

Watching for Christ's Return

I Thessalonians 5:1-6

Keep Yourselves in Love

Jude:20-23

Praise to God Our Savior

Jude:24, 25

Children of Truth

III John:4

Healing the Nobleman's Son

John 4:46-54



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Reformed Witness Hour

(www.reformedwitnesshour.org)

Station Listings

Station	Location	Frequency	Time/day
KARI	Blaine, WA.....	550AM.....	8:00 P.M./Sunday
KCWN	Pella, IA.....	99.9FM.....	3:30 P.M./Sunday
KDCR	Sioux Center, IA.....	88.5FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KGDN	Tri-Cities Walla Walla, OR.....	101.3FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KLOH	Pipestone, MN.....	1050AM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
KLTT	Denver, CO.....	670AM.....	1:30 P.M./Sunday
KPRO	Riverside, CA.....	1570AM.....	11:30 A.M./Sunday
KSPO	Spokane, WA.....	106.5FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTAC	Moses Lake, WA.....	93.9FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTBI	Wenatchee/Moses Lake, WA.....	810AM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTRW	Spokane, WA.....	630AM.....	9:30 A.M./Sunday
KYAK	Yakima, WA.....	930AM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
WFDL	Fond Du Lac, WI.....	1170AM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI.....	102.9FM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI.....	1570AM, 92.9FM ...	4:00 P.M./Sunday
	NYC-Long Island, NY.....	101.5FM, 94.9FM, 104.5FM, 96.5FM ...	8:30 A.M./Sunday
WORD	Pittsburgh, PA.....	101.5FM.....	10:00 A.M./Sunday
WPGF	Carlisle, PA.....	91.3FM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
UK			
GOSPEL	Northern Ireland.....	846AM.....	8:30 A.M./Sunday
Canada			
CKNX	Wingham, ON.....	920 AM.....	7:00 A.M./Sunday

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

January 3, 2016
No. 3809

Watching for Christ's Return
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear radio friends,

Introduction

In this first week of the New Year I want to consider with you a passage that addresses Christ's second coming. It is found in the first six verses of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 5. We read there: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Beginning in chapter 4 already, the apostle Paul treats the subject of Christ's second coming at the end of the world. In the last several verses of I Thessalonians 4 Paul's chief concern was to comfort the saints by assuring them of the final resurrection, the glorious gathering in of the

church of Christ in the last day. When Christ returns to earth at the end of time, the dead in Christ shall rise to meet Him in the air while, at the same time, we that are alive and remain will be gathered by the angels to meet Christ and the resurrected elect in the air.

Then, Paul says, shall we ever be with the Lord in heaven. This is the greatest of comfort to the child of God who at times is called to see his loved one buried in the grave. This is not the end, but we shall sleep, and when Christ comes, we shall all live. Comfort each other with these words, Paul writes.

But that is not all that needs be said about that second coming of Jesus Christ. That is why the Word of God we consider today starts with the conjunction "but." *More* needs to be said of Christ's coming. And that more addresses itself to the *when*, that is, the time of Christ's return! That is the heart of the verses we consider in our broadcast today! Christ comes again as He has promised. But when will Christ come?

That was and is a pertinent question. Paul had just

explained to the saints of Thessalonica about their being alive and remaining when Christ came. Did this mean Christ was coming in their lifetime? Obviously not! Can we say that Christ is coming in our lifetime? Can we say Christ is coming in the lifetime of our children or of their children? “Of the times and seasons, ye have no need that I write unto you, for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night!” With this Paul in the verses of our text proceeds to give us instruction of the time of Christ’s appearance. And with it he gives us practical instruction of our need to watch for that coming of Christ, right now in our lifetime!

WATCHING FOR CHRIST’S RETURN

I. A Thief in the Night

The goodman of the house and his wife are ready to lay themselves down to sleep. It is early evening, it is dark outside and they must rise again at daybreak to begin anew their day’s labors. The goodman routinely checks the doors of the house to see that they are all bolted tight. Confident that the house is secure for the night he retires. He is confident that his house is safe and he lays himself down thinking to himself peace and safety! But sometime in the night, a thief who knows his

profession well breaks into the man’s house and steals away all the goodman’s possessions! He came swiftly, unexpectedly, and suddenly. Who would have thought it was his intent that night to rob and plunder the goodman’s house? Who was to know that the thief was coming? And who was to know what watch of the night he was coming in? So the goodman was caught totally unprepared. He was not watching, neither was he prepared. He was sleeping; and he lost his precious possessions.

Such is the coming of the thief. He depends on the element of surprise! He comes when no one is expecting him. He descends upon the house suddenly and swiftly. Whether he is loud or quiet in his coming, he usually achieves his intent. If he comes quietly it is to rob and steal without the goodman knowing it, and to escape the house undetected. If he comes loudly, it is probably not only to rob but also to harm anyone that will get in his way.

And usually he succeeds too, because he is unexpected. The goodman of the house is simply not prepared to keep him from robbing him. The thief is foiled in his attempt only when the goodman is forewarned and prepared. Everywhere the Bible uses this one and the same figure to describe the coming of Jesus

will use everything He sends us in the valley of tears for our profit. No heartache, pain, sorrow, or burden we bear, as did this nobleman and his family, will destroy us. We belong to God for Christ’s sake! All things will work together for our good and eternal life in heaven. We know that. We are assured of that! And that is faith!

*Faith is also
an assured confidence that,
having been forgiven in the
blood of Jesus Christ,
all is well with our souls!
Nothing will separate us
from God’s love.*

III. The Servant’s Confirmation

We have already learned of the confirmation of this man’s faith by his servants. He left for home, perhaps early the next day. The servants must have done likewise and met their master along the way. Their news to him only confirmed for him what he already believed to be true: “Your son lives.” Then, not out of doubt, but to confirm that it was indeed Jesus’ word that healed his son, he asked, “What hour of the day did he begin to amend?” This does not imply, of course, that the son may have begun the healing process that would eventually lead to his recovery. The question literally was: When was he healed? When was his son made whole again? The answer was

the seventh hour, which was, as we mentioned, 1 o’clock in the afternoon. The nobleman knew that this was exactly the time that Jesus told him his son lived. Again, this was but a confirmation of this man’s faith.

He needed to know in order to inform his servants and his family that Jesus had healed the son. He returned home, and then, we are told, “he himself believed and his whole house.”

This means that not only did this miracle prove to him that Jesus was the Christ. It proved it to his whole house. It proved it to the servants of the household and it proved it to his immediate family too. His wife believed, his son who was healed believed, and if there were others in his family they too believed. How thankful we can be that God not only works in the hearts of individual saints but in families as well. Truly, this miracle gives abundant testimony to you and me who believe, that Jesus Christ is Lord. He has healed our sicknesses and soothed our pains.

Blessed be the name of the Lord.

even having seen him, Christ healed him. How could Jesus, without even having met this boy, know who he was, much less heal him? What, do you think, people of God, did this make of Christ in this man's thoughts? Who but God could perform a miracle such as this! This nobleman was given a certain knowledge of Christ as God. And that is the knowledge of faith. But this man was also given an assured confidence that what Jesus had spoken was true and had of a surety come to pass. All worry for his son was alleviated. The man left with peace and assurance in his heart. He did not hurry home in doubt of what Jesus said. And that too is faith, an assured confidence that Christ does what He has set out to do.

Now, let us not forget the significance of this miracle—what it points us to. It points us to the disease of sin and the inevitable death that belongs to the human race that is fallen in Adam. It points to our sin and our need for a Savior. That Savior, who alone can deliver us from the power of sin and death, is Jesus Christ. Even as Jesus by His power healed that son of the nobleman from his illness and saved him from death, so also Jesus delivers us

from our sin and from the death we so much deserve. Christ has accomplished this for us through the power of the cross. He has taken on Him our sins and offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin in our stead. By means of His own death on the cross, Christ has won the victory over our sin and death and has delivered us from it.

