

Hello Friends, the other day, I found myself reminiscing, and I remembered one of the chapels, in my first appointment, at Barrow Hill, near Staveley in Chesterfield. Before I arrived, the safe had been stolen and a new state of the art one purchased. Now, like any new minister, I was given various files, filled with information, one which included instructions, and a code for the combination for safe. Full of enthusiasm, I went to investigate, so 6 turns left, 5 turns right, 4 turns left, I was doing so well, at least I thought I was.. I started again, and again and again, until at last, 6 turns left, 5 turns right, 4 turns left 3 turns right, 2 turns left, 1 turn right, I was there, I felt like the greatest safe cracker in the world, I reached to turn the handle, and behold the wonders inside, it didn't move. I tried again, knowing that I had to really concentrate; it called for utter silence, as I listened to every click and clunk, surely this was it, but no. I looked again at the instructions. I turned the page, and there, there in front of me, was the secret, to now opening the safe – Now Turn Key – Key – KEY. Oh yes that one rather new, odd looking key, on the large bunch I had left at home !!

We all have various keys, that we use every day, to our homes, cars etc, etc, today I want to think, of the key of faith, using the letters, as an acronym.

So, Firstly our Christian faith is based upon FACT;

Now, some would say, that Jesus, did not really exist. OK, but we have a book; we call it the bible, that contains several thousand words, about the life of Christ, and it is written, for the most part, from eye witness accounts. Of course, we would like, to perhaps know more, about his childhood etc, but the writers, focus on, who he was, and the impact his life and death made, on those around Him. OK, so some might say, well you what other proof, what other evidence do you have ? Now my answer would be, that in the historical writings, of the Roman Empire and historians, like Josephus, and in Israel today, there is, plenty of evidence, to support, the existence of Jesus Christ. In fact, there is more historical, evidence, for the life of Jesus, than that of Julius Caesar, and nobody doubts, that he existed. Then there is Christ's resurrection, well former master, of the Rolls, Lord Denning, he was head of the Law Courts and Judges, and he said, that "any intelligent Jury, who viewed the evidence, of Christ's resurrection, would return a verdict, concluding, that the resurrection, did DID happen."

So our Faith, is not the opposite, of reason, for it is based, upon fact. A fact, that billions, have put their faith, in, over the millennia

Secondly, our Christian Faith, can and should, give us, an **ASSURANCE**, that we are indeed saved. For as Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8 says: **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”**

My Friends, this, THIS, was made possible, through the sacrifice, of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, upon the cross, his body broken, his blood shed, for as Romans chapter 3 and verses 25 and 26 says, **God sent Christ to be our sacrifice. Christ offered his life’s blood, so that by faith in him we could come to God. And God did this to show that in the past he was right to be patient and forgive sinners. This also shows that God is right when he accepts people who have faith in Jesus.** So because of what God has done, we can have the assurance of our sins forgiven, our lives made right with God, and, AND, an eternal life with God, beyond this world. For John, in 1 John 5 : 13, wrote these concluding words, **I write these things, to you who believe, in the name, of the Son of God, so that you may know, that you have eternal life.** My Friends, we have the assurance, of a life and a relationship with God, that begins in the here and now, and lasts for eternity, as we put our trust, our Faith in God.

Thirdly, our Christian Faith, is about an **INTENTION**, not merely to believe, having, a head knowledge, as it were, about God. But a desire, of the heart, and mind, and will, to have faith in God, and His Son Jesus Christ, as our Lord, and Saviour. Consequently our Faith, should be physically, **Active**, as James says in Chapter 2 verses 18 and 22: **But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith, without deeds, and I will show you, my faith, by what I do. As the body, without the spirit, is dead, so faith, without deeds, is dead.**

So our Christian faith, is about, an intention, to believe whole heartedly, to behave, whole heartedly for God as a follower of Christ. Now this life, may well mean, that our values, principles, and outward behaviour change, as we become, more like Christ, and serve Him in the world. And this life of discipleship, is lived out, in the everyday life, of our world. As a result, by the way we live, our lives, as witnesses for Christ, Christ-Ones, lived 24/7, others, may also, come to faith, in Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, our Christian faith, is about **TRUST**, trusting in God and God alone, for everything. Now, my friends, for many of us, this is not easy, in a world, where we are so often, told, to be selfish, and self reliant.

But for me, and my life of discipleship, and hopefully for you, it means, putting God, **FIRST**, in our lives, wholly, completely, and therefore, not relying, on any worldly things, be they financial institutions and systems, bricks and mortar, or religious activities or dogma. For our Christian Faith, is a about, a **personal faith**, that trusts, in God's promises, for each one of us. These are given through His inspired word, written and spoken.

Consequently, as we act, on that word, as we put out faith, and trust, into action, serve others, share and support others, with the resources we have, we will see God's Kingdom, His Kingdom principles, built in us, and, **AND**, through us.

My Friends, if we do all that, **then finally, in our Key of Faith**, we can have **HOPE**. Not worldly hope, a hope, which often, is wishful thinking, or a feeling, that what is wanted, will happen, I feel I'm going to win the lottery this week. But a Christian Hope, a confident hope, an assured expectation, based upon, our faithful God.

For our Hope, is a Saving Hope, based upon, what Christ has done, for each of us. It is A Living Hope, for as Romans 8:16, tells us, of God's Spirit, dwelling in us, so that we know, **We Know**, we are God's children. Yet our hope, as Hebrews 11 says, is one, which is certain, of things, that we cannot see. For our Christian Faith, and our Christian Hope, are a Pilgrimage, a journey of life and faith, and they enable us, as the followers of Christ, to live confidently, in the here, and the now.

And, **AND**, as for the Future, well God, I believe, is already there, and whatever happens, He, **HE**, will be there, for each of us. To prompt us, to guides us, just as He, does today. For we, **WE**, are His presence, in the world, and each of us, can bring, such hope, not only, into the world. But into, the very lives, of those we meet, those we talk to, each day.

So to conclude. My question is, will you use, the Key of Faith Today, and every day, to unlock, that dynamic, and fulfilling life, that is for each one of us, a living, and personal relationship, with God, in Christ. Will you walk, will you live, by **FAITH** !

Well thank you for listening, and until we see each other again.
May may the blessing and peace of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you, and those you love,
this day and always Amen.