

Church History - Session 9 (The Reformation)

by Edgar F. Parkyns

The Reformation period was marked by significant challenges, including persecution and corruption, but ultimately led to the spread of the Bible and the establishment of Protestantism.

Duration: 52:58

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:4, Romans 3:25, Romans 5:1, Romans 8:16

Topics: "Church History", "Reformation Theology"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the Reformation period and the challenges faced by the work of God during that time. It was believed that the old forms of medieval Christianity would be replaced by a new Bible-enlightened Christianity. The speaker also mentions the impact of John Wesley and the Methodist societies in England, where people gathered to seek salvation and encourage one another in their faith. The sermon also touches on the influence of the Jesuits and their use of sensual religion and elaborate rituals to enhance their appeal.

Transcript

The first moment is when I was describing a vision that the Lord brought me after a very heavy decrescent last week by a good old Lutheran text suggests to live by faith. And then he said, well I thought our prayers might have had something to do with it because they very definitely did pray for me the other night and that's quite true. But I'm very glad that the uplift is not just dependent upon the passing experience of your prayers but God has brought me back to one of the great foundational truths because that means that the thing has permanent basis.

Hallelujah. So, that's very satisfying. Now, you have all the notes for today's lesson in front of you so there's not a tremendous amount of need for me to go through them at any rate in great detail as we have quite a lot of ground to cover.

We'll pick up from the Reformation period at which we were looking last week. And we will have a little look at the difficulties which met and hindered the mighty work of God at that time. It looked as though all Europe would find the old established forms of medieval Christianity swept away and a new Bible-enlightened Christianity would take its place.

But there were difficulties which met the flood of new light. The first one was the organized opposition of the Catholic Church. It had been in control of things fairly peaceably for the best part of twelve centuries

and now when there was such a strong turning away from the authority of a teaching church to the authority of Scripture, the first weapon she used was persecution.

There had of course been degrees of persecution before but during the Reformation period, the 16th, 17th and even on into the 18th century there was persecution on a tremendous scale. It's not easy to authenticate figures because obviously the Catholic Church records differ from the Protestant records. All history is like this, it just depends which history book you read what figures you get.

Indeed, even in common newspaper reporting, two papers with different sympathies can report the same thing from entirely different points of view, emphasize certain aspects and conceal others. At any rate, it has been estimated that 50 million Bible believers suffered death often preceded by torture, before the truths belonging to the open Bible were re-established. And while this does include figures dating back from about the 10th century and going on to the 18th century yet the peak of all that persecution was around the 16th and 17th.

We were looking last week at the Inquisition and some of the methods that were used to bring heretics back to the fold of the Church and we also saw something of the armies which enacted the decrees for the extermination of heretics. We didn't say anything about the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve in France. There was such a great company of Huguenot or Protestant people, especially in Provence in the south that they constituted at least a third of the population.

Admiral Colligny was one of the great leaders of that group and France had to deal with this great section and they arranged a royal marriage between one of the Protestant princes and one of the Catholic princesses. The whole occasion was set up for the feast of St. Bartholomew and the Protestants, believing that peace had at last come they had been persecuted for some years believing that peace had at last come came into Paris by the thousands and at midnight a signal was given and they were surprised and slaughtered. You may have seen a lovely picture of that story showing a young Protestant, obviously an aristocrat whose fiancé is trying to tie onto his arm a white kerchief which was the secret signal of those who belonged to the Catholic exterminators and he is gently removing it as she is trying to persuade him to wear it before he goes out to make his escape.

Details about the Bartholomew's Eve have been played down, of course, by Catholic historians and they would have done better except that the Pope had a medal struck in commemoration of the extirpation of heretics on that eve and commending France as the eldest son of the Church and actually showing a picture of the massacre on the medal. Of course, medals are still in existence so there is irrefutable evidence of the Pope's complicity in the matter. Later on, the revocation of the Edict of Nancy was one of those events in France which pretty well wiped out Protestant testimony in that country.

She did have a fine number of Protestant communities but with the revocation of the Edict of Nancy all Bible-loving believers lost their citizenship and many were driven out. Henry of Navarre had brought in the Edict a hundred years before and it was an Edict of religious toleration which allowed people to meet in freedom of worship and read the Bible and exhort one another without molestation. Then Louis XIV, a hundred years later, revoked it, called it back, cancelled it and the dragonards, the army, dragoons were billeted in the Protestant provinces.

