

I Believe in God: Shining Like Stars

Someone said, “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction” - come one! Shout at me who is was said this!! People talk about a knock-on effect - if something happens at one place, there are ramifications that continue down the line - this is often the case in economics or in a house-buying chain... There are consequences to the choices we make... I was trying to patiently explain this to the operator on the DVLA phones when I called up to find where my driving license is - they said to send it back, but didn't specify that unless I sent it by courier, they would be able to confidently say whether they have it or not... We need to know that our actions have consequences.

So too with our belief in God. Last week we looked simply at “I believe” and how that belief in in God the Father through Jesus the Son. As we look in depth at the different parts of the Apostles' Creed, we will begin to see how these words of faith have consequences that shape our lives. Knock on effects, consequences of our actions and even, in certain cases and situations in equal and opposite. - or perhaps 'greater and opposite' to the prevailing actions of the world in which we live.

As we open up the Scriptures we find Paul's letter to the Philippians doing just this. Demonstrating what it means to hold to faith, to “I believe in God” in Philippi which was a proud outpost of the Roman Empire and where people were proud to be Roman Citizens, Paul taught about the stellar nature of Christians to be people of honesty and integrity. Ones who didn't complain and conform to the prevailing attitude in the world around them. Look there in verse 12. The consequences of verse 13: “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.”

Last week we looked at how Jesus is the one through whom we live for God. This reminder is that we are not alone - even when we stand on our own because God works in us, through Jesus. There are consequences to our faith... And those consequences are for the good of the world and the good of the person working them out.

It's hard being a Child of God and maintaining your stellar- sparkle. It's so easy to rant in an email or throw shade on someone else; to express yourself too thoroughly on social media and lose your cool publicly and gracelessly. Its hard when its easier to complain than to react with joy. To dig your heels in for your own way and have a grown up version of a toddler tantrum.

Does this 'be good' refrain as a consequence of our faith mean that it becomes a huge effort? Hard work? Toil???

It this the consequence of our faith and belief in God? Well, it might feel that way sometimes, but the Bible reminds us that Jesus himself is the source of our rest and our

peace. We remind ourselves of the words of promise from Jesus in Matthew 11:28 - "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace." As the old chorus hymn reminds us... It is when we fix our faith on the giver of our faith rather than on the storm around us that we find our peace. This peace can be the motivator for our lived out faith and the end goal itself. The difference that the world will see in us is that we look at the situations not from an earth-bound point of view, but through the lens of God's own love. Partakers in his life, we live out God's vision for the earth.

Our business then is to shine like stars as we hold firmly to the word of life. So. What might this mean?

Do you remember back in the day before health and safety was a thing, how some wit would have a small electric shock device and try to make you hold their hand to scare you? Joyous! It wasn't long after this traumatic period that we were doing an experiment where we had to hold hands to allow an electric current to pass through us to power up an electric light bulb. I wasn't keen on this notion, expecting the electricity to hurt like the buzzy thing had earlier... but the reality was that the connection with the power source led to light being shown. Fixed to Jesus, his power is shown through us and our obedience as we work for the good of his kingdom and demonstrate his life in our own living... Please don't do these electric experiments at home, I expect they're banned now and I'm sure Methodist Insurance would love a disclaimer at this point!!

We stay connected to Jesus... We work out what it means to be like him. And we will shine...

I think our priorities and our favourite things can go together well ... if we are people who enjoy being miserable or contrary or can't do anything without having an argument about it first and this is where we get our joy from, thence don't shine, but when our favourite thing is to 'live in agreement with one another and promote peace' and when our favourite things are to build up and pursue God's excellence, then we shine. Our choices, have consequences.

So, a fun fact about me: my favourite colour is 'sparkly' - don't be telling me it's not a colour! I love to sparkle. And I love a church that sparkles too...

A people that respond to the world with the love of God in Christ Jesus. Offering love, without complaint, serving others and loving them

Belief in God has consequences. And Paul asks us to set pride and grumbling aside so that we might shine brightly in a dark and gloomy world. Shining brightly among this dark and crooked generation like stars in the sky. For the world to navigate its way home to God by... Lighting up the darkest nights with brightness and beauty... Pinpricks of joy in a hopeless situation.

So shine and sparkle. Sparkle and shine. Be memorable for faith. And your light shining there, glittering and good is a consequence of the decision you have made to follow Jesus.

Amen.