The question is, Do we believe this? Certainly we do if we truly are able to see and know our sin! If we think sin in us is a little matter, if we think we are righteous in ourselves and really have no need of salvation—then we reveal no faith. But when we know our sin, when we know our need for the cross of Christ, when we see in Christ the only way to eternal life, then by God's grace we are given that knowledge. When we know that Christ has died to take away sin and its guilt, when we know that Christ has overcome sin for us, then we are given by God's grace a knowledge of our salvation. And that knowledge is the knowledge of faith!

But there is more. Faith is also an assured confidence that, having been forgiven in the blood of Jesus Christ, all is well with our souls! Nothing will separate us from God's love. God

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Christ. Our text does too. In verse 2 we read, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." And throughout these verses the same figure is used in order to instruct us concerning Christ's return. Christ's coming at the end of time will be as the coming of the thief in the middle of the night!

Now, let us apply this figure to the coming of Christ. The obvious meaning here is that Christ's coming is going to be swift, sudden, and unexpected. This is true first of all from the point of view of the wicked world itself. This world will have fallen asleep just like the goodman of the house. Jesus tells us that just as in the days of Noah, so also at the end of time men will be going on with life as if this world will never end. They will be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Life will be going on as usual. The church of Jesus Christ that keeps warning to watch for Christ's return will be mocked and ignored: "Where is the promise of His coming, for all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation!" From a spiritual point of view, therefore, this world will have fallen asleep calmly and confidently! They will say to themselves: "Peace and safety!" Being sound asleep from a spiritual point of view, this world will not be prepared

for or even expecting the coming of Christ!

The same is true of the time of Christ's coming as well. He comes at a time when we least expect it. He tells us He comes soon, and that he comes quickly, but just exactly when Christ is going to return, no man knows! Not only is this idea established in the figure of a thief appearing suddenly in the night, but it is supported by another picture Paul uses, in verse 3 of our text. We find there the picture of a woman in travail—a woman who is about to be delivered of a baby. And the idea is that suddenly, without a clue, that first hard labor pain hits. The woman has been expecting it all along—she knows it is close, but she does not know exactly when that first hard labor pain will hit that will bring about the birth of her baby.

Christ's coming will be sudden and unexpected. He comes when this world believes that they have found their way, that they have found the answer to all the ills and problems of society. Christ comes when the kingdom of man in this world has established itself and is convinced that there is peace and safety. At a time that no man can configure—that no man is able to determine or prophesy of, Christ will come. And that coming will not be quietly in rapture, but it will be a coming

with shouts and trumpets, unto the destruction of the wicked of this world!

Now, it is important for us to realize the point Paul makes here before moving on. There was an error about Christ's coming that prevailed in this church of Thessalonica. Many of the saints there believed that Christ would come in their lifetime. In fact, some of them had even quit working and were idly waiting for Christ to return. The instruction here is meant to combat the error of unbelievers who precluded the coming of Christ. I really have no need to write to *you* about the time of Christ's return, Paul says to the saints of Thessalonica, because you know about it perfectly! And what you know through my preaching and through the words of Christ Himself is that that day comes as a thief in the night! You cannot predict that Christ is going to come in your lifetime! It is not your job to predict that time! It is your job to watch! You know already that Christ's coming will be sudden and unexpected! Make no assumptions, make no calculations, listen to no predictions of a man. Christ tells us that we will not know when He comes. He will strike as a thief in the night! And He will come when this world feels safe and content in its sin, and therefore says, "Peace and safety!" And when Christ comes, He will

come with sudden destruction, and the wicked will not escape.

II. Prepared For the Thief

But having established this fact, Paul goes on to say this, in verse 4: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." Now, that is striking! Paul tells believers that the coming of Christ ought not to overtake us as a thief in the night. Or, in other words, God's people are those who will be prepared for that thief when he strikes unexpectedly. We may not know in what watch of the night the thief will come, but nevertheless we are those who will be prepared for the coming of thief! Christ comes as a thief, but we will not be as the wicked world who spiritually sleeps. We will be spiritually awake and watching for the thief that he might not break in on us unprepared. And all this is true because we know perfectly of Christ's coming!

We ought not to overlook that perfect knowledge we have of Christ's coming that Paul speaks of in the second verse of this passage. That is not just a knowledge about some facts of Christ's coming. It is not some kind of human deduction we have made for ourselves that Christ comes again. It is a *perfect* knowledge. It is the knowledge of faith—a knowledge that most people of this world do not have

Jesus may have been a man of lowly birth, He was a noble man in His own right. That was not something that the Pharisees would have admitted. They impugned Jesus because of His lowly birth. Nothing good could come out of Galilee. But here we have a nobleman who in faith recognizes that Jesus is indeed a great man carrying the very authority of God Himself. This nobleman reveals his humility as well when he does not even attempt to argue with Jesus. He did not try to defend himself. He had one thing on his mind: that Jesus was the only hope for his son. He was focused on that: "Lord, come down to Capernaum lest my son die!"

But there is something else in the attitude of the nobleman that perhaps does not meet the eye immediately. And this attitude revealed that his faith was genuine. Jesus responded to this man's request with the very simple statement, "Go your way, your son lives." Mind you, Jesus did not have to ask God to give Him the power to heal this man's son. Jesus did not bow in prayer before God asking God to heal this man's son. Jesus revealed His power and authority as the Son of God simply by responding to the man, "Go your way, your son lives." And the man left. He did not say to Jesus, "Are you sure? How do you know? Shouldn't you come to Capernaum with me to make

sure?" We are told in verse 50 that the man immediately went his way. But here is what revealed this man's faith. It was not until the next day that he met his servants along the way. He asked them exactly the time his son was better and they told him the seventh hour. It was one o'clock the day before. This was, of course, exactly the time Jesus had said, "Thy son liveth." But it was the day after this that he met his servants. Now, 25 miles is a bit of a ride or maybe more of a walk. But it is obvious from the account that this nobleman was in no hurry to get back to Capernaum to see if what Jesus had said was true. He could have hurried back the same day. But it was the day after that he met his servants. This, by all means, indicates that the nobleman believed Jesus! He knew that Jesus had done what He said and the nobleman trusted Jesus. And that is faith!

The nobleman came to Cana already trusting that Jesus was able to heal his son. He recognized in Jesus one who carried the very authority of God Himself. The very way that Jesus said to him, "Go your way, your son lives," was enough to convince him that Jesus was who He said He was. In other words, this nobleman was given by God's grace a certain knowledge of Christ as the Son of God. From a distance, without even laying hands on his son, without

ing reference when He said to the nobleman, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.” The nobleman was fully aware what Jesus meant by this too. But, as we will find, he was yet insistent in his request.

Before we address the faith of the nobleman, however, we must recognize that every miracle Jesus performed was a sign. It was a mark or a token—proof—that speaks to us of who Jesus is. This miracle proves to us once again Christ’s divinity. Every miracle reveals the glory of Christ as the Son of God. But each miracle does this in its own unique way. This one does too.

In the illness of this boy we are made to see the fatal disease of sin. The human race as it perished in Adam is doomed to eternal death. And it is because death reigns in us that we are given over to the incurable disease of sin. Sin reigns in us unto death, Paul writes in Romans 5:21. We are conceived and born in sin, incapable of doing any good. We walk in unbelief, despising God and His commandments. And we must realize the hard reality that sin is a fatal disease. There is no escaping it of ourselves. Just like the nobleman’s son, we have no hope of recovery.

We know our sin, do we not? We know we are liable to death on account of our sin! And we in faith come to Jesus because

we know He is the only way to be healed from the loathsome disease of sin that threatens us with eternal death! The Pharisees saw no need for salvation from sin. They thought they had no sickness. They were whole. They were righteous by their works, so they thought. We know we are sick! We know that death threatens us. For this reason what Jesus told the Pharisees comes as the greatest relief to us. Mark 2:17: “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Our Savior has come to heal us and to bind up our spiritual wounds. When we witness this miracle of the healing of the nobleman’s son, we give God thanks for that God has revealed to us our sin in order that we might come to Jesus to be healed. “Lord, heal us of our sin before we perish in it!”

