

Inviting the Unconverted to Christ

by Ernest C. Reisinger

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the principles of evangelism, particularly in relation to Christ and directing faith and assurance, and highlights the differences between Puritan and modern practices.

Duration: 1:06:55

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 1:15, Mark 6:12, Luke 9:57-58, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 20:20-21

Topics: "Evangelism", "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon transcript, the speaker discusses the importance of presenting the gospel in a concise and effective manner. They emphasize that many people are already open to accepting Christ and do not need to be convinced, but rather need a clear presentation that should not exceed 30 minutes. The speaker also quotes from a counseling training course, highlighting the need for individuals to be brought to a sense of self-denial and to flee from the occasion of sin in order to experience true conversion. They emphasize the importance of understanding and seriously considering the gospel before it can be received and lived out. The sermon references the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, emphasizing the command to teach and disciple all nations, and also mentions Luke 14, which discusses counting the cost before coming to Christ.

Transcript

Dr. Gray, gentlemen, we're at the bottom of the barrel. Almost there. Though there's been a lot of contrast in this conference, from Anglican to Baptist and many other contrasts, but today, at the end, we're coming to the end, this is the contrast of contrasts.

Dr. Packer, the, one of the, I think, one of the world's best theologians, and now we're down to the carpenters. However, however, I think it's quite appropriate to be, something like this, at least, to be in true Puritan style. I often read of Bunyan, of John Owen being in Bunyan's audiences, and then I'd read that, how Owen would come to his audience, I thought, I wonder how John Bunyan felt, and I never realized that I'd have an opportunity to find out.

Today, I want to sort of try to keep within the, the papers are not my speed, and I've got some friends here that if they'd be gamblers, they're Christians, so they don't gamble, they're betting that I'll stop and preach. But the boss told me not to preach, but to stay to the paper. Not in those words, but, first, I'll plan to stay within the framework of the theme for these afternoon sessions, namely evangelism, but more particularly, evangelism in Puritan and today's practices.

Then, specifically, I'll try to stay within my assigned part of that theme, and that is to Christ and directing faith and assurance. Now, my purpose will be to deal with the principles, I hope you hear this, with the principles of evangelism in this particular area, and not the personalities in evangelism. And so I hope when we come to the question period, there's no doubt in my mind that you'll be able to connect some of these principles to persons.

However, in the discussion period that follows, I trust that you'll keep to my idea, and that is to stay to the principles of evangelism and not the personalities in evangelism. We have no personalities in mind other than we associate them to these things. Now, how do I plan to approach this? Well, four things.

One, I plan to give some quotations from the great Puritans and from some men whose heart later burned with the same Puritan and biblical evangelism. I will not be giving many quotes of today's practices for two reasons. One, because of time.

Two, because I think many of us are painfully aware of them, and they need not be quoted. Secondly, I plan to point out some of the pronounced differences. And I hope you listen carefully as I read their Inviting Men to Christ.

And you make some applications in your... Namely, of four. I want to appeal to the scriptures also to show that the historical Puritan practices were more loyal to the word of God and also more doctrinal and theological in their foundation. And fourth, I plan to mention what appears to me to be clearly the apparent difference between the two practices.

First, a Puritan I'd like to quote, Dr. Packer already mentioned this morning, William Guthrie. And I think I should say a word about him. He was one of the holiest and most noble of the experimental divines of Scotland.

He was born in the year 1620, later a student of Samuel Rutherford. He was licensed in 1642 by his presbytery with high approbation. And he and his little book, *The Christian's Great Interest*, that I will be quoting from, were both highly esteemed by many of his illustrious contemporaries.

One, Mr. Matthew Crawford, a fellow minister, said he was one of the greatest practical preachers of Scotland. And Dr. John Owen, Dr. Packer already mentioned the quote and thought that Dr. Owen was a little reckless in his statement, but I have to give it again. Dr. Owen, on one occasion, drawing a little gilded-edge copy of this treatise from his pocket, said, I quote, the author, I take it, referring to the little book, Owen said, Now, a carpenter had to look that up in Webster or go with me.

