
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

March 9, 2014

Giving Away Our Faith

“Whenever anyone asks you to speak of your hope, be ready to defend it.

Yet do this with respectful humility, maintaining a good conscience.

*Act in this way so that those who malign your good lifestyle in Christ
may be ashamed when they slander you.”*

1 Peter 3:15, 16 (Common English Bible)

Notice that last sentence, *“Act in this way so that those who malign your good lifestyle in Christ may be ashamed when they slander you.”* Very often in my ministry, people express surprise when they are on the receiving end of ridicule and laughter for living a godly life. They somehow have the notion that a godly life results in admiration and respect from others. I wonder what world they grew up in. It has always been my experience that following Christ with integrity and living a godly life is difficult today. Not because that life is so hard but because it draws so much attention from others – most of it negative. As a child I remember being labeled a “goody two-shoes”. I have never been certain what that expression meant. But I always understood that it wasn’t a compliment.

I am particularly surprised when self-identified good Christians express astonishment when they are “maligned” for their exemplary life and values. Don’t good Christians read the Bible? The Bible has never made it a secret that following Christ is risky business. That wonderful preacher and author, William Willimon once put it brilliantly: “When we follow a Man who was ridiculed, hated, spat upon and eventually nailed to a cross we should not think we are going to get off any better.” A Christian lifestyle takes considerable courage. It certainly isn’t for the faint of heart.

These few sentences offer encouragement. They are honest that ridicule will follow a decision to live a godly life. But they also tell us that if we remain resolute, maintaining humility rather than expressing haughtiness in a Christian walk, those who make fun of us will eventually be put to shame. We need only to remain faithful to the high calling of Christ in our lives. God will take care of the bullies who seek to malign us.

There is something more, of course, here in these few sentences. Some people who notice our decision to live for Christ will not malign us; they will inquire of us what it is that we have. They will be those who have grown weary of the way of the world and are desperate to go in a different direction. The author of these sentences tells us to be ready to give it away. Recently I stepped up to a Starbucks in the Town Center Mall in Boca Raton. The barista looked into my eyes and asked, “What do you have?” Naturally, I thought this was a clumsy request for my beverage order. “A tall latte, please,” I responded. “No, what do you have? I see it in your eyes. What do you have?” Then I saw tears in her eyes. She took a break and we prayed together.

Grant to us, O Father, such conviction of faith that we are ready to share it compellingly and with joy to a world hungry for good news. In the certain power of the Risen Christ, we ask, Amen.

Doug Hood

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