II. The Nobleman’s Faith

We cannot help but notice the humility that the nobleman revealed in his plea to Jesus. He addresses Jesus as “sir.” That is the Greek word for “Lord.” Here we have a man of rank and position, a man carrying his own authority addressing Jesus as lord. He recognized something in Jesus. He recognized that Jesus carried His own authority—that, though

of Christ’s coming. When the wicked man (inside the church as well as outside) is warned and instructed concerning the swift and sudden return of Christ, he does not believe. His reasoning is blinded by unbelief. He knows, yet he does not know, that Christ comes again. He knows about it, but he does not believe it. And for that reason too Christ will come upon that unbelieving man suddenly and unexpectedly. Christ’s coming will overtake him with sudden destruction!

But God’s saints have been given a perfect knowledge that Christ is coming. We know He comes soon and suddenly. And we by all means believe it! We may at times grow weary in watching, we may be at times not so alert, but we know perfectly that Christ is coming and we believe that.

This blessed truth Paul emphasizes in verse 5 of our text: “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.” You and I, fellow believers, are children of the light and not children of the darkness. We were at one time, of course, when we were lost in our unbelief and sin. We, too, then were children of darkness. Sin had its hold over our hearts, minds, souls, and body! Our hearts and minds were darkened to the truth. We lived in the night of sin! We could not

nor did we desire to know God and the things of the kingdom of heaven. Of the times and seasons we could not know because God had not revealed them to us. And this is true of countless throngs of people today. Our world is lost in the darkness of sin and unbelief—these are the children of the night to which our text refers, those still stumbling about in their unbelief.

Yet, God is gracious, is He not? He has proved that in our lives. He still proves that in the hearts and lives of many people yet today. He graciously has poured out into the hearts of His elect people the light of salvation. He has laid the burden of our sin and unbelief on the shoulders of Christ. And Christ carried away the burden of our sin on the cross. He earned there for God’s people the gift of faith—and included in that faith is the certain knowledge that Christ returns and that we should be prepared! How thankful we can be for the light of the knowledge of God we have received in Christ Jesus! Now, we know perfectly that Christ comes—soon, swiftly, unexpectedly! And we watch for Him!

We know that the time of Christ’s return is getting very, very close! How do we know that Christ returns soon? Because we know the times and the seasons. God has revealed to us the times, first of all!

That term is used in our word “chronology or chronological.” When we use that term even in our own language it refers to a sequence or succession of events that take place in time. What our text here means therefore is that we are given to know perfectly the sequence of events that take place in the history and development of this world. That is quite a thing, you know! Wicked man has been trying to find out the purpose of this world and its development since time began. He never has! The believer has! He is given a knowledge and understanding of the order of events that take place in history. We know that all of history is ordered by God from eternity. We know that God has ordered all things in such a way that through the saving of a church unto glory, God will glorify Himself! He created all things for that reason. Man fell into sin for that reason. Christ has come for that reason. The church is defended, guided, and preserved for that reason. The end of the world will come for that reason. And every event in creation and history leads to that perfect end. We are given to know the times.

And we are given to know the seasons. This term refers to a certain fixed period of time! We know the various fixed periods of time in this world. We know the time of the prediluvian world—the world before the

flood. We know the time from the flood to Christ—the period of the old dispensation. And we are given to know perfectly the period of the new dispensation—the time during which Christ rules over all this world from His throne in heaven—the time from Christ’s ascension to His second coming. We know as well what will indicate the close of this period of time. We will be watching all the signs that indicate that this period of time in God’s chronological time clock is coming to a close. The Bible everywhere gives us signs that point us to the imminent return of Christ. We are given to know what will transpire in history before Christ returns again. And we watch these signs as they develop in creation, in the nations, and in the church, in order that we might be prepared for the coming of the thief!

III. Watching for the Thief

In this regard, we receive a command in verse 6: “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” This command is based upon the knowledge we have of Christ’s coming. It is based on the fact that we know He comes suddenly and unexpectedly. Do not sleep, do not be drunken, but watch and be sober! *Always be prepared*, for we do not know in what watch of the night the thief will appear!

before Jesus at about 1 o’clock in the afternoon. The nobleman pleaded, almost begged, Jesus to come to Capernaum and heal his son. He had laid aside all rank and authority and in humility recognized his need for Christ to heal his son. Humbly he addressed Jesus, “Sir, come down and heal my son for he is about to die.”

Now, I realize that it may be too early in the account to be able to say that this man was a believer. But there seems to be some indication already in this request of the faith of this nobleman. At least he did recognize that Jesus was a man of God who was able to heal his son. That faith was not as great as was the centurion who later came to Jesus and asked Jesus to heal his son without even coming to see him. This man thought Jesus had to come to Capernaum some 25 miles away and touch his son in order that He might heal him. Nevertheless, this nobleman did believe that Jesus would be able to help his son even when all else had failed.

In verse 48 we read of Jesus’ response to this request of the nobleman: “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” Now, at first glance this reply of Jesus may seem rather hard and cruel. It seems as if Jesus took the attitude, “Sigh, another one of these

people who are simply curious to see Me perform a miracle!” But this was not a rebuke. It was merely a test of what was in the nobleman’s heart. It was a test of his faith. Of course, Jesus already knows what is in the heart of every man. He knew what was in this nobleman’s heart too. Jesus knew this nobleman was not simply curious to see a sign performed by Him as so many others. This man had indeed come out of faith! But Jesus wanted this nobleman, as well as those who witnessed this miracle, to know that a miraculous faith is not a true faith. Those who believed in Jesus simply as a great miracle-worker were not true believers. You see, from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry masses of people followed Him merely out of curiosity. Nothing more. All they wanted to see was another miracle. On top of that, there was another group of people that would not believe in Jesus despite all of the signs He showed them. The Pharisees and Sadducees desired of Jesus a sign of Christ’s earthly kingship. They were looking for an earthly king who would defeat their earthly enemies. They did not seek a heavenly kingdom. To them Jesus said in Matthew 16:4, “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it.” It was really to these gainsayers that Jesus was mak-

were beginning to follow Jesus about in order to see a miracle. From this point on Jesus was given little alone time.

The return of Jesus to Cana must have been noised about the countryside, since 25 miles away from Cana in the city of Capernaum, a nobleman heard of Jesus' presence. No doubt he had heard or even witnessed one of Jesus' miracles. Whatever the case, this man quickly traveled to Cana in order to see Jesus. The nobleman's son was sick unto death in Capernaum.

John mentions in verse 54 that this is the second miracle Jesus performed because this miracle is directly related, in his mind, to the first miracle Jesus performed. All miracles are signs. They point to Christ's divinity, to His power as the Son of God. Miracles manifest forth Jesus' glory! When Jesus changed water into wine it was a sign of Christ's divine power to change one element of creation into another. This miracle marks an advance in the proof of Christ's divinity. Not only is Christ Lord of creation, but He is the life-giving Lord. In this second miracle, Jesus shows His power over life and death.

THE HEALING OF THE NOBLEMAN'S SON

I. Christ's Miracle

The identity of this noble-

man is unknown. From the term itself we find that he was not himself a prince or a ruler but an officer or steward of a ruler. Since he was stationed in Capernaum, it is very likely that he was a Jew who served as an officer in Herod's court. It is suggested by some that he could have been Chuza, who, we learn in Luke 8:3, was a steward of Herod and whose wife was named Joanna, one of the few women who ministered to Jesus during His early ministry. While plausible, we certainly cannot say for sure. But we can say that this nobleman was a man in a position of authority and honor. He came to Jesus in Cana because his son lay sick in Capernaum. Again, we are not told the type of sickness that the son suffered, but it must have been serious. We learn in verse 47 of our text that this boy lay at the brink of death. It was not a sudden illness, but one that had lingered, leaving the boy in a severely weakened condition. Nothing could be done from a medical point of view to save this son from certain death. His disease had taken control of him and death was inevitable. Out of desperation this nobleman hurried to Jesus, whom he recognized as the only hope for his son.