Owen went on to say, I have written, and this is the quote that Dr. Packer gave you this morning, I have written several folios, but it's recorded in the memoirs of the great Dr. Chalmers. Quote, I am on the eve of finishing Guthrie, which I think is the best book I have ever read. And I might add my personal testimony to that.

For 1967, if I was going to be marooned on an island and could only have four books, this would be one. Of course, the Westminster Confession would be the other. And of course, the Bible.

You can get a pretty good theological education from those books. The whole second part of this little treatise, let us see how this noble divine invited the unconverted to Christ. He did not begin with, God loves you and has a plan for your life and point out all the benefits that would accrue to you and how nice it would be if you would accept this poor little, weak, pathetic Jesus standing outside your heart's door,

pretty little, pleased with sugar, I might let him in.

No, he didn't. Conditioned because of sin, God's purpose and intent to save men by Christ Jesus. He said, quote, The Lord thus did most freely from everlasting purpose and intent to save men by Christ Jesus and the covenant of grace in which he intended reconciliation with the elect through Christ Jesus, God and man, born of a woman in due time to make this agreement effectual.

That's how he began inviting the sinners to Christ. He explained what receiving was in this second half. What believing was.

He was very strong and clear to point out that it's a duty to close with Christ, not an option. And he used such text as 1 John 3.23 to enforce his argument. This is his commandment that you believe in the name of his son, Christ Jesus.

Not as though he were trying to get votes for Christ or something like that. He made it as a command to believe. He did not try to high pressure men into a deciding they knew not what.

He gave them information. That's been brought up several times in the conference, the importance of information. We'll touch on it a bit later.

He warned them against trying to do this duty without consideration. That is, without counting the cost. He encouraged them to consider the facts that was involved in coming to Christ.

Hear him. Men must not rashly, inconsiderately, and ignorantly rush in upon this matter saying that they approve of the way of saving sinners and that they will acquiesce and rest in him for safety. He said often men deceive themselves here and do imagine they have done the thing.

Imagine they have done the thing. In the second chapter of the second half he points out some of the properties, what he calls properties and native consequences of true believing. One, believing in Christ must be personal.

Two, this duty must be cordial and hearty. The matter must not swim only in the head or understanding, but it must be in the heart. The man must not only be persuaded that Christ is the way, but affectionately persuaded of it.

Loving, liking, and having complacency in it, that is resting in it. Three, another property or qualification of true believing, as it goes out after Christ, he said it must be rational. Quote, by this I mean that a man should move toward God and Christ in knowledge and understanding, taking up God's way of saving sinners by Christ as the scripture holds him out.

Not fancying a Christ to himself, otherwise in the gospel speaks of him, I mean also that a man must in calmness of spirit, as it were in cold blood, enclosing with Christ, not simply a fit of affection which soon vanishes. Note the emphasis on calmness of spirit, in cold blood, not in a simple fit of affection. This is the very opposite to a climate that's all geared to a moment of decision under a highly emotional atmosphere.

Gunther, he points out that this faith must be personal, cordially, hearty, rational, and resolutely, and he gives a whole paragraph on how resolute a man must be about coming to Christ. He said, quote, there is a confident guard upon the free grace of God in the gospel held out through Christ Jesus, so that ignorant, senseless, profane men cannot with any shadow of reason pretend to an interest in it. It is, it is true,

believing in Christ and closing with him as a perfect savior seems easy.

And every godless man says that he believes in him, but they deceive themselves since their soul has never cordially, rationally, resolutely gone out after Christ. The next great Puritan I want to mention, and there will be some overlaps today in some of this, not that I parroted after Dr. Packer. You may hear some of Dr. Packer in this paper, but it won't be in that flowing Oxford English, but you may hear some of him because I read his books, so don't be alarmed if you hear it.