Everybody who wanted to retain their faith in the Bible and in Christ lost house and property and had to leave the country and as they were leaving they were very often slaughtered. Many of them died at sea in an attempt to get away. France never recovered and a hundred years later again plunged into the French

Revolution when the whole country turned against religion and aristocracy and a reign of terror you all know about had its roots in the extermination of Christian testimony a hundred years before.

The wheels of God grind slowly but they grind exceedingly small. But the chief agency in the Counter-Reformation was the Society of Jesus founded by Ignatius Loyola who was contemporary with Martin Luther. Both were seeking God.

Martin Luther found God through the Bible. Ignatius Loyola had a vision of the Virgin Mary and in his illness he dedicated himself to the Virgin Mary to the church and the service of the papacy and formed a small company of brethren who made vows of absolute submission to their superior and built up a company of people tightly bound together by secret oaths and with amazing loyalty to their cause and with amazing ability too. His missionaries travelled to many parts of the world.

Francis Xavier was one. He is famed for his mission to Lepers but what people don't know is that Francis Xavier or at least his companions taught the Chinese that Christ was a manifestation of Brahma and this was one of the perversions of the gospel that they practiced. I am told also that some of the Jesuit missionaries were the Indians of North America told them that Christ would scout more enemies than anyone else in the world.

They were quite able to adapt to whatever circumstance they were in as part of their understanding trained to this. The diplomats of the Jesuit movement entered into every government in Europe and were responsible for assassinations, wars and all sorts of intrigue. They became so infamous for their plottings that every country in Europe in turn turned them out.

They used to manage to get back again after a few years. In education they did a tremendous work. They had seen that the Dominicans who operated the Inquisition were failing in their task because the more you killed heretics the more they flourished.

The more every time you burned a Bible believer two would take his place. And obviously torture and death were not doing their work. So the Jesuits went in for education.

In Poland particularly they got friendly with the government had permission to set up schools especially among the children of the aristocrats and within two generations had turned the whole country away from the gospel without shedding blood. And from then on Poland was closed to the Bible and to preachers of the gospel. They vastly affected education in many lands seeking to erase the indictments of history against their church and they had done that very, very well.

As you can see the history that I am bringing you is something you have scarcely ever heard about. That's Jesuit work. It's smart work to wipe all this out of men's memory and to enhance her colourful antiquities.

That is, Jesuits know the appeal of sensual religion the appeal of fine architecture, beautiful colours, elaborate ritual and they have fostered these things everywhere and they have used their powerful appeal.

My last sentence there looks a bit strong I have drawn it from Rhet and Guinness and I haven't got my direct authority with me but a Jesuit may assume any disguise tell any lie, perpetrate any deed without violating his conscience because he has been trained during his early years to regard the advancement of the church as a justified motive for any act that is, the end justifies the means and a Jesuit obeys his superior without question and his superior will obey the Governor General of the Order and the General will submit to the Pope so there is a perfect machine but having said all that we must recognise that the

worst hindrances to the truth came from among the ranks of the reformers and their churches because you may give a man a new title let him join a new church but it doesn't

necessarily change his heart and the same corruptions that had grown so long in the Catholic Church began to reappear in the reformed churches in many countries an alliance was formed for the sake of protection between the church and the state thus in Germany the Lutheran Princes protected the Lutheran Church and the followers of Luther often lacking pure love of the gospel imitated his worst characteristics Luther, while he was a tremendous man on justification by faith and on the proclamation of the gospel was nevertheless hot-headed and very often very hard in his dealings and some of his followers imitated his worst characteristics and persecuted all who desired freedom of worship Luther himself broke free and claimed freedom from the dominion of the Catholic Church but then he set up

a state church from which no one was allowed to deviate so denying the very principle of liberty which he had discovered he was especially annoyed with all the little sects who grew up looking into the Bible for fresh truth and going off into different directions and he persecuted them when the Peasants' Revolt broke out this was a time of great ferment in Germany the Peasants' Revolt broke out soon after which wasn't entirely dissociated with the Lutheran Revival because as people began to get the knowledge of the Bible spread especially when it was spread through cartoons they began to be discontent with the order of things as they were and eventually the Peasants' Revolt broke out Luther was hard against it and wrote to the German princes exhorting them to quell the Peasants' Revolt