We read in verse 47 that he besought Jesus to come down to Capernaum where his son lay sick. This request he put

Ah, that is the very error of those who wish to predict a certain hour in which Christ comes. If I knew exactly the year, month, day, and hour that Christ will return, then I would have no reason to watch right now! All I would have to do is wait until that time and then rather hurriedly prepare myself so I am ready! There would be no need to ready myself now. That is why Christ does not reveal the exact time of His coming. He does not want us to know! He does not want us to know, so that right now, and every day of our lives, we might prepare ourselves for that coming! He wants us to live every day of our lives as if He is coming tomorrow. We must always be prepared, in order that we might live a holy life in this world!

He does not want us to sleep. Those who sleep, sleep in darkness. We walk in the light, however, and must not sleep. In other words, we may not grow weary in our expectation of Christ's return. We must never become lethargic as far as our spiritual lives are concerned. We may not lay aside the fight of faith, we must not grow weary in the battle against sin and Satan. We must not close our eyes to the events that are going on around us and ignore them! We must

not let our guard down as far as our battle against our enemies is concerned! Neither may we be drunk—spiritually drunk! We may not be intoxicated with the pleasures and treasures of this present world! We may not consume ourselves in them so that we become worldly minded and lose sight of our home in glory. Our heads may not whirl with earthly luxuries and pleasures, so that, as a result, we lose sight of the times and seasons! This world ends and we must watch for that end.

This means that we must be sober. Our minds must be clear and bright. Our spiritual senses must be honed so that we watch the signs around us. And we must read them correctly too—in order to understand just when it is that the thief comes. We

*We must never
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are concerned.*

must be busy in our study of God's Word, in worship, and in prayer. These means equip us to be sober and

our eyesight keen. Then we will watch! We will stand in these last times with our eyes wide open and waiting.

Christ comes. Are you prepared to meet Him? Can He come tomorrow and will you be ready to meet your Lord? Watch! He comes soon! Prepare! Then we will be ready when Jesus comes!

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

January 10, 2016
No. 3810

Keep Yourselves in Love
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

If you recall, there were a few verses at the end of Jude's letter we have not yet considered. We took a little break from our consideration of this letter for the month of December. In the next two broadcasts we are going to conclude our study of Jude.

The battle God's people wage against unbelief is a difficult one. To stand opposed to sin, Satan, and the wicked world is a battle of the fiercest sort. Our enemies are relentless always attempting to pull us down into spiritual ruin and despair. It would be less difficult to fight if the battle lines were more clearly defined. For example, if in the church were to be found only believers, while outside the church were found unbelievers. We would know then where we stand: the church against the world. But Jude points out that Satan sends his forces into the very confines of the church itself. Unbelievers creep into the church unawares and oftentimes God's saints must battle the enemy within the confines of the church. This

is the purpose of this epistle of Jude. Jude admonishes us to "contend for the faith."

In the verses we consider today Jude issues no more warning against these ungodly men that had crept into the church unawares. Jude has reached that part in his letter where he now instructs God's people how they are to live in order to overcome such men. We read in Jude 20-23, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." In these verses we are called to keep ourselves in the love of God. We do that by building ourselves up on our faith and by prayer.

But there is something additional we find in the verses. God's people have a calling toward one another. Because we are members of one another in the church of Christ we are

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

January 31, 2016
No. 3813

Healing the Nobleman's Son
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

Thanks for tuning in these past several months while I spoke on the Reformed Witness Hour. I counted it a privilege once again. For my final sermon I would like to speak for a few moments on a miracle of Jesus. It is recorded for us in John 4:46-54: "So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour

when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee."

The setting of this miracle is Cana in Galilee. We read in verse 46, "Then came he again into Cana of Galilee where he made water wine." Directly after Jesus' first miracle, the changing of water into wine, He departed Galilee in order to celebrate the Passover feast in Jerusalem. We find in John 2:23 that Jesus performed miracles while in Jerusalem too. The healing of the nobleman's son is the second miracle Jesus performed in Galilee, therefore.

After Jesus' trip to Jerusalem, we now find Him back in Galilee. Because of Jesus' first miracle in Cana and those He performed in Jerusalem, He had become quite a celebrity. People

faith of a young person in the church, when we hear that this young person walks in this world even as he or she has confessed, there is great rejoicing among the saints. The opposite is true too, you understand. Nothing is hidden that is not made plain. When a young person walks in the way of sin and unbelief, or when a young person confesses to believe but lives like the world, the church is grieved. And believe me, God's people do hear about it in some way or another. That causes grief in the church.

But when God's children walk in truth, the church is made glad, it is happy, it praises God with thanksgiving and song! I can say this as a pastor in the church of Jesus Christ. There is nothing more gratifying to me than to hear that God's people walk in truth! There is nothing more pleasing to the elders of the church than to hear that the members of their church walk in truth! There is nothing in this world—let me stress that—there is nothing in this world that is more rewarding to a pastor than to see young people confessing their faith and becoming defenders of the faith! And there is nothing more rewarding for a believing father and mother either. They

have vowed when their children were born, to raise them in the fear of the Lord. But parents also realize that they raised those children imperfectly and in much weakness and sin. How often father and mother go to bed at night and ask forgiveness for their failures as parents. But to know that God by His grace has remained faithful to His covenant promises to save their children in their generations, this gives the greatest of joy and happiness to parents.

But all of this pales when placed against the fact that it is God who is pleased to hear of His children walking in truth. God is happy. There is no greater joy found in God when we walk in truth! That is what really matters, after all is said and done! God sees and hears all things! And when He sees us, young and old alike, walking in His

*We want to please Him.
And there is no better way
of doing that than by
walking in truth.*

precepts, we delight our heavenly Father! As His children, that is what we really want to do. We want to please Him. And there is no better way of doing that than by walking in truth. There is no greater joy than to see His name glorified in us! May we continue to walk in that way. May God lead us into all truth!

called to extend ourselves to those who are struggling in the church too. For that reason, Jude exhorts the church to extend a helping hand to those who were becoming spotted with the lusts of these wicked men. Now, that is a task we seldom hear of! That we are to lend a helping hand; we are to show our love for those stumbling into the way of sin by having compassion on them. Such we also consider today.

KEEP YOURSELVES IN LOVE

I. A Confident Command

Jude makes an assumption in these verses that we consider. He is confident that the saints whom he addresses love God. Notice the command: keep yourselves in the love of God. There may have been ungodly men who crept into the church and were spreading their error. There may have been some in the church who were giving in to the lusts and lasciviousness of these men. But this was not true of the church as a whole. It was not true of her officebearers. Neither can we say it was true of the majority of the members of the church. The saints loved God. This is also why Jude could confidently call them "beloved" in verse 20. They loved God because they were God's beloved. He first loved them.

And that is where all true love begins—in God. God is love. He does not simply possess love, but God is love. Love is one of God's attributes. And it is the love of God that defines for us what true love is as opposed to the lust that is far too often passed off as love in our society today. The term for love in the Hebrew speaks of a strong, an intense, longing after another. So strong is that desire, that the person possessed of such love is unwilling to part with that person he loves. It is so strong a longing that a person is willing to devote his life entirely to that person for his happiness and welfare.

It is a love that seeks to know more and more of that other person—to spend a lifetime in the pursuit of knowing that other person better. The term for love in Greek reflects this idea: so intimately do we know others that we prize them above all else. We are unwilling to abandon or to do without them. In this way love becomes a bond—an inseparable bond between two or more individuals.

