

Fowey Fables – No.35 April 2015

I have recently been thinking about Galatians chapter 2 which presents an interesting paradox. In the first chapter Paul reminded his readers of how the Lord Jesus Christ had been revealed first **to** him on the road to Damascus, (still a dangerous road to travel) then **in** him as he had learned alone in Arabia, and finally **through** him as God's messenger. He emphasised that he had been appointed by God not by man. But in chapter 2 he explained how after 14 years of ministry he had returned to Jerusalem to lay his teaching before the church there 'for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.' On the one hand he knew his message had come from God but on the other hand he wanted his brothers in Christ to tell him if he had got it wrong. He was thrilled when the elders in Jerusalem encouraged him to continue his ministry to the Gentiles which was very different from theirs to the Jews. They realised they had the same message of grace but their vocabulary, illustrations and methods could be strikingly different. Paul expressed a remarkable combination of confidence in God which made him sure of what God had taught him, and at the same time a humility which meant he knew he could learn much from this brethren. God means us to have both qualities then 'iron sharpens iron.'(Prov.27:17)

The other fascinating puzzle in this chapter is how Paul, who had been so firm when writing to the Romans, (2:1-11) about how we are not to judge one another, could not only challenge Peter about his behaviour but do so in public. Hadn't Jesus also warned us about how we should only do this kind of thing in private?(Matt.18:15) The real issue was that what Peter was teaching others by his example of avoiding social contact with Gentile Christians, was happening because he was 'fearing the party of the circumcision'.(Gal.2:12) Paul has recognised the confusion Peter was causing that was making some young believers doubt that we are justified by faith alone and not by works. This was a key issue of teaching that needed to be dealt with publically. On another occasion Paul had urged the Corinthians, (I Cor.14:29) to listen to teaching and then 'let the others pass judgement.' So we have no business to judge behaviour but we have a strong responsibility to speak out if we believe teaching is wrong. Far from being nervous that debate about truth will cause division and personal hurt we are use it enthusiastically and lovingly. The Greek word for debate means to 'seek together' and should be a positive exercise, as in Acts 15:2,7. Peter obviously accepted Paul's rebuke in this spirit rather than being offended by his directness. We should do the same.

It has long been our practice to encourage students in Bible school to question what we say. Some are horrified by what they suppose is a challenge to authority and we have to remind them how Jesus welcomed genuine questions and asked many questions Himself. Others argue about everything but don't always listen to the answers. Both have missed the point. It is fun seeing the first group daring to question and the second group being brave enough to listen. The Lord continues to bring people back in touch who were here a short or a long time ago. What is so encouraging is to hear how their time at the Lodge was the foundation for many exciting paths God has led them on since.

In the same way it has always been my hope in writing study notes and putting them on our website, www.foweylodge.com not just to have people using them, which many have done, but to have them debating, offering alternatives ideas and approaches. What I have wanted is better ideas, better ways to express and apply them, and how to see such material used as widely as possible. Sonya Kim translated a lot of material into Korean which was great, but I would be thrilled to see the notes find their way into other languages. Let me know if you see any avenues to do this.

Our community at the Lodge changes somewhat from year to year. Sam and Thelma are now well settled in Turangi in the middle of the North Island. Sonya is in Papatoetoe. Thierry and Jenny have moved out to Whitford, not far from Howick. They are all still special friends whom we welcome whenever we can.

The Hanne family are loving life and the privilege of being in His service. Pete is still in Turangi not far from the Chapmans, putting his heart into the fire service and the challenge of rescuing people from the mountains, the bush, the lakes and rivers, road crashes and anything which catches fire. He is a big practical help to us whenever he can get home. Nick, Tracey and Eva have lived with us for the last few months but will soon move into the White House at the Lodge, (not the one in Washington!) Nick is now well started on his law degree at Auckland University and enjoying it. He has managed to combine this with helping to manage the medical practice and the Bible school as far as his time stretches. Tracey is a wonderful support and has many creative ideas to offer. Eva, now nearly 18 months old, is a great entertainer who keeps us amused with funny faces and a rapidly expanding vocabulary including some Chinese. Together they have also taken on the leadership of a large youth group in a local church which is already flourishing.

Chris and I continue to spread our time between the medical practice which we both of us love, and all the other things which happen at the Lodge and outside. As always we find ourselves spread too widely so every now and then the Lord has to rescue us by sending help to allow us to take our hands off some tasks. The latest additions to the team are Pat and Marlys Doyle who first came to the Lodge nearly 20 years ago and then moved back to Canada and on to Australia. They are now back, living in a little unit behind the White House, and taking on the role of administrators for the Bible school basing themselves in the Bible school office which has not functioned for some time. We believe they will make a huge difference to our desire to serve more effectively those who come to learn.

We had a Water Week camp at Mangakino in January which was very fruitful and fun. Our hearts are still in camps whenever and wherever God opens the way and brings together a team. We are still deeply concerned for several hundred orphans and desperately needy children in Uganda, Zambia, India, Pakistan and Fiji. Again we would be so happy to hear from anyone who wants to help us organise better and grow the existing sponsorship of kids or programmes in any of those places.

As always we would love to hear from you and to know any ways we can help and encourage you.

Our love in Christ

Tony and Chris