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"WAR DECLARED!!"

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," John 16:8.

Mr Ronnie McLean, when preaching from Acts 1:8 on the subject of 'The Infilling of the Holy Spirit' in Kilskeery on the Lord's Day morning, 9th September, in his introduction to his subject, referred to John 16:8.

As I looked it up I was struck by what is a declaration of war by the Holy Ghost against the spirit and ethos of this world in which we live.

Holy Ghost holiness is the very opposite to all that is in the world. This idea is totally alien to all those today who claim to enjoy the fulness of the Holy Spirit's power and grace, but whose way of life is very evidently not opposed to the ways of the world!

The 'worship' services, the mode of dress, the general appearance and behaviour of the modern 'Pentecostalist' are utterly worldly. Far from a spirit of reverential fear of God in their services there is the air of a circus, a centre for worldly entertainment. This they decidedly promote. It is not something into which they have carelessly declined but rather pointedly advance and nurture! The 'minister' is attired in the most casual of clothing - usually jeans and an open neck shirt! There is little order observed during the 'service', with people going and coming and drinking coffee etc!

This they would have us know is "Holy Spirit Christianity"!!

How wrong they are! How misguided they are! How deceitful they are!

I don't think it is possible to be more deceitful than to present this as Holy Ghost-inspired Christianity!

Please consider just what it is our verse clearly teaches.

I. THE POWER AND GRACE OF THE HOLY GHOST IS MOST NECESSARY FOR A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN WITNESS.

The previous verse has the words of the Saviour declaring just how necessary is the grace of the Holy Ghost for our wellbeing. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you," John 16:7. He uses the word 'expedient'. It carries the meaning 'profitable'. See Matthew 5:29. "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Life without the fulness of power and grace of the Holy Ghost will prove to be 'without profit', even for the best of Christians.

1. It is for this reason that the Saviour forbade His apostles to begin their great crusade without first being filled with the Holy Spirit. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high," Luke 24:49. They must first wait for the infilling of the Holy Spirit for all labour, no matter how earnestly carried out, is in vain if not conducted in the divine energy of the Holy Spirit.

2. It is for this reason the early believers did tarry. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren," Acts 1:14. They did as they were commanded and continued in that obedience and with one mind for that is the meaning of 'with one accord.' 'Continuing in prayer' was the sole activity of the early believers in that day. There ought to be such a pressing emphasis on such praying today. Would that we, the people of God, were of one mind on this matter today. What a different and effective witness we would be able to give!

It should be noticed, that the one exception to their waiting upon God for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost



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was their taking upon themselves to find a replacement for Judas. Poor old impetuous Peter was to the fore as usual! "And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus," Acts 1:15-16. The outcome of this enterprise was the selecting of Matthias as a replacement. That is stated at the close of chapter 1 of Acts. "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

Dear Christian, please note that name for it is the first and the last mention of the man. I am sure he was a good man but he was not God's man and Peter was wrong to suggest that they hold such an election. The Saviour had commended them to pray and wait for the Holy Ghost.

There are many enterprises today that are embarked upon and which supersede the great need of the hour - prayer- which end in utter fruitlessness! That alone should have occupied them!

3. It is for this reason they frequently went back and prayed afresh even after Pentecost. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness," Acts 4:31. There are many references to the believers in those early days being filled with the Holy Ghost. That was because they were constantly praying for and seeking after such an infilling.

That is still the uppermost need of the Church today. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit," Ephesians 5:17-18.

The fulness of His power and grace is the need of the hour.

II. WHERE THE FULNESS OF HIS POWER IS EVIDENT THERE IS WAR AGAINST SIN.

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." The Holy Spirit will move those in Whom He dwells to oppose and reprove all sin.

1. It is one of the evidences of the absence of His power that the pulpits are so cowardly when it comes to sin amongst the pews. Sin goes largely unchallenged when it is flaunted amongst the people of God. Yes, there can be a bold crying out against the sins of other denominations and of the government but there is silence on the sins right there before the preacher's eyes. The immodesty of dress! The worldliness of the painted face! The absences at the prayer meetings! That is, I am sure, what the Holy Ghost would have us cry against today. It is reported that the Sabbath after Dr Paisley, a young man, met with the Lord in a prolonged season of prayer and undoubtedly received an infilling of the Holy Ghost, he stood before his congregation and declared war upon sin of every form! So it is with every man filled with the Spirit of God. "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin," Micah 3:8.

2. Popularity is deemed a very important mark of the modern preacher! Great care is taken not to offend anyone, irrespective of how obviously sinful their lifestyle may be, if they are members of the church. This is especially so if they have a large family connection amongst the church members of which many may be offended if anything were said against that person's sin.