Such is God's love. As the triune God He loves Himself perfectly. The three Persons within the Trinity long after the fellowship and life of one another. In that love they seek each other, they are unwilling to live without each other. They

are bound together in one within the very being of God Himself. That is the love that characterizes believers: God's love. It is a love that must enter into the various relationships of life. It is the love that binds believing husbands with their wives, and wives with their husbands. The binding love that parents show to their children, and children to their parents; or that members of the church reveal toward one another. And so on. We love with this sort of love because the love of God has been imparted to us with our salvation. So much did God love us that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for us. So much did Christ love us that He gave His very life for us. Through His work on the cross Christ also bestowed on us such love. It has been shed abroad in our hearts! We live in and out of God's love.

That is on the foreground here in our text: the love we have for God. We are God's beloved; and because we are, God is our beloved too! God has become the ultimate object of our love. And it is in that love that we have for God that we are enjoined by Jude to live. We are to keep ourselves in that love.

Now, the act of *keeping* may seem simple enough. It means to

guard or to attend to carefully, or to hold firmly. But this task of keeping is not so easy a matter. It implies Christian warfare. It implies an intense struggle. It is as if a few people are called upon to defend a city against a hoard of merciless mercenaries who are attacking us. The city is our love for God and we have to defend ourselves in that love against a host of unbelief. We must keep or guard ourselves in our love for God against overwhelming odds. There is a strong leader at the head of our enemy, Satan. There is a relentless world of unbelief that seeks to draw us away from our love for God. And then, to add to the intensity of the battle, there are those within the church itself that ally themselves with the world and Satan and would destroy our love for God. In the battle that we are called to keep, we are called to hold firmly and unwaveringly our love for God, Christ, and Their cause in this world. It is true that God preserves us in His love. But that does not make our battle to keep God's love at the center of our lives any easier. Let us face it, sometimes in our battle we can grow weary.

Sometimes, because of the weakness of our faith and our sin, we can begin to waver in our love for God. How easy it

us. It is true that we have been set free from the bondage of sin. Jesus tells us that we who are free are free indeed! We have in us the Spirit of our risen Lord and we are able to walk according to the truth.

We have been freed exactly in order that we might do that. But we have within us that old man of sin yet, and according to that old man there is

in us a spirit of rebellion. Many times we desire to walk yet according to the course of this world, and to fulfill the desires of our flesh. And that desire in us can be very strong—so strong that we are prone to ask, well, what is wrong with doing this or that? We want so much to justify fulfilling our flesh. What John writes therefore is an incentive to walk actively in the way of truth. We must always be conscious of the truth and let that truth live in us and motivate us.

This is true in doctrine, first of all. Not everything is true doctrinally! There is no other way than Jesus Christ Himself. Other religions do not lead to eternal life. They are not truth! God is truth and His Word is truth! Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life! No man can come to the Father but by

Him! Neither are there different forms of the truth within Christianity itself. There is only one truth. It is the truth that is revealed to us clearly on the pages of Scripture. We

We follow after the truth when we allow the Bible to interpret itself, and not by imposing on the Bible what we want it to say.

follow after the truth when we allow the Bible to interpret itself, and not by imposing on the Bible what we want it to say. The Bible is not subject to any private

interpretation. We must listen to what God tells us is truth.

When walking in truth we also lead a new and godly life! God's Word must guide us in the places we choose to frequent, and the things we decide to do, and the direction that our life will lead in this world! Walking in truth is following the way God's Word directs us.

III. What They Cause

When we walk in God's truth, there is no greater joy! No, the wicked do not rejoice. Satan does not rejoice. In fact, Satan will try all the harder in our lives to ensnare us in sin. He will try to ruin the church and the truth. But the joy that is experienced in the sphere of the church of Jesus Christ. For example, when we as God's people hear the confession of

standard of God's holy Word and not in a way that seems right in our own eyes. When we walk in the truth of God's Word and commandments, then the truth is in us, and that truth will set us free!

II. How They Walk

Some people think that when it comes to living for Jesus all that is needed is going out into this world and becoming involved in a little social reform or making this world a better place to live. But living a life of antithesis,

that is, saying no to the sin and temptations of this world, really does not enter into a life for Christ. Attempting to live a life of spiritual separation from the corruption that pervades society is not essential for the Christian life. Confess Christ, but go to the same places and enjoy the same things as the wicked. But that is not enough, according to the Word of God in our text. It is not enough only to confess with the mouth but not with the way one walks. There is no greater joy than to hear that my children *walk* in truth is what John writes.

You confess your faith to be a Christian believer? Well, faith is dead without works, we learn in James' letter! We must walk therefore in the sphere of the truth as revealed to us in God's Word.

Walk. We all are called to walk through this life. Our way through this world is a journey we must walk. And as we walk through this world there is one path that we can follow that leads to eternal life. It is a strait and narrow path that leads to a strait and narrow gate. Few walk in this way. And there are many

different paths that lead us astray from this path. You and I are called to walk in that way that leads to eternal life and we must do that without straying down those paths that lead us to destruction. The only way we are able to do that is by following after the truth. The truth must be our guide in this way. And it is walking in the sphere of the Word of God, the truth, that causes great rejoicing on God's part.

We well know, however, that a conscious walking in the truth is not an easy matter for

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in the blood of Christ?
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we sincerely desire
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to the standard
of God's holy Word
and not in a way that seems
right in our own eyes.*

is to give in to the lusts of this present life or to doubt the coming of our Lord. How often we can become so lax in our own personal battles with sin and Satan and we find that we do not burn in our love for God. Our love begins to wane, and we are apt to follow in the ungodly lusts of unbelievers or to cower beneath their mocking. Though God preserves us, nevertheless we are called by God to guard ourselves from the evil pursuits of this world. Jude instructs us that there are two distinct ways in which we must keep ourselves, beloved saints.

The first is by building up ourselves on our most holy faith. To understand what Jude teaches us here, we need to know what is meant by the most holy faith.

Jude does not refer so much to faith itself as he does to the *objective content* of faith. He refers

to a body of knowledge set forth in the Bible, all of which is the object of our faith, of our believing. And Jude calls it the most holy faith because that which we know and have confidence in is the Word of God itself. Even as God is most holy, holy above all else, so also is His Word. God's Word is worthy of our veneration. It is sacred. It is worthy of to be heeded reverently and in awe just as God is.

To *build* ourselves on our most holy faith means, then, that we must constantly be building ourselves upon the Word of God. To keep ourselves in our love for God, therefore, we must be found in the Scriptures. We must be building up our faith in God, our knowledge of God and our confidence in Him, by the study of His Word. This is not an abstract exercise. It is very concrete. There are certain ways that we can build ourselves on God's Word. First of all, we must read it and study it. Secondly, we must sit under the preaching of the Word, to have a steady diet of that Word. In the third place, we must discuss that Word in our families and with our fellow saints. To build ourselves up on the faith

*To build ourselves up
on the faith means
we must immerse ourselves
in the Bible.*

means we must immerse ourselves in the Bible. It is not an ordinary book. It the Word of the God whom we love!

The second way we are to keep ourselves in God's love is by means of prayer. Jude writes in verse 20, "praying in the Holy Ghost." Ah yes, never must we underestimate the power of prayer in our lives as God's people. Scripture reading and prayer go hand in hand. One cannot be had without the other. Prayer places us in living contact with God. When

we pray we talk with God. We enter into His presence and we pour out our hearts before Him. We praise Him, we thank Him, we place our needs before Him. We ask of Him for strength to remain faithful to His cause in this world. We draw from Him the strength needed to guard ourselves in His love. And yes, we pray in the Holy Spirit. No doubt about it! Our prayers are not merely formal, well-worded, nice sounding petitions meant to impress men or God. It is speaking to God from the heart—a heart in which the Holy Spirit has taken up His abode. We pray in the Spirit. We pray being led by that Spirit into a prayer that is both proper and sanctified by Him. God answers these prayers. He keeps us in His love. He answers us with strength to do so.

