

The Future of the Reformation

Reformation Month 2004

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As has been mentioned times already, this is Reformation day, a tragedy in Protestant churches and among Protestant people that it should never proceed beyond being Halloween when the greatest event in modern history was triggered on this date 1517, and it's a day long to be remembered, not because of the dramatics of that particular day for I think had you been there when Luther nailed his theses to the church door, you would not or perhaps it was someone else nailed them for him, it's hard to say, you certainly would not have thought that it was going to be a world shattering event or a world changing event but the Lord made it so and we're glad to remember what God did beginning at that time and spreading it greatly from there.

We have been thinking on various aspects of the Reformation. We've come this evening having deal with the faith of the Reformation and the fruits of the Reformation, and last week a little at the failures of the Reformation. Dr. Barrett was not named as a failure of the Reformation, you must understand that, he was said to have declined from his original views of baptism and fallen to where he now is but we will forgive him for that, that everybody has feet of clay. But having looked at the failures of the Reformation, we will tonight look at the future of the Reformation.

Psalm 44,

1 We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. 2 How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. 3 For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. 4 Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. 5 Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. 6 For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. 7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. 8 In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah. 9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. 10 Thou

makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves. 11 Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen. 12 Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price. 13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. 14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people. 15 My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, 16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger. 17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. 18 Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; 19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. 20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; 21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. 22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. 23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth. 26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

Amen. The Lord will add his own blessing to the reading of his own precious word for his name's sake.

What we have read this evening is essentially a prayer and I think that what is given in the Psalm that follows may, whether it has a basis in exegesis or not, I think it may devotionally be taken as very much God's response and I want to leave with you as our text for tonight as we consider the future of the Reformation, the 16th verse of the 45th Psalm, and if there is one answer that we could desire to the prayer of Psalm 44, I think this would be it.

16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

As our Bible reading shows us, we should never forget what God has done for his people. The story of the mighty acts of God on behalf of his church should ever be in our hearts and always upon our lips. We must say as did the Psalmist, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old." It's a wonderful thing to cast our minds back and recollect what God did in the times of old, but having said that, I must hasten to add that we must never live in the past. That's something to which we are all prone, especially as we get older. Every generation looks back to the good old days. The reality is that they were not particularly good and they were not particularly great. It is part of the feebleness of advancing years to live in the past and that is simply another way of saying that you're getting old enough to have

little vision for the future, and since you can see nothing much ahead of you, all there is to rejoice in is what is past.

Now, why we may excuse this in a 70 year old, an 80 year old, or a 90 year old. It is inexcusable for the church of Jesus Christ and yet in the church we tend to do it. We read the story of past revivals, we have learned lecturers going around the seminary circuit and they are lecturing on revival, reading papers on revival. The last thing in the world that anybody who was ever in a revival would ever think of doing would be to read a scholarly paper on revival. All this going on, directing our attention to the past in such an unhealthy way that the church especially, the Reformed and evangelical church, tends to live in the past and that we must not do.

We're called upon to live for God today and as the Lord wills, tomorrow as well. Our interest in the story of God's past blessings should stir us up to give us a vision for the work of God. It should stir us up to desire something today, to want to overthrow the status quo, to overthrow this spirit of deadness that has gripped so much of the church of Christ, this spirit of non-expectancy that lets us sit back thinking and dreaming of what used to be while the world plows on to hell. We must as we study the past and the blessings of the past, be stirred to seek God for a greater work than ever before in our day and in our midst.

We have God's promise, "If my people which are called by my name," do we meet those criteria? Are we God's people? Do we bear his name? Then this is his promise to us and it places the responsibility fairly and squarely upon our shoulders. "If my people which are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked way." Now there are the conditions. The criteria: you are God's people; you are called by his name. The promise is for such alone. The conditions: humble ourselves; afflicting our souls before God; examining our hearts in the light of his word; throwing over the wickedness and the worldliness; the shameful way of living that has become usual for professing Christians; turning away from the empty religious ritual that shrouds our souls and that hides our true impiety and our true ungodliness of life.