But the next great Puritan that I want to mention is one that Mr. Martin mentioned, Joseph Eileen. He was described as greedy for souls. They say, well, Calvinists aren't evangelistic.

I read where he was described as greedy for souls. Joseph Eileen was born in 1634. He sat at the feet of such giants as Dr. Owen and Dr. Thomas Goodwin at Oxford University.

Eileen was one of that brave and godly company of 2,000 men that Dr. Packer talked about this morning who were cast from their pulpit. But even then, he would not be silent and stop preaching and was thrown into prison for a year for preaching, for a year only to be taken again after a year for preaching in a private home on Psalm 147. I refer to his book, and I'm sorry we don't have enough back on the book stand. We couldn't talk about it this week, but I refer to his book, *Alarms of the Unconvergent*, Positivity, the greatest thing on conversion that I've read.

And I'm sorry, you may order it, but we don't have it. A book that influenced, this same book influenced George Whitfield while he was still a student at Oxford. One of the books that Spurgeon turned to when he was under conviction of sin.

Spurgeon records how when he was a child, his mother would often read a piece of Eileen's alarms to them as they sat around the fire on a Sunday evening. And he said, when he was brought under deep conviction of sin, he said it was to this old book that he turned. He says, I remember, he writes, when I used to wake in the morning, the first thing I took up was Eileen's alarm or Baxter's call to the unconverted.

All those books, I read and devoured them. And with his heart burning with the same, Spurgeon was prepared to follow in the steps of Eileen and Whitfield. But this little treatise that I want to refer to this afternoon, and the chapter title is *Directing the Unconverted to Christ*.

All preachers hear me today. They hear some of these directives. Men and brethren, and if you do not win here, then, oh sinner, and if ever you would be converted and saved, take heed to the following counsel.

Number one, sit it down with yourself as an undoubted proof that it is impossible for you to get to heaven in this your unconverted state. Two, labor to get a sore sight of your, a sore, lively sense and feeling of your sin. And then he tells them how to do it and why it's necessary.

He said, folks, till men are weary and heavy laden and pricked at the heart and quite sick of sin, they will not come to Christ for a cure nor sincerely inquire what must I do. They must see themselves as dead before they will come to Christ that they may live. And under the same head he says, meditate on the number of your sins.

Jesus' heart failed him when he thought on this, and he considered that he had more sins in the head of his head, and he cried out, all for the multitude of thy tender mercy. He says, meditate on the aggravations of your sins as they are the grand enemies of the God of your life and the life of your soul. In a word, he

said, they are the public enemies of all mankind.

Meditate on the desert of your sins, he said. It cries to heaven. It calls for vengeance.

It's due wages is death and damnation. It brings the curse of God on the soul and body. He says, meditate on the deformity of your sins.

It is black as hell, the very image and the likeness of death. One, the sin of your heart, he said, it is little purpose to lop off the branches while the root of corruption remains confined in all these aggravations. The fifth direction, I've skipped a couple.

The fifth direction, he says, renounce all your sins. Notice, as Mr. Martin pointed out, the emphasis on repentance. He says, renounce all of your sins.

If you yield yourself to practice of any sin, you are undone, in vain do you hope for life in Christ, except you depart from iniquity. Forsake your sins or you cannot find mercy. You cannot be married to Christ except you be divorced from sin.

Give up the traitor or you'll have no peace with heaven. Keep not Delilah on your lap. You must part with your sins or with your soul.

Spare but one sin and God will not spare you. Your sins must die or you must die for them. If you allow one sin, though but a little, a secret one, though you may plead necessity and have a hundred shifts and excuses for it, the life of your soul must go for the life of that sin.

And will it not be dearly blot to put me emphasis on repentance? And he goes on to say, poor sinner, you have fallen off from God and have engaged his passion. You know, ye know, that his commandments and grace, he offers to be your God again in Christ. He told sinners that all the love God had for them was the love God had for sinners in Christ.