II. A Mutual Command

There is something that may elude us if we read this passage superficially. Jude does not address only certain individuals in the church. He does not say, Keep yourself in the love of God. He does not say in the singular, build yourself up on your most holy faith. In other words, Jude is not simply encouraging us individually to perform these activities. He speaks in the plural. Members of the church *together* must keep each other in the love of God.

Together the members of the church must build themselves up on the Word of God and prayer. This is a command that is to be fulfilled communally, cooperatively, by the saints. It is a command God's people must fulfill together with one another. And that, of course, forms the basis for the following verses of our text.

God's people are always called upon to help one another in their walk of life. It is an integral part of the communion of saints. This is why Jude states here, keep yourselves. Help one another to guard each other in your love. Help one another together, building yourselves up on your most holy faith. Pray together. And as we mentioned, this forms the basis for the verses following. If we are to do all of these things together, we must be ready and willing to help those in the church who stumble along the way. How willing are we to encourage, visit with, and push along those who are floundering in their walk and life? Notice what Jude writes in verses 22, 23: "And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

In these verses we find three categories of people that were falling into the sins of those ungodly teachers who

the powerful, irresistible work of the Holy Spirit drawing us out of the darkness of sin and into the light of Jesus Christ!

And that powerful work of God in our salvation is implied within that term "children" in our text. I know that the apostle

John writes here, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." It seems that he speaks here of his own children. We know, of course, that he is not speaking of his own natural born children—though if he had some, I'm sure that he would rejoice if they walked in truth too. But John does not refer here to natural born children. He speaks of spiritual children. Gaius was one of them. John refers, therefore, to those who came to faith and repentance through his preaching and the preaching of the other apostles.

But there is more yet implied in the term "children" that John uses here. After all, John was infallibly directed by God to write this letter to the *church*. John says to us, to believers, "There is no greater joy than to hear that my children, that is, God's children, walk in truth!" And it is in that that we find the gospel in our text too. We are the

children of the most high God! By His grace He has adopted us in the blood of our Savior and we are His children and heirs. God, our heavenly Father whom we call Abba, Father, says to

you and me:
"You are my children,
and I rejoice when you walk in truth.
There is no greater joy

to Me than when I see you walk in My Word and commandments." God says this to His children!

And this is possible only on the grounds of our adoption, children of God! We were at one time alienated from God and were children of wrath as were others. We walked according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of our flesh. We walked in unbelief and hatred toward God. But God sent our Savior into this world and in His blood has adopted us. Christ made us to see and understand the truth, that is, God Himself as Creator and Redeemer! As God's children we now run to that God and to His Son and find our safety in Them. That is truth. God has worked in us in such a way that we have discovered the truth. Are we adopted in the blood of Christ? The sure test is whether we sincerely desire to walk according to the

*God's people must be children of truth!
And that, I say,
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alone is reality—the ultimate reality of all things. After all, He alone existed from eternity and He alone according to His eternal plan gave existence to all things. He called them forth by His power and He continues to guide and direct all things according to the standard of His own will. That makes God the one and only true and sure reality. And that makes Him personally the truth! If that is the case, then whatever God says, whatever He tells us, is going to be the truth. Since the Scriptures are the written Word of God, they are therefore truth. If God is truth, then God’s Word is truth. It is right as opposed to wrong, it is the one objective standard according to which we judge everything, in our own lives and in the lives of those about us. And John writes: I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in that truth—the truth that is revealed to us in the Scriptures. That is what causes great joy—walking in the ways that God’s Word teaches us.

But there is definitely more involved in walking in truth than just what we have mentioned. There is something invisible to the eye involved. And that is the working of God’s grace. There are some who insist that the believer must reform this world, reconstructing society and the people of our world to conform to the Old Testament

laws of God and His Word. They feel it is the calling of every child of God to enter every sphere of life in order to reform society and remold it according to the principles of God’s Word. And that all sounds fine and dandy too—except for one thing. The wicked of this world will never conform themselves to the precepts of God’s Word. The world does not want truth. It does not want Scripture! The wicked will rebel at it at every turn. This present world of sin and unbelief will not subject itself to the truth of God, no matter how attractive or how reasonable it may seem. And that is true because it takes a wonder-work of salvation to confess what the church confesses!

It is striking that in verse 3 of his third epistle John speaks of Gaius as one in whom the truth dwells. He is not just a man who knows the Bible and what it teaches. But the truth of the Scriptures dwelt in him! The truth of God’s Word permeated his very being. The truth must be in us! We must love that truth! It must become part and parcel of our lives. It must instruct us, admonish us, lead us, and comfort us! God’s people must be children of truth! And that, I say, takes an act of God’s grace in our hearts and lives! It takes the saving work of Jesus Christ in powerfully delivering us from the unbelief and hold that sin had over us! It takes

committed ungodly deeds in an ungodly way. Each category is worse than the one before it. Jude teaches the faithful of the church how they are to react to these. Not by ignoring them and hoping they go away. Not by acting as if everything is ok when this was far from true. But here is the way those who love God must deal with troubles in the church—a way that every church does well to learn. There are some, Jude says, to whom we must show compassion, making a difference. Very simply put, this sentence means that there are those in the church to whom we need to bring help in a compassionate, yet discriminating way. There were those who were new to the faith and in ignorance lacked discernment. They were easily drawn away by such false teachers. Stronger believers were enjoined to help them: to visit with them, pray with them, instruct them patiently and compassionately. This must be done “making a difference,” or by determining what manner of person we deal with. Some of those given to temptation were tender and soft and must be dealt with in that way. Others were stubborn and contentious and these had to be dealt with in that way. Such was the first group of people prone to give in to the errors of the false

teachers in the church.

The second group of saints who need the help of stronger believers in the church were those who needed to be saved by pulling them out of the fire. The idea here is that these needed to be rescued by snatching them out of the lasciviousness of ungodly men and their ungodly deeds. Some saints in the church of Jude’s day were just beginning to walk into the fire of lust—just beginning to take on the attitude of those who despised the rule of Christ and the elders. Jude says, in love reach into the fire in an attempt to save these from destruction. Do this without fear, in order to save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins. That is something that very few believers, even when faithful, seem to be willing to do.

to help them: || *We are so apt at this point to turn away and give them over to the flames of sin.* ||

at this point to turn away and give them over to the flames of sin.

The third set of people are those who for all intents and purposes are already gone, already lured into the sin and following the heretics in the church. Jude says in verse 23, “some help while hating or detesting the very garment spotted by the flesh.” There were those in the church who had given in to the lust of their sinful flesh. Their souls were spotted with the filth

of their sin already. The garment mentioned here was that of a tunic, that piece of clothing worn closest to the body. This word is used to show that lust had now conceived itself within them, they were wearing it close to them. Jude instructs God's people that, out of their love for the saints, they must even be willing to speak with these contentious members, using strong warnings and admonitions. The elders must exercise Christian discipline. Those strong in faith must stand fast. Such behavior is also an aspect of keeping ourselves in the love of God.

III. An Urgent Command

The urgency of this command cannot be overlooked either. Dear friends, we live in the last days. Jude warns those who lived then to stand fast against evil men. Can you imagine how much more that is the case today? How often the sins of this postmodern world threaten the church. A failure to discern between what is right and wrong prevails. People are more concerned with pleasing themselves than they are with pleasing God. There is so little conviction in our world. People do not stay the course anymore. Oh, how we need to live in love in the midst of the church! How we need to build ourselves together

on the most holy faith. How we need to pray together and to look out for one another's spiritual welfare. So many are drawn away from the truth. So many walk in the desires of the flesh. It is urgent that we keep before our hearts the second coming of Christ and the final judgment.

