



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

Fiftieth Anniversary Report

Report of the special service in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church marking the 50th anniversary of the first Free Presbyterian services in Lisbellaw on 12th February 1967.



A section of the congregation in attendance at the special meeting

Lisbellaw. There were Free Presbyterians from Coragarry in Co. Monaghan, from Clogher Valley and Kesh congregations as well as visitors from other neighbouring congregations. We were glad to see visitors from Independent Methodist churches as well.

Apologies were received from a number of ministers who had links with the meetings in Lisbellaw. The Moderator of the Ulster Presbytery, Rev Thomas Murray and the Clerk, Dr Ian Brown, both sent apologies due to previous engagements.

Special guests attending were Rev William Beattie and his wife Sally. Rev Beattie, now retired, took part in the first meetings in Lisbellaw. Rev Gordon Ferguson and his wife Anne as well as Rev Gordon Dane were also in attendance. Both these ministers attended Lisbellaw before entering the ministry of the Free Presbyterian Church.

Rev Dane testified of his days in the Sunday School and his conversion as a lad. Rev Ferguson spoke movingly as he related some memories of his days in Lisbellaw and the powerful preaching of the gospel back then. He related how members of his family were converted and stated that his family owed much to the mercy of God through the meetings in Lisbellaw.

Before preaching, Rev Foster presented memorial plaques to the special guests. One of those was presented to Mrs Winifred Gallagher who was a member of the congregation from the beginning. She and her late husband, Hugh, transferred membership to Kilskeery when the meetings began there.

Rev Foster's message was based upon Psalm 126, verse 3. "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

He entitled his message: "Joyful memories of 50 years ago".

In his opening remarks he said:

"It is such a privilege to have memories of times which have the character of those days mentioned here by the Psalmist. Not every generation of God's people have such blessed mental souvenirs!

The word 'when' suggests that the Psalmist is looking back and savouring the mercies of God enjoyed in



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former years.

What mercies they were we enjoyed in Lisbellaw! They were of a time when God 'turned' the circumstances of His people.

It is, of course, a foreshadowing of a future day when the Lord will FINALLY and FULLY overthrow the captivity of His people and lead them into the promised land of GLORIOUS, ETERNAL LIBERTY.

As I have often said, every breath of revival experienced by the Church of God is a foretaste of the coming of Christ in power and great glory.

50 years ago, a wonderful time of blessing was drawing very near to us in this part of the world.

I. WHAT WE ARE MARKING TODAY IS WHAT GOD DID AMONGST US

50 YEARS AGO.

Those who saw lives changed under their preaching back then must confess today that we see no such things under our preaching now! That highlights that it was GOD that worked. Man cannot glory in the events or claim credit for what happened in those blessed times half a century ago.

II. WHAT THE LORD DID WAS A GREAT THING.

Indeed, we have to note that it is in the plural in our text - 'great things'!

Our text indicates that the words of the psalmist are but a repeating of the exclamation of 'the heathen' who witnessed the work of God amongst His people. Of course, such a statement is 'forced' from the lips of 'the heathen'. Under normal circumstances, their words would be mocking and derisory. But God can make the lips of the mocker to sing His praise. "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him," Proverbs 16:7.

I think that was the case 50 years ago.

Rev Foster concluded by noting that:

III. THAT RECALLING THE TIMES OF MERCY AND BLESSING PROMPTS A LONGING FOR SUCH TIMES AGAIN

From praising the psalmist turns to prayer. "Turn again our captivity, O LORD," verse 4.

His final words were a prayer for God to visit the land again.

"My prayer is that God will be merciful to our land again and cause us all to REMEMBER the days of blessing and joy He gave us in former times and that we might ask for them again."