

Pew and Pulpit #02: The Pew Looks at the Pulpit

by Ernest C. Reisinger

The sermon emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine, the relationship between the law and the gospel, and the lordship of Christ in salvation.

Duration: 1:11:15

Scripture: Psalm 62:5, Mark 1:17, Acts 20:27, Romans 3:23, Ephesians 5:14, 2 Timothy 2:24, 2 Timothy 4:2

Topics: "Preaching"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that man is born to be a slave, either to self and sin or captivated by Christ. He argues that there is a free moral agent but no free will since the fall, stating that individuals are free to act according to their fallen nature. The preacher highlights the importance of the Lordship of Christ, using the example of the leper who humbly cries out to God for healing. He also discusses the role of a faithful minister, emphasizing the need for preaching in the demonstration of the Spirit's power rather than relying on enticing words of human wisdom. The preacher concludes by mentioning the simplicity of preaching and the qualities that a servant of God should possess, such as being gentle, kind, able to teach, and patient.

Transcript

An appreciation of the fellowship that I've had here, the things I've received for my own soul from the ministry of the others who have ministered to us. I think I should say a word about books to encourage preachers to encourage their people. I have take just a minute to do that.

I've had witnessed, and I suppose you have, some wonderful things by men being changed by a book or two. I know you've enjoyed and been blessed by the ministry of Al Martin. I met Al in a strange kind of way.

I was at a little conference one weekend, trying to minister to some young people, and the first evening was a Friday when we got there. We had driven a long ways. I drove one way, and they were about 200 miles at least.

It was a weekend retreat. So in the Friday evening meeting, I just kind of mentioned to them what I'd hoped to do. I think at that time I said we're going to have a little study in 1 John, tests of eternal life.

Because they'd all had a long drive, and I was tired, and they were tired, I didn't want to burden them with any long message that would be too heavy. So I just kind of introduced it. I was no more back to my room, with a tap on the door.

Here was the director of this, and his wife, and all the counselors, and I thought, oh boy, I'm in for it. Because sometimes, you know, when you go away, they want to tell you what to preach, and that's about the last straw with me. I'll do anything, stand on my head, but that's one place we draw the line.

So I listened, and the first thing they said, do you know Al Martin? I said, I never heard of him. They said, well, some of the things you were saying was kind of what he did last year. And so then I started to ask them questions, and the more questions I asked, the more I wanted to meet that man.

And when I, and believe it or not, I, before I ever went home from that conference, I drove way out of my way to chase him down, and found him in that little town in New Jersey. Well, I found that God had brought him a long ways, and a hard road, and I won't go into all the details, but there were some things he, we didn't agree on, and that was all right, because I felt that he was coming along, and I gave him two books. That's that American humility.

It was in relationship to the atonement, and some things in holiness, and I gave him Bishop Ryle's book on holiness, and I gave him John Owen's Death of Death and the Death of Christ. And if you know anybody that's hung up on the atonement, and you give them that, and they read it, don't bother giving them anything else. Just, they'll have to die hung up.

One book, two weeks ago before I came here, I can't go on to say what that book, Al testified to me what those books have meant. Two weeks ago before I came here, I was in Phoenix, Arizona, in a little church. I couldn't understand how I got invited there.

It was through the literature, actually. I'm saying this to encourage you in books, not only to buy them for yourself, but sometimes to share a book with a fellow minister. There are businessmen in your church that, if they knew a minister, the only thing was keeping from having a book with money would do it, and you could intercede for another minister better than you could for yourself, probably, in that respect, at least.

But I was amazed in this little, I said, well, how did you find out about us? Because they'd been buying books from us, like they're going out of style with sending these books to, to all these fun stuff to Phoenix, and so then they invited me to speak there. And I was quite interested. Half a dozen of those young lads visited Scotland, and they were, of course, with the kind of evangelism that we couldn't wholly endorse by any stretch of the imagination, and they needed a few things, and somebody in Scotland gave them a couple books, old books.

I don't know how they got a hold of them. This is a good plug for the Scotsman, and I can say it since I'm not a Scotsman, but they got a hold of those books and they saw a different kind of a Christianity as they compared it to the old historical Christianity, and they wanted to know where they could get more. And, of course, it was through those books and banner and referring them to us, and I could say today that that was a healthy looking young church, about two years old.

They had, they were getting a hundred people out to the meetings. God had given them a couple elders that came from other churches because they were back in that old historic stream, but my point is this. It was just a book or two, just a book or two.

If you study the Reformation, I think it was John Fox says, the Pope will have to have new regions to reign over or abolish the printing press, because these people give out their literature by night at the risk of their life. I just say that to encourage you, to encourage your people. You know, you've got a lot of laymen in your church, but if they had this vision held before them of using literature in their witness, the right kind of literature, I believe it would help well so much.

I have a lot of things on my heart today, and I could talk more about books and give you more testimonies to where I've seen a book or two change a life. I met two young fellows in Westminster Seminary, and they were from backgrounds that would never, never, never, never get them to any place near a place like Westminster Seminary. Upon inquiring with them and conversation with them, I found one fellow was in the most liberal university or one of them in our nation, went over in the old library and pulled down Charnock's Attributes or something and got a hold of that, and it changed his life, and he pursued that till he could find out where that stream of truth was being spread, led him to Westminster.

