



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

The alternative to surrender to terror



The synopsis of a sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on Lord's Day, 28th May by Rev. Ivan Foster

Our comments are based upon 2 Kings chapters 18 and 19. Please read these chapters for yourself.

History is but a mirror which reflects the events of today in its records of former times. The Bible says as much in Romans 15:4. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

What a trustworthy guide the Bible provides when we find ourselves at a crossroad not knowing whether to turn left or right. The person or nation that trusts to its counsel will never go wrong. Those who abandon its guidance will most certainly lose their way. Under the guidance of its ecumenical counsellors, the Ulster Unionist Party has taken a decision yesterday that will affect us all. It was a decision that will see the country yield to the demands of the IRA and submit to having the representatives of republican terrorism in government.

In our Bible reading we stood with Hezekiah in the midst of the trouble that confronted him. It is not hard to see the parallel between our difficulties here in Northern Ireland and those of the faithful king of Judah.

I. THE DEMANDS THAT WERE MADE OF HEZEKIAH

18:30-32. Do these words not sound familiar to us here in Northern Ireland? According to the Assyrians, it was an agreement that would benefit the nation greatly.

1. Life was offered. Verse 32. The alternative to the Assyrian proposal was death.

2. It was a standard of life much higher than they had known. In fact, the offer was couched in terms similar to God's description of Canaan, verses 31-32. Life had been very difficult in Israel of late. They had endured defeat at the hands of the northern kingdom of Israel, the Edomites and the Philistines. Hezekiah's father had been an evil man and his rule had brought the judgment of God upon the nation. *For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD*, 2 Chron 28:19. Would not a time of peace and stability have been most welcome to Hezekiah and his people even as it would be to Ulster's citizens. But was the price too high?

3. It was a most attractive offer compared to the future as painted by the Assyrians. Verse 27. Here, crudely stated by Rabshakeh, was what awaited them should they refuse. Eight years previously the Assyrians had besieged Samaria for three years. The distresses of the city and its inhabitants would have been known to all. The future of Ulster is most bleak should we reject the proposals submitted by the IRA, we are told by the "YES" camp.



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II. THE DISASTER THAT HEZEKIAH FACED

1. A fate worse than death awaited Judah. The fate of a conquered people was most dire. No mercy, no leniency. It would mean the end of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah had the fate and the future of his people in his hands. So is our future painted for us here in Northern Ireland. Ulster has no future outside of this Agreement we are told. Dire warnings of renewed terrorism, of economic strangulation, of mass unemployment, of London and Dublin forcing joint rule upon us have all been prophesied. We would become the outcasts of the United Kingdom, of Europe, of the world. All this has been said in order to persuade a "YES" vote from the Ulster Unionist Party. Sadly, it worked.

2. Judah was in great weakness . In the days of Ahaz, the previous king, some 30 years before, Judah had lost 120,000 men in battle against Pekah, king of Israel. They lost some 200,000 people into captivity at the same time though their liberty was quickly restored, 2 Chron 28:6-8. Thus depleted in strength and naturally traumatised by captivity, no matter how brief, they faced their enemies.

3. The message from the Assyrians greatly distressed the king . 19:1. To Hezekiah, it was *a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy* , 19:3. Please note what concerned him most of all. It was the dishonour done to God and His name, verse 4. Here is the real underlying motive of the enemy. It was an attack upon God and His glory that was taking place. I hear the tones of Ken Maginnis MP. He took occasion of the public debate on this issue to attack the preaching of Dr. Paisley. That is what ecumenists and republicans really hate -- the message and the name of God. If only Ulster were led by men that had an eye for God's honour, as did Hezekiah, rather than their own political future, then we would fare better.

III. THE DECISION THAT HEZEKIAH TOOK

The offer was rejected. Why did he do so?

1. He knew the Assyrians to be liars. He had first-hand experience of their treachery, 18:14-17. We too have seen how untrustworthy republicans are. They who can take a life in order to advance their cause will think nothing of telling a lie. Lies have been their stock and trade both in their terrorism and in their politics. They have taken every concession made to them but have refused to keep one undertaking to disarm. Sinn Fein/IRA can not, are not to be trusted.

2. He had learned that compromise did not work . After stripping God's house of treasure and giving it to buy off the Assyrians, they still came to attack Jerusalem. What has compromise gained for us? Nothing other than greater demands from republicans.

3. He believed God. 19:15-19. This was the one thing the enemy did not want him to do! They repeatedly scoffed at the idea of trusting God in order to dissuade them from such faith, 18:22, 30, 35; 19:10. It is always a good idea to consider just what it is the enemy wishes you to do -- and then reject it! Our fathers would have needed a lot less time to decide upon the advisability of a scheme that was advocated by Martin McGuinness and



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Gerry Adams. They would have instinctively said it cannot be for our good if it receives their endorsement. God's answer was marvellous, 19:32-37, and it was swiftly carried out. God rules in the world of politics and war. He can bring a swift reversal of fortunes upon the mightiest of men. And it came to pass that night, verse 35. 185,000 Assyrians were slain by the Lord that night and the army camped before Jerusalem was no more! So may all the enemies of the Lord perish.

Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever , Psa 81:13-15.

These words remain true today. They present the alternative to Trimble's plan.

May God yet bring this country back to faith in Him.