



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

The electoral 'wipe-out' of ecumenical unionism in the light of God's Word



Based upon a sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on Lord's Day, May 15th, 2005.

"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain," Psalm 127:1.

There was a change in the political framework of our country, at the recent elections, which few will have failed to notice. In this part of our little country, the west of the province, the Ulster Unionist party has held a dominant position which was largely due to the influence of the ecumenical churches, principally the Church of Ireland. But that dominance has had a severe blow from which we hope it will never recover. I wish to preach on the topic advertised. I am long enough in God's work to know the dangers that spring from such a success. More authoritative than experience is the Word of God. From it I am informed of the dangers that spring from such a success as that recently enjoyed.

FAILURE

Failure may bring disappointment and with it, a blaming of God. But reprehensible as that may be, it is not nearly so dreadful as the consequences that may spring from success. Success can bring pride and self-confidence and out of that a misappropriation of the honour and glory which is God's alone. Such a consequence will close heaven above our heads and cost us the blessing that brought the good election result in the first instance. The verse before us contains information that is beneficial and an admonition that is timely.

I. THESE WORDS DO NOT TEACH US THAT THERE IS NO NEED TO ENGAGE IN LABOUR AND TOIL TO ACCOMPLISH GOOD

The Lord is not saying that the good of our souls, the good of our family and the good of the nation will be accomplished without our involvement.

1. In the grand scheme of things, man has his duties and appointed labours.

Individually this is so. It is clear we can harvest in life only in keeping with our sowing. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," Galatians 6:7. There is a need for personal application to the means that God has appointed, by which men may enter upon good success in the pursuit of legitimate earthly riches and joys. There is a season to sow and a season to reap. If they are missed or neglected or deliberately defied, there is a price to be paid. No lasting good can come from a defiance of the order that God has ordained for men. Nationally it is the same. The same principle that governs the individual's embracing of good for himself, applies to the nation. "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up," Hosea 8:7. Nations reap what they sow in the same manner as individuals. Paul wrote: "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortal-



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ity, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile," Romans 2: 6-10. Nations must pursue that which God sets forth as beneficial to their wellbeing if they are to enjoy good. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people," Proverbs 14: 34. Spiritually, the affairs of our eternal soul are likewise governed by this simple rule: "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," Galatians 6: 8. There is a responsibility laid upon men to obey the commands of the gospel. "God . . . commandeth all men every where to repent," Acts 17: 30. Such a command must be obeyed if man is to do good to his own soul. If a person neglects the opportunities given of God or refuses the commands of the gospel, then there is a terrible price to be paid. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke 19: 41-42. (See also Matthew 25: 1-13).

2. Indolence and idleness will bring a fearful harvest. The slothful man is often mentioned in the book of Proverbs and the lesson to be learned from his folly set forth. "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" Proverbs 6: 9. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man," Proverbs 24: 30-34. Where there is sloth, be it in the realm of earthly or eternal matters, there will be poverty.

3. As our text infers, there is a building and a keeping to be engaged in during life. May we consider these two words, "build" and "keep", with regard to the spiritual duties of men, for a moment. The first time the word "build" is used in the Bible, in the context of worship, it is linked to the building of an altar to God. "And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar," Genesis 8: 20. Likewise, this building was prominent in the life of Abraham and Isaac. "And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD," Genesis 12: 7-8. "And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well," Genesis 26: 25. Our duties toward God must be given precedence over all other "building." Think then of the word "keep."

FIRST USE

Its first use in the Bible likewise sets valuable lessons before us. Chiefly, we must keep God's garden. "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it," Genesis 2: 15. But it is not just God's garden that must be kept.



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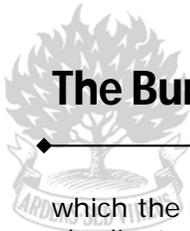
God has given man other duties as well. "And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" Genesis 4:9. Man must keep his neighbour. These duties are set forth in the summary of man's duty under the law as given by the Saviour. This is what it is to love "the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind . . . thy neighbour as thyself," Matthew 22:37, 39. These then are the labours we must engage in.

