

395 THE Faith

As Paul writes his second letter to Timothy every follower of Jesus Christ is given some practical encouragement by the Holy Spirit: we are to continue in the Faith (that “holding fast” we came across last time, 1.13); we have learned, and go on learning, “the form of sound words” of the Christian Faith (1.13); we are assured of these doctrinal truths taught to us by trusted spiritual teachers; and crucially, we are to know what God’s Word says, means and expects (II Timothy 3.14-15, (KJV).

In once-Christian Britain a pretty thorough job has been done since 1945 in expunging Almighty God and His Word, the Holy Bible, from public debate and decision-making, with the inevitable consequences of this folly now in plain view around us. We can mention here in passing that adherents of other Faiths, such as Jews, Sikhs, Muslims and atheists are now heard in Parliament and the media with far more respect than is shown to overtly Christian voices, a distinction that smacks of mischief by “the accuser of our brethren” and his cronies (Revelation 12.10).

By way of our Christian response to this situation it is timely to remember three basic truths which we come across occasionally in these Reflections. The first is that everyone on this planet is “a believer” in something, even if, as with atheists, that “something” consists of a belief in “There Is No God”. Because we are all believers we are all therefore “equal starters” in assessing the various Belief Systems on offer. Which of these Belief Systems has the strongest underlying credentials and is therefore the most likely to be TRUE?!

The second truth arises from the results of that assessing, which demonstrate that the Judeo-Christian Faith rests on a stack of unanswerable, objective, historical truth-credentials which are unmatched by any rival. At the heart of these credentials is the Holy Bible itself. Where indeed would we be without the Bible?! But that is where relatives, neighbours, friends, colleagues, politicians, journalists, etc, etc, now find themselves - without the Bible - some by arrogance and others by ignorance or apathy. Truly, there is work to be done.

Our third truth states that the Christian Faith is THE Faith far more than it is MY faith! God’s Word, the Holy Bible, stands alone as a God-breathed, God-revealed, objective body of truth, which exists on its own in its entirety quite independently of whether you, I or anyone happens to believe it or not (II Timothy 3.15-17). It is INTO this Faith that each Christ-accepting believer has been drawn by the grace of God (eg., I

Peter 1.1-5), meaning that I am a very, very small cog in God's wonderful Work of Salvation in Christ; (small, yet deemed precious – I Corinthians 6.20 & 7.23a / Galatians 2.20b). As such, to regard this as MY faith puts the emphasis in quite the wrong place, on me rather than on the Lord Himself.

Now this point is far from being a clever little twist of words that does not matter in practice. It matters greatly in practice when it comes to our witnessing to the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Often each of us is urged “from the front” on a Sunday to “share your faith” – yes? But see how that approach – “Let me share with you what I believe” - UPgrades Me and DOWNgrades Jesus! Do Mr and Mrs Bloggs up the road actually “care a jot” about what I may happen to believe if these beliefs are presented as being merely “my personal beliefs”?

But when our witnessing is re-defined as our pointing to the objective Truth of the Christian Gospel with the Lord Jesus Christ at its heart, the whole thrust of that witnessing is transformed. Now it is 99% about Jesus - Who He is, why He came, what He has achieved, why He matters and what we are called to do about Him. Such witnessing has been aptly described as like two tramps sitting on a park bench, with one telling his pal where he can find bread. The 1% is each of us then saying when appropriate along the way that this is the Faith into which we have been drawn by God's goodness, and in which we now live with present and future blessings - clear signs in themselves that this Faith, of all those on offer, is indeed God's Truth.

Sure enough, the many examples of witnessing in the New Testament are hardly about Peter, Paul, Phillip or whoever saying “Now let me tell you about my faith”; instead these witnesses always concentrate on the objective Jesus-Facts, with mention of their personal experience only in passing (some examples from Acts: 2.14-40; 10.34-48; 13.14-43; 17.22-34; 24.10-21; 26.1-32).

All human beings are “believers”. The Christian Faith stands quite alone on its unimpeachable credentials, and is revealed in “the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (from II Timothy 3.15, KJV).

That is The Faith in which we are privileged to live, and that is The Faith we are to make known.