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Men On The Run

During the Sinn Fein/IRA terrorist campaign, which has been replaced by a more subtle scheme whereby, having obtained their goal of political power, they now use that power to pursue the objectives they formerly sought by terror and murder, the term OTR referred to IRA killers "on the run" from the law and the just desserts it would mete out to them.

Since the commencement of the power-sharing deal between the DUP and Sinn Fein/IRA, the term has fallen out of use, since part of that deal included a virtual amnesty for all republican terrorists.

However, there is another use for it that has arisen within the confines of the Church of Christ - ministers "on the run" from their duty before God in this evil day.

Jonah, in his backslidden state, gives a picture of just what a man "on the run" from God is like.

"Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD," Jonah 1:1-3, KJV.

In truth, Jonah may have acted with a higher degree of principle than do many of the servants of the Lord today who qualify for the title of OTRs. Doubtless, the fear of man played a part in his decision to run. It was a dangerous enterprise. Nineveh was a place of danger for any Israelite, especially one proclaiming such a message as that given to Jonah to proclaim. But there was something else. I am sure that Jonah would rather that Nineveh were damned, it being such a threat to his own dear nation of Israel, than be spared by the mercy of God and that through his preaching.

Doubtless, a spirit of nationalism was at work in Jonah's heart.

Knowing better than God

How often men believe themselves wiser than God and feel that they know what is best for the nation better than does God. Here in Ulster, it is argued that the deal done between Unionists and Sinn Fein/IRA was the right thing, the only thing that would do good for Ulster and preserve its future. That is still the mantra intoned by those who uphold power-sharing with murderers when they are challenged.

In so saying, they, like Jonah, elevate their own understanding above the wisdom of God.

God says: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people," Proverbs 14:34, KJV. The wise men of the DUP said that a deal with murderers, which is of course the very antithesis of righteousness, was the right way forward and a clinging to God's Word and a looking to Him for His help, was the wrong way.

The recent riots on the streets of Belfast and some other places are the result of some people beginning to realise just what the "small print" in the St Andrews' Agreement contained. The removal of the Union flag from Belfast city hall seems to have stirred some to a degree of wakefulness. Of course, few of them know what is to be done about the treachery - hence the rioting!

Those who know what should have been done some five years ago are in hiding!

I am especially thinking of those servants of God who were aware that a wrong turn had been taken by the political decision to enter power-sharing with murderers in 2007. But because it would have been deemed unpopular to speak against it, given the support there was for it amongst deluded Protestants, or because it would have been even deemed to have been disloyal to prominent leaders of long-standing by some to oppose the power-sharing deal, they did, in essence, what Jonah did when it was his duty to sound forth the message of God - they went "on the run"!



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There is only one direction in which to run from our duty before God - downward.

Jonah "went down." Jonah went down to Joppa, he went down into the ship and eventually went down to the depths of the sea (1:3, 2:6).

This is the only direction that disobedience to God will take any one, but it is especially true for those servants of God who run from their duty and remain silent when they were called upon to honour the Lord and serve the flock by telling them God's word for today.

There is only one consequence that will follow running from God - disaster!

Jonah was followed by the chastening hand of the Lord. He was followed by God's anger and it was felt by all upon the ship in which he sailed. What a thing it is when God's servant becomes an instrument of misery and death to all around. Such is the lot of a Jonah. It is said of our Saviour: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him," Acts 10:38, KJV. What a contrast was Jonah in his backslidden state to His Master! God's servants are to be instruments of good to society. They are to be lights in this world. But when they go "on the run" from God they become instruments of misery. Unrepentant Jonahs can only lead the people of God into disobedience and all that it brings.

Today, Ulster needs men who walk with God, who care not for popularity but care only for the "well done" of God.

There is only one remedy for running from God and our duty - repent!

"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple," Jonah 2:4, KJV. Jonah was wrought upon by the correcting mercy of God and experienced the fruit of chastening which is repentance. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby," Hebrews 12:7, 9-11, KJV.

Jonah was chastened, corrected and turned back to obedience to God.

Just how quickly will the people of God in Ulster be corrected and turn, acknowledging the error of their ways, the folly they embraced for a season?

The sooner the better for the cause of righteousness, for our children and for the province generally.

Jonah took up again the message of God that he had discarded. "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD," Jonah 3:3, KJV.

The return to the old paths and to the old preaching is the need of the hour. The Free Presbyterian Church needs to get back to not only preaching the message of salvation through Christ's atoning blood alone but it needs to take up again with renewed vigour the task of earnestly contending for "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Jude 1:3, KJV. There is a new wave of "creepers" who have infiltrated the church of Christ. As it was in Jude's day so it is in ours. We must cry out against them as did Jude. "For there are certain 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, KJV.

Today they go under new names, though they have the same obnoxious objectives. The "Neo-Evangelicals", the "New Calvinists", the exponents of "Christian Rock" and of course, intermingled with all this are the



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old poison of ecumenism's ploys and tricks and the machinations of Popery and its scheming to draw all of Christendom under her sway once again.

The man of God today needs to be on the walls of the city crying out loudly and constantly against these enemies and alerting the people of God against that which threatens the peace and wellbeing of Zion and its children.

Jonah warned of the danger that faced Nineveh and the means of deliverance. So it is our task today.

By the mercy of God, when Jonah returned to his duty and submitted to God, great success attended his preaching. What a vast number of people were visited by God in His mercy! We have some idea of the numbers involved from what the Lord says to Jonah in verse 11 of chapter 4. "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" There were 120,000 infants in Nineveh. How many, many more adults there must have been who repented at Jonah's preaching.

Here is the success that attends the obedience and faithful preaching of a man who at the first failed the Lord and went on the run from God and his duty.

Is there not encouragement aplenty for God's servants today, irrespective of yesterday's failings, to stopping running and turn again?

Peter and all the apostles, turned from their running away and enjoyed a Pentecost.

So may we, brethren. Let us put God to the test.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, (that which had been withheld from the Lord) that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it," Malachi 3:10, KJV.

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12th January 2013.