Humble ourselves, genuinely pray. Where will you find today a praying church? Where can you find praying preachers? Where are the Robert Murray M'Cheyne's who wet the floor of his study with their tears as they prepared to preach on heaven and hell to a dying people? Where will we find praying churches? Where will we find praying preachers? Where will we find praying people?

Humble themselves and pray and, "seek my face and turn from their wicked way." The promise is, "then will I hear from heaven." And will he heal their land and that land is not America, it is not Northern Ireland, it is not England, it is not Germany, it is not China, it is not some geographical location. The land that is referred to is the land of the spiritual Israel. Oh, I know the promise originally was to national Israel and therefore the land was a national entity but we are the Israel of God circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands, related to God in a spiritual relationship through Jesus Christ. And the land is not a geographical entity, it is the land that is possessed by the church of Christ. It is a

revived church that's being promised here and I tell you, when you've a church in revival be it in America or in England or anywhere else, that church will affect the geographical location in which it is placed. "I will heal their land and I will forgive their sin." There is a promise.

We have read another of those promises in our text tonight. It is a beautiful and glorious promise to a people who have just been saying, "We have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us what work God did in their day." Now comes the promise, instead of thy fathers shall be thy children whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. With that promise we should make bold to pray as we were reading tonight, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake."

Over these past weeks, we have been considering something of what God did in the Reformation of the 16th century but this must be more than a history lesson. If all we do is get a history lesson, my apologies to the history teachers but I think they probably would be the first to agree with me, if all we get is a history lesson, then we have wasted our time entirely. Our study of the past has to create within us a yearning for the present and a vision for the future.

The Protestant Reformation was not and is not a finished work. It's not something buried in the dusty archives of history. It's a living principle. The Protestant church looked upon itself as reformata, a church reformed, a reformed church. But it also looked upon itself as a true witness of Jesus Christ and therefore it saw that it must be not only reformata but as they put it in their little Latin phrase, semper reformanda, always reforming. In other words, it's not just reformed, past tense, it is always reforming.

And there are various reasons for this. The first one is that there is a regressive tendency in every human agency and you could see that even in the days of the Reformation. The Reformation was not long underway until there were elements within it already seeking to regress, to undo something, to give away some of the ground that had been gained. This was especially discernible among good men who desired peace and unity. Now, those are very praiseworthy aims to have. Anybody who's looking for peace and unity has at least good ideals.

I think of Philip Melanchthon, a great theologian, a man who stood by Luther. He was never going to be a Luther but then, Luther was never going to be a Melanchthon either. A great genius. A theologian of the very first order but a peace-loving man, a man who wanted unity and in order to get it, he was willing to take the things that were indifferent, the adiaphora, and he was willing to stretch that term almost to breaking point in order to gain common ground among the greatest number of people with that result that had the Lutheran Reformation really followed Philip Melanchthon, good and great man that he was, he and the rest of them would have ended up destroying the very things that he had set out to build.

He also adopted a view called synergism, a form of synergism. Reformed faith has always believed that regeneration is what's called a monergistic act of God. In other words, it is God who regenerates. It is not a cooperative action. It's not a cooperative endeavor between God and man. It is God who regenerates. It is God who justifies. Now, the Reformed always recognized that in sanctification, in the regenerated, redeemed and justified soul, there is a process of growing holiness in which the human spirit does cooperate with the Holy Spirit because God does not impose a holy life upon us from without, he works it from within, but when he regenerates, he is giving life to that which is dead. There is no possibility of cooperation between a dead soul and a quickening Spirit in order to produce a regenerate soul. That cannot be. Regeneration is life from the dead, that's monergistic. Any view of synergism is destructive to the Gospel.

And so you have these regressive tendencies already in the Luther Reformation and Melancthon and those like him were far from unique. You could find this, evidence of it or similar things, in the various branches of the Reformation. You could see it among the Calvinistic and Reformed. There were the differences there and some willing to go to greater lengths than others to produce peace and unity. You could see it among the radical Reformers, although they were not looking for unity with the papal church or with the Reformed or with the Lutherans. Yet in order to establish their agenda, they were far more Roman Catholic in their doctrine of salvation than they were Reformed and they utterly rejected the whole idea of a forensic justification that was central to the main Reformation's doctrine.

