



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

"The Ultimate Revival"



Based upon the first sermon of a series on Isaiah 51:9-11, preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, July 30th 2006.

No. 1. The source of the conditions which require revival: "the waywardness of believers"

"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away," Isaiah 51:9-11.

No verse gives us a clearer or more succinct definition of the work of God's watchman, the minister of the gospel, than Isaiah 21:11-12. "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night . . ."

A watchman

God's servant is a watchman watching for the approach of the "night", the "dark hour before the dawn."

We are in a world of night, but an even darker time is coming. It is for that that the preacher must watch and inform the people of its approach.

But note the watchman's answer to the question: "The morning cometh, and also the night." He speaks of the morning before he speaks of the night even though the events will happen in the opposite order to that in which he refers to them.

That is because a divine principle is here at work. The Lord frequently highlights the final glorious outcome of His will and purpose, before He refers to the intervening times of darkness and sorrow.

In Revelation 4, we have the four horsemen. Christ is the first, though He is last in the order in which these horsemen will appear.

The Saviour will return to this earth AFTER the period of chaos and lawlessness symbolised by the three other horsemen. But He is present before them in this prophecy in order that we might know that whatever takes place, Christ will return and we must ever keep that before us. Whatever takes place, the glorious morning without clouds is secure and established and will dawn.

Vital

I believe it to be more important than ever that the man of God watch and warn of the approach of the dark night of man's lawlessness, but also to give a strong emphasis to the



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

culmination of all things.

That is what we intend doing in this series of studies on revival.

Messianic

Our text is a messianic text. It ultimately refers to Christ's return. Here is recorded for us the cry of the believing remnant of Jews which will find itself under the heel of Antichrist at the close of this age. This is the fulfilment of what the cries of the Hebrews in Egypt were a type.

But these words in their essence, and many like them, have been the substance of the cries of God's people for revival throughout the ages. They form a pattern for prayer for those seeking revival. Christ's return is the ultimate revival. All that will take place gloriously at the second advent takes place to a measure every time the Lord visits His people with quickening grace. He rules and reigns amongst them; His Word truly becomes the rule of faith and practice; His enemies are thrown into disarray and are forced to retreat; His people enjoy a great measure of freedom, liberty and joy.

Necessary

The circumstances which necessitate such a prayer as this are set forth in this portion. Look at 50:1. "Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away." The former times of married bliss have ended because of the unfaithfulness of Israel. Herein lies the cause of the deterioration which requires revival to remedy it. God's people have been wayward and backslidden. That dreadful truth applies to you and me in this day.

I. THE FAULT BEGAN WITH THAT GENERATION OF BELIEVERS WHICH INITIATED THE DEPARTURE FROM GOD

Creeping disobedience is the beginning of the tragedy. "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel," Judges 2:10. The word "arose" appears first in Genesis 4:8. "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." You can see from its usage in this verse that it is an aggressive action. There has been an aggressive rising up against God's truth amongst the ranks of the professing church.

initial fault

Whose was the initial fault? Not the children but rather their parents that raised them as unbelieving children!

Our task is set out in Pro 22:6. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Eli is the patron saint of unfaithful parents. “For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not,” 1 Samuel 3: 13. The word “restrained” means to “weaken”. That is the task of the parent — to weaken the grip that rebellion has on the heart of their children. Few parents do that today. Rather, they indulge their children and “spoil” them, “ruin” them.

II THOSE SMALL BEGINNINGS LED ON TO DISASTER

1. Small sins grow. I remember an old rhyme which went like this:

*For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.
For want of a horse the rider was lost.
For want of a rider the battle was lost.
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.*

The deepest apostasy starts with just a little disobedience and sin. The Garden of Eden tells us that!

2. Small sins are noticed by the Lord. Believers may trivialise them and resent and murmur at the preacher referring to them, but the Lord would have them mentioned. legalism

Years ago, when this preacher cried out against backsliding, his cries were labelled “legalism”! The atmosphere beginning to prevail across our church demonstrates the falsehood of that slander.

“And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim,” Jeremiah 7: 13-15.

“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. What if the preacher followed the Lord’s pattern and cried out as did the Lord? What would have been the response to that?

We must daily pray for pardon for we sin daily. “Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil,” Luke 11: 3-4.

God does not consider any sin a “little matter”!

3. The sin consisted of ‘not knowing’ the Lord. Knowing God is the essence of true religion. To “know not” is to be lost. “Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God,” 1 Thessalonians 4:5. “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 2 Thessalonians 1: 8.



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Such are the consequences of carelessness amongst Christian parents.

Senses

We have five senses — all of them are employed in metaphors about “knowing” the Lord.

1. Knowing by hearing. John 10:4. Here is our awakening.
2. Knowing by seeing. Gal 3:1; Hebs 11:13. Our eyes are opened, Acts 26:18.
3. Knowing by smell. Psalm 45:8; “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad,” Psalm 45:8. “And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed,” Genesis 27:27.
4. Knowing by touch. “And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me,” Luke 8:45-46.
5. Knowing by tasting. Psalm 34:8, 119:103; Song of Solomon 2:3.

All these speaks of experimental, intimate knowledge of Christ. Such knowledge is the mark of regeneration. “And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart,” Jeremiah 24:7.

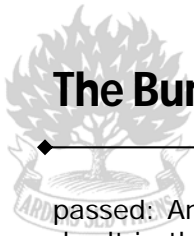
III. WE IN ULSTER FIND OURSELVES WHERE ISRAEL WAS JUST PRIOR TO JOSHUA’S DEATH

If something does not happen soon, then the next generation of believers in Ulster will increasingly depart from the Lord with the most dire consequences on their offspring.

1. The departure was beginning in Joshua’s day. “And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you,” Judges 2:1-3.

Strange words

That is the reason for Joshua’s strange words just prior to his death. “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

passed: And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey," Joshua 24:15-24.

Let every Christian read and meditate upon these words and grasp their application for this day.

2. The breach in the walls of separation were beginning to show. "And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?" Judges 2:2.

Breaches

Is there not a breach in the walls of separation today?

Has there not been a mingling again with those in the camp of apostasy in a manner which would have brought justified condemnation upon our heads a decade or two ago? It is not just a fault amongst the young but it is to be found amongst the older generation and even office-bearers!

These things do not go unnoticed by the Lord.

3. The result was a weakened Israel and a strengthened enemy. Here is the explanation for the present state of affairs in Ulster. On every hand we see compromise and appeasement — a lowering of the standards and conditions under which we are willing to live.

Once Sabbath desecration horrified us. We protested at the opening of council swings on the Lord's Day. Now we see Christians excusing themselves from voting against the use of council property for sodomite marriages!

Is this not a weakening of our stand? Excuse it as you will, but this is what it truly is.

The moral havoc here in Ulster is the direct result of God's people wandering away from the Lord; returning to the paths they forsook but a short time ago.

And it is that departure that demands that we cry to God for revival, for it alone will bring about the return of the wanderers.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land," 2 Chronicles 7:14.

May the Lord have mercy upon us and forgive our backslidings and for His great name's sake revive us again.

"Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved," Psalm 80:3.