trumpets and shout that the bridegroom was on his way. The bride would hear the call and collect her belongings. She was ready – and had been for some time. Her wait was finally over. What joy there would be when the bride was finally presented to the groom at the wedding feast.

'Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.'

John, 14:1-3, NIV

ARE YOU READY? DON'T MISS OUT ON THE WEDDING FEAST OF THE LAMB!