

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

WHAT GOD CAN DO
TO KEEP A MAN ON HIS FEET

Text: "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." Jude 24.

This is to be a discussion of stamina, staying power, the capacity to stand up to life. It is becoming ever more difficult these days just to keep your footing, to maintain your balance and to go steadfastly on without losing your nerve and being swept off your feet. Needless to say, this thing of keeping your footing is all-important; it is preferred business, for everything depends upon it. You can't go on to achieve any of the things that you have set for yourself unless you can keep your feet on the ground.



Rev. D.M. Clark

Make no mistake about it--it's a slippery world we live in! To keep one's footing and to walk with steady stride today is no mean achievement. For one thing, there is the down-drag of sordidness with which we have to contend. Then there is the down-drag of secularism with which we have to contend. Moreover, there is the down-drag of discouragement with which we have to cope.

Jude, writing in the first century, is pleading for stamina. Do all within your power to keep your footing. Then, remember that God will help you. Well, what can God do to keep a man on his feet?

For one thing, God helps us to keep our footing in days like these through the reinforcement of our inner selves.

Do you remember what Ezekiel had to say about his experience in Babylon? There among his exiled people, discouraged, no doubt, by external circumstances, and by disillusionment and apathy of those whom he sought to lead, something happened to this man that changed the course of his life and that vitally affected the destiny of a Nation. "The spirit entered into me," Ezekiel wrote, "and set me upon my feet."

It was for this reinforcement of the inner selves of his disciples that Jesus prayed that last night before his crucifixion: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

This was the earnest desire of the Apostle Paul for his converts, and his incomparably beautiful prayer in Ephesians gives expression to it.

This thing that God is able to do for us is real. Emerson tells us of people who live out of a great depth of being. Baron von Hugel describes lives that experience this reinforcement by the Spirit of God as those who know an "overflowing interior plenitude". That's what we need--more than we need to be relieved of burdens of responsibility, pain, or care; more than we need to have outward circumstances changed. We need to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. Paul vouched for the reality of this inner strength in his own life when he wrote: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheth me."

Again, God helps us to keep our footing in days like these through association with lives of strength and purpose.

Does anyone doubt that this a favorite method that God chooses of helping us? He brings us help through people. Who has not been steadied, strengthened, and encouraged by association with someone who shared his faith with us, or who believed in us at our best by loving and trusting us? Who does not look up to somebody, drawing resources from that person, sharing his strength, benefiting by his faith, courage, and maturity? Do you take such people for granted? Do you feel grateful to them, and let it go at that? Or do you see that it is God himself who ministers to you through such human hands

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Members of St. James Baptist Church are presently honoring the Rev. and Mrs. J. L. Simmons on their 14th anniversary at St. James' and the 22nd year of the Rev. Simmons' resident pastorage. The celebration will continue through Sunday, Aug., 30, with the theme from 1st Timothy, 5th Chapter: "Rebuke not the elder, but treat him as a father."

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and hearts?

Furthermore, God helps us to keep our footing in days like these through the instrumentality of the Church.

We need to do some straight thinking about the Church just now. Point out all her weaknesses and label all her mistakes, if you please. But when this has been done, face the truth about the Church in the world today. You will not be able to get around the fact that the Church is the only institution on earth that stands year in and year out, century after century, for a spiritual conception of life. You cannot evade the fact that the Church, and the Church alone, is trying to face men with God; that the Church has the only Gospel of a power that can change human nature and give men a new chance; that the Church and only the Church, is trying, no matter how imperfectly, to translate into practical living the teachings and ideals of Jesus Christ.

What I would have you see is that the Church is God's method of helping you to keep your footing in days like these through what he reveals to the eyes of faith.

When a man really and truly fixes his eyes upon God, not upon rewards, results, or personal satisfactions, he finds the secret of stamina and endurance. What he discovers is that he lives not in one world but in two. He does not deny the sordidness, the materialism, the tragedy, and the discouragement that the eye of flesh has seen. He sees beyond all that another environment, just as real, more real, indeed, for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Faith sees reality that keeps men on their feet, despite all that has happened or may happen, now or later.