You gotta get to Christ, sinner. Oh, sinner, here is the most blessed news that ever came to the sons of man. The Lord will be your God if you will but close with him in his excellency.

Will you have his mercy, his grace, the sin-parting God to be your God? Oh, yes, says the sinner, otherwise I am done. I'm undone. Ah, but he further tells you, I am a holy and sin-hating God.

If you will be owned as one of my people, you must be holy. Holy in heart, holy in life. You must put away all your iniquities.

Be they ever so dear, ever so natural, ever so necessary to the maintaining of your worldly interests. Unless you will be at enmity with sin, I cannot be your God. Ah, he tells you, sinner, again he tells you, sinner, I am the sovereign Lord.

If you will have me for your God, you must give me supremacy. Now, that business of trusting Jesus as your personal Savior, whatever that is, and then some big convenient day when it pleases you, you make Him Lord. No, he said at the outset, you must give me supremacy.

You must not make me second to sin or any worldly interest. If you will be my people, I must have the rule over you. You must not live at your pleasure.

You will come, will you come under my yoke? He asked the sinner. Will you come under my yoke? Will you bow to my government? Will you submit me to my word, to my rod? Sinner, what do you say to this? Seventh direction, I'll skip again. He said, accept the Lord Jesus in all of His offices as yours.

Upon these terms Christ may be had. Will you have Christ in all His relations to be yours? Your king, your priest, your prophet, will you have Him and bear His cross? Do you not take, do not take Christ without consideration? Notice that again. Do not take Christ without His consideration, but sit down and count the cost.

Will you lay all in His seat? Like our Lord, Ali made the way narrow at the outset. The twelfth direction, now I'll skip several. The twelfth direction, he points out the necessity of attending to the means.

Hear him again, quote, attend conscientiously upon the word as the means appointed for your conversion. Attend, I say, not customarily, but conscientiously with this desire, desire and hope and expectation that you will be converted by it. Come to every sermon you hear with this thought.

Now he's talking to the unconverted. Come to every store you hear with this thought. Oh, I hope God will come in.

I hope this day may be the time, this may be the man by whom God... Again, we see the essence of on-the-spot decisionism or salesmanship. Recently, and I do give a couple of quotes of recently, I read in a manual called Counselor's Training Course, and this ties into what Dr. Packer said this morning about this quick on-the-spot business, but I read, and I have it with me in case you don't believe it, I read in the Counseling Training Course for a leading evangelist. Remember, many people are ready to accept Christ.

They do not need to be convinced, but just show how. In most cases, this presentation should not take more than just a quote. And that's not a fly-by-night thing either.

The fifteenth direction. He said, directing the unconverted to Christ, he says, forsake evil company. Forbear the occasion of sin.

You will never return from sin till you decline and forego the temptation of sin. I never expect your conversion from sin, said Eileen, unless you are brought to some sense of self-denial as to flee from the occasion. If you will be nibbling at the base and playing at the brink and tampering with the snare, you're so much for Eileen.

May I quote another Puritan that we all love and sing his hymn, John Newton, the great preacher and hymn writer. I took this from a sermon entitled Coming to Christ. Very apropos for my part of this assignment.

Based on the text, Matthew 11, 28. He says, The gospel of Christ can be truly esteemed and understood by none but weary and heavy laden souls. Not this bit that you can say with a smile on your face.

The gospel of Christ can be truly esteemed and understood by none but weary and heavy laden souls who have felt their misery by nature and have tried and have tired of the drudgery of sin and have seen the curse of a broken law pursuing them like the avenger of blood. Notice the effort not to comfort before their conviction or not to comfort before their concern. Surely that Puritan believes that they must see their pollution before they would desire Christ's protection.

They must see their, they must be disturbed by their sin before they'll, in the same sermon under one of the titles or one of the foreexamples, when is it to come to Christ? He says the following, It certainly implies more than mere bodily coming to his presence. He was surrounded, speaking of our Lord, he was surrounded and even followed by a multitude to touch while standing around him. He complained, Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.

John 5.41 From one of Bunyan's sermons, and a sermon, quite a long sermon, I don't know how he ever preached these sermons, but it's a sermon on the text of John 6.37 called Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ. And under one of the heads of this sermon entitled What is it to come to Christ? Bunyan said, quote, This word welcome must be understood spiritually, not carnally, for many come to him carnally and bodily that had no saving advantage by him. Multitudes did thus come to him in the days of his flesh, yea, innumerable company.

This coming, says Bunyan then, this coming then, intended in the text is to be understood of the coming of the mind to him, even the moving of the heart towards him, for it's from a sound sense and an absolute want that the man has of him for justification and salvation. And I found a footnote in the same sermon, quote, it wasn't by Bunyan, it was somebody, just a footnote, it says this, quote, To come to Christ in its proper sense is to receive him as he's offered to us in the word, to believe on him as a substitute, as a suitable, excuse me, a suitable and all sufficient savior, to submit to his government, that's in coming to him, to submit to his government, both in suffering and doing his will, with all lotus of mind, and thus, of the Holy Spirit upon the soul. Another, I supposedly wouldn't call him a Puritan, but he had the Puritan same stream of convicted soul and the same stream of divine truth.

Another, dear, one of those dear men that we hold up in esteem and long to emulate, every preacher ought to want to emulate him anyhow, Robert Mary McShane. The book's on the book table. I found in that copy out there six letters.

Now don't forget we're talking about directing before I was converted to Christ. And I say, well how did they do it? Well I found six letters of McShane, all to a soul seeking, that's what, all six letters were to some soul seeking Jesus. And by the context of the letter, it's obvious that it was a girl's skin in poor health.

I want a quote just from a few of those letters in answering this question. How did they do it? Just a few quotes from some of the letters. There were six letters all together.

Letter one he said, Seek to know your corruption. Did you ever hear anything like that in our counseling? Seek to know your corruption. Do you think you have been convicted of sin? This is the Holy Spirit's work and his first work upon the soul.

All pray for deep discoveries of your real state by nature and practice. The world will say you are an innocent and harmless girl. Do not believe them.

The world is a liar. Pray to see yourself exactly as God sees you. Pray to know the worth of your soul.

Letter two, Seeking the righteousness of Christ. Quote, Robert Mary McShane, I pray that the Holy Spirit may sweetly and silently open your heart to relish the way of salvation through the blood and obedience of Emmanuel. In your nature, in your past life, in your breaking the holy law, in your contempt and neglect of Jesus, in your indwelling sin, God can see nothing but what he condemned.

Your tears will not blot out your sin. They do nothing but weep in hell. But that does not justify them.

Your right view of the gospel will not justify you. You must be covered with a spotless righteousness. Letter three, Joy and bleeding.

There is a text, he said in the letter, there is a text in Romans 15, 13, which expresses all my desire for you. The God of hope, and then he quotes the text, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing. The truths that are presented to you will not convert.

The God of hope must breathe upon your heart and water it often. Then see how he gives you joy and peace in believing. He goes on in that same letter, he says, when Jesus revealed himself to you, as he did to Thomas, when Jesus revealed himself to Thomas, Thomas cried out with joy, my Lord and my God.

And then he said, if Jesus reveals himself to you in all of his, the glory of his person, and the completeness of his work, and the freeness of his love, you too will be filled with joy, appropriating joyful faith, and will cry, my Lord and my God. It is difficult to explain what believing is, he said. I suppose it's impossible.

But when Jesus unveiled his matchless beauty, and give you a sweet glimpse of his matchless face that was buffeted and sped upon, then the soul joyfully clings to him. This is believing. This is joy and peace in believing.

The truest, purest joy flows from a discovery of Jesus Christ. He's the hidden treasure that gives such joy to the finder. Do you think you have found that treasure? Touching question, he said.

Touching question. If not, you are poor indeed. But how much joy may you have in Christ.

