



A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEKEND

7th July, 2023

"keep us from falling"
Jude 24

Children's playgrounds have equipment for adventures of imagination, thrills of speed, strength, balance, courage and confidence. One favourite is the wobbly bridge, -planks loosely chained across a 'chasm' of a child's imagination. It would be virtually impossible to cross, were it not for a rope to hold onto. The rope also moves, but it is anchored at both ends; hanging onto it makes the difference between crossing the fearful chasm or falling into the waiting jaws of imaginary crocodiles below!

At this time most 11-year-olds are preparing to leave Primary Schools to enter the great world of Secondary education and the future. They leave with an impressive range of foundations in Maths, English, Geography, History, Religious Studies, Science, Art, Music, and so on. And they have acquired a toolbox of skills for learning, -the basics to continue life's journey.

Those foundations will support them well, though forgotten beneath the building of knowledge and competence and achievement yet to come. They are the 'wobbling planks' of their bridge, loosely chained together, moving with the discoveries and innovations of human knowledge, changed and challenged by the fashions and trends of society, perhaps more so today -and more threateningly- than ever before.

So what will *"keep us from falling"* (Jude 24) on the perilous stages of life? Not just as children, but at any age we may be *"tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming."* (Ephesians 4:14)

That's where the rope comes in, to hold onto in a world of constant movement, *"an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."* (Hebrews 6:19) For children, young people and for ourselves as adults, there are essentials that aren't shown by exams or appraisals; vital character qualities which are of lasting and even greater foundational importance. God has given us the guidelines of his word, anchored in his fatherly love for us. They are principles of character and morality, matters of heart and spirit, wisdom to equip us to discern and decide. We could name *"...the fruit of the Spirit... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"* (Galatians 5:22-23). We could set our minds on, *"whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, ... anything excellent or praiseworthy"* (Philippians 4:8). We could cultivate works of grace, like compassion, courage, forgiveness, respect, gratitude, justice... and so on. These are all things developed not so much in classrooms as in families and communities, clubs and churches; not so much by talking as by looking and listening, by the example of those around us, and supremely in Christ. They are the 'ropes' to keep us from falling in an age of very 'wobbly steps', -not just for children, but for all of us.

So: *"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."* (Jude 24-25)