

Wednesday, 8th July 2020



THE CANDLESTICK

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14).

Over last weekend there was great jubilation in a certain part of the United Kingdom because the pubs opened, and we are returning to ‘normality’! ... That’s the current dizzy heights of our nation’s aspirations. I’m sure you agree, it’s quite sad. ...

What is it that keeps *you* going though? Yes, of course, the days can be very long if you are continually shut in, without seeing anyone ... but, when life gets tough and you feel as if everything is piling up against you, what is it that keeps you going?

Helen Roseveare was a Christian missionary doctor who served the Lord with Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade in the Congo from 1953 to 1973. In the early sixties, many missionaries were captured by local terrorists and they included Helen who was incarcerated for five months in 1964. During this time, she endured beatings and rapes. A few years ago, Pastor Alistair Begg was preaching in Northern Ireland and went to visit her in the care home where she was staying. He relates how she didn’t speak much to him, but before he left, the last words she said were, “Keep on going” ... and she repeated, “Keep on going on”.

Similarly, in a Bible commentary I’m reading at the moment, the writer (A.M.S. Gooding) wrote, “Continuance is always the proof of reality”. This is a truth which is desperately requiring our attention for sometimes, - even as Christians, - we give up too easily. It’s what Jesus was referring to when He said, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God (Lk. 9:62). And later, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, looking out over Jerusalem, He told His disciples, he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (Mt. 24:13).

Being a Christian has never been the easy option for it sets us apart from the world. We live by a different set of principles and values. We have aims and aspirations the world knows nothing about. We have a vocabulary and mindset it cannot and does not want to understand. Therefore, as a Christian, we cannot be happy with anything which contradicts God’s Word, and neither can we compromise its truth for we are the children of the Author, and He has given us the Holy Spirit to fashion us into the image of His Son. This invariably means we are *[God’s]* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. 2:10). Already, in God’s eyes, we belong to His ‘holy nation’ whose purpose it is to show forth the praises of him who hath called *[us]* out of darkness into his marvellous light (I Peter 2:9).

This then means ‘we keep on going on’ and we shall not give up no matter how challenging the conditions for we are *made* and *moulded* to persevere through every hardship and trial. He is the Potter, we are the clay, and we are the work of the One Who created the heavens and the earth (Is. 64:8). In Him we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37) and we are persuaded that he is able to keep that which *[we]* have committed unto him against that day (II Tim. 1:12). And as Job describes, He will eventually bring us forth as gold (Job 23:10).

We know Who wins ... and we are on His side! When we are with Him, it is impossible to lose because He works everything after the counsel of His own perfect will, in which we have already obtained our inheritance, through His grace (Eph. 1:11). Again, no wonder Job was so hopeful, I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold (Job 19:25-27).

Compare that with the quagmire of uncertainty in which the unbeliever is hopelessly floundering. Since God created the first man and woman, their offspring has tried to take over, but they have never produced anything but trouble and heartache! Their arrogant foolishness has led to their conceited wallowing in vainglory, unaware of their spiritual destruction. Their empty display of proud reliance on their obstinate self-consuming impotency has irreparably alienated them from God so that, as Paul summarises, There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ... Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes (Rom. 3:11,12,16-18). ... *It’s frightening, if only they could see it!*

So, you see how important it is for us as believers to keep pressing on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? If you are soundly born again, you’ll not give up for God’s saving grace is intensely ‘ingrained’ within every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ *not* to give up, but to ‘keep on going on’, as Paul tenderly instructed Timothy, Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:8).

What a prize! Here’s another quote from Helen Roseveare, “If I truly believe in Him, I’ll trust Him to desire for me that which is for my highest good, and to have planned for its fulfilment”. ... Indeed, “To God be the glory, great things He hath done!”