There were points of regression to be seen on every side. You can see this throughout subsequent history. The story of the Puritans in England was fighting against the Protestant churches, regressing in one way or another back into the deadness and the formalism of Rome. The Covenanters fought against such regression in Scotland. The Succeeders also fought against it as they were battling the so-called moderates in the church of Scotland. In many ways you could say that Jonathan Edwards and the revivalists who followed him here in the United States were fighting against the tendency in Protestantism to regress to dead religion.

What I'm saying is and this is true today, it's true in the Reformed churches in America today. There is a backsliding tendency going on. It's true in fundamentalism today. The fundamentalism of America in 2004 is a far cry from the fundamentalism of the early 1900s. There is a regressive tendency that's inherent in every human agency and for that reason, the Reformation must be more than a past event, it must be something continual. It must become the format of a normative principle of the life of the church. It must always be reforming, always keeping in line with the word of God in light of the latest trends that are going on all around it.

Another reason why the church must always be in reformation is that we face old enemies, though sometimes they're in different garbs. In the 16th century, Rome was the unmistakable foe. The fulminations from the Vatican made that clear. The filthiness of Rome, her bishops and her priests, made it clear that Rome was the foe so the battleground was clearly drawn, the lines were there, the enemy was in sharp focus.

Now today, it is usual to look upon Rome as being something very different from what it was in the 16th century. I remember being told that by an Anglican priest who was going to an ecumenical meeting and I was there too. I was there to protest and he was there to participate. We were both peas but not in the same pod. And he told me, he said, "The trouble with you is you're living in the 16th century. Rome has changed. Do you not realize that? Vatican II has taken place. Pope John XXIII." Well, he forgot to say it was Pope John XXIV or Pope John XXIII the second. As you heard Dr. P. so ably set before us in his presentation of Jan Hus, Pope John the XXIII was a real pope until they decided to get rid of him and tried to get just one pope instead of three of them and so they wiped him out from that canonical list.

"You don't hear that there was a Pope John XXIII." "Yes," I said to that Anglican priest, I said, "I have all those documents that were produced by Vatican II and I've read reams of them, have you?" "Nope." I said, "Not only that but I have books of the post-conciliar documents, that is, the documents produced by the Roman curiate expounding, explaining and applying all the constitutions of Vatican II. Have you read those?" "Nope." "Well, let me tell you a little about them. Let me quote a little from them and you will discover that in no essential has Rome changed." In fact, the motto of the church of Rome, quite the opposite to the Protestant churches which is *semper reformanda*, always reforming, always taking the situation in which we find ourselves and making sure we stay in line with the word of God. Hers is *semper eadem*, always the same. Always the same and still a bitter enemy of Gospel truth.

Then there are some new foes that we have to face. We're not living in the 16th century, social circumstances have changed, for one thing democracy has arrived. You are living to see the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy in that great vision of the second chapter when he interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. You're living to see that strange phenomenon of the iron mixed with the miry clay. You're living to see the devolution of government down to what we call democracy. It has arrived. I forget the exact words of Winston Churchill, which is a shame for me, but he said that democracy is the worst form of government that you may have except for all the rest, and I think that that's just about how it stands. With democracy, you've got a vicious secularism, you've got militant atheism, you've got an anti-God attitude enshrined in government. Whatever the failures of rulers in the 16th century and they were many and vicious, one thing that could not be readily charged upon most of them was a total repudiation of the idea that they were there to serve God. Now, many of them deliberately served themselves, many of them, because their minds and their hearts were darkened by false doctrine, did not truly serve God, but at least in principle the law was based upon the idea that the ruler is a minister of God. If you were to say that in American politics today, it would be a guarantee of non-election. If either Mr. Bush or Mr. Kerry between now and Tuesday were to say, "I look upon my job as being a minister of God," you may be absolutely certain he would indubitably lose the election. That's where we have got. We have state sponsored hostility to the Gospel.

