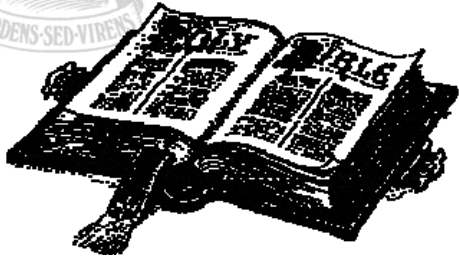




The Burning Bush—Online article archive



"The Problem of Sin in the Church"

No. 4 (part 1) - "The dire consequences"

"Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you,"

Joshua 7:11-12.

Whatever pleasure and apparent advantage Christians may think they obtain by disobeying God and indulging in sin, it is far outweighed by the price that must be paid for sin. We must be sure of that. Judas may have considered 30 pieces of silver a good return for his evil deed of betrayal but that silver has cost him the wrath of God for the last 2000 years and he yet faces the everlasting wrath of God for all eternity! Such is the cost of sin.

I could not be too strong in my warnings against sin!

The dire consequences for the Christian or the church which embraces sin are set forth in these verses.

Note first of all:

I. WE ARE REQUIRED TO STAND BEFORE OUR ENEMIES

The child of God is in conflict with an enemy and must confront that enemy.

1. We must face our enemies. This world is full of the enemies of Christians. Not all men are enemies posing the same threat but all men are moved and motivated by a spirit of enmity against the people of God. We live in enemy territory. It is by the grace of God that we are able to live here. He preserves us from powers that would otherwise overwhelm us. We cannot avoid the enemy without surrendering to them. If we are challenged by the enemy, we face them or we give ground and seek to avoid them.

There are churches which glory in their non-confrontational spirit. They claim to "just preach the gospel". They do no such thing. It is, at best, a partial gospel. They run a camp for cowards not a church witnessing for the Saviour. Christ is "Captain of the Lord's host", Joshua 5:15. This is not an "honourary title". He is a "man of war". He leads the armies of heaven. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS," Revelation 19: 11-16.

The spirit of appeasement and compromise is of the flesh and is exploited by the devil. The words of peace spoken by the enemy are lies. "Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past," 1 Samuel 15: 32. Facing Samuel, Agag proposed compromise and peace. This was rejected by the prophet of God. "And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal," verse 33.

Heed these words setting out the mind and heart of the worldling, Christian. "Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief *is* in their hearts," Psalm 28:3. "*The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war *was* in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords," Psalm 55:21. "And they watched *him*, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor," Luke 20:20. These are but a few of the many examples of man's deceitfulness and hatred for the truth of Christ and those who proclaim it, which are set forth within the Bible.

2. We must fight our enemies. God calls us to war not compromise and treaty-making! God does not command us to make the best deal we can with the enemy.

We do not seek confrontation. We are commanded also " . . . as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," Romans 12:18. But where such peacefulness on the part of Christians is rejected and their message and witness is threatened and they are required in any way to disobey God's will for them, then we must resist, even unto the death, that opposition. Such was the spirit of the reformers, the martyrs and the confessors.

We must fight a superior foe. Superiority is no reason for our avoiding of a fight. We can no more successfully plead the superiority of the enemy as just cause for retreat as did the unbelieving spies sent out with Joshua and Caleb. "And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this *is* the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight," Numbers 13:27-33. Our foes are even greater than those seen by the cowardly spies. Paul gives us a full description of the enemy in Ephesians 6:12. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities-



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

ties, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*."

We are called upon to face the very powers of darkness. It is the armies of the devil that must be confronted. Such powers are beyond our comprehending. Their greatness is beyond our knowing. Yet fight them we must!

3. We must maintain war against them. There is no discharge in this warfare. "*There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war,*" Ecclesiastes 8:8. We cannot retreat. We cannot retire. This is a fight in which we must engage until we depart this life. Paul only ceased to battle when he ceased to breathe! "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing," 2 Timothy 4:6-8. We must die in harness, wearing the armour of Christ, for to this calling we were born. We are born to war. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier," 2 Timothy 2:3-4. We were "enlisted as a soldier" by the Lord, for that is the meaning of the phrase.

Let none disgrace the uniform of Christ by cowardice or compromise but let us "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called," 1 Timothy 6:12.

This is the first part of our fourth study in a short series of messages on "The problem of sin in the church". [Click here](#) to listen to/download a recording of each of the messages in the series.