Another fellow in a liberal seminary, in the most liberal seminary in our country, at least one of them, stumbled by Calvin's Institutes, started to read him and said, this is a different kind of Christianity they're teaching me here. He left that seminary after one year and went to a seminary that believed the Bible. Multitudes of them, one book.

Oh, my brother, this is not a great effort sometimes with a book if we're prudent and watch our, watch our opportunities and be wise. I'd like to read just a few verses from Titus and a few verses from Timothy. Titus chapter 2. Mr. Murray said in his address how, made some remark about how doctrine is practical.

I'm sorry I get in those places that look disparagingly at sound doctrine. The Bible is pregnant with statements about doctrine. In a meeting not too long ago, I had to say to some people who cornered me about doctrine.

They didn't like the word, and I said, have you read Titus and Timothy lately? Just underscore the number of times the word appears. Chapter 2, verse 1. But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine, that the ages, this is the reason, that the ages may be sober, grave, tempered, sound in faith, in charity, in patience, all stemming from sound doctrine. The aged women likewise, that they be, that they be in behavior as becoming holy, becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given too much wine, teachers of good things.

That they may teach the young, they have to be instructed in sound doctrine themselves first, to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers of home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded in all things, showing myself a pattern of good works in doctrine, showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Exhort servants to be obedient unto their masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again.

The flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever. May he bless it to us today. I feel constrained, and we bow in just a word of prayer before the, this hour with you this morning.

Let us pray. O Holy Father, Righteous Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would approach her to thee. We are but men, and we are not only men, but we are so impotent, even at our strongest.

And we are so ignorant, even at our wisest. Be pleased, our Father, to look at us in this respect today, and help us. Give us of thy Spirit for our impotence.

Give us of thy wisdom, that wisdom that is from above, that's pure, and peaceable, and gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, that wisdom that is without partiality, and without hypocrisy. O merciful Father, give us of thy Spirit. Lord Jesus, thou hast said, if we ask for bread, you would not give us a stone.

And if we ask for a fish, you would not give us a snake. And how much more you promised the Spirit to them that ask. In thy name we ask just now, for thy Spirit, for Jesus' sake.

We're thinking, I was hoping, and Mr. Mary asked me, he had heard a tape that I gave at a little conference on biblical assurance, and I was meant to do that this hour, but I didn't get very far yesterday. I didn't get finished, at least, with some things I had hoped to say. You know, I kind of left my notes a few or three times, and that's bad when you leave your notes, but I don't apologize for it anymore.

I did that once, and an old fellow had come to me, put his arms around me at the end of the meeting, and he said, son, if the Lord sheds a little light on your feet when you're preaching now and again, he said, just follow that light. He said, your notes will be there tomorrow. And I've tried to take the advice of that dear old soul ever since, and not been a slave to notes, though I am blessed with them this morning, and I was blessed with notes yesterday.

So I think I'll go on with the spiritual needs of our time, representing the pew, what we long for, what we pray for, to see the pulpit filled, because there's power in the pulpit. It's a powerful place, a powerful place. We long to see that place that God has ordained to be a powerful place, filled with ministers of that special kind that especially Mr. Alexander has been calling our attention to so vividly.

Just a word of review. I know that's a bad rule in homiletics, but since I haven't had homiletics, I can break all the rules. I haven't learned that fine art to put round corners on square things and smooth things down.

But I do want to review, because I think number one on my list, as I would represent that pew that I talked about yesterday, would be that man must be sound in doctrine and more especially have a right understanding of the relationship between the law and the gospel. A clear view that these three great truths of the Bible stand or fall together, the law of God and the cross of Christ and the judgment of God. Realizing, as I said yesterday, that the base of the cross is eternal justice and the spirit of the cross is eternal love.

And if you have a cross without that base, this lovey-dovey thing without any justice, there's a place for Bible love in a high place. But when there is a cross without that base of eternal justice, it's a baseless cross and leads to sentimentalism or superstition or something else. And another reason is because so it's important.

The law is so important in evangelism. By the law is the knowledge of sin. What is sin? The Bible tells us in plain answers, it is the transgression of the law.

The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ and so it's vitally important, not only in evangelism but also in sanctification. Most of the deeper life movements would be greatly helped if they could see the relationship to the law in sanctification. What, in what does sanctified behavior consist? Doing the will of God.

Isn't that simple? In what does sanctified behavior consist? In doing the will of God. Where do I find the will of God? In the moral law. Children, obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right.

Whether I'm a Christian or a non-Christian, it's right for a Christian to love God with all his heart. It's right for a Christian not to have idols. It's right for a Christian not to take the Lord's name in vain.

It's right for a Christian not to steal, not to bear false witness. Therefore, I say whatever grace does, it doesn't change what's right. It changes our relationship to what's right and gives us power to do right.

Because a man becomes a new creature in Christ, he does not cease to be a creature. The way I hear sanctification press, sometimes you'd think that when he became a new creature in Christ that he ceased to be a creature. He's still a creature, and he's still a creator, and those mandates are for creatures, saved or unsaved.

Then the other thing, and I feel it's the law seductor of the Bible, I really do. I don't have the pulse of things here and don't know, but in my country I'd call it the law seductor of the Bible, and that is the lordship of Christ, the lordship of Christ. He is Lord by God Almighty's decree.