The incentive to keep this command is found at the end of verse 21, where we are told to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. This speaks of the coming of Christ at the end of time, when He will come to destroy this present world and to usher in eternal life. God's people look for that time, because then the mercy of Jesus Christ will be revealed to us. Mercy is God's willingness to deliver you and me out of our present distress and to give us joy and peace. This has been accomplished already at the cross of Christ in principle. That is where Christ's mercy first appeared. But that mercy of Christ will finally be revealed at the end of time when Christ will deliver us from all our enemies. There will be no more struggles in our lives and in the lives of our fellow saints. Keep yourselves in the love of God by looking for the mercy that will be shown when Christ comes again. Then rejoice that God preserves us unto that day of the mercy of Christ.

to each saint in the church of Jesus Christ! And words of our heavenly Father to His children.

CHILDREN OF TRUTH

I. Who They Are

What is truth? Seems that this is quite an abstract question. My guess is that most people would answer that question like this: "Don't bother me with something that heavy. The discovery of truth is best left in the hands of philosophers and theologians to debate."

Either that, or the answer that is heard increasingly more so is: "There is no set standard of truth. People

may believe in different things as truth. The truth is relative, varying from one person to the next." Whatever the case, most people do not worry their heads about this question because they feel it has little to do with life. But that is far from the case. The answer to the question "What is truth?" touches our lives very personally. We live in a confused world. This must be so if in despair and depression people seek to take their own life. Not long ago, and probably the stats have increased since then, I read that some 30,000 people a year actu-

ally commit suicide, while there are 20 more who attempt to do so for every one that actually does. I'd say we live in a pretty messed up and confused world!

You know why? People have not discovered what truth is! Now, the question "What is truth?" becomes a vital one for everyday life, does it not? The truth provides the answers to those all-important questions with which we all struggle. The truth provides answers to such questions as: why I am here, what is the purpose of my life here, and where am I going?

|| *The truth...is the objective standard according to which you and I can judge everything.* ||

The truth provides an answer to this because it alone is reality, it is right as opposed to

wrong. It is the objective standard according to which you and I can judge everything.

Believers have the answer to the question "What is truth?" We believe everything contained in the Old and New Testament to be the complete and perfect doctrine unto salvation. That means that the truth to the believer is everything contained in holy Scriptures. And that is exactly what truth is! Jesus tells us in John 17:17 that God's Word is truth, that is, what God says to us is always truth.

And that is obvious too, isn't it? God Himself is truth. He

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

January 24, 2016
No. 3812

Children of Truth
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

The third letter of the apostle John, III John, was probably written around the same time as his other two. What distinguishes this letter from the others is that it is a letter written to a particular person. It is more a pastoral letter, a letter meant to instruct and encourage an individual rather than an entire church. From the general tenor of the first two letters, it becomes obvious that John was writing to Gentile churches. These churches were troubled by the heretical group known as the Gnostics. These men had infiltrated the ranks of the churches in Asia Minor. For that reason too it is safe to assume that John in this third letter was addressing an individual in one of the Gentile churches in Asia Minor.

That individual was a man named Gaius. It is difficult to identify who Gaius was, but it is not the Gaius who was converted through the preaching of Paul in Corinth. Tradition has it that this man lived in the city of Pergamos and later became an

influential bishop there. It could very well be true that Gaius was the pastor in the church there. We cannot be very sure. But it is obvious from the letter itself that John did care deeply for this saint and his particular labors.

And, as is obvious from the letter, John was interested in the truth. The term “truth” is one of John’s favorite words, it seems. This was true throughout the first and second epistles, and it shows up immediately in this one too. In fact, this is the main emphasis of the passage we consider today, II John:4. This verse reads, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” We can understand why the apostle John concerns himself with the idea of truth in his letters. Jesus had taught His disciples much about truth and what it is. “I am the truth,” He said. Or, “the truth shall make you free.” Now, John, one of Jesus’ closest disciples, teaches us concerning the same truth of which Jesus taught him. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth!” These are warm words of an elder and pastor

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Praise to God Our Savior
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Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

Today we conclude our series of sermons on the letter of Jude. The last two verses of his letter, verses 24 and 25, comprise a doxology of praise to God. We read, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

A doxology is an expression of personal experience that arises out of the events of one’s life. Such events have led that person to contemplate God and what He has done for him. Such praise to God comes to expression when we announce to others what we think about God. This is what Jude does now at the end of his letter to the church. He is overwhelmed with the truth that God is the one who preserves His people and keeps them from falling. God presents us faultless before His glorious presence—we who deserve nothing from His hand. Now, what is his response? To God be all

glory, majesty, dominion, and power!

Yes, objectively this is true. These virtues, and more, do characterize God. But Jude raises this doxology because this is his experience in life. His heart soars with an overwhelming knowledge of who God is and what God does for him and His church.

This same doxology ought to be found on the lips of all of God’s people. This God of whom Jude speaks is our God. He is our Savior. He keeps us from falling. He presents us spotless. What then is our response to what God has done for us? We with Jude lift up this doxology of praise to Him. What a fitting way to conclude our study of this letter!

Again, we must understand the verses we consider in light of what we have just learned. We need to keep ourselves in the love of God. We must do this by building up ourselves on the Word of God and by prayer. In our great love for God and the church we must even be willing to have compassion on

those fellow saints who stumble. But through all of this we also remember—we cannot help but remember when we consider our own weaknesses and failures—that after all is said and done, God preserves His church. *He* saves her, *He* builds her up in love, and *He* keeps us from falling. That truth is on the foreground here in the Word of God we consider.

PRAISE TO GOD OUR SAVIOR

I. God Our Savior

How overwhelmed are you by the God whom we serve? How much are you taken in by the magnificent presence of the God before whom we stand? He has created all things. There is not one creature in this world that escapes His rule. He is in control of everything. The God whom we serve is therefore God alone. There is no God beside Him. There is none above Him, none His equal. There are no gods who are even subservient to Him. He is God—alone, the only God who must be served and obeyed. He is the one God before whom every man stands, and with whom all men have to do. He is not like the mythological gods of the ancient Greeks, who were

many, weak, and characterized by the sins of men. He is not the gods of the pagan peoples of our world today, whose gods are powerless. Jehovah is the God. Our God alone is Creator, the One who sits in heaven and directs all the affairs of this world according to His good pleasure. Everything exists by His hand, everything is under His control, and everything therefore fulfills His sovereign will. How often do you look upon Jehovah God in adoration and fear and consider who He is?

Furthermore, the one only God whom we serve is called in Scripture and in this doxology of Jude, our Savior! That cannot be said about any of the gods of man's foolish imagination. The one true God is the God who saves His people from their sins in order to make possible their place in heaven. It is so easy for us to overlook this truth concerning the God whom we serve. We like to think only of Jesus

Christ as our Savior. God is this angry God who desires to cast us all into the abyss of hell. He desires to punish every one of us for offending His most high majesty. Then Christ comes along and dies the ultimate death, paying the price for our sins and reconciling us to God. For Christ's sake, then, God is

He is the one God before whom every man stands, and with whom all men have to do.

Christ as our Savior. God is this angry God who desires to cast us

right, even if we do not understand His ways and His judgments in the earth. God is sovereign. He always fulfills what He chooses, and because His is the power and rule no one can stand in the way of His executing what He wills. God's is the glory, the majesty, the dominion, and the sovereign power! That is what we see when we look on the presence of God.

III. Our Joy

When the wicked and unbelieving behold our God, they do so with dread, loathing, and scorn. Man chafes under the sovereign rule of God. Man seeks his own glory. He thinks he is highly exalted. He refuses to bow before the living God. Wicked man spurns God's commandments and walks in His own ways rather than listening to God. And because God's judgment on unbelieving men is delayed, they actually think they rule and God does not exist. They think they will escape judgment. But God is in the heavens and He laughs at men who imagine they have broken

away His rule. He holds these men in derision and will destroy them in His just wrath. Unbelievers will not escape! But we, God's children, who are held in His hand, rejoice in this knowledge of God. This God is our God, and if He is for us, then who can be against us. All things work together for our good. Nothing will ever separate us from God's love. We are held in His bosom never to be plucked away from Him. That is our experience. What joy this gives us—an exceeding joy.

