

## 185 "The beginning of wisdom"

July 1st 2016 has been the 100th anniversary of the start of the Battle of the Somme, one of the most horrific battles of the First World War. The events of that day have been sensitively marked in Britain and France, so that our nations, and the generations who have come after, may never forget.

With hindsight, we can only be appalled over all that happened in those times: how the great nations of Europe, feeling confident in their various alliances built on suspicion of their neighbours, were actually highly vulnerable to any tiny spark; how that spark came with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo; how "gung-ho" attitudes plunged Europe and the wider world into terrible conflict; how the Generals, when the two front lines faced each other across the trenches, kept sending their men "over the top" into machine gun fire, for "one more push"; and how this war, far from being "over by Christmas", lasted for over four years and cost millions of lives. What sombre lessons need to be learned and applied.

A century later Europe again finds itself a scene of division, this time based mercifully only in politics rather than military might, for the decision of Britain to leave the European Union has thrown a large proverbial "cat among the pigeons". Feelings are running high, hot and hasty words are bandied about, and the media, in trying to do their job of truth-telling, often fan the flames by interviewing whoever they can find, to talk about whatever they can think of! Does this endless "saturation coverage" really help the causes of clarity and truth?

We are reminded of how the Lord in His Word has so much to tell us about what we are to say and not say, and how we are to say it and not say it - instruction that is very basic, very practical, even very obvious once it is pointed out, but sadly is all too often forgotten or ignored, be that in Parliament, the television studios, social media - or our own homes.

A few verses from the Book of Proverbs give us the flavour: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stirreth up anger" / "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit" / "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!" / " ... and a soft tongue breaketh the bone" (Proverbs 15.1 / 15.4 / 15.23 / 25.15, KJV).

Continuing in Proverbs, the Lord tells us the consequences of our turning aside from Him, such as - "But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of

my reproof" / "Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices" (Proverbs 1.25, 31).

Instead, not surprisingly, we are to seek and follow the Lord - "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" / " ... and with all thy getting get understanding ..." / " ... write (my commandments) upon the table of thine heart" (Proverbs 1.33 / 4.7 / 7.3).

As we do this, including that vital taming of our tongues, we are assured of the Lord's blessings - "For the Lord shall be thy confidence ..." / "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely ..." / "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich and he addeth no sorrow with it". (Proverbs 3.26 / 10.9 / 10.22).

So in these days of uncertainty, our calling as those seeking to be Christ's faithful sheep is to support and pray for those in leadership, in whatever form that leadership may take (eg., Mark 12.13-17 / Romans 13.1-7 / I Timothy 2.1-2). We ask the Lord to have His hand of restraining mercy and guidance especially over the nations of Europe in the negotiations that lie ahead.

For - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Proverbs 9.10). Therein lies the path to the peace that all humanity longs for, to be established fully on that wonderful day when all acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. And therein also lies the surest path to ensuring that there will never again be another Battle of the Somme.

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