

190 Standing and Resisting

In recent Reflections we have been reminded of the need to keep our Christian consciences good and pure, to avoid spending our time in futile philosophical discussions which miss the point, and to "guard the Deposit", the contents of the Scriptures which are "able to make you wise to salvation through belief in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:15, Literal).

We are well aware why this Deposit needs to be guarded, especially when, as today, we are bombarded with contradictory beliefs, opinions and conduct. The prevailing "Just do it" mood of the age assumes that there is no God-given, objective truth for our guidance and that we got here by chance, so we'd better make the best of things while we can. But by God's grace Christ's faithful sheep, saved sinners as we are by His shed blood, know that there is such Truth, to be found in the "Deposit" that is the Holy Bible, and focussed within its pages on Jesus Christ the Lord.

So we find ourselves in a competition that is far tougher than the Rio Olympics! This is a battle over Truth, and we know that the God-opposing forces are ultimately directed by the devil himself, Satan, a created but fallen being described variously in the Scriptures as "the adversary", "a murderer from the beginning ...there is not truth in him ... he is a liar, and the father of it", and "the accuser of the brethren" (I Peter 5:8 / John 8:44 / Rev 12:10). So this is not a game: it is "for real", the stakes being so high that they have eternal consequences, and anyone bearing the name of Christ in any meaningful sense is bound to attract Satan's attention at various times and in various ways.

Rather than us all making ourselves scarce on hearing this news, we are urged instead to put on the whole armour of God of Ephesians 6:11-18 - well-known to us all no doubt, but so easy to neglect. The armour enables us first simply to stand against the wiles of the devil, neither dashing about trying to be heroes in the battle, nor to be lolling about miles back from the front-line. As we explore in the Concordance and Greek Lexicon the Greek word translated "wiles", we come across craftiness, carefully planned devices and deceptions, cunning, trickery; in other words, nothing is quite what the devil may make it seem, and surely as the old saying goes, "all that glitters is not gold".

But the armour gives us more. It protects us with truth and righteousness (6:14), assuming that our lives indeed possess those qualities, which brings us back to the need for those "good and pure consciences". "The preparation of the gospel of peace" (6:15) obliges us to be ready with explaining and justifying "the Faith", "the Deposit": WHAT, clearly and precisely, does the Christian Gospel actually say? WHY does everyone on this planet so need this Gospel? And why should

anyone accept THIS Gospel rather than the numerous other claimant-gospels presented to us these days? A Christian who is tongue-tied and terrified by some bold believer in atheism is not much good as a soldier at that moment, yet how easy the Lord has made it for us to expose the fallacies of atheism on the one hand and the "many infallible proofs" (Acts 1.3) undergirding the Christian Deposit on the other. Some basic knowledge of both the "Christian Evidences" and the "Atheism Nonsenses", can go a long way as we stand and resist on the battlefield. If these remarks are new to you then a good place to start is by simply typing "Christian Evidences" into Google.

For remember that everyone on earth is a believer, everyone has faith, even if it is faith in NOTHING, so Christians are not the few little freaks who are the believers, while everyone else outgrew the realm of belief years ago! What matters therefore is: of all the Beliefs on offer around us, which of these Beliefs have the most solid credentials, and are therefore the most likely Beliefs to be TRUE?

There are some more pieces of armour to consider next time God willing, involving the critical relationship between faith, salvation, the Word of God and prayer (6.16-18). But for now let us keep in mind that simple picture of the well-clad Christian on the battlefield, "guarding the Deposit" by standing, resisting, standing, resisting - and standing, resisting! How the Lord could do with more Christians like that.

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