

Faithful, Talkative and Evangelist

Special Companion in Faithful

In the valley of the shadow of death, Christian was comforted by the voice of a man off in the distance saying “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.” It turns out to be Faithful. He is someone that every Christian would want as a friend. The believer should want to find likeminded travelers on the way to heaven. Christian has to catch up to him, and rushes ahead of him, whereupon he gloats, stumbles and falls (Prov. 16:18). Faithful without rebuking Christian lifts him up, and so “they went very lovingly on together.” Charles Wesley has written:

All praise to our redeeming Lord,
Who joins us by His grace
And bids us, each to each restored,
Together seek His face.

He bids us build each other;
And, gathered into one.
To our high calling's glorious hope
We hand in hand go on.

Faithful and Christian have at the very root of their friendship a common story of receiving grace and mercy, and they speak together of their experiences. Richard Sibbes: “For our better encouragement in these sad times, and to help our trust in God the more, we should often call to mind the former experiences, which either ourselves or others have had of God's goodness, and make use of the same for our spiritual good. We should take notice of God's dealings with us in sundry kinds; how many ways he hath refreshed us, and how good we have found him in our worst times.... This hath formerly been the custom of God's people. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul (Ps. 66:16).”



Faithful's Experience in the Way

Faithful left the City of Destruction on account of the warning by Christian. He witnessed Pliable's return and shame. Faithful himself was untroubled by the Slough of Despond, but encounters

- ❖ **Wanton** with her flattering tongue tempted Faithful with all kinds of fleshly pleasures, but Faithful turned from her because he remembered her steps descend to hell (Prov. 5:5).
- ❖ **Old Adam the First** (picturing the first man Adam as the old man in the believer's heart and life), who promised Faithful all kinds of things, a house full of dainties and his three daughters in marriage: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). The old man is attractive but repulsive at the same time, and Faithful is

reminded to put off the old man with his deeds (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9). When Faithful turned to leave, the old man gave him a deadly pinch (Rom. 7:24).

- ❖ While climbing Hill Difficulty, Faithful was attacked by **Moses** and left for dead. After struggling with his old man, the law accuses and troubles the conscience, and in that sense Moses can only castigate and condemn the sinner. Bunyan: “The law shows the soul its sin against this law, to kill and there leaves him stark dead, not giving him the least life, or support, or comfort, but leaves the soul in a helpless and hopeless condition.” Faithful was rescued by One who had wounds in His hands and side.
- ❖ **Discontent** who urges Faithful to go back, because the way through the valley of Humiliation is humbling, and who wants that, and others will abandon him if he persists in the way. Faithful would gladly part with such friends, and he would rather go in the way of God’s salvation, which is the cross before the crown.
- ❖ **Shame** who says that too much religion is a bad thing, and it leads to a loss of freedoms, and the rich and famous stay away from it, and its preaching wounds the conscience. Faithful replies that what man highly values God loathes, and God’s will and word is better though everyone oppose it.

Instructive Encounter with Talkative

Talkative is the kind of person who delights in talking of divine things, but only has a theoretical knowledge of these things. He has no heart knowledge of the things he seems to know with his head and talks about with his mouth. Faithful is taken in by Talkative’s knowledge and his great swelling words (2 Pet. 1:18). Just because others talk about the things of God, without any further evidence, is no proof that they are objects of God’s saving grace. In spite of his eloquent speech, he is a wretched and wicked man. The



company he is in sets the tone of his conversation. He can talk at church and in the ale-house. He is a saint abroad, but a devil at home. Faithful begins to scrutinize Talkative’s religion. He asks: what is the proof of saving grace in the heart? Talkative mentions two things: 1) an outcry against sin. 2) great knowledge of Bible mysteries.¹ The more Talkative is exposed, the less and less he has to say; in fact, he becomes offended, resorts to abuse and bids them farewell.

¹ Faithful answers differently. Saving grace in the heart brings about: 1) conviction of personal sin, even unbelief; 2) repentance from sin and turning to Christ; 3) desire for holiness resulting in service; 4) ongoing conflict that requires a sound mind); 5) grace in the heart becomes observable to others. Faithful asks him: do you experience this saving grace in your heart. Does God agree with your testimony, does your conscience agree with it, do your neighbours agree with it? Talkative with a blush declines to answer at all.

Precious Visit with Evangelist

Evangelist returns to investigate and encourage them to faithfully endure what lies ahead. He is thankful about the progress so far, how they have endured trials and profited from them, persevering in them in spite of even their confessed failings. One commentator says: “Evangelist wants to put steel in their backbone and encourage them to run the race in order to obtain the prize.” They are not yet out of Satan’s reach. He calls them

1. To keep the world at bay
2. To flee fleshly lusts
3. To set their faces as a flint

Evangelists warns them of Vanity Fair that lies ahead. They are urged to be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). So far the journey has brought them into individual contact with worldlings. Now they must “encounter the corporate system that animates all the forces who would block the progress of a true pilgrim bound for the Celestial City. Vanity Fair is the City of destruction, the world, dressed in it best party dress. It is the place where the most seductive attractions of the world take center stage in an attempt to steal our gaze, cool our resolve, and shake our confidence, which is to be in the God who is the maker and builder of the yet unseen city.”

Discussion Questions

1. Bunyan tells us of Christian and Faithful. What is the wisdom of including these two main characters in Pilgrim’s Progress?
2. Read Proverbs 26:23-24, 1 Cor. 13:1. What do these verses teach about people like Talkative
3. In this encounter with Talkative, Christian subscribed to something called “experiential” or experimental” religion. What is this? Do we need this? Do we know this?
4. Read Acts 14:22. What are these tribulations? Is it possible to be a Christian and not experience any tribulations? Why or why not?
5. What does Hebrews 12:1-2 teach us about enduring persecution?