Now here's where we are and in many ways we have to say that why we look back on a glorious past not only in Europe and the Reformation there but here in the United States,

we look back on a glorious Reformation past. You've heard the story again and again of the Pilgrim fathers and of the early Puritans. You've heard the story of the New England revivals. You've heard the story of the great evangelists who have moved across this country preaching the old old story of the Gospel in all its fullness. And yet we have got to say, "Thou hast cast us off. Thou hast put us to shame and thou goest not forth with our armies."

So what is the future of the Reformation? As we think of its future, I want to make three or four very simple observations and try to be brief therewith. It's not always easy. First, let's settle this in our minds: the future of the Reformation is sure to be one of conflict. You cannot stand for God without being in a war. The Reformers proved that. When Luther, that Augustinian monk, went out to nail his theses to the door, he had no intention of declaring war on the pope. He had no intention of getting into the vortex of a world-shattering confrontation and conflict. But he couldn't avoid it. And all the Reformers of all the different branches of the Reformation, they all found the same thing: if you're going to stand for God, you are going to be in a war. Not just a battle but a war. A war of attrition sometimes. Sometimes much worse, a war unto the death.

And we will find the same. If any man will live godly, Paul says, in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution. Sainthood and suffering always are going to go together. Standing and suffering are always going to go together. If you're looking for a cushy job, if you're looking for the easy path through life, let me warn you away from being in the service of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ when he calls men, calls them to be good soldiers. And it's not just some poetic expression, it's not just some figure of speech to stir the blood, it's real. The battle, the warfare is real. We wrestle against not mere flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. When you stand for God, you're standing against Satan.

Now, Satan is the god of this world. Understand what that means. Satan is the one whom the world is worshiping. It doesn't mean to say they're all declared witches or pagans. Paul talks about people who are offering sacrifices to one god or another and he's saying they are actually sacrificing to devils. Satan is the god of this world and so if you would stand for Christ, you're going to be in conflict with all who worship Satan.

There is a great confluence of enmity against the church of Christ and it comes from every quarter. All, whatever their differences, who are worshiping Satan agree in this, they are opposing Christ and those who stand for him. We will have a conflict with Rome. Rome is militantly anti-Protestant as it ever was and it has never called off the hounds of the counter-Reformation. We will have a battle with the ecumenical movement in all its parts. Now, that's a movement that changes its face from time-to-time. I haven't time tonight to draw the history or even sketch the history of the ecumenical movement. You've got one very very important aspect of it in the World Council of Churches. You've got another aspect of it in much of what is called the charismatic movement. One of the leaders, the founders of the charismatic movement, David du Plessis, many years ago said that to be truly ecumenical you must be charismatic, and to be truly charismatic

you must be ecumenical. George Carey, the archbishop of Canterbury as he was, made a statement regarding the so-called charismatic revival and he noted that it was to be found inside the church of Rome and it was to be found in many Protestant denominations, and he quite honestly, though he was saying it as a positive, as a declared evangelical issue, to find it not so positive at all but certainly something to be worried about, he said that the amazing thing about this revival was that it crossed all the denominational lines and it was able to bring Roman Catholic and Protestant together, it was able to bring people together even though they had nothing in common theologically.

Now, let me tell you, that is dangerous. A unity that is not an expression of truth is not of God, it's of the devil. A unity that is not based on the truth of the Gospel is going to promote the lie of the devil. It is the enemy of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and we will be in conflict with the ecumenical movement. Now, let me tell you, that sounds very easy when you're sitting in a meeting like this but when you get out there and everybody wants to be together, we're all of one mind, and you're standing there like Micaiah, you remember the prophet Micaiah? And Ahab had all his prophets there saying, "Will I go up to Ramothgilead?" And they all said, "Go up. Go up. Go up and the Lord will prosper you." Jehoshaphat knew better. He committed himself like an idiot to go with Ahab but he said, "Is there not yet a prophet of the Lord of whom we may inquire?" "Well, there is Micaiah but he never says anything good about me." And as the guard goes to fetch the prophet, he says to him, "Micaiah, all the prophets are speaking with one voice, now why don't you do the same? Enough of this making a difference, enough of this separation, enough of this bigotry as if you alone are right."

