

Get a Grip!

THE STRIKING monument on the cover records an event where people literally took a grip on life.

In 1995 a French catamaran struck rocks off the island of Jersey in treacherous conditions. 307 passengers and crew were in danger of their lives. Thankfully, the emergency services, supported by local ships, were able to save them all. The monument thanks ‘the help of God and of many strong arms’.

We sometimes use this expression about relatively trivial things. When someone has failed to complete a task or refuses to take something seriously, we might tell them to ‘get a grip’. They probably won’t like it, but they will know what we mean.

We may even tell ourselves to ‘get a grip’ if we feel we are letting ourselves down.

There are more serious aspects though. Do you ever feel like you are losing your grip on life? Sometimes it appears that there is nothing solid in life. Jobs change, friends and colleagues come and go, and even our most loved ones pass away and leave us on our own. At times it can feel like there is nothing permanent and reliable in our life.

Gripping Something Solid

The Bible is solid, permanent and reliable. It doesn’t change and we can trust it. In

it we find prophecies which were written thousands of years ago, now coming to life in front of our eyes.

Over 2500 years ago, God’s prophet spoke to the nation of Israel, who were taken into captivity. His message was:

O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves (Ezekiel 37:12-13).

The State of Israel was established in 1948, we can visit it, and we see it in the news.

Similarly, the message of God’s Kingdom on earth and the fact that He wants you in it is the same now as it was when Jesus preached about it two thousand years ago. He hasn’t changed His promise or His purpose with this world.

A Hold on Life

In the New Testament, we find repeated encouragements to take a grip on eternal life – the promise of a place in God’s Kingdom. Paul wrote this to a young man, Timothy:

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:12).



The expression to 'lay hold' means to grip something, to hold it tight, even wrestle it to the ground. Maybe a rugby tackle is a good visual example! That is the strong grip that we should be taking on God's promise.

How do we do this? Well, more of Paul's words may help:

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1:13).

By holding tight to the Word of God, which Paul taught, we are anchoring ourselves to something solid. God's Word is unchanging, it tells us about His plan and how He wants us to live with Him. We can trust it.

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast (Hebrews 6:19).

Getting that Grip

This is a lifelong opportunity, to take hold of God's Word, His promises and the hope He offers. Writing in Philippians chapter 3, Paul described his goal:

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:10–11).

The effort he put in, the way he focused on that goal, are described in the following verses:

*Not that I have already **attained**, or am already perfected; but I **press on**, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also **laid hold** of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have **apprehended**; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I **press toward** the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (v12–14).*

The language is strong. The words highlighted in blue mean to seize, possess or arrest someone. The words in green are translated elsewhere as to 'persecute'. Paul was previously the main persecutor of Christians, killing them and sending them to prison. So he knew just how powerful it was to seize something – and now he was seizing the hope of God's Kingdom.

The Bible is our opportunity to understand God's offer, and to take hold of it ourselves. Let's read it and get a grip on a real future.