That joy is now. We have the joy of our salvation now. But that joy will fully come when we enter into the presence of God faultless in the day of days. This joy is ours now *and forever* because God's is the glory, the majesty, the dominion, and the power both now and forever. Unto all eternity God is God and we are His. Both now and forever we abide with Him and taste of His glory and majesty. As we conclude our study of Jude, let us say it together: to God be the glory now and forever. Amen. So let it be!

Man is not at liberty to critique God or say God is not fair according to man's standard.

means “highly exalted.” The term speaks of that one who is of preeminence and of great importance. The person who is majestic is of highest worth and excellence and authority. Such is our God. He is excellent in all the earth. He is so, of course, exactly because He is God. He sits in the heavens. They are His throne and the earth where man dwells is merely His footstool. There is not one creature that can be compared to God in glory or in majesty. God alone is crowned with honor. We can take the man most feared and honored in the earth and he is nothing but vapor before the sight of the all-glorious God of heaven and earth. God alone is to be feared and obeyed. All men ought to stand before His excellence with trembling. So high above all creatures stands our God.

God’s is also the dominion and the power. The term “dominion” refers to the extreme might and strength of God. It refers to His ability to do everything that He seeks to accomplish. When we at times desire to do something, our own weakness stands in the way of accomplishing it. If I wanted to pick up my car and put it somewhere else, I could not do so because I do not have the strength. If I want to change events that are transpiring in this world (as I so much would love to do), I cannot do it be-

cause I do not have the power to do it. Well, the events of this world are controlled by God to fulfill His own sovereign will and good pleasure. (I guess I would not want to change what is transpiring in this world.) God sends wars and He cause them to cease. God sends tornadoes, but those tornadoes are in God’s hand to begin and to stop. Man’s heart is in the hand of God and He moves it in the way that He wills. God is all-powerful to do everything that He pleases. That is God. Such dominion or strength belongs to no man. In fact, the very strength that does belong to man is given to him by God. God’s is the glory, the majesty, and the dominion.

And His is the power too. Now, this term speaks of God’s sovereignty. Power in our text literally refers to the right and the authority to do what God wants. God reigns over all. It is His right by virtue of the fact that God has planned it all, has made it all, and executes His plan over all. He is King and no one can question His authority or challenge His right to do what He does. Man does not set the standard of what is right and wrong. God does. Man is not at liberty to critique God or say God is not fair according to man’s standard. Who are you, O man, that replies against God? Shall the thing made say to him that made it, why have you made me thus? Whatever God does is

no longer angry and we have a place in heaven.

Although all this is true concerning Jesus Christ, we, with Jude, praise the *one God* who is our Savior. *He* saves us! Christ was sent into the world according to God’s will and purpose. Christ died on the cross because God desired the salvation of His people. God provided for you and me our Savior in the person of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Although it is true that the triune God did not suffer and die on the cross, nevertheless the divine Son of God, the second person of the Trinity was nailed to the tree on our behalf. God is our Savior. He has chosen us and loved us from eternity. He willed our salvation. He made it possible. He sought us out to reconcile us unto Himself. The God whom we serve is the only God, who is our Savior.

Jude is overwhelmed with this truth concerning God by means of his own personal experience and by means of what he sees God doing for His church. He states in verse 24, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” God is the one who is able to keep us from falling! Think of the blessed truth this Word of God sets forth for us here. One commentator writes this about this phrase: “There is no lack

with God. Only by willfully turning from his enabling grace can anyone be lost.” Sound good? It certainly is meant to. But this man denies the truth that God preserves His people and keeps them from falling away from salvation. He says: If those whom God has powerfully saved willfully turn away, they will go lost. He does not say: Those whom God powerfully saves, God will keep from falling away from faith. He denies the truth of the preservation of the saints. If that is true, and it is not, then salvation does not depend on God alone, but in part depends on us. We must preserve ourselves and then God will preserve us.

But that is not what brings to the lips of Jude this doxology of praise. He praises God His Savior because this God saves! He that begins a good work in us will be faithful to complete that work. When God saves, then, as Jesus says in John 10, we are held in His hand. And no one and nothing will be able to pluck us out of that hand of our God. The work Christ has performed for us on the cross is all powerful. Christ’s Spirit sent to work in our hearts cannot be resisted!

Those whom Christ saves cannot go lost! Neither ought we to overlook what the Word of God here in verse 24 teaches us about God: God is able to keep us

from falling! God has the ability, the power against all odds, to keep us from falling away from Him. The knowledge of that is so, so comforting to the believer.

Look at the odds from a human point of view that the saints in the church of Jude's day had to face. Look at the odds we have to face! The temptations of this world press in upon us from every direction. The church world of today itself places upon us an extreme amount of pressure to turn from the old paths. How true are the words of the psalmist in Psalm 124: "Now Israel may say and that in truth, if that the Lord had not our right maintained, if that the Lord had not with us remained, when cruel men against us rose to strive, we surely had been swallowed up alive!"

We experience that in our lives, do we not? The preserving grace of God? When we fall and stumble along life's pathway (and who listening is so proud to think he has not stumbled?) then God preserves us. He does not preserve us in order that we might feel comfortable while walking in our sin. He does not make the believer happy when walking in sin. The believer does not reason: "I need not worry that I am sinning. God forgives me anyway and will not let me fall away." God makes

the believer miserable in his sin. He is not happy when he walks in sin. In this way God brings

*Those whom Christ saves
cannot go lost!*

His children to their knees in sorrow and repentance over sin. But He does preserve. He does so in His great power and in His love and grace.

The last phrase of verse 24 speaks also of God as Savior: God is able to present us faultless before the presence of His glory. Someday every man is going to stand in the presence of God's glory. This will take place at the time of judgment. Every eye shall see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God will judge us through His Son. At that time we too will stand in the presence of God's glory. But when we do, we will do it without fear and terror. We will do it with joy. Why? Because God Himself will present us faultless before Him.

Take note: Jude does not say that Christ will present us faultless before God in the day of judgment. That surely is true! Christ has paid the price of our sins on the cross. He has died to take away our guilt. In that day of judgment we are going to be clothed with the garments of Christ's righteousness. That means we will appear there innocent, righteous, without any fault or sin because we will be

covered in Christ's blood. But that is not what Jude says. He says that *God* will present us to Himself faultless, without sin. *God* does that! That is why we can call God our Savior. He presents us before Himself faultless in the Day of Judgment because He in

*Whether men glorify God
in their praise or not,
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His great love for us sent Christ to accomplish His purpose in our salvation. Christ did the work God sent Him to do. God gave us to Christ to be saved. Christ performed this work on behalf of God. And now, those who are God's people, the sheep of His pasture, the people He loves and cherishes in Christ, God takes before Himself and sees them as faultless. When we stand in the presence of His glory in the day of judgment we will do that with exceeding joy!

II. His Praise

It is on the basis of this experience that Jude, and we with him, give praise to God! *How* we give praise is by extolling God for who He is. It is to look upon His glory and majesty with awe and adoration. It is to sing the praises of His dominion and power. This Jude does in verse 25: "To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

God's is the glory. Whether men glorify God in their praise or not, God's is the glory. God's is the glory even when men reject Him and scorn Him. We pray that too, "for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory." You see, God's glory is the

shining forth of all the virtues of God, especially that of His holiness. The people of Israel could not look on the face of Moses because God's glory was reflected in his face. The shepherds were sore afraid because they beheld God's glory in the presence of the angels. God is a God of infinite virtues. He is sovereign, eternal, immutable. He is righteous, just, and holy. All of these virtues are one in Him, and God shines, so to speak, with these virtues—so pure, so transcendent is He in His virtues. His holiness itself is a light or perfection that shines forth in God. God glorifies Himself in the works of creation, even in the raising up of men to destroy them. Even when the heathen rage upon Him, God is glorifying Himself. His is the glory.

Hand in hand with this stands God's majesty. We more often use the word sovereignty, but the idea is the same. God rules over all in His dread majesty. The word "majesty"