

ARE YOU PASSING ON THE TORCH? *continued*

- One picture / medallion features Wycliffe with some flint stones – “*Wycliffe struck the spark*”;
- Another shows Hus with a lighted candle – “*Hus lit up the candle*”;
- Completing this a representation of Martin Luther holding aloft a torch – “*Luther wielded the torch.*”

While these representations tell in symbolic form the story of the Reformation as it began, continued, and crystallised under the touch of an Englishman, a Bohemian, and a German ... the challenge for us today is: **are we** re-igniting the old biblical fire and passing on the torch? ... following the noble example of the Reformers, and of Paul to Timothy (**2 Timothy 1:1-18; 2:14-26; 4:1-5**).

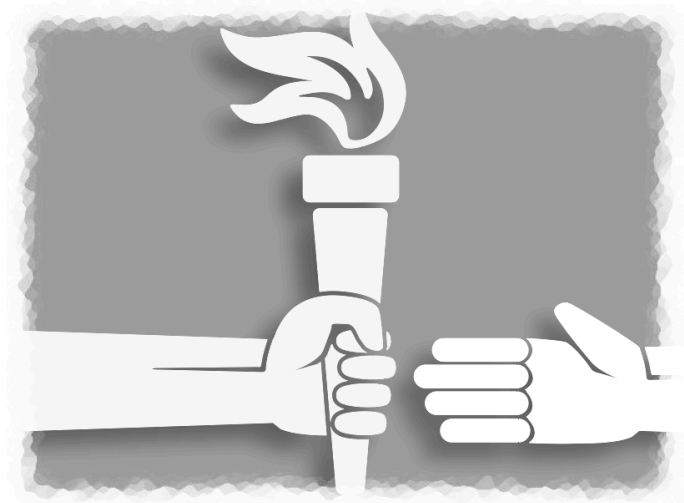


MEETINGS TODAY

- Sunday School – 10.15am
- Morning Worship – 11.30am: *16th Message in the Galatians Series: “Full Steam Ahead, One Step At A Time.”*
- Evening Service – 7.00pm: “*Jesus On That Cross Bids Me To Look and Live*”

INSPIRATION IN A SENTENCE

“I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, or how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished Now what is the food for the inner-man? Not prayer but, the word of God.” [George Muller]



ARE YOU PASSING ON THE TORCH?

Three of the many key Reformation figures whose busts are on display in the Martyrs Memorial Free Presbyterian Church, Belfast, are:

John Wycliffe – 1300s (England),
John Hus – 1400s (Bohemia / Czech Republic),
Martin Luther – 1500s (Germany).

These three men spearheaded the rediscovery of Gospel Truth in Europe — Grace Alone! Faith Alone! Scripture Alone! — and each paved the way for the next.

The connection between them is illustrated by a set of medallions on display at the Library in Prague and also by pictures on the wall of the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, the church in which John Hus preached.



FULL STEAM AHEAD, ONE STEP AT A TIME

Text: **Galatians 5:16-18.**

Development in the spiritual life is never as fast as the Christian expects. Even though we are being made like Jesus Christ, this only happens a little bit at a time – and sometimes that “little bit” seems *very* little!

Exercising our liberty, without license, to love others (**5:13-15**) is often a slow process, but

Galatians 5:16-18 outlines the answer to our discouragement.

[1] IT IS NOT ABOUT SMOOTHNESS, BUT STRUGGLE.

Struggle is a normal component of the Christian life.

(a) THE BATTLEGROUND: Two principles are at war within us – the “flesh” versus “the Spirit.” These exist in constant, unrelenting, unremitting antagonism to each other. Christians have conflicts the unsaved never know about. Our rewards are great, but the path to those rewards is a relentless struggle. As there is no second blessing experience that can magically propel us to a state where you no longer struggle with sin, we walk the hard road to glory, fighting every day to stay on the right path.

(b) THE BADGE: Though we long for the day when only pure and loving desires will fill our hearts, yet this war within us is an indicator of spiritual life. No war within means the flesh controls the citadel and all the outposts.

(c) THE BENEFITS: It is crucial to remember that God allows the struggle as part of our ongoing spiritual growth in grace. Among other benefits, this ongoing struggle: reveals to us our inherent weakness, kills our pride, humbles us again and again, forces us to cry out to God for help, reveals the uselessness of human effort apart from God’s strength, causes us to love the Saviour who delivers us from sin, leads us to a life of continual repentance, makes us more watchful against the advance of sin, makes us long for the rest of heaven, prods us to use all the means of divine grace, encourages us to develop habits of holiness, forces us to lean on fellow saints to help us out, leads us to look for daily solutions instead of instant miracles.

[2] IT IS NOT ABOUT SELF, BUT THE SPIRIT.

This section of **Galatians 5** opens up a vast area of truth, principally what it is to walk in the Spirit.

(a) THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF WALKING IN THE SPIRIT: Two pictures in the surrounding verses shed light on what it means to, “walk by the Spirit”:

(i) **BE LED BY THE SPIRIT, 5:18.**

Paul puts the emphasis where it belongs – on the Spirit’s work, not ours. The Holy Spirit is *not* a leader like the pace car in Formula One, but like a locomotive on a train. We do not follow in our strength; we are **led by His** power.

(ii) **BEAR FRUIT THROUGH THE SPIRIT, 5:22.**

Once again it is the Spirit’s work that is emphasised, not ours. *He* bears the fruit (cf. **John 15:4-5**). *Our* wills are deeply involved: we want to be coupled to the locomotive; to abide in the vine.

(b) THE INCENTIVES TO WALKING IN THE SPIRIT:

The text gives two reasons why is it so crucial for us to walk by the Spirit; **vs.16&18:**

(i) **BY WALKING IN THE SPIRIT, THE DESIRES OF OUR FLESH ARE OVERCOME.** Flesh is the “I” who tries to satisfy me with anything but God’s mercy (cf. **5:24, 2:20; Romans 8:7**).

(ii) **BY WALKING IN THE SPIRIT, THE DIRECTIVE OF THE LAW IS OBTAINED.** The Law directs us to love (**5:13-14**), but it cannot open the lock of the heart to enable us to show holy affection to others; it is only the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of grace that does this (cf. **Romans 8:3-4; Gal. 5:22-23**); illustrated by Bunyan’s *Interpreters’ House*.

[3] IT IS NOT ABOUT STRIDES, BUT STEPS.

“*Walking in the Spirit*” (present tense, meaning – “keep on walking”) is not some mystical experience reserved for a few special Christians, but is God’s design for normal Christian living. It is nothing more than choosing (by God’s grace) to take tiny steps toward the light day after day after day, something we do by *resting in the promises of God*. Those tiny steps do not remove the struggle but they allow us to walk in the light even while you feel the pull to go in another direction. By the Spirit’s power, we can choose to walk in the light every day, advancing, as Israel did in Canaan, one step/battle at a time until we are led through to ultimate victory in the land of perfect rest.