Eternal life is not the end of an accepted proposition like we have even in some of the better circles. It's the idea of hofsterring off Christ. Christ is not the, or eternal life is not at the end of an accepted proposition.

Eternal life is in the hands of a sovereign Christ. I don't know any more serious verses that you could face sinners with than John 17.2. That's a tremendous verse, and if you read that verse, you'll see that eternal life is not at the end of an accepted proposition, but in the hands of a sovereign Christ who has been exalted, as we've heard so vividly and beautifully this morning. You have to preach that he's the Lord.

What happens when we preach that he's the Lord? Well, he's the Lord of all men. That crowd you'll speak to on Sunday, most of which give no evidence of Bible regeneration. He's their Lord.

You say, well, what's the difference? Well, there's a great difference. Some of us are very happy about it. We're very happy about it, and we've find our freedom within his lordship, and others grit their teeth and say as they did years ago when he was on this earth, we will not have this man to reign over us.

And they went free from his rule and free from his reign. They don't mind giving him a little tip on Sunday morning to salve their conscience. Have enough religion to salve their conscience, but not enough to save their soul, because they have not vowed to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

And I want to say again today, any effort or anything to put basic submission to Christ, subsequent to salvation, is to cut the living and vital nerve of the new covenant. Again, by repetition, because the two blessings of the new covenant are forgiveness of sin and a new heart. And that man is self-deceived who believes he has forgiveness of sin, where there's nothing been done in his heart.

What Christ's blood does in heaven gives us a new record. Spirit does something in earth, gives us a new heart, and writes his law on our heart, the lordship of Christ. Oh, why is it so important? Why it puts men down here, and it puts men seeking him, and it puts him up there.

You want a beautiful picture of it? What I'm trying to say, Luke 5 12, here's the picture of the leper. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole. That's a far cry from trying to strike a bargain with Jesus.

That's a helpless, dead, hopeless sinner, crying out to God to do something for him that he can't do for himself. I'd like to sum up some other things. That's just by way of review.

I'd like to sum up some other things. When I think of those old preachers, the men that I said I read, and brought it to comparison, the Bible, they preached the true biblical condition of men and women. That is, that they're not just sick and need help, but they're dead and need life, supernatural life from God, who alone can raise the dead.

They believed that history was nothing less than the working out of God's preordained plan. That's what history is. They believed in a God who was sovereign, not only in creation, but sovereign in redemption.

All-wise in planning redemption. All-powerful in performing and perfecting redemption. A God that, a Bible that held the doctrines that set forth a Redeemer who actually redeemed.

A Christ who came not just to make salvation possible. This is a fine line and an important distinction. A Christ who came not just to make salvation possible and is standing idly by, waiting to see what these big, mighty sinners are going to do with this pathetic Jesus.

No. A Christ who came to seek and actually save. That's different.

The doctrines that set forth a triune God with each person of the Trinity working together in the salvation of men. It's an awful thing to sit in a pew and have a preacher that has a God that planned one thing, and a Savior that redeemed something else, and the Holy Ghost that's applying it in another way. No, no.

There's no war in the Trinity on this business. What the Father planned, the Son purchased, and the Holy Ghost is in the world today, now applying. And if I didn't believe that, I'd turn him a button.

There's no war in the Trinity on something as important as redemption. The Spirit communicates what the Father planned and what the Son purchased in redemption. I'm talking about the atonement, sure.

What gives me greater thrill than to read that probably the most Christological chapter in the Bible? When I read, this keeps me going. When I read Isaiah 53 and see that verse 11 where it says, he, not maybe, possibly, depending on sinners, no, he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. That's it.

That's it. You know, I find these people who are afraid. I don't believe we ought to stand up and give definitions of election and all that.

I believe these great Bible truths are what we stand on to live by and to preach from. Some people, I've been in meetings where I've said election and it was, you know, as if it were in the Bible. I sell Spurgeon's and give away Spurgeon's sermon on election and I say, now you may not agree with this, dear people, but don't fight with it because it's in the Bible.

It'll be perfectly all right for you to say, I don't understand it, but don't speak against what's in the Bible. Do you know, Jesus, I don't, I came across this one day and I don't feel so badly about getting bumped a few times when I mention election sometimes in the meetings because I was reading this passage of Luke and I see he got stoned for preaching election. Yes, he did.

In Luke chapter 4, here it is, verse, well, it's verse 25 where he talks about there were many widows in Israel, but unto none of them was the prophet sent except one. If that isn't election, I don't know what is. And he was preaching this.

He said there were many widows, many widows in Israel, but unto none of them was the prophet sent except one to save Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman, a widow, and then he increases it. He said, there were many lepers in Israel at the time, he said, the prophet, and none of them were cleansed save Naaman the Syrian. And what happened when he preached election? And all they in the synagogue when they heard these things were filled with wrath.

They rose up and thrust him out of the city, led him to the brow of a hill. And all these great doctrines, you know, we see them all the way. I'll tell you, if you ever have a bout with a real universalist, you'll do some thinking about the atonement.

For two years, a universalist tried to convert me with letters and books. And at that particular time, I didn't see the importance of having a right view of the atonement as I do today. But you know, after two years, I either had to believe what she was trying to propagate to me, a very high class, educated woman, a wife of a general in the American army.