That is being in the fear of man and we know what that results in! "The fear of man bringeth a snare," Proverbs 29:25. Many pulpits are adorned with the chains of such fear. The blessed Holy Ghost, when He takes control of a man, breaks those chains! He shall have a ministry and a witness modelled upon the Saviour's. "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the



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earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked," Isaiah 11:2-4. The Holy Ghost preacher cannot but obey the Saviour Who commands, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins," Isaiah 58:1. The faithful preacher will be made the enemy of God's enemies. "For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land, And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD," Jeremiah 1:8; 15:20.

Christ was and is, an uncompromising enemy of sin and wickedness and so too are His faithful servants.

3. Revival, that time when the Spirit of God is poured out upon a people, is a time of war against sin. It is for this reason that the enemies of righteousness so oppose the gospel in times of revival. They are under attack! Their trade in wickedness is threatened. In the '59 revival it is recorded that often courts convened only for the police to report to the magistrate that there were no wrongdoers for them to bring before the bench! Pubs, the fountain from which much crime flows, were closed in times of revival. Old Pastor James Kyle Paisley, during his early ministry was the means of closing a number of public houses within the areas where he conducted gospel missions.

Yes, the Holy Ghost moves Christians to war actively against sin and worldliness.

III. OF COURSE, IT IS TO BE NOTICED THAT HE IS THE 'COMFORTER' OF HIS PEOPLE.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you," John 16:7.

He Who is called the Comforter is the One 'called alongside us' to aid us, strengthen us, fill us with assurance, peace and joy! "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," Romans 15:13. He is the Fountain, flowing from Christ our Head, conveying to us ALL the blessings which are stored in Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," Ephesians 1:3.

1. The Church of God is never more joyful and full of contentment than when they are warring against the world in the power of the Holy Ghost. I can remember the first time I read Acts 5:40-42. "And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Here was New Testament Christianity! Joyful defiance of the dictates of ungodly men in obedience to Christ and energised by the Holy Ghost. That is what many saw, in a measure, in the early 1960s and subsequent days, praise the Lord!

2. History shows this to have ever been the case. What wars the Reformers engaged in as did likewise every faithful servant of God in days of revival blessing. What conflict George Whitefield encountered as did John and Charles Wesley. What battles Henry Cooke engaged in the days that led up to the glorious 1859 Revival in Ulster. Is not the history of our own Free Presbyterian Church marked by the same wars, if we have not altogether forgotten those early days with Ian Paisley and our Church fathers in Crossgar and its aftermath. The days of blessing we passed through in the days of 1960-1970 in more recent days were times of court cases, fines, imprisonment and reproach. It was a time when the Free Presbyterian Church was deemed by many to be "the offscouring of all things," 1 Corinthians 4:13. Paul was able to finish that statement with the words "unto this day." Sadly, to a very large degree, we are unable to say that today! The reason we are more acceptable to society is because we do not enjoy the mighty blessing of the infilling of the Holy Ghost. Were we to enter again into that glorious experience, we would find that the world that



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to some degree smiles upon us today would immediately substitute the smile with a snarl!

3. May God grant us again such a time of reproach, not that we seek the mere opposition of men but rather the evidence that our witness, galvanised by the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, is effectively hurting the worldly. Where there is the reproach of men then there is the joy and peace of the Holy Ghost.

"And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:23-30.

This, in a nutshell, tells the story of Holy Ghost power, and that which follows, reproach, suffering, joyful singing of praise to God and triumphant, glorious soul-winning.

May we see days again in which we sing as once I recall it being sung in my first day of prayer and fasting in the earlier summer of 1964.

1 Oh, spread the tidings 'round,
wherever man is found,

Wherever human hearts and human woes abound;

Let every Christian tongue proclaim the joyful
sound:

The Comforter has come!

The Comforter has come,

The Comforter has come!

The Holy Ghost from heav'n,

The Father's promise giv'n;

Oh, spread the tidings 'round,

Wherever man is found,

The Comforter has come!

2 The long, long night is past,

The morning breaks at last;

And hushed the dreadful wail and fury of the blast,

As o'er the golden hills the day advances fast!

The Comforter has come!

3 Lo, the great King of kings,

with healing in His wings,

To every captive soul a full deliv'rance brings;

And through the vacant cells the song of triumph
rings:

The Comforter has come!

4 O boundless love divine!

how shall this tongue of mine

To wond'ring mortals tell the matchless grace divine,

That I, a child of hell, should in His image shine!

The Comforter has come!

Rev Ivan Foster (Rtd)

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