

## **206 Factual Truth, Relevance and Need - 2**

Pilate's famous question to the Lord Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18.38), is as relevant today as it has ever been, and in the ongoing "bear-pit" of claim and counter-claim concerning ultimate Truth, Christ's faithful sheep have a part to play in speaking up for the Lord and His Word as made known to us in the pages of the Holy Bible.

Last week we concentrated on how we can "stand up for Jesus" in friendly and natural ways in one-to-one situations. We can make mention of the Lord or the Bible, or some of those "evidences" which demonstrate the Bible's trustworthiness, such as its moral teachings, miracles and prophecies, all of which focus on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14.6).

But there is another side to our upholding Christian Truth, which involves us in "standing up for Jesus" in the public sphere too. In scriptural times there was always an "Establishment" consisting of the "opinion-formers" and decision-makers, whose behaviour affected the people in their charge, for better or worse. So we can think of Samuel with Saul (I Samuel 13.5-16 / 15.1-35), Nathan with David (II Samuel 12.1-15), Elijah with Ahab (I Kings 17.1-3 / 18.17-19.3), and Jeremiah with Zedekiah (II Chronicles 36.11-11), along with many other examples. In each case we see brave men of God "speaking truth to power" as the saying goes, often at great risk to themselves.

Later on, John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus and His apostles did just the same thing – speaking God's truth to powerful people who did not care for what they were being told! We know what happened to the Baptist, to the Lord, and to most of His apostles, but God's Truth prevailed over all – and it still does.

In many parts of the world we know that our Christian brothers and sisters face severe opposition because of their faith in Christ, so their publicly speaking up for Him is very difficult. In "the West" we still have greater freedoms as Christians, (freedoms often won at much cost by our Christian forebears), though even here we see the Christian Faith being wilfully ignored or ridiculed. So there is no denying that there is work to be done, in which we all have a God-given part to play.

We are conscious of many influential people and organisations whose assumptions and decisions profoundly affect wider society. If large numbers of "ordinary" Christians were in the habit of "standing up for Jesus" and His Truth with these folk, what a difference that could and would make! For the Lord's salt and light would be shed forth once more in the many places of power, no doubt

causing these “movers and shakers” some annoyance, but also some changing of direction on their part. All would be blessed – for surely the Lord’s well-known promise to Solomon still holds good for any God-seeking nation today – “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chronicles 7.14).

In practice we can "stand up for Jesus" in the public arena by either writing or by speaking live. Each of these approaches is different, requiring particular gifts and needing its own humble and prayerful preparation. God willing, we will consider these in some practical detail in our next Reflection in the light of God's Word.

Meanwhile there is Christ the Good Shepherd to be followed, our fellow “faithful sheep” to be encouraged, and those not yet in Christ’s flock to be told first the bad news of their acute spiritual need, and then the Good News of salvation by faith in Christ alone!

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11.28). Old words, as true as ever.

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