And I came to one, I thought I could be neutral on this thing, or at least quiet about it. And I saw that I either had to believe what that woman was saying, that everybody's going to be saved. She had bring such verses to me, as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.

That's the verses she used on me. And I said, well, either she's right or that means something else. And I had to come to the conclusion, thank God to John Owen and some more help.

I had to come to the conclusion that all that Adam represented shall die, and all that Christ represented shall be made alive. I don't want to be vague on these things. People fight it, I have to remind them of the hymns.

They'll stand up and sing, William Cowper's hymn, there is a fountain filled with blood. And when they get to that third stanza, they sing right through it and never think what they're singing. Dear dying lamb, thy precious blood shall never lose its power till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more.

Now, let us not suppose that God's decision to save a man by a decree leaves a man passive or inert. It's the very opposite that takes place. The covenant of grace does not kill man, or it doesn't regard him as a tin can or a piece of wood.

It takes possession of the man. It lays hold of him, his whole being, all his faculties, powers, soul and body for time and eternity. That's what it does.

It doesn't annihilate his powers, but it removes his powerlessness. It doesn't destroy his will, but it frees it from sin. It doesn't stifle or obliterate his conscience, but it sets it free from darkness.

It regenerates, recreates man in his entirety and renews him by grace and power and causes him to love and consecrate himself to God freely, freely. You know, we have to lay some of these foundation principles. These are the foundations that I believe, the doctrinal foundations that you build a devotional life on, if it would have substance to that devotional life.

Yes, and these doctrines, rather than drive us to coldness, rather than drive us to be doctrinaires, they ought to drive us, as it did St. Paul in a host of the godly of the past, to proclaim to all men that they're dead in trespasses and sin. Not just that they're sick and need help, but they're dead in trespasses and sin. That Jesus Christ, God's Son, is a perfect, able, willing Savior of sinners, even the worst.

Yea, the Chiefest, that the Father and the Son promised that all that know themselves to be such sinners, and put their faith in Christ as Savior Lord, shall be received into everlasting favor and none cast out. That's what it ought to drive us to do. Well, we've looked so much at the preacher's life and his doctrine.

I want to spend a few minutes this morning on, because I told you how many sermons I've listened to, I want to spend a few minutes this morning, if I may, with a few thoughts on how he used to preach. I got a lot of help. I was hauling Dr. Packer over to seminary when he was over in our country a couple years ago, and we were going back and forth and spent quite a bit of time together.

I remember, I found him in the Westminster Library, that's where I used to meet him, and he was reading an old saint of another day, William Perkins, and he was telling me about Perkins on the art of prophesying. I had a lot yesterday, I wanted to give you both that on another point, but I think I must bring Perkins in today a little bit, because after Dr. Packer told me so much about Perkins, I snuck back there myself, and I liked that so much that I said to the librarian, Mr. Kuski, I said, I don't have time to write all this out, I'm a poor writer anyhow, I've been dictating letters for 25 years, I can hardly spell anything. So I said to Mr. Kuski, the librarian, I said, do you think you could get somebody to type this off for me, some 80 pages, and he said sure, so he did.

But in chapter 8 of that great treatise on the art of prophesying, he had talking about ways of application, which I think is a tremendous weakness in the ministry. You know, these men get out their swords, and they dangle them, and they shine, and they sparkle, and they, and then they lay it up to somebody's chest like that. Oh, the old, the old Puritans, when they brought their swords out, it was, oh, you must do that in a holy, that's sincerity, we'll talk about that.

But under that, he said, talking about the, the ways of application are chiefly seven, he said, he sounds like a Puritan already, doesn't he? According to the different conditions of the people, which are in the fold. And he said this, first, these are the seven, and I wish I had time to read all that he said about it, let me just give you the heads. Unbelievers, he said, who are both ignorant and unteachable.

So you have to allow for that. Some are teachable, but yet ignorant. These men, to these men, the catechism must be delivered.

And he gives Acts 18.25, Apollos was catechized in the way of the Lord. Perkins was very strong on this point. He said in another place, the catechism is the doctrine of the foundation of Christian religion.

That's what he said in another place. And then he said, some have knowledge, but are yet not humbled. And such, the foundation of repentance ought to be stirred up.

That is to say, a certain sorrow, which is according to God. Sorrow according to God, a grief for sin, even because it is sin. Under this point, Perkins tells how the use of the law stirs up the heart.

And then he said, some are humbled. Just never forget, they're not all unbelievers, they're not all unteachable and ignorant. They're not all in one class.

Some are humbled. Here we must very diligently consider, oh, this is a vital point. I hope you hear this.

We must very diligently consider whether their humility be complete and sound, or but begun in light and flight, lest he or they receive comfort sooner than is meet, should afterwards wax more hard like iron, which being cast into the furnace becomes exceedingly hard after that it is cooled. You know, I believe

there's a danger in giving false comfort. I was reading Jeremiah the other week, and I came to that sixth chapter with these verses.

One of the marks of the false prophet is that he says, peace, peace, when there is no peace. But it says in the 13th and 14th verse, I noted this, the priest, he says, the false prophet, at just this point, it says, the priest, everyone dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of my people slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace.