with fire and sword which they did and Luther applauded them for merciless treatment of the poor and ignorant peasants so none of us is perfect and when we see the human corruption satanically inspired that has marred one great movement let's not fail to recognize the same thing will happen anywhere the Protestant government of Zurich, Switzerland ordered that all who stood for baptism of believers by immersion should be drowned it wasn't a big scale thing but it was bad enough and it showed the same persecuting spirit Felix Menz, a godly leader and a great gospel preacher supported them in this way in Vienna, Austria Habmeier, a mighty preacher of the gospel loving the Bible and preaching it and bringing thousands to Christ he preached in Switzerland and in Moravia and elsewhere after a

lifetime of suffering he was persecuted by Catholics and Protestants he was burned alive at Vienna and a week later his wife was drowned in the river obviously he was an Anabaptist they thought that drowning was the best way to treat people who wanted baptism bitter, cruel persecution John Denk, believing in the leading of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Bible he was very much of your line of thinking so aren't you glad he didn't live in those days John Denk, believing in the leading of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Bible was persecuted by Zwinglians from Switzerland Lutherans from Germany and Catholics from Austria Michael Sadler a leader among the Anabaptists was arrested and burned and his wife his wife being drowned shortly afterwards you see the hatred against

baptism in these grounds other troubles arose through false prophets among the multitude of sects that arose there were naturally many who were seeking for new experiences in the Spirit I'm sure that many were genuine but more were merely over-excited people looking for vision and experience and spiritual gifts rather than looking for a Bible-instructed walk with God and they spread throughout the provinces of Germany at Münster the prophets there decided they ought to set up the New Jerusalem I think you've heard of that somewhere else too haven't I? even in this country it's one of the manifestations of spiritual undisciplined exuberance in their movement there were murders of those who opposed them there was polygamy you'll find that sexual immorality often accompanies undisciplined

spiritual movements it's happening today there was enforced community of goods worship I don't think these are new American manifestations they're old and the bishop of Münster called in the army and annihilated them they were called Anabaptists and this name was generally given to all those who believed in baptism of believers by immersion they were all called Anabaptists and it became a word of odium one that people did not like meanwhile Lutheranism lost sight of the gospel not completely but to a great degree and having retained many of the forms of the old medieval religion clung more to those forms than to the life of the gospel and I said here like the church of England the same sort of thing happened there the church of England too became formal and but lifeless so I would like to

say here that we have looked in history at the great corruption of the professing church known as the Roman Catholic church but I think we may see that any other church given the same circumstances and given the same opportunities and the same length of time would have been likely to go the same road it's the expression of the corrupt human heart trying to be religious without regeneration it's what happens when Satan gets hold of religious men he can do more with religious men than any other type and no wonder that he he has a go at all of us we're his prime targets and so we have looked at some shocking things in history and believe me we've only scratched the surface but this tendency to corruption is latent everywhere and it's only the grace of God and the continued renewing of the

Holy Ghost that keeps the church clean my my we little understand the forces of darkness that are out to destroy the testimony of Jesus Christ and it's good to have a look back at church history and see how these things have happened I found that Menno Simon we don't hear of him in Britain but you've heard of him over here Menno Simon comes out of all this mess and confusion an Anabaptist that is he believed in the baptism of adults a wise and godly leader but the founder of the Mennonite church helped many people to a to a sane disciplined following of the Bible over the page in England during the brief reign of the boy king Edward VI his father was Henry VIII Protestantism flourished you remember the Lollards who had been spreading all through Henry the reign of Henry VIII in spite of

persecution both from the Catholic church and also later from the new newly formed church of England Protestantism flourished and in the church of England during his reign there were many fine God fearing Bible loving believers but he was followed by his half sister Mary who was intensely Roman Catholic had Jesuits in her court and determined to swing Britain back to Rome in her reign Ridley, Latimer Coverdale Cranmer and hundreds of others were burned at the stake in Britain too in my own hometown I often see the monuments there although people don't like that kind of monument they want to forget that these things ever happened Cranmer was the Archbishop of the church he was the one who Henry chose to lead the new church of England of which Henry became the head Cranmer its Archbishop

but although he was a timid man he was a God fearing man and although under pressure he denied the truth that he believed in his heart yet he repented and we saw last week that when he was being tied to the stake he held out the hand that had signed the document of repentance and allowed it to be burned steadfastly he held it out in remembrance of his shame when he went back on the truth Ridley a dear godly Bishop Traberdale one of the men who translated and spread the Bible in the English language Latimer was an up and coming young clergyman in Oxford eager for high office in the church he had seen a tremendous example of Wolsey the famous Cardinal who wanted to be Pope and just missed it and Latimer was headed for high office he carried the cross in the great ecclesiastical processions

at Oxford but there was a little group of believing students at Oxford who used to pray and read the Bible together and among them was a young fellow named Thomas Bilney rather weak and frail and certainly

very timid but Bilney used to pray for Latimer and he had a tender heart and longed for the conversion of this young man and one day Bilney at the close of the Sunday morning matins went to Latimer and said Sir will you hear my confession and Latimer delighted to think that one of the heretics was going to come to him was quick to agree and Bilney went to Latimer's study and he fell on his knees and he began to confess how the load of his sins had weighed him down, how he had sought God by prayer and fasting by penance, by confession by the sacraments and found no peace but how at last

he had turned to Jesus Christ crucified and the peace of God had come into his heart and everything had become new and the proud Latimer found himself caught the Holy Spirit was there and this ambitious young churchman was broken before God in his own study and found Christ and this man who hoped to be one of the leading churchmen of his day finished up at the stake, a higher honour and when he and Ridley were in the flames facing each other at two stakes in the heart of London Latimer cried out so that many could hear his words were written down Be of good cheer Master Ridley and play the man we shall this day by God's great grace light such a torch in England as will never be put out and the Bible that we hold in our hands is a demonstration he was right never has that light of

scripture been put out among English speaking people Queen Elizabeth the first put an end to these persecutions she wasn't very religious she liked certainly the most colourful services she could find she liked pomp and ceremony but she did have protestant leanings she put an end to these persecutions and proclaimed herself protestant and her leading churchmen were good protestants as a result the Pope got the King of Spain Philip to launch, to build and launch the Great Armada in an attempt to bring England back to the fold of the church God intervened and that mighty fleet was wrecked off the English coast Queen Elizabeth put an end to these persecutions but as a loyal head of the Church of England persecuted dissenters, Puritans and they had a rough time during her reign in 1620

everybody over here knows I think the Pilgrim Fathers seeking freedom of conscience and worship landed at Pnt I have a note here to read you a page from a talk to a testimony John Kennedy it was from the congregation at Leyden some of the English people went over to Holland to find refuge there originated an event notable in the history of England and America the sailing of the Pilgrim Fathers aboard the Mayflower for the New World in 1620 it was the start of the great Puritan emigration across the Atlantic the first small company led by their elder William Brewster landed in Plymouth, New England to establish a colony where men could worship God unhindered and give full expression to what he taught them from his word John Robinson remained behind in Leyden and charged the departing

company with words which fell right to the foundation of the life of the Church I charge you, before God and his blessed angels that you follow me, no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ if God reveals anything to you by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as you were to receive any truth by my ministry, for I am very persuaded the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of His Holy Word good isn't it?

For my part I cannot sufficiently derail the condition of those Reformed Churches which are come to a period in religion and will go up present no come to a period in religion and will go up present no further than the instruments of their Reformation the Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw whatever part of His will our God has revealed to Calvin they will rather die than embrace it the Calvinists you see, stick fast for where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things this is a misery much to be lamented in other words he's saying keep moving on in the light of God let your revelation be base squarely on this book and not on wild and sensible interpretation Arminius a Protestant

Dutch theologian at the close of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th questioned some of the teachings of Calvinism.

I think he was originally required to write in defense of Calvinism but when he examined the Scripture carefully he felt he had to change his ground and so Arminius became the father of a whole school of thought the Arminian school of thought in contradistinction to the Calvinist school of thought.

And here are some of the things that his followers declared they made a statement to clarify their position. The decree of salvation that's a phrase they borrowed from Calvin Calvin talks about the decrees of God God decreed salvation for some damnation for others says Calvin. So they say the decree of salvation applies to all who believe in Christ and who persevere in obedience and faith Calvin would say that the decree of salvation applies to all the elect so here's a slightly different approach.

Christ died for all men Calvin said Christ died for the elect the Holy Spirit must help men to do good things which are truly good such as having faith in Christ for salvation that is you can't believe just by your own ability. You need divine help. How much we say amen to that God's saving grace they said is not irresistible.

Calvin said it was. Man is so far depraved that unless irresistible grace operates upon him he cannot possibly be saved. Arminius didn't agree and a clause that everyone knows too.

It is possible for those who are Christians to fall from grace. So that was the Arminian position and I think probably more of us would find ourselves happy with it than with the extreme Calvinistic position. What do you think? Everybody still argues it to this day.

Moving on. Reformers of the Reformation. I borrowed that title from one of my textbooks.

