

# SUNDAY ARTICLE

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## Loyalty

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There are two qualities sadly lacking in Australian public life, qualities which, by contrast, ought to be evident in the life of every believer.

Believers are what they are by the grace of God. We enjoy his favour not as an award for good behaviour or because we deserve it, but because God favours us contrary to our deserving. It's called grace.

The fact that our sin is forgiven does not reflect our superiority in any way to anyone else. We are all fellow beggars. "Nothing in my hand I bring." God has favoured us by opening our eyes to see our own spiritual poverty and directing us to Christ, the certain ground of our forgiveness before God.

It is also clear that as well as forgiveness, God has taken up residence within us. He has moved into our lives in the person of the Holy Spirit, "you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit is an unseen, yet real person now living in us. He baptises us into Christ, he gives us gifts for ministry and he evidences his fruit, on display in the way believers live.

Of the two qualities largely lacking in our political leaders, one is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and the other is the fruit of our Christian hope.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit includes faithfulness (Galatians 5:22). This is the characteristic commitment to another through thick and thin. It is on display in our marriage vows, "for better,

for worse, richer, poorer, in sickness and in health".

The downfall of another Australian PM is a reminder that the more effective enemy of an Australian political leader does not sit opposite, but behind him/her in the House of Representatives. It is a sad day when our leaders seem to be so disloyal and self-serving.

The second characteristic, the fruit of hope, is endurance, perseverance, the ability to keep going and doing right no matter how tough the headwinds (1 Thessalonians 1:3). It is the idea of loyal constancy.

These are not qualities unique to the believer – we see them in many of our fellow countrymen, especially evident in the ANZAC tradition on the battlefield. But for the believer we expect these qualities to permeate our lives, because in these characteristics, God's energising, sanctifying Holy Spirit evidences himself within.

Our earthly leaders let us down and leave us no example to follow, but the perfect God/man, the Lord Jesus, set his face steadfastly to Jerusalem to suffer and die for undeserving rebels. What an unflinching example he is to us – another reminder that we look to him, "the one who suffered outside the city gate to make people holy through his own blood" (Hebrews 13:12).

We live for the Jerusalem that is above (Hebrews 12:22) and in doing so, this faithfulness, steadfastness, and loyalty will be evident in our lives, and we pray will be duplicated in the lives of our children also, so that they will be people of authentic character.

It was the late President Harry Truman who said "you want a friend in this city (Washington DC), get a dog!" What a sad yet seemingly realistic assessment.

All our faithfulness is to reflect his:

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

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