II. THESE WORDS REBUKE THE PRIDE OF MAN

We are here told that we must labour, but we are also told that our labours will be futile without God's blessing. Note the repeated use of the word "vain" in the text. Man's labours for himself, for his neighbour and, most of all, for the Lord, are in vain. Without God's grace we can do nothing. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing," John 15:5. The best of Christians are helpless of themselves to do that which will please God or bring honour to His name. What then of sinful men? Their deeds are futile indeed! increase Paul said of his labours in evangelism, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase," 1 Cor 3:6-7. Note that the Lord does not merely help to do things but the truth is, He undertakes the whole work. All glory belongs to Him. Man finds this most offensive. Man believes that he, by his labours, must contribute something to the successful enterprise. illustrated It is best illustrated from Holy Scripture. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever," Exodus 14:13. "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you," 2 Chronicles 20:17. "With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah," 2 Chronicles 32:8. The best efforts of man, without the intervening grace of God, are futile. danger Herein is the danger of which I would wish to warn my fellow Protestants.

1. Good success may quickly blind us to these truths. "But when he (King Uzziah) was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense," 2 Chronicles 26:16. "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem," 2 Chronicles 32:25. God warned Israel of the danger of attributing their victories to their own efforts. Read carefully Deuteronomy 8:11-18. That is the danger facing our Protestant people. faithful warnings No one has been more faithful in issuing this warning over the last 60 years than Dr. Ian Paisley who led the Democratic Unionist Party to their historic victory within the last few days. May his warnings be heeded by his party and the people of Ulster.

2. Should we forget these truths there is a severe penalty to pay. "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations



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which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God," Deuteronomy 8:19-20. This is the penalty we have seen others pay. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall," Proverbs 16:18.

FOR GOD AND ULSTER

The Ulster Unionist Party, which was so decimated in the Westminster election, was the party that gave our forefathers the watch word — "For God and Ulster." Within its ranks were godly men and women who held on to God for His blessing on the political affairs of Ulster in the dark days of the early 1900s. But that party forsook its foundations and embraced ecumenism and, filled with pride and self-importance, fell. Let those who enjoyed success recently remember this lesson of history!

3. We will preserve ourselves and our children from great affliction if we remember these truths. "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 forgetting of the Lord and His works saw Israel overrun by her enemies. David Trimble thinks that he has left Ulster a better place as a result of his leadership. What a fool the man is! Ulster is in slavery to Sinn Fein and its allies. Trimble brought Ulster into coalition with the gangsters that murdered Robert McCartney and many, many others, over the last thirty years. The political life of this land is in bondage to gunmen and robbers, thieves and murderers. That is the heritage given us by David Trimble and the Ulster Unionist Party. Our slavery will be broken only by the intervention of God. Look again at our text.

III. THESE WORDS CALL UPON US TO GIVE THE LORD HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE IN OUR HEARTS AND LIVES

Unless Ulster looks again to the Lord alone for our deliverance and our keeping and rejects the notion that smart-alecky politicians with glib tongues and big egos can outsmart Sinn Fein, London, Dublin and wherever else the architects of our destruction nest, and deliver us, then despite the change in the political world, the misery of Ulster will continue and deepen. We must look to the Lord for our priorities, our strategies, our policies. His Word must be made the manifesto by which we seek the good of the land and all its people and deal with our enemies. The following words were uttered by one of the greatest political thinkers ever — King David. "Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: my goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me," Psalm 144:1-2. Under this policy he saw his kingdom prosper and advance until he handed over to his son Solomon a kingdom that stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River in present-day Iraq.

WHITTLED AWAY

Under the policies of successive Ulster Unionist leaders, we have seen the freedom and rights of Ulster whittled away until Sinn Fein is virtually the ex-officio government of our land. These words, in Psalm 144:1-2, leave little honour for David to claim. To him, his God was His everything! Is He your "Everything" tonight? Paul said: "But of him are ye in



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Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," 1 Corinthians 1:30-31. Is your hope, your faith, your dependence for time and for eternity resting in Christ tonight? There can be no earthly contentment or victory no entrance into God's heavenly kingdom unless Christ is your everything. Happy is the one who can quote in faith Isaiah 54:17. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD."