



# The Burning Bush - Online article archive

## A very express word from the Spirit

*"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. These things command and teach," 1 Timothy 4:1-11.*

Today, as part of my daily reading, I read the above verses. The word 'express' appears only here so that this is a very unique and specific utterance of the Holy Spirit for the people of God in the 'latter times'!

The term 'latter times' is likewise unique in that it appears nowhere else in the Bible. There is the parallel phrase, 'the last days' (Genesis 49:1, Isaiah 2:2, 2 Timothy 3:1, etc.)

The days that will come at the close of this age are often the subject of the Holy Spirit's considerations. We would do well to consider them for we, as a generation, are above all before us, the nearest to those referred to by the Lord.

There are many of us who believe that this generation is indeed the generation whose offspring will likely see the close of this age!

In the verses above it is clear that the Lord, above all generations that have been born, has a word for those living at the end. It is a word of WARNING and a word of INSTRUCTION!

I observed three matters in these verses which perhaps you will consider with me.

### I. THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS THAT THERE WILL BE A DEPARTURE OF SOME FROM THE FAITH

**1. The Holy Spirit is here speaking of those within the ranks of the 'professing Church'.** Only they can 'depart' from the 'faith'!

The word 'depart' means to 'withdraw oneself' or 'revolt'. This is not a reference to events in the heathen world. No, it is referring to that which will take place within the professing Church of Christ.

The unbelieving world is basically unchanging. What it has always done it will continue to do until the end of time. The only difference is that the restraint which God has exercised upon it in order to accomplish His will amongst the nations in His time, He is pleased to lift at the end of the age.

*"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way," 2 Thessalonians 2:7.*

*"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be*



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

*tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them," Revelation 9:1-6.*

The time of the full development of this 'departure' from the faith and the unleashing of the powers of hell upon the nations will take place at the very end of this age. The reference to the 'the fifth angel' sounding the trumpet indicates that, since there remains only two more trumpets, the sixth and the seventh to sound before the age ends.

*"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets," Revelation 10:7.*

*"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever," Revelation 11:15.*

**2. We should note with thanksgiving that it is only 'some' who will depart.** 'Certain' (that is what the word means) individuals will revolt from the truth of God's Word or 'the faith'. Jude refers to some of those who were of the character of the revolters of the 'latter times'. "For there are certain (same word as 'some' in 1 Timothy 4:1) men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," Jude 1:4.

The professing Church of Christ has ever been infiltrated by false professors and deceivers. Judas Iscariot is the best known example of that. However, that infiltration will increase in the latter days until the 'professing church' takes on the appearance of the deceivers and lose all likeness to Christ. So it is today.

The main denominations bear no resemblance to the appearance and likeness of the early Christian Church. Whereas, the early believers were described by Peter in these words: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Peter 2:9. Paul said that the people of God were redeemed by the Lord Jesus for a specific purpose. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus 2:14. As it was with Israel of old so it was with the New Testament saints. "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth," Deuteronomy 7:6.

Here then is the character of the people of God as was ordained by the Lord. But, as a result of the wicked influence of the infiltrators, the appearance of the 'professing Church' alters dramatically! It has become a haven for uncleanness and impurity!

Today, the 'professing Church of Christ' is the leading advocate for the acceptance of sodomy and all forms of moral perversion! Its ministerial ranks contain perverts of every form who are rejoiced over by those who delight in the destruction of Biblical holiness.

**3. However, there is a faithful remnant who seek to maintain a witness to the truth in the midst of this wickedness.** As I have noted, the word 'some' indicates that there will be those who shun this 'departure' from the faith and remain true to God's Word. Where there is a 'departure from the faith' there will always be a 'departure from the departers' (to coin a word); a 'leaving of the leavers'!

Separation is God's will. He would not have His people remain in the midst of such rebellion. Please remember those familiar words of Paul. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

If we would walk with God then we must not keep company with those who have apostatised for He has departed from them. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3. The Lord cannot be in agreement with those who dispute His Word and seek its destruction! He withdraws from such and expects us to do the same!

*"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us," 2 Thessalonians 3:6.*

*"Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself," 1 Timothy 6:5.*

If we would serve God in these days of apostasy and rebellion then there is but one place to do it! "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach," Hebrews 13:12-13.

May the Lord give us grace to obey this injunction and 'shake off the dust' of any links to the religious rebellion around us as a 'testimony against them' (Luke 9:5)!

### II. THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS THAT THE DOCTRINES OF DEVILS WILL SUPPLANT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

" . . . some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." The words 'giving heed' is literally taken from 'bringing a ship to land'. I have often, in the past, watched fishing boats returning from sea and berthing in Kilkeel harbour. There has always been a fisherman on the dockside ready to catch the tossed rope and secure it to a bollard.

In that act we see just what it is will take place in the latter days. Professing Christians will catch at the 'rope' of the devil's falsehoods and tie up themselves to the 'bollard' of his wickedness and lies.

**1. The professing church of today has anchored itself to the devil's lies.** That is what the devil has ever sought to have men do. You recall Peter's action in Matthew 16? "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men," verse 21-23. Here was Peter, foolishly, snatching up the devil's lie and tying himself to it. Mercifully, the Saviour soon severed that rope and set Peter free. Peter most foolishly embraced, had a taste for the lie of the devil regarding the Saviour dying at Calvary. He 'savoured' the idea of Christ NOT dying at the cross. Christ had indicated "how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." But Peter, as it were, had no taste for such a truth. He preferred that Christ not go down that road but that was the devil's lie that he embraced!

So it is today! How many have preferred the devil's lie to God's truth? Heaven has permitted this to happen whereas, with Peter there was an intervention. Peter being one of the Lord's elect it would not be allowed for him to be so deceived and beguiled.

