

## 440 A Good Fight

As we were reminded in last week's Reflection, Christian people are to be thankful people, thankful to the Lord for all His blessings, and thankful to and for (most of!) those among we live. These are our fellow human beings, each made in God's image, all of us being of "one blood ... the offspring of God" and members of the one human race (egs., Genesis 1.26-29; 2.7, 20b-25 / Acts 17.22-31). If only fallen sinful human beings accepted this basic scriptural fact about the supreme value of every human life, from conception to eventual physical death, would not a great deal of current unhappiness be avoided?

But unfortunately that acceptance is not going to happen this side of God's Kingdom on earth because of sin - "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Roman 3.23). Sin continues as the petrol fuelling the spiritual warfare that has been waged between Almighty God and His many adversaries led by Satan, since the Fall (Genesis Chapter 3 / eg., Ephesians 6.10-18).

So we see how in the Christian-shaped "West" biblical truth has long been set aside by the numerous "powers-that-be", in politics, the media, education, public morality and so on, with "the people" unsurprisingly following suit. Leaders waffle on about "our core values" and "liberal democracy", while behaving as if Almighty God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, does not exist. This is simply a repeat of the grim spiral downwards found so often in the Old Testament - godless leadership and the abandonment of Almighty God, producing a tide of rampant wickedness; truly, "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1.9).

Thus the scene is set fair for the spreading of falsehood and wickedness across western society, examples of which any newspaper or news bulletin will supply. Now we as Bible-believing Christians are in the midst of all this and have a critical, God-given part to play – to stand up and speak up – even though that may not suit us! Does the Christian Church not share some responsibility for how things are now, through its divisions and distractions? "Lord forgive, Lord, have mercy" is a timely prayer.

See how the Lord Jesus in the Gospels fearlessly and constantly speaks up FOR the Truth, and AGAINST falsehood and wickedness, knowing full well the likely consequences for Him (egs., Matthew 23.13-33 / Luke 13.31-33 / John 18.33-38). Then consider Paul's extraordinary ministry –

a constant “bish, bash, bosh” against his fellow Jews, vile idolatries, Roman officials, corrupt kings and governors, as well as coping with his own fears and exhaustion (eg., Acts 18.9-11). There is nothing soppy here! – we see afresh that our Christian duty is to speak up for God’s Truth as focussed in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which the world has never cared for and has always tried to silence; and as we do this, we are bound to speak up against falsehood and wickedness, as and when and where we are able.

Think of some of the great old hymns about Christian warfare: “Who is on the Lord’s side?”, “Stand up, stand up for Jesus”, “Christian, unflinching stand”, “Onward Christian soldiers”, “We rest on Thee, our shield and our defender”, “Fight the good fight”, and many more – now largely out of fashion in an age when the phrase “the Church Militant” seems to be so neglected. But that is still the age in which we are placed, with the Church needing to be rightly “militant”, while looking forward to the age of the “Church Triumphant” which, by God’s grace, is yet to come.

Obvious targets of our day, requiring our exposure in the light of God’s Word, are two great falsehoods, Atheism with its various offspring, and Islam; and numerous wickednesses, including the pooh-poohing of the nuclear family, the promotion of homosexuality and its offshoots, and the casual acceptance of fornication, cohabitation, adultery, abortion, corruption - and the list goes on ... .

In speaking up against these many wrongs, Bible Christians will cause offence, just as did the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, Paul, and many others thereafter. We do not set out to cause offence; we set out to hold forth God’s Truth in Christ, for God’s glory, speaking with courtesy and firmness. We remember how that little saying, which we have come across before in these Reflections, works out in practice – “Peace at any price, and Truth at all costs”: that God’s Peace only comes when God’s Truth has been established. Such holding-forth of God’s Truth is thus a profound expression of Christian love, and equally, a withholding of that Truth is a profound expression of Christian un-love.

The Holy Spirit has given us the words of Paul, by then a battered old saint near the end of his life, written to Timothy – “I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith” (II Timothy 4.7, KJV). Whenever our time of departure may draw nigh, may those words be true also for each one of us.

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