And a lot of our evangelism, especially that it's connected with super psychology and mass psychology, is nothing more than saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace. And then Perkins says, some do not believe. He points out how these may be built up.

And he points out how some do believe, and that they need to be built up in the faith. I'll never forget our first pastor of our little church. We were desperate, and we didn't know as much then as we knew later about calling ministers.

And so we thought because the fellow had the college and the school, that he was ready. And we heard him preach, and he must have preached us his only best sermon. But anyhow, we called him.

And on prayer meeting nights, now here's the saints that want to cry out to God, and need fed, and need their swords sharpened. One prayer meeting night, I remember the title of his sermon, and this is actual. He had a title, Old Car and a New Motor.

That was his title. And he gave a little 10-minute ditty on being born again to the saints. Well, he went back to school after a while.

But some people need built up, and Perkins didn't miss that point. And then he said, some are fallen, that is the true people of God who stumble and fall. And he has a lot to say on that.

But you know, even after reading Perkins, he can't improve on the larger catechism. You know, I could have spent this whole message on one question in the larger catechism to make this point. And I'm going to take time to catechize you a bit, because I don't know if you've looked at the larger catechism lately.

You see, the shorter catechism doesn't have this in. And it ought to teach the people of God what to look for in a minister. But there's a question, it's question 159 to be exact.

And this is the question, how is the word of God to be preached by those who are called thereunto? Now, if this isn't five sermons, I never saw what wouldn't be five sermons. Listen to the answer. They that are called to labor in the ministry of the word are to preach sound doctrine diligently in season and out of season, plainly.

I'm going to talk about these things in a minute. Not in enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirits and of power. Three, faithfully making known the whole counsel of God, wisely applying themselves, now get this, to the necessity and capacity of the hearers, zealously with fervent love to God and the souls of his people.

Sixthly, sincerely aiming at his glory and at their conversion, edification, and salvation. Let's take that apart a little bit. Sound doctrine diligently, we covered that pretty well.

And then the second thing was plainly. Plainly. I want to spend a little time on that, plainly.

You know, some young preachers that I go hear, come out, they think they're going to refute all the higher critics. And the big problem is, first they must teach their people what the higher critics believe. That's right.

So they go to all this great strain of refuting all the higher critics, and it's wonderful, but the people they're talking to don't know what the higher critics believe. That's right. That's not plainly.

I read in the Bible, except you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall that be known what is spoken? For you shall speak into the air. And that kind of preaching is nothing more than speaking into the air. Plainly.

Our brother called our attention to this verse the other night. See the pattern of a faithful minister, and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirit of power. Plainly.

Plainly. Ah yes, Hebrew and Greek and Latin all have a very high place. But not where Pilate put them.

Over the head of Jesus. At his feet. At his feet.

At his feet. The pew is not interested so much in the tools of the minister as they are and how he uses them. How does he use the tools? These are tools.

Plainly, I say. I want to read from Banner Magazine a back issue on the simplicity of preaching by J.C. Ryle. I'm going to take time to read this.

There's a lot of points, but I just want to read point four called a direct style. The fourth hint I give is this. If you wish to preach simply, use a direct style.

What do I mean by this? I mean the practice and custom of saying I. And you. When a man takes up this style of preaching, he is often told that he is conceited and egotistical. The result is that many preachers are never direct and always think it very humble and modest and becoming to say we.

But I remember good old Bishop Thaler saying he was that we was a word for kings or corporations. They should be used. And they alone.

But the parish clergy should always take I and you. I endorse that saying with all my heart, said the bishop. I declare I never could understand what this famous pulpit we means.

Does the preacher who all through his sermon say we mean himself and the bishop or himself and the church or himself and the congregation or himself and the early fathers or himself and the reformers or himself and the wise men and all the wise men in the world? After all, does he or after all, does he only mean himself? Plainly John Smith or Tom Jones. If he only means himself, what earthly reason can he give for using a plural number and not saying simply and plainly I? When he visits his parishioners on a sickbed or catechizes in his school or orders baked bread from the baker or meat from the butcher, he doesn't say we. He says I. Why then should I like to know can he not say I in the pulpit? What right has he as a modest man to speak for all for none but himself? Why not stand up on a Sunday and say reading the word of God, I have found a text concerning such things as these and I come to set them before you.

My people, many people I'm sure, do not understand what the preacher means, what the preacher's we means. This expression leaves them in a kind of a fog. If you say I, your rector, I your vicar, I your curator

of the parish, come here to talk of something that concerns your soul, something you should believe, something you should do, you are at any rate understood.

But if you begin to talk in vague plural numbers that we ought to do, many of your hearers do not know what you're driving at. And whatever you're speaking, whether you're speaking of yourself or them, he goes on and on. You know, my pastor's only half as old as I am, but he's a pastor indeed.

And I love him with all my heart. And as an older elder, when he came out of seminary, he had this kind of a thing. And so I thought, well, I want to help him.

I love him. I covet him for Christ as I look at these men today. One of the things, I don't know what Paul meant when he said his spirit stirred within him, but when I see a gang of preachers, something happens down here to me, and I say, that they'll blaze the earth with the truth.

So when I say this to him, I wasn't trying to kill him or hurt him. And I didn't say it in the presence of anyone else. And I didn't go home at my Sunday dinner table and discuss it so that my family would have no respect for the minister.