There is a dreadful word in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians where he writes of the latter day apostasy and the embracing of the Antichrist. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness," 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

What a dreadful thing when God responds to persistent and deliberate rejection of His truth with His abandoning of the rebels! He sends them what they desire, 'strong delusion' and with it, damnation!

As with the spread of the 'coronavirus' and the dreadful consequences, so we see, on a world-wide scale, the spread of a 'virus' of deceit which will be followed by damnation of all those affected by it!

**2. The professing church has become the disseminators of the devil's lies.** "Speaking lies," verse 2. The LIE has become the gospel that pulpits which once proclaimed Christ the TRUTH, now proclaims. We may say with the Psalmist: "Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns for signs," Psalm 74:4. "O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps," Psalm 79:1.

**3. The fate of the false and rebellious 'church' will be that of Jerusalem in AD 70.** "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," Luke 21:24. The Gentile 'Church' has followed in the footsteps of the 'Jewish' Church, abandoning God's truth and rejecting God's Son, and it will suffer the same judgment as did the Jewish nation, at the hands of the Lord Jesus when He returns.

This is made very plain by the Saviour in Matthew 25:31-46.

*"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."*

The "all nations", spoken of in verse 32, are not all the nations of the earth. No, for those nations which are Muslim or Sikh, or Buddhist or of some other heathen religion, cannot say unto Christ, as did the members of these nations, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" No, these are the nations of 'Christendom' which claim an allegiance to Christ and which contain 'sheep', true believers and 'goats', false professors! This is the judgment of the 'visible church' at the return of Christ. And the judgment of the 'goats' is, as taught by Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:12) to be cast "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

### III. THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS IT IS THE DUTY OF THE FAITHFUL SERVANTS OF GOD TO TEACH THESE TRUTHS

"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained," verse 6.

**1. I have the fondest memories linked to this verse.** I can well remember Dr Paisley's comments on it back in 1964, just after my conversion and my joining of the church in Ravenhill. He was replying to those ecumenists and modernists who had attacked him for daring to criticise the teachings and the actions of their leaders. He explained that a 'good minister' in the eyes of many was one who (and here he went into an elaborate enactment of the notion of a modern cleric - much to the amusement of the congregation) 'holds his cup of tea most elegantly, crooking his little finger to just the right angle, and sipping most delicately!'

Having thus discarded with disdain the modern notion of a minister, he then turned to Paul's definition in the verse 6.

That moment has lived on in my memory through the years and spurred me to seek to emulate what I heard that night of what a true and a good minister Christ is. He is one who REMINDS the people of God of the apostasy which the Holy Ghost has warned us of. He is one who ECHOES the warnings of the Holy Ghost in the ears of God's people.

A good minister is one who puts the brethren in remembrance of these things. Quite literally, I believe Paul is saying a good minister is one who frequently 'lays out' these truths before the brethren. The word has its roots in the word 'laid' in Matthew 27:60. "And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed." As the body of the Saviour would have been lovingly, tenderly, reverently laid in the tomb by Joseph of Arimathaea, even so must the good minister ever to seek to lay down this truth before the people of God.

**2. As it would have been with the actions of Joseph, there is much reproach linked to it.** Joseph well and truly threw off the cloak of timidity and fear which he had worn up until that day. He was most bold to act as he did in company with Nicodemus, who had a like deliverance from the fear of man. The apostles and disciples kept their distance and did not publicly associate themselves with the Lord Jesus at His crucifixion or His burial. That blessed privilege belonged only to these two men. Oh! glorious honour indeed belongs to them.

Well, it is the same today. To act and preach and live as a 'good minister' as is here defined by Paul, is to bring reproach upon oneself! There was a time when the Free Presbyterian Church gloried in a ministry of putting 'the brethren in remembrance of these things' set forth by the Holy Spirit regarding the latter day apostasy, but I fear it must be said that few there are who glory in that witness today!

I will not speak of my own observations but I have the oft-repeated complaint of many, many faithful Free Presbyterians as evidence of this truth. There is not the contending for the faith that once was the glory and the honour of Free Presbyterianism.

Let who will deny this but the silence of many of the pulpits on this matter witnesses to this truth!

**3. Paul's urging of this upon Timothy and his encouraging of him to act so, is surely an indication of the danger that this truth will fall into disfavour!** The Church of Christ today is not, by a long way, as was the Church but a generation or so ago! We are not at war with the world and its trends as we are required to be. Rather, there is in speech and behaviour, in faith and in practice, a conforming to the world and its ways! Have we not forgotten Romans 12:2? "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

I recall the disappointment of a Christian who had quoted to his young Free Presbyterian minister a view I had expressed on how wrong it was to support the Democratic Unionist Party, given its support for power-



## **The Burning Bush - Online article archive**

sharing with the murderous Sinn Feiners and its more recent endorsement of a sodomite candidate standing as one of its candidates in the 2019 local government elections, when his minister responded by saying: "But who listens to him?"

Now, I take no offence whatever at a person despising my views and ideas BUT I certainly think that there is something very seriously wrong with the views of a minister, young or otherwise, when he dismisses what I have said when expounding the truth of God and adhering to the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church in its early years and which witness God had honoured with revival blessing in the mid 60s and early 70s!

I share in the disappointment of that sincere soul who, in distress of mind, told me of the conversation! Sadly, I believe that there are many who will empathise with that Christian.

How believers need to look afresh at these words of the Holy Spirit and take them to heart and to pray that the Lord will raise up again those who will embrace and act upon verse 6!

Loving it as I do, I will repeat it in closing.

"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained," 1 Timothy 4:6.

Rev Ivan Foster (Rtd)

15th April 2020.