I admire Micaiah but there are very few of them. Can you imagine the pressure standing before two great monarchs surrounded by all their prophets and all the pomp of their court and the excitement of an army ready for war and thirsting for victory and you stand there, one lone voice, but the voice of God. I'll tell you, to stand like Micaiah is a difficult thing but that's what we're called upon to do.

We will be in conflict with the apostates from evangelicalism. Rome is trumpeting the number of people who have given up evangelicalism. Not just given up Protestantism but given up evangelicalism to go back into Rome. Elisabeth Elliot's brother Thomas Howard, high profile convert, pervert to Rome, he fell in love with Rome's history, he fell in love with Rome's beauty, the beauty of her liturgy, the beauty of her buildings. Frankie Schaeffer, the son of the late Francis Schaeffer, didn't join Rome, he joined the Eastern Orthodox and what attracted him was the same thing, just beauty. He talks about the planned ugliness of Protestant churches. The man hasn't a clue in the world what he's talking about. This stirring of the sense, even they be the aesthetic senses, is no indication of any spiritual value. As a Presbyterian, I am glad to say I believe in severely simple churches because this is not a church in a real sense, it's but a meetinghouse. And I believe in a severely simple service because what is not mandated by Scripture, what is not cleared by the word of God, is an innovation and a imposition of the carnal mind. We have people like Howard professedly drawn by the inadequacies of evangelical worship and be aesthetically linked to Rome. Of course, the truth is that in his heart, and he

ultimately came to confess this, the reality is that he fell in love with the authority of the pope rather than the sole authority of Scripture.

Then you have people like the ex-Presbyterian ministers, Scott Hahn and Gerry Matatics, two of the most voluble proponents of popery today. These are men who took on the great doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, sola scriptura, said the Bible itself doesn't teach it. Took on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and threw it over for the formulation of the Council of Trent. There is a drift.

You will find that there are evangelicals straying back into Romanism and then you've got the compromisers. We some time ago were taken up with dealing with ECT, Evangelicals and Catholics Together. Some of the greatest names in evangelical Protestantism were associated with that. James Packer, perhaps the most famous modern Reformed theologian and a man of rare ability in theological matters and yet there he is yoked with Evangelicals and Catholics Together. It sounds very good, we have so much that we have in common, but the trouble is they play down the reasons for separation and it all comes down to this: that ultimately there is a devaluing of the biblical doctrine of justification.

Now, here is just a brief list of some of the things and movements against which we will be in conflict but understand this: if you ever want to serve Christ, and I want you to get a vision, especially you young men, I want you to get a vision for serving Christ, I want you to be stirred in your heart from what God has done in the past to rise up and do something in your day. Under God, the future is in your hands. I want you to have that vision and be stirred with that energy and filled with the Spirit for that work, but understand that you will be called to a work of ongoing conflict.

The second thing I'll say, however, is this: we will prevail in that conflict only as we maintain the great truths of the Protestant Reformation because they are biblical truths. I will not take time again to expound the faith of the Reformation and go into the sola scriptura. That is the basis of everything. What is your authority for believing anything? It is the word of God. Not augmented by papal authority, not augmented by Roman tradition, not augmented by Protestant confessions. Let me emphasize that. I signed the Westminster Confession of Faith as a statement of faith, not as something by which to judge the Scripture but something that having studied, I believe is a good expression of what the Scripture teaches. The Scripture is our sole authority, sola fide, justified by faith without works.

I want to tell you, these are the great truths. We must be gripped with the same passion for truth as filled the Reformers, especially a mighty passion for the glory of God. That's one thing that moves your heart. When you read Luther or Calvin, and I take them as the two most accessible and most famous of the Reformers, but it's true whether you read John Knox or if you read Hugh Latimer or any of the English Reformers or any of the continental Reformers, when you read you'll find that there is in them a burning passion for the glory of God.