But so I started to take some notes, how many times he used we, and he says, we don't give, we don't pray, we don't witness, we have no compassion, we are not converted, we have no fear of God. I thought if he hadn't converted, well, I know he was. So one day I said to him, I got over to his study.

I said, you know, I'd like to talk to you about something. It's kind of difficult. I said, if I didn't believe you loved me and I loved you, I wouldn't talk to you like this.

But I said, do you, do you give anything to the church? He says, oh yes. Well, I knew he did because he's a man of God. I said, do you pray? He said, sure.

I said, do you witness to anybody privately now and again? He said, sure. I said, do you have any Christ-given compassion at all? He said, well, not as much as I'd like, but I hope I have some. I said, are you converted? And he didn't know what he was getting at.

Well, I said, that's what I want to talk with you about, not about whether you're converted. I said, you know, I've been taking some notes, not very copious notes, just on one score. And I said, you say we don't give and you tell me you do.

Now I said, you're lying to the people. I said, you say you don't pray to the people, but you do pray. Maybe not enough.

And I say you don't witness, but you do witness. I said, you know the fellow that sits in the pew and he says, we don't pray, we don't give, we don't, he says, well, I said, this is the reaction we get in the pew. I said, well, if the preacher doesn't pray and he doesn't witness and he doesn't give and he's not converted, why should I care? And then I said, I'd like to do one thing with you and see his spirit is right.

And I, and I, and I trust God that my spirit was right because my motive was not to scold him, but to put my arm around him. I said, I'd like to read two sermons with you, one of Spurgeon's and one of Whitfield's just on this point. We're not going to consider anything else at this point.

Spurgeon would say sinner. Well, I needn't elaborate on that. Bishop Ryle does a good job enough, but I mean, when we talk about plainly, we can't do it without that.

Some apparent distinctive of George Whitfield's preaching was just on this point. One author said, and I copied it down. One, one author said about Whitfield, and I believe he was the greatest evangelist that ever put his feet on American soil without any hesitation.

I say that. That's my own strong conviction. One author said about him this, he preached a singular, pure gospel, much wheat and little chaff.

He was preeminent. He was preeminent, a manifestation. It was preeminently a manifestation of truth, sin, sins, your heart, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, absolute need of repentance, faith and holiness.

His preaching was singularly lucid and simple. He was bold and a direct preacher, not the abstract way. I have come here to speak to you about your souls.

There was a constant vein, now get this, a constant grain, vein of application all the way through his sermon, not a tailpiece stuck on at the end. This is for you. He was descriptive.

He turned men's eyes into ears. Earnest, he was earnest with pathos and feeling. And then the old catechism question said, thirdly, faithful, make known the whole counsel of God.

I believe the, if I were to sum up preaching in two words, and I don't think you would disagree on this, it's explanation and application. Let me tell you where the best ministers fall down, in my opinion, and I hope I have an ear to hear, not with a censorious spirit, where the best ministers few fall down is on application. Application.

And then it says wisely, applying themselves to the necessity and the capacity of hearers. I went one place once and there was a fellow preaching to about 12 people. He was a quite a scholar.

And he had about 12 people and his congregation was dead as a dodo. You know what his subject was that night? The historicity of 2 Peter, when his people didn't know Mark 1 17 yet. That's what it means by, I think, wisely applying themselves to the necessity and the capacity of the hearers.

And then zealously and sincerely. The other, oh, a couple months ago, I was at RE Seminary speaking to the students. Just one day, a young fellow came up to me and he said, after the meeting, he said, if you were going to give a young preacher a verse or two that you think would help them in their ministry, what verse would you give them from the Bible? Well, I said, it's a pretty big book and I just don't know off the top of my head.

And I started to walk away. And then I turned around because I thought, well, I'll give him the verses that helped me. So I had to give him one, never had that request before.

I said, sorry, young man, I think I'll, I think I'll, I think I will give you a couple verses if you don't mind. And I said, the reason I say this is because they helped me so much. They keep me going as a layman.

They keep me trying when I'm alone. They keep me seeking after something. You know what verses I gave him? And I wish you'd turn to them this morning, because I'd like to call your attention to a couple of things in the verses.

I'd like you to turn to these verses, very good verses for the close of the service, for the close of this, this meeting. 2 Timothy chapter two, verse 24. The servant of the Lord must not strive or quarrel.

Preacher, don't strive with your congregation, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. Do you know why these verses have meant so much to me? May I share you a little, and I want to give you a little breakdown. Certainly not original, but I studied these verses.

And if I have verses that keep me going, this is a couple of them. The doctrine of election keeps me going too, because I know that Christ has some sheep on the side of the hill. And I'm looking for those sheep, and from my point of view, they don't have a mark on their forehead.

And therefore, I say, whosoever will may come. But the second thing that keeps me going, I think, is some of these verses. You know why? Because every servant of God ought to know the state of the unconverted.

And in these passages, we ought to know the state of the people we're dealing with. We had this last night. We must know the people.

Know them. Listen. And the state of the unconverted is vital.

He's a slave, I learned in verse 26. He's a slave in Satan's prison house. And I say he's in prison.

