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“Does God negotiate with sinners?”



An answer to Gerry Adam’s much publicised statement that the gospel is all about negotiation.

The synopsis of a sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on Lord’s Day evening, 7th December 2003.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,” Isaiah 1: 18.

Gerry Adams was unable to keep the contempt and derision out of his voice when he called upon Dr. Ian Paisley to engage in talks on reconciliation with him and Sinn Fein, in the wake of the recent election, when Dr. Paisley and his colleagues gained a majority of Unionist support. Adams is quoted as saying: “I don’t know of anything within the Christian philosophy which is not about dialogue, conversation and dealing with sinners . . . as a sinner I offer myself up, and on behalf of those who I represent, to be converted by Dr. Paisley to his vision of the future.”

The leader of IRA/Sinn Fein appears to believe that there is a parallel between the dialoguing and negotiations of politicians and parties and the manner of God’s proclaiming His Word unto men. He would have others join him in this delusion.

Such a notion on his part only underscores Gerry Adams’ ignorance of the Word of God and the message of salvation.

Sadly, all too many Protestants would share Adams’ view!

Men believe that God is open to them bargaining with Him over what it is He requires from them. This is natural man’s understanding of God and His ways. So thought Cain in the beginning of time. “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell,” Genesis 4: 3-5. But as Cain found to his cost, so will Gerry Adams and all who think like him — God will accept nothing short of what His holy law demands from the sinner. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law,” James 2: 10-11. Partial or incomplete obedience to the Law of God will not suffice. Obedience in all points is what God requires of all men. The price of failure is damnation. “How then may a man be saved?” you ask. That is what we will consider now. But let us learn first of all . . .

I. GOD DOES NOT NEGOTIATE WITH SINNERS



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

In His grace and mercy He has devised a redemption, the terms of which He has fully declared throughout the ages by the mouth of His servants. A full record of His plan of redemption is given us in His Word. Its terms are not negotiable. The rich man in hell attempted to bargain on behalf of his brothers, but he was told that the terms of the gospel were the only terms under which a sinner may escape the wrath to come. "For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead," Luke 16:28-31. It is what is stated in the Word of God alone which forms the basis of the plan of redemption.

1. God has with great longsuffering proclaimed the gospel. The most sinful of men have been addressed and won by the gospel. Heaven has within its walls those who were murderers, adulterers, robbers — the very scum of the earth, it may be said. Remember what Paul said of the membership of the church at Corinth! "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

2. God has employed every possible means of explaining its terms. Types, shadows, illustrations and parables have all been employed in order to convey to mankind the glorious message of salvation. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;" Hebrews 1:1-2. We have in the Saviour's ministry a wonderful example of simple preaching. Though touching upon the highest of subjects, He nevertheless was able to employ the most common of terms and phrases when setting forth these truths. He harnessed the illustrative powers of the flowers in the field, the birds in the air, children playing in the street, the rising and setting of the sun, the moon and the stars — all were employed in colouring and highlighting the glorious truths of the gospel.

3. God has patiently sought to explain. It was said by the great Ulster preacher, W P Nicholson, when preaching in Belfast long ago, as he highlighted the stubborn procrastination of sinners and their stiff-necked refusal to give heed to God's truth, that were he God, he would have damned them long ago! Truly, God is more patient by far than the meekest of saints. Moses, the man of outstanding meekness, lost his patience with wayward Israel long before the Lord did.

The Lord has reasoned with men, as our text shows. "Come now, and let us reason together," Isaiah 1:18. The apostle Paul likewise engaged in such patient teaching and exhortation. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures," Acts 17:2. "And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks," Acts 18:4. "And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

with the Jews," Acts 18:19. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee," Acts 24:25. The Lord has pleaded with sinners. "And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face," Ezekiel 20:35. "Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead," Jeremiah 2:9. "For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice," Jeremiah 11:7. His servants have suffered much to proclaim the gospel to recalcitrant sinners. In all this, God has not negotiated or amended the gospel.

The Saviour was hated for His stance, but did not alter His message.

II. TO AMEND THE GOSPEL IS TO DESTROY IT

This is patently obvious.

1. The gospel offers a salvation purchased by the death of the Son of God. How can this be improved upon? "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed," Isaiah 53:5. Wherein may a man improve upon such a ransom or sacrifice? It cannot be done. To alter this aspect of the gospel and substitute our own works for the Saviour's agonies and blood on behalf of His people, cannot be seen as an alternative.

2. The gospel offers salvation to the utterly undeserving. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us . . . for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life," Romans 5:8, 10. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled," Colossians 1:21. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief," 1 Tim 1:15. Some of those who crucified Christ were saved! (Acts 2:23,41). Who can alter the terms of the gospel in keeping with truth and justice to be more merciful than they presently are?

3. The gospel offers salvation free. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Isaiah 55:1-3. See also Revelation 21:6, 22: 17; Ephesians 2:8.

4. The gospel offers salvation to those who will believe. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3:16. See also John 3:36, 6:35; Romans 3:24. What can be simpler than this?

5. The gospel offers a full salvation. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," Isaiah 1: 18. (See also Psalm 103:12; Isa 38:17, 43:25, 44:22.) Tamper with this and the perfection of mercy and grace is destroyed. Submission to God's terms is the only term demanded! "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land," Isaiah 1:19.

III. ALL WHO REFUSE GOD'S TERMS WILL SPEND ETERNITY REGRETTING THEIR DECISION

1. There is a time factor in God's message. "NOW." If the opportunity is missed, eternity will be one of utter misery and the bitterest regrets.

2. Let me warn you that God will keep His timetable. Politics in Northern Ireland have consisted of ignored timetables. The IRA were long ago supposed to have disarmed and disbanded. That was the essence of the "Good Friday" Agreement, but we know that this has not happened. However, God will keep His timetable and there will be no extensions or ignoring of it. Esau found that out. "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears," Hebrews 12:16-17. The parable of the foolish and wise virgins reminds us of the timetable of God that is currently operating though men choose to ignore it. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh," Matthew 25:1-13. Dear reader, be in time; be ready. Comply with the gracious demands of the gospel. You have but to look to Christ to live.

There is life for a look at the Crucified One, There is life at this moment for thee. Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved, Unto Him who was nailed on the tree.

Look, look, look and live; There is life for a look at the Crucified One, There is life at this moment for thee.

O why was He there as the Bearer of sin, If on Jesus thy guilt was not laid? O why from His side flowed the sin-cleansing blood, If His dying thy debt has not paid?

It is not thy tears of repentance nor prayers, But the blood that atones for the soul; On Him then believe, and a pardon receive, For His blood can now make thee quite whole.

We are healed by His stripes: would'st thou add to the word? And He is our Righteousness



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

made; The best robe of heaven He bids thee to wear, O couldst thou be better arrayed?

Then doubt not thy welcome, since God has declared There remaineth no more to be done;
That once in the end of the world He appeared And completed the work He'd begun.

But take with rejoicing from Jesus at once The life everlasting He gives; And know with as-
surance thou never canst die, Since Jesus, thy Righteousness, lives.