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“Moses meets with Sihon” — an Old Testament incident with a modern day application



Based upon a sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, Lord's Day evening, October 15th, 2006.

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,” Romans 12:18. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord,” Hebrews 12:14.

I am very conscious of the duty that belongs to a minister of the gospel at a time such as this in the affairs of the nation.

A minister's duty is somewhat like that of a ship's captain. He must plot his course by the chart and compass, but he must also keep his eye upon the weather and the sea and make allowances and adjustments to his course, according to that which his ship is likely to encounter as he sails toward his destination.

Undoubtedly, decisions soon will be taken which will feature large in the lives of our children. The wrong decision will bring much ill to this land of ours and its future generations. The decisions centre upon whether or not men who have made murder their trade are to be admitted to the government of this land.

It must be stated that they can only enter that government with the agreement of the majority of the people of this land, the unionist people. If that majority agrees to such a thing, then they are casting away their heritage and trampling over the protests of the last 30 years.

point

The point may be made, and that very truly, that SF/IRA will be put into government with or without the approval of the Ulster Protestants.

That may very well be so, for the treachery and deceitfulness of Tony Blair and the Labour government are seemingly boundless.

But, in response to that point, we can only say that it would be better to have a government which includes miscreants such as Adams and McGuinness forced upon us than for us to agree to such a government. Then, at least, we can claim that our hands are clean.

Tonight, I would like to remind us all of our duties as Christians in the situation that we find ourselves in.

I. IT IS THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY TO LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN AS MUCH AS IN US LIES.

The Commentary of Matthew Poole, (1624-1685), a Presbyterian commentator, says this of the words in Romans 12: 18. “The duty to which he exhorts in this verse, is a peaceable and quiet behaviour towards all men, as well infidels as Christians; those who are bad, as well as those who are good. The like exhortations we have, Heb 12: 14. And to the discharge of this duty he annexeth a double limitation; first: If it be possible; secondly: As much as lieth in you: q. d. It may so fall out, that some men are of such froward and un-



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peaceable tempers, that it is impossible to live peaceably with them, or by them: or such conditions of peace may be offered as are not lawful for you to accept; it will not stand with the truth and glory of God, and with a good conscience, to agree with them. But, however, do your part, let there be no default in you why you should not live in peace with all men whatsoever."

1. Peace that is to be sought. 'All men.' These words were addressed by Paul to believers living in the capital city of the pagan Roman Empire. It was a centre of wickedness and anti-Christian prejudice. Yet, Paul exhorts them to live at peace with their neighbours if at all possible. In like fashion, the exhortation to the Hebrews in 12: 14 is directed to those who lived in the midst of a people who had "endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance," Hebrews 10: 32-34.

We are to seek a peaceful co-existence with the most wicked of people.

2. Perimeter that is to be observed. It is not peace at any price. As pointed out by Matthew Poole, there are two provisos. "If it be possible" and "as much as lieth in you". There are those who will not be at peace with the people of God and there are those who lay down such conditions for peace that it is impossible for the Christian to comply. apostles

For the apostles to co-exist with the leaders of Jerusalem, they were required to "not teach in this (Jesus') name?" Acts 5:28. The apostles refused such terms of peaceful co-existence. "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men," verse 29. The same situation was faced by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Peace for them meant worshipping the golden image. They refused such terms of peace. Daniel their friend did the same in a similar situation, Daniel 6. The examples in the Bible of similar situations are very numerous. Our own history provides us examples. The 1912 crisis in Ulster was precipitated by a refusal by our Protestant forefathers to accept the terms dictated by the Westminster government for the future governance of Ireland. They were prepared to fight the British army before going in under a Home Rule government for, said they, "Home Rule is Rome Rule"!

3. Price that is to be borne. War is the price, should we deem the terms of peace are unacceptable and must be rejected. Remember the words of the Saviour. "I came not to send peace, but a sword," Matt 10: 34. God's people have found themselves more often in a hostile environment than they have in a peaceful one. Hostility to the things of God and His people in this world is the norm! "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world," John 16: 33.

II. IN THE PURSUIT OF SUCH A PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE, WE ARE TO HAVE DEALINGS WITH THOSE WHOSE VIEWS WE ABHOR.

We cannot seek for peace except we talk with those with whom we presently have no peace. Thus Moses made an approach to Sihon, king of the Amorites.

"And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders," Num 21:21-22. Moses gives more details in Deut 2:26-28. "And I sent messengers out of



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the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the high way, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet."

1. Moses sought a peaceful passage through Amorite territory. He sought no war if it could be avoided. His actions were the outworking of the spirit of the exhortation of Paul to the Romans in 12:18.

2. Moses initiated this contact, despite the wickedness of the people. The Amorites were a wicked people and had been so for over 500 years, as the mention of them by God in Genesis 15:16 shows. "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." They had long been the subjects of God's wrath.

3. He sought a peaceful co-existence, even though he knew that the Amorites were destined to be destroyed and their land claimed by Israel. Gen 15:18-21. We may live side by side with those whose religious views are quite contrary to the teaching of the gospel of Christ and who, if they died trusting in such religious notions, would be the eternal subjects of God's wrath. But that does not mean that we are not to seek to live in peace with them and what's more, seek their peace. I mean by that, seek for them, by prayer and gospel witnessing, the blessing of God through the atoning death of Christ, which is the essence of true peace.

In dealing with even our enemies, we have an example in God's actions toward men. He treats with those who are His enemies. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:43-45.

"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 5:10.

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled," Colossians 1:21.

Before our conversion, we were enemies of God but He, in mercy, sought for our wellbeing and comfort and so must we for those who are, in word and deed, our enemies.

III. HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT TO LIVE AT PEACE WITH THOSE WHO DEMAND TOO HIGH A PRICE FOR PEACE

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Hebrews 12:14.

1. We cannot forsake holiness for peace. Peace with our neighbours must go along with a holy walk with God. We cannot divide them. A peace that is based upon an agreement that is offensive to God will cost us our peaceful relationship with Him.

2. Holiness refers to our relationship with God. The word "holiness" refers to that habit and disposition of heart which is required by God. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Ephesians 4:24. (See also 1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 John 3:2-3.)

We must preserve that relationship, irrespective of how our relationship with our



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neighbours may suffer.

3. The forsaking of our obligations to God for the sake of peace will cost us dearly.

“Without which no man shall see the Lord.”

The wrong decision by us here in Ulster will signal that we feel it more important to have quiet times here amongst men than we count it vital to so live in submission to God’s Word as to enjoy eternal peace with the Lord in glory.

A forsaking of the holy standards of God by Christians in the matter of government will generate a view amongst the next generation and with the unconverted generally that short term expediency is of more importance than our eternal spiritual well-being.

A soul destitute of holiness will not see the Lord. They can have no union to or communion with God in Christ.

Please note that here is an assurance that with holiness we may see and enjoy the Lord throughout eternity. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,” Matthew 5:8. “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.

Purity of heart comes only through the washing of the blood of Christ and the justifying and sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost.

Any agreement that exalts evil men to positions of power for the sake of “peace” is contrary to the mind of God and will cost the land His blessing and grace. That will, in turn, have an eternal impact upon the rising generation and those that will follow.

A decision of great magnitude is about to be made in this land.

May God guide our leaders, especially Dr. Paisley.