And he's on death row, and he doesn't have a key. A lot of preachers I hear, they don't mind telling people they're in prison. And then they turn around and say, they've got the key in their pocket.

They say, you're in prison. You do this, and you do that, and you do the other thing. Well, that builds up their flesh.

And I come along and say, you're in prison. And you don't have the key in your pocket. And you're on death row.

If anybody's going to get you out, it'll have to be God. That puts a man to seek in God, instead of trying to do this, and do that, and do that, and God will save you. No.

You quit doing it, and God will save you. That's the heart of it. He's in prison.

And I say he doesn't have the key in his pocket to get out. The state of the unconverted. He's helpless.

He's taken captive, I see, by Satan, at his will. Man is born to be a slave. Don't talk to me about free will.

I see plenty of will all around me, all day long, everywhere. Plenty of will. But I haven't seen much free will.

It's either a slave to self and sin, or it's captivated by Christ. Plenty of will. I think I ought to say a word about this, because some people stumble here.

There is a free moral agent, but no free will since the fall. Somebody said to me, come up to me after me, do you believe in free will? I say, sure. I believe you're free to act according to your nature.

What kind of nature did you get at the fall? We go from there. Let me say something about it. Since man, let me put, we've got to think about this will in this fourfold state, because that's the state of the unconverted.

You see, state of creation, he had a free will to do good and evil, but was necessitated to do neither. State of degeneration, here he is a servant of sin and necessitated to do evil by virtue of that state. Third, the state of regeneration, where he's free from slavery and dominion of sin, and free from the love of sin, though not yet free from the inbred corruptions of sin.

And then think about his will in the state of glorification, wherein man will be both freely and necessarily good and perfect and happy. Should I sum it up by saying, in the first state, man is free. In the second state, he's a slave.

We have it in the verse 26 of our text. In the third state, he's set free. And thank God in the fourth state, he'll be made perfectly free with glorious liberty.

So we have in the text the state of the unconverted. And then, another reason why this verse is meant so much to me, because we have the efforts of the servant of Christ, the servant of the Lord. One, what is it? To teach and instruct men as to that which belongs to their everlasting peace, verse 25.

To rescue them, if possible, from the power of Satan. That's what you have there. Who wake thou that sleepest in Christ shall give thee light.

To rescue men, if possible. And then another effort of the servant of Christ is this. To set forth, now get this point.

You see, if God, just underline those couple of words. To set forth the claims of God as their only hope. See, that puts that man down here, crying out to Christ to do something for him.

If we set God before him as their only hope, sinner, you're in prison. You're in death row. And you don't have the, you don't have the key in your pocket.

What would he do? Cry out for mercy. Mercy. Mercy.

Cry out for God to do something that he can't do for himself. You say, oh, there's no difference, it's just the way you're saying it. No, there's a difference.

One is God-centered, the other is man-centered. And then I see not only the efforts of the servant of God, the state of the unconverted in those three verses, the efforts of the servant of Christ there, but I see some instructions for that servant. How do we go about it? How do we go about it? Don't strive.

Quarrel. Don't be quarrelsome. One.

Two, be gentle. That is kind to all. Three, able to teach.

Doesn't say go out and decision them. Able to teach. Patience.

I wish I could tell you how patient I was, but I'd be a liar. I pray for it. I pray for it.

I'm serious, I pray for it. That God would give me more patience. It's right there.

Patience. In meekness. You know, it's patient under injuries, or patient when wronged.

And then it says, in meekness. In meekness. In meekness.

And of course, the servant of God, not only does he set forth before the unconverted people, their only hope is God, but listen, there's something else. The servant of God must depend on God. If God, bringing people to Christ is past my reach, I can't do that.

For there's some people I'd bring today. It's past my reach. And so as the sinner, if God per adventure, so the servant, if God per adventure, we cannot be sure that they'll recover from their error.

Not our responsibility either. That's not my responsibility. My responsibility is to be faithful to the rest of the text.

To take the message to them. My responsibility ends as I preach and pray for them. I want to read you Hendrickson's rendering of those three verses, if you bear with me.

And then I have one more thing to say, and I'm finished. Hendrickson's translates that like this, and I kind of like it, and I believe he's accurate. And the servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be qualified to teach.

Patient under injuries, with mildness correcting the opponent in the hope that God possibly may grant them conversion, leading to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may return to soberness, being delivered out of the snare of the devil, by whom though have been taken captive to do his will. Hendrickson says repentance is not a strong enough word. It's conversion is the word.

Conversion, change of mental and moral outlook. Change of view, which leads to change of life. We've looked a lot at a lot of things these days.

We've had a lot of hours in these chairs. I pray God that every one of those evening hours and day hours will prove in my life and in your life proper. But you know, I think I'd be remiss in bringing the last words to this conference if I didn't say another word.

And this is not some application tacked on to the end. It's just bearing my soul to you. And in closing, I wonder if we've been speaking and I've been speaking today to some minister who can remember a glorious devotional life.

When you felt called to the ministry back there somewhere, you prayed, you felt and experienced the presence of Christ. But then came college and seminary. And that cold academic climate has chilled your private devotions.

Oh yes, then you got out of seminary and you were busy. Financial strains. Then came the hard knocks and disappointments from the people in the church.

