

## 512 Falling-Apart Bibles

In this solemn time of Remembrance, we thank the Lord afresh for those who went to war, in different conflicts at different times, to fight for the good against the evil. Many came back; many came back with awful wounds; and many did not come back. We thank the Lord too for all the less-noticed men and women who did vital work on the home front in support of the war effort. And we humbly thank the Lord for hard-won victories, for the preservation of peace and freedoms under Him, and above all for the gift of His only-begotten Son, through whom all the ultimate victories have already been won (eg., I Corinthians 15.54-58).

Now we turn to a different remembrance, to Dr John Coleman, a much-loved missionary doctor serving with his wife Audrey in Iran. In late 1980, one year after the Islamic revolution in which the Shah was deposed, John and Audrey and some local church workers were arrested by the Revolutionary Guard. John was held in solitary confinement in grim prison conditions.

John expressed no bitterness at his treatment but repeatedly asked for his Bible, with no effect. Then one night the cell door was opened and John was given his Bible. It was dark outside and dark inside, but in later years he told of how he sat on his cell bed in the darkness through the night, just stroking the cover of his Bible, and weeping before the Lord with gratitude to Him for all His blessings, including now the gift of his Bible.

At first light he began to read it, with tears flowing as he praised the Lord page by page. In all the hours of daylight in the days that followed, he read and read and read, and after thirteen days, he reached Revelation 22.20. By the time he and Audrey and the others were released after 200 days of captivity, due to the intervention of Terry Waite, John had read through his Bible five times.

We see that the nations of the once-Christian West are in a bad way. America is deeply split between two mutually-loathing halves, consisting basically of socially conservative, Republican-supporting rural areas, and socially liberal, Democrat-supporting urban areas, as the recent mid-term elections demonstrate. President Joe Biden is already seen as embarrassingly incompetent, while ex-President Donald Trump thunders about, using speech which is very far from being “always with grace”, as we were thinking upon last week. Because the United States Constitution is avowedly secular in nature, with religious freedom being

guaranteed for all citizens, Bible-believing Christians in the USA are generally well-organised and full of voice on the political stage. They are used to “fighting their corner” in opposition to the numerous other corners on the political battlefield.

But in Britain things are rather different, for, as we saw so clearly after the recent death of the Queen, constitutionally we are still a Protestant Christian country. This Christian constitution has brought great benefits to the nation over the centuries, but its presence also perhaps explains why the Christian voice in our national political life has never been that strong. For there has been the assumption that because the Christian Faith is supposedly at the heart of who we are and what we do, no strong Christian voice in the political sphere is necessary.

That assumption may have been reasonable enough in times gone by, but of course, especially since the 1960s, numerous laws have been passed in Parliament which go blatantly against plain biblical teaching, leading to the chaos of today spiritually, politically, economically and socially.

As is often mentioned in the annual Remembrance season, were those who gave their lives for their country in war to see it now, they would surely be appalled, and rightly indignant to know how this woeful state of affairs has been allowed to come about. The answer involves secular-minded governments casting off the so-called “biblical shackles” that are there by God’s grace for restraint and guidance; to which we must also unfortunately add weak Christians and churches, whose biblical voices, even if raised, have been repeatedly set aside by those in political power at the time. We are now seeing that what has been so assiduously sown is being inevitably reaped, as the Lord God allows our national, self-wrought chaos to take its course.

This brings us back to faithful John Coleman, reading his Bible hour by hour in his prison cell: John brought much blessing to others in the good times, and he coped steadily in the harsh times, because he knew his Bible, and he knew the Lord of his Bible. In this time of Remembrance may we also remember and follow John’s simple example, for, as that old but so true saying puts it, “The Bible that is falling apart will surely belong to someone who isn’t”.

By God’s grace, it is such “someones” with their falling-apart Bibles, be that a John Coleman or any of the rest of us, who minister God’s blessings of love and truth in Christ, wherever on the spiritual battlefield

we have been called to serve (egs., Psalm 1 / Matthew 5.13-16 / Ephesians 5.8-11; 6.11-18).

© November 2022 Faithful Sheep Ministries – [www.fsmins.org](http://www.fsmins.org)