Reformers of the Reformation. The Reformation settled down back into formal religion for the most part and God still continued to raise up his testimony although there is this continual tide, I would almost say, a current leading away from God. Yet God is also operating in some respect sovereignly from time to time, raising up his men to lead in the direction against the tide, against the current.

And when in England many people were settling down to drift along with formal religion when the average person knew a lot more about hunting, shooting and fishing than about what's written in the pages of the Bible there arose George Cox and in his searching he found the secret of Christ within you, the hope of glory. And he meditated so much on the inner light that he rejected all together. He said the spiritual meaning is the great thing.

Get the spiritual meaning feed on Christ in your heart and you don't need baptism. If you don't need the supper. If you are truly if you truly died with Christ you don't need to be baptized.

He took an extreme view against the sacraments which of course had been overlaid with a good deal of ritualism. He was both fearless and meek and a very difficult man to deal with. When they brought him up in court he wore his hat.

And when they told him to take it off he he asked them to show from the Bible where he should take his hat off. He didn't call what they called the buildings churches. He called them steeple houses.

That's the house of a steeple on the island. That's not a church. The church is composed of living stones.

That's in it in the church. That's a steeple house. And so George Fox was put in jail for his strange views and went around preaching through the country to all those who were tender.

He looked for tender people. That's one of his own phrases. He meant those who would receive the convictions of the Holy Ghost in their conscience.

And you'll find in his diary he writes, I went to Bedford and I found there certain tender people. And this is how he ministered through the country. And he had quite a large following.

He wore a famous leather jacket. And this enabled him to sleep out in rough bed and put up with all sorts of things. I've seen one of the prisons at Lansdowne in the west of England where he was shut up for many months.

So societies of friends were formed. It was meant to be an undenominable name. What could you have left undenominable than a society of friends? In theory it doesn't bear the stigma of any denomination.

But you can't escape it. Can you? They were called Quakers and their nicknames stuck. Just as the Methodists were called Methodists and their nicknames stuck.

His followers and other Puritans were persecuted and fined during the reign of Charles II, who although supposedly the head of the Church of England was secretly a Catholic. The secret wasn't found out until after his death. He instituted the Five Mile Conventicle Act.

No one could hold a religious meeting without the authority of the state church unless it was five miles from any village or town. To this day you can still find in Britain in remote places the remains of the old chapels that were put up in those days miles away from anywhere. And some of their communities they are still direct connections to that town.

During these times of oppression many pilgrims came over to this side and among them William Penn. An aristocrat with plenty of money. The king owed him a great big debt that he couldn't repay and he obtained Pennsylvania by permission of the king.

And there he set up that land as a model colony. Refused to fight with the Indians and the first inhabitants, first settlers in Pennsylvania were very godly men indeed. And there's no doubt still a tradition in that way.

His next name of course should be John Bunyan. He was an independent citizen and Isaac Watts belonged to the 17th century also. I would advise you to read John Bunyan's Great Abounding and also Pilgrim's Progress even if you haven't seen it since you were a child.

And read Pilgrim's Progress right through. You'll find a mine of spiritual instruction in that quaint old book. In the meantime in Geneva and France and Holland Jean de Labade a gospel preacher founded house groups.

No new idea. In Geneva, France and Holland. And he aimed bless his heart, at perfection in the assembly.

He wanted an assembly absolutely matching the very best in the New Testament. So here's someone also with whom you have some sympathy. He failed to achieve it.

It's nice to have good ideals, isn't it? August, that should be France, I'm sorry. A pietist. There are a number of folks who are known as pietists of this period who were not strictly attached to any

denomination but sought by contemplation to know God.

Madame Guillaume was one, and she was a Catholic. Bishop Penelon another, also a Catholic. And there was Thomas Kempis, also a Catholic.

There are others who were Protestants who concentrated on the life of meditation. He became a professor at Harley University, preached conversion and the godly life, influenced missionaries to go to India and preach Christ and founded faith orphanages. Isn't that amazing? We always thought that George Muller was the first, but here way back more than a century before is a man on the continent doing the same thing.

Count Zinzendorf is another name that we should remember particularly, born in Germany in 1700, converted while still a child. He founded a settlement for persecuted Moravians on his own estate. And there they met for worship and prayer and became a Bible-loving gospel-propagating community who sent out missionaries throughout the world.

The dawn of the great Protestant missionary movement was on Count Zinzendorf's estate in Germany. The Moravians, being Bible-believers and people of prayer, people of prayer and the Bible, knew the meaning of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. So that when the two Wesley brothers went over to America, they found on their ship some of these Moravian missionaries travelling also.

