

100 ".... the hope that is within you "

Christian people are Hope people!

The full verse containing the phrase in our title this time (I Peter 3.15, AV) goes like this - "But sanctify the Lord your God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear".

This Christian hope is something far stronger and more precious than the popular view of "hope" these days - a crossing of those fingers and a hoping for the best. Christian hope has been well-defined as "a joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation". There is nothing "iffy" about such hope - rather a certainty that the things hoped for are really and truly going to happen.

And by God's grace we know full well on what historically-solid grounds this robust Christian hope actually sits - nothing less than the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed for us and preserved for us in the pages of the Holy Bible.

So let us understand just what the Holy Spirit is telling us, through Peter, in the verse before us this time, I Peter 3.15. First, we are to "sanctify the Lord in our hearts" - to give the Lord the constant, special place, that is His by right, at the very core of our being. He is the Lord on the throne of our lives; He is the One who "says what goes" in our lives, who oversees all our decision-making. This sanctifying springs from our faith in the Lord, as a natural giving to Him of our worship and loving obedience; in turn it then strengthens that faith, worship and obedience, thus slowly building our greater spiritual maturity. Such maturity is not ultimately for us, but for Him, for by it we will be more effective in bringing glory to God's holy name.

Second, the Holy Spirit urges us to be ready! - ready to explain why we are people of hope. This assumes that people will actually ask us to explain, and such people will only ask if they have seen, perhaps over some considerable time, something about us that points to hope. This ties in with some recent Weekly Reflections - that many folk among whom we live are still "without", including their being without hope; and that in their midst we are bidden to "hold forth the word of life". That holding-forth consists of steady Christian lives where Christ is indeed sanctified in our hearts, supported by a readiness, and an ability, to speak the Gospel truths, simply and clearly, as and when appropriate.

Finally comes that little phrase, "with meekness and fear". The Holy Spirit knows how careful we have to be, in our speaking of the hope that is within us, that the call of the Lord to others is all about their following of Him, rather than their following of us! Our task and privilege is to point wholly to the Lord; in one vital sense, we do not matter, and we are not to matter, in this pointing.

For such meekness and fear prevent any human boasting: our many blessings are gifts from Almighty God, which we have done nothing to deserve. These blessings were won for us at such great cost, and are showered upon us with such great love! And one of the loveliest blessings of them all - is the blessing of Hope.

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