You know, that's what makes it so difficult for us in the 21st century to understand what those people were doing in the 16th century. We blame and I'm not going to rehash what I covered last week. We blame them for their conjunction of church and state. We blame them for allowing blasphemy to stay on the criminal code. We can't understand that, but as I said last week, they could not understand where we are today. A leading Roman Catholic layman spoke of tolerance and he said tolerance is the virtue of those who believe in nothing. There is a lot of truth in that. Another famous English writer said this: in the world it's called tolerance but in hell it's called despair. The sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die, that's the relativism of the age in which we live. That's the self-centered existential sort of philosophy that has been imbibed even in the professing church of Jesus Christ. We pride ourselves that we are more tolerant than the Reformers of the 16th century, the reality is most of us believe in nothing, or if we believe in it, we don't care enough about it. We stay alive because there's nothing we'd be willing to die for.

That's where the church is today and I want to tell you, great wars are not won by fainthearted sissies, great wars are won by men who count not their lives dear even unto death. And we will not see the work of God succeed under our ministries, let me bring it right down to this church and this denomination, we will do nothing great for God if we have nothing more than educated sissies in the pulpit who have no fire in their bones, no burning zeal in their heart, no guts to stand for God, no willingness to give up everything for the furtherance of the Gospel. But give us men who will maintain the truths of the Reformation as the Reformers did with a burning passion for the glory of God, give us men who have burned every bridge behind them, give us men who are willing to be counted the off-scouring of all flesh that Christ may be glorified, and we will win the day.

The third thing I say is this: we must however learn from both the successes and the failures of the Reformers. I pointed out some of the failures last week and one that stands out is their failure to maintain a united front against the real foes. Too often they were found warring among themselves. Now again, we've got to place ourselves in their situation. We're used to instantaneous communication, we're used to the diffusion of information very very quickly, in those days it didn't happen that way. It was difficult to get information from one place to another and on the field of battle with the cloud and the dust of controversy, it was difficult very often to know exactly who your friends and who your foes were. Sometimes I think what would it be like had we been able, and I think it would have been a good thing if somebody had been able to do it, to get your Luther and your Zwingli and your Calvin and your Conrad Grebel and your Menno Simons and put them all in a great room and lock the doors and say, "You'll neither have food nor water until you get your Bibles down and work this all out."

There are things that divided them that would never, and they will never be completely answered to everybody's satisfaction before Christ comes. The matter of baptism is one of them. It has divided the people of God and it's crazy just to say, "Well, I'm biblical and he's not." As I tried to point out last week, there were reasons for holding to pedobaptism beyond baptism itself and that's the underlying doctrine of Scripture and the relation of

the Old to the New Testament. Those are deep things but a world it would have been if the Reformers had been able to keep their powder dry for the real enemy. What a different place Europe would have been.

We must know our enemies and fight them and not our friends. I say this as somebody who, I've often described the Free Presbyterians like the meat in the middle of a sandwich, you get teeth from both sides. I'm a Presbyterian, I'm a Calvinist and I am too fundamental for the Reformed. The Reformed despise the Free church. We don't exist as far as they're concerned, we're too pietistically fundamentalist. But then we have fundamentalists who treat us like we have the plague because we're too Calvinistic. I have fundamentalist brethren and they dare not let me into their pulpit, the walls might come tumbling down.

I, on the other hand, being truly ecumenical, I have been able to open my pulpit and the walls haven't come tumbling down. I hope this will come out a little when Eugene talks to us next week. I don't know, I don't tell him what to say. But you know, behind the Iron Curtain during the years of Communist dictatorship, God's people had their differences, many of them were Baptists but many of them were Pentecostals, but do you know what they found? When it was a matter of life and death, they didn't fight each other. It didn't matter. I'm not saying that they united, they didn't. They were true to what they believed but they didn't fight each other. They had a common foe.