It didn't seem like the same crowd. It was so gloriously tapped you on the back and shook your hand when you told them you were called to the ministry. Now you come out and find that they don't pay you.

And a thousand other things. You've been disappointed. That crowd that was so anxious for you to go in the ministry didn't seem willing to help you in Christ's work.

And all this has helped to kill your devotion and made you a bit hard and made you a bit cold and made you a bit professional. Where do you stand with your devotional life? I hope these days together would bring you back to that place, something approximating that devotion you had when you felt constrained and called to Christ. May it please God to use these days to bring you back to something like that.

And then maybe some of you keep wobbling and slipping away upon the great doctrines of the Bible because they seem to be hard to preach. Ah, they're not only hard things to do and live in the Christian life, in the ministry especially. It's a great calling, but they're hard things to believe.

And they're hard things to preach but may I with all the passion of my soul and all the pathos of my heart today remind you that Jesus Christ preached hard things. Ah yes, there was the sympathetic Christ. There was the compassionate Christ.

But Christ preached that sermon on the bread from heaven, John 6, when he said, no man can come to me except the Father with whom it sent me, call him. And you'll remember when he comes to that, we had it in John 10 last night, verse 26, didn't seem to disturb him much. How thin the crowd got, he said in verse 26, ye believe not because you're not my sheep.

But in John 6, when he comes to the end, that's hard preaching. Catholics have turned it into cannibalism. That's hard preaching.

And when he got down to the end, toward the end, we find the Bible says this, from that time many went back and walked no more with him, not because of his life. Have you gone back because of a hard, what seems hard, teaching of the Bible? The logical next question would be to ask you where you've gone. That's what happened in that context.

He was telling them, no man except the Father. Peter said, where are they gone? You remember Peter's question. Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

Where will you go if you leave the Bible and the teachings that may seem to be hard? And then one more thing. I could never be in a crowd this size without believing there's a possibility that there's a man here that is a stranger to heart religion. The week before I left, I got a letter.

So did you think I'm not presumptuous in saying this? I got a letter from the First Presbyterian Church of a certain city in the south where I'd preach last October. This man's a graduate of one of our best seminaries. It's dated March 6, 1969.

I got it right before I left home. I don't want to read the personal things. It'd be embarrassing and not of any edification to you.

But he tells me in this letter, he says, ever since you were here, and I'm reading Eileen's Alarm to the Unconverted, and as I've listened to Al's tapes, I sent him three tapes after I left. Dear fellow. Nice man.

Nice man. He said, and also reading Mr. Shelton's own testimony. That's a fellow who preached for 20 years before he was converted.

He said, I've come under the conviction that I'm not a true convert. He says, this is not the first time I've thought and felt this way. Therefore, I know that a change must take place in my life, Ernie.

He says, I'm miserable inside. No one can know that but me. I know the truth, but the truth has never set me free from myself, my sin, nor unto godliness.

He says, I have a form of godliness, but not the power. He said, the first section of Eileen's book fits me to the T. He says, I have a name, and I live it, but I'm spiritually dead, and I have not been converted from my sins. I have no power over my sins.

In short, my sins have dominion over me. And he goes on, and just another few paragraphs down further. He says, there's really no circumstances that I can relate concerning a personal encounter with Jesus, and yet in my sins, I'm yet in my sins, and I'm miserable.

He said, Fran, that's his wife, knows my condition, and I believe she even wonders about her own faith. We have tried so many, he goes on, some things they've tried. And he goes on in another section here.

He says, I have not, however, recognized myself for what I am. Ernie, I don't see myself as undone. I am, therefore, I have not seen the Lord.

Oh, to be able to relate such an experience of the heart, heart religion. Everything still revolves around myself. Ernie, I seek the praise of men, and not the praise of God.

By the way, this is not on the wave of the emotion of the meeting. This was October, four months have lapsed. I'd have been suspicious about a letter like this.

In fact, as I wouldn't even say now that the man is not converted, even though he just may have lost his assurance, or he may never have gotten a well-grounded assurance. Good distinction. He says, I'm not trying, he says, I'm just trying to say the things that come to my mind.

I'm not seeking to make rhyme nor reason out of my plight. Oh, how miserable it is to stand before a congregation and seek to lead them in the throne of grace, and know nothing of the riches of that throne myself. Any hypocrite could pray the prayers that I pray, Ernie.

Any hypocrite could do the work I do. I enjoy the mechanical work of the ministry. But Ernie, when it comes to preparing and delivering a sermon, how miserable I become.

I have recognized for a long time that while my preaching is not in the demonstration power of the Spirit, I've sought with so many words of my own wisdom to convince my people of something that I'm not convinced of myself. And he goes on to tell how when he was married, his wife asked him about his conversion, and so on. I trust that for such a man here, that the stranger to grace in his heart, that he would become a diligent seeker after reality.

Because there's reality to be had. Yes? Spiritual needs of our times. Men with holy lives.

Men subject to grace, devoted to Christ. Preaching sound and doctrine. Preaching plainly, faithfully the word of God.

Wise in application. Zealous and fervent. The love of God and for the souls of his people.

Sincerely aiming at the glory of God and the conversion of sinners. Let us pray. O Holy Ghost, sanctifier of the faithful, give these thy servants discernment to know that which is of heaven and that which is of truth and that which is of man whose breath is in his nostrils.

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