During a violent storm when even the sailors feared that the ship would be stowed in, when it looked as though the main mast was going by the board and the passengers were clinging to each other in terror, Wesley found that he himself, faced with the apparent reality of approaching sudden death, realized he wasn't prepared to meet God, although he was a God-fearing, praying, earnest clergyman. He found also to his amazement that the Moravians, even their women and children, could quietly pray and worship in the midst of the storm and were a liability to no one. They were so beautifully controlled.

And when the storm was over, he said to one of their leaders, How is it that your people are not afraid? And he said, Well, they know God. They're ready to go. And that experience never left Wesley, and all the frustrations of his ministry over here, not far from here I believe, he remembered that encounter.

And when at last he was recalled as a failure, he wrote in his diary, I went to America to convert the Indians, but oh my God, who shall convert me? And came back to Britain still very conscientious, but utterly frustrated and in darkness, and met with Peter Boaler, another Moravian, who was able to help him to an assurance, toward assurance of salvation. Did I tell you that Peter Boaler told him to preach justification by faith, even though he hadn't experienced it? Did I tell you that one? Yes, that was his remedy. He said, you, Wesley was saying, how can I get this justification by faith? I read it, I pray about it, but it's not in my heart.

Says Boaler, my brother, you've been praying for it a long time, why don't you preach it? No, I'm not going to preach, I'm not willing to preach. You preach it, he says, until you've got it. And when you've got it, you'll know what you're preaching about.

And Wesley began to take it advice. And they say that Wesley and John and Charles, John and Charles, doing their duty, going to the prison to speak to prisoners, went to deal with a man who was condemned to death for sheep-stealing. That was the law in those days.

And they found this poor fellow terrified, not only at the prospect of death, but at the prospect of eternal judgment. And the two brothers read the Church of England prayers to him, and talked to him, and then they opened the scripture to Romans and showed him the way of peace through the blood of Christ. And to their amazement, when they prayed, they saw a change in over the man.

And he passed from being trembling and almost imbecile, into being triumphantly at peace with God. And they accompanied him to the scaffold, praying with him, but he was far happier than they were. And he went to his death absolutely victorious.

And the two brothers looked at each other in bewilderment. They said, How is he blotted? We haven't. That within a week, I think it was, both brothers found peace with God.

John had a little meeting in Aldersgate Street, where he heard one reading Luther's notes on the Epistle to Romans. The blessed assurance of sin's forgiven came to his heart. He knew he was a child of God.

The Holy Spirit bearing witness with his spirit. A few months later, they had another tremendous experience of an outpouring of the Spirit in their prayer meeting. And from then on, the two brothers went out and set Britain on fire, and also caught a light a few bonfires over here.

Praise the Lord. George Whitfield encouraged them to take part in open air preaching. John was horrified at the idea.

But George was going away, and he said, I have a congregation of 5,000 people waiting at Bristol. And they're leading the gospel. Will you come and preach? And John had never preached outside a church of England in all his life.

But at last he consented. I think his mother explained to him that Jesus had taught in the open air, so why shouldn't he? And he summoned up courage, and at 5 o'clock in the morning found 5,000 minors waiting for him. And he had a beautifully modulated voice.

He was able, so to speak, without one of these things, that 5,000 could hear every word. And the Holy Ghost came upon that crowd in conviction of sin, and then in assurance of salvation. And lest we had begun something he didn't give up all his life.

The thrill of preaching to hungry souls in the open air changed England. Methodist societies were at first contained in the church of England. Wesley would encourage those who were seeking for salvation, seeking for peace with God, to meet, and share their experiences, read the Bible together, and encourage one another to seek the Lord until they found him.

That was the beginning of Methodist societies. Later on, as they needed ordained ministers, the whole Methodist movement broke away, and Wesley began to ordain his own ministers, especially for America. Well, that conveniently brought us to our break time just about.

The 19th and 20th centuries, with their ferment of new thoughts, new denominations, and sects, good and bad, we may glance at next week. I am also considering having a short test. Yes.

Yes. Well, I'll endeavour to make it ridiculously simple. You won't think so, but I'll try and do it.

And most of it will be based on the Scripture, and as you can answer it with your Bibles, you shouldn't have much difficulty. It'll be an open book exam, but it won't take long. Just the second half of the period.

In fact, I might have so much to tell you in the first half that you might have to take it home, and you will see. All right, let's have a break.

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