I am sick listening to Reformed, to Presbyterians, dismiss the fundamental Baptist as a bunch of legalists and sick listening to that lying garbage. Oh, there are legalists among fundamental Baptists but there are legalists among the Presbyterians as well. And I'm sick of listening to fundamental Baptists dismiss the Calvinists as people who don't believe in prayer or soul winning when their own history books will tell them that this very country was evangelized before the Baptists every got going by Five Point Calvinists.

What I'm saying to you is that there is an ancient motto, it was I think first put out by Augustine of Hippo, it was repeated and preached by Richard Baxter, the great English Puritan, and it's three little lines and, my, we should take them to heart. "In essentials unity. In non-essentials liberty. And in all things charity." We must not make the mistakes that our forefathers made.

We should also, of course, remember their successes. They succeeded in taking the Gospel to men of every class: to princes, to magistrates and to common people. Some of them were theologians, some of them were simple Gospel preachers, some of them were flaming evangelists. William Farrell preaching the Gospel and seeing many many many people and whole towns come to Christ. But there were others: the Waldensians never gave up their distribution of Scripture at the risk of their own lives, going into marketplaces to get out the word of God. The Bohemian Brethren, the spiritual children of Jan Hus, right up until and then during the Reformation giving out the Gospel. As I pointed out last week, had a major part in bringing Poland to a golden age of Gospel opportunity. The same was true, I must confess, of many Anabaptist preachers. Some of

the Anabaptists, it's a blanket term that's very difficult to define, were foolish and they caused great great trouble, but there were others at the cost of their lives that were willing to go to preach as best they could and call men to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. In one way or another despite their differences, these Reformers were getting the Gospel of Christ out.

Let me tell you, that is the crying need of our day. That's it. Get out the Gospel. Give out the Scriptures. Where you work, speak of Christ. Take nothing for granted. When I had a couple of years at the lowest part of the totem pole in the business world, I have to make it clear, the lowest rung on the ladder, in fact, I probably hadn't even gotten to the first rung, I was the thing they put the ladder on. And I remember going into that office in a vow to God in my heart, "I will be a witness for Christ," and God blessed that witness. There were two professing Christians already in that office and never once had there been, never once had there been one word of Gospel witness to any of those unsaved people.

Take nothing for granted. The young lady who was given to me as a typist was as religious as they come. She was in church three times every Sunday. She was a member of the Church of Ireland, that's the Episcopal Church in Ireland. I well remember carrying a little Gospel or a little New Testament in my top pocket and I would bring it out and I wasn't stealing the time. Let me tell you, don't steal your employer's time to do the work of God. I wasn't stealing the time. We had a certain amount of work to do, we did it, and if you had to stay an extra half hour to do it, you didn't get paid for doing that, you just did it. I take out my New Testament and I talk to her. She would get to bringing in her prayer book. For the first time she heard the Gospel and she's in heaven today because an 18 year old spoke of Christ.

My, that's the need. I read an article in a secular magazine about the Assemblies of God working in South America and especially in Brazil, and how that over the past almost 40 years, probably 40 years now or more, more than 40 years, they had seen a million people a year come to faith in Christ. Now, I know it's easy to blow them off and say, "Well, they're Pentecostals, aren't they?" Yeah, so what? "Oh, I'm sure there's a lot of chaff in that." Well, there might be chaff but I have no doubt there was chaff in that. Tell me, would you rather have no harvest in order to have no chaff or would you rather put up with a bit of chaff and have a great harvest?

A million people a year and I was very interested to read what this secular magazine had to say because as they described what they were doing there, you know, I said to my wife, I said, "That's exactly what the Free Church did in Northern Ireland." Step for step exactly the same thing. We had no access to the centers of power. We had no access even to the daily newspaper. If you wrote a letter to them, they cut it to ribbons to make you look like a fool. We had no access to radio. In those days, television had hardly even gotten started and we certainly had no access to that. But one thing we did have, we had tongues in our head. We had Gospels in our hand. We had gone out to the street corner and we gave out the Gospel and when people got saved, they started witnessing and they

started bringing their workmates to sit under the sound of the Gospel and wherever people got saved, they saw other people saved and that's how the work of God took off.

That's still the way. That's still the way. What the Free Presbyterian Church needs in Greenville is a bunch of people on fire to go out and reach other people and bring them to Jesus Christ and bring them unto the sound of the Gospel and disciple them in the things of God, that they may go out and win souls for Jesus Christ and bring them to be disciplined, that they may go out and bring souls to Christ. That's the working of a New Testament church.

My friend, that's what we need to do and if we do that, we will see what the Reformers saw, we'll see the Gospel make radical changes even to the nation. We must never lose the vision of a sweeping revival but, you know, the key to it was this: they gave everything in this. This is not a part-time job. What you have as your job, what earns your bread and butter, that's your part-time job. Now give it all you have, be a good employee. If you're saved, you should be the best employee that you can be, but that's your part-time job. Your real job is the kingdom of Jesus Christ. That's your real job.

They gave everything and that's the kind of passion we need. Men with that message, men with that commitment, will always see God maintain his cause and they will see the work go on to the ages to come. Now, there is more, the last thing I'll say is this: that we have every reason to expect the Lord to give us a glorious future, instead of your fathers, it will be your children. Do you know what I want to see? I want to see God do such a work in my day that instead of people talking about what happened in the 16th century for decades and if Christ tarries for centuries even, rather looking back to say what God did in our day.

Can he do it? That's the vision I want you to get. That's the hope I want to burn in your heart. Instead of your fathers, it will be your children. You see, it's God's purpose to continue his work from generation to generation. It's God's promise to continue his work from generation to generation and God's people in every generation should be and may be. That means you should be, I should be and we may be in no degree behind our fathers in our experience of God's grace and power.

I come back to where I started. I find God for what he did in the past but we must refuse to live in the past. Rise up, O man of God. Have done with lesser things. That's the call, rise up. Serve God as David did. Serve God in your generation. Give them everything you are and everything you have. Set out to blaze a trail that's worthy of him. Will you make it your prayer, your constant ambition, your burning desire, "Lord, let me do something great for God"?

You say, "But preacher, I'm not a Luther, I'm not a Calvin, I'm not a Knox, I'm not this." So what? You can do something great for God. If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Is there any limit to what the Holy Ghost can do? As Henry Varley said and D. L. Moody learned, "The world has yet to see what God can do through a man

who is fully dedicated to Christ." "Lord, let me do something great for God. Let me do something that's worthy of the name of Christ."

May God stir our hearts. There is a great future for the work of God. Make sure you're part of it. Make sure you are a worker in it.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Let's all pray.

In just a moment the meeting will be over. I wonder if the Lord has spoken to your heart. We often hear in missionary meetings, "There's a call comes ringing o'er the restless wave, 'Send the light! Send the light!'" That's true. Let me introduce you to a higher, greater and better call, it's a call from the throne of God. "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" I trust tonight if you're a Christian, that you will yield that heart and that life, your time, your talent, your gifts and your abilities, your body, your brains, your everything, to the service of Jesus Christ. I believe there's a great future for God's work and I want to be part of it. What about you?

Father in heaven, bless thy word to every heart, we pray. We thank thee for what we have heard from the fathers of the great work that God did in their day. But O Lord, in this day of great need, "Arise, why sleepest thou?" Arise, O God, visit thy church. Visit this company of people. God have mercy and stir the hearts of God's people tonight. We ask thee, Lord, that thou will raise up a band of young men who have caught the vision and who have caught fire for God. O Lord, we pray, sanctify them wholly spirit, soul and body. Fill them with thy Holy Spirit. Baptize them with power from above. O God, give them that burning zeal to burn every bridge behind them, to say, "The cross before me. The world behind me. No turning back." Lord, give them that and, God, grant that from this house will go out a stream of men and women, indeed, who will be witnesses to God's Christ, servants in the cause of the King, good soldiers in the battle for truth. Hear our prayer and revive thy work again that thy people may rejoice in thee. Part us now in the fear of God and in the faith of the Gospel and in the hope of thy glorious promise. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.