So much for McShane. Now for the second half of my title, which I hardly should say a word after Dr. Packer's message this morning. It almost seems, what's that big word, anticlimactic.

But let me go on because I have to do this because it will be a little, maybe come out, I say not with that beautiful Oxford English, but more in a carpenter fashion. I'd like to give a few quotes from the Puritans in connection with the shirt. First, let us see a great missionary in a situation that will show us something that seems almost totally lost in our generation.

And before I read this excerpt from his diary, I want to ask you, my dear, esteemed preacher friends and fellow laborers in the gospel, what most preachers, evangelists, and personal workers would do in this situation. I'm going to quote from David Brainerd's diary, July 2, 1745, when he was about to leave the Indians at Cross Week Sun. Remember my question.

What would happen in our day? What would happen in your church? Quote, When I parted from them, one told me with many tears that she wished God would change her heart. Another, that she wanted to find Christ. And an old man who'd been one of their chiefs wept dearly with concern for his soul.

I then promised them to return as speedily as my health and business elsewhere would permit, and felt not a little concerned with partings, said Brainerd, lest the good impressions then apparent upon numbers of them might be lost. Yet I could not but hope that he who I trusted had begun a good work in them, and who I knew did not stand in need of being changed. And he believed in a sovereign God that not only made salvation possible, but actually saved.

Please notice, just in that little quote, he did not decision them. He did not give them assurance. And I say, as a layman, my dear brethren, a proper understanding of our responsibility in the area would save many, many false perceptions, not all, but many.

And it would save many false notions about salvation, and many false ideas about invitation. May I quote from his diary again, referring to his own experience of salvation, David Brainerd, quote, Thus scores of times I vainly imagined myself humbled and prepared for saving mercy. And while I was in this distressed, bewildered, and tumultuous state of mind, the corruption of my heart was especially irritated by the following things.

And he named four, elaboration, I'm only going to name three, and talk about one. His heart was especially irritated at the following things. One, the strictness of the divine law.

Two, that faith alone was the condition of salvation. Flesh doesn't like that. But the third one's the one I want to call your attention to.

This is another thing that irritated his heart. That I could not find out what faith was. That I could not find out what faith was, or what it was, to believe and come to Christ.

I read the cause of Christ to the weary and heavy laden. I thought I would gladly come if I knew how. I read Mr. Stoddard's Guide to Christ, and my heart arose against the author.

For though he told me my very heart, all along under conviction, and seemed to be very beneficial to me in his directions, yet here he failed. Here he failed. He did not tell me anything that I could do that would bring me to Christ, but left me as it were, for I was not supernatural, and which the highest angel cannot give, let alone a preacher.

That's how he dealt with the secret. It was later Stoddard's Guide to Christ that was the means used in the hands of God to his conversion. May I again turn to that beloved of all Christians and my faithful saint, John Bunyan, example that I know of.

Let him speak for himself, but remember, here is an awakened sinner under deep conviction. You haven't even seen anybody like this, let alone know how to counsel them. Under deep conviction, crying, well, I'm looking for that song.

Know well how the evangelist deals with the seeking. Now I saw upon a time when he was walking in the field that he was reading in his book and greatly distressed in his mind. And as he read, he burst out as he had done before, crying, what shall I do to be saved? I saw also that he looked this way and that way as if he would run, and yet he stood still because I perceived he could not tell which way to go.

I looked then and I saw a man named Evangelist. Study Bunyan. I saw a man named Evangelist coming to him who asked, Wherefore dost thou cry? He answered, Sir, I perceive by the book in my hand that I'm condemned to die and after that to come to judgment.

And I find that I'm not willing to do the first or prepared to do the second. Then said Evangelist, Why are you not willing to die since this life is attended with so many evils? The man answered, Because I fear that this burden upon my back will sink me lower than the grave and I shall fall into hell. And sir, if I be not fit to go to prison, I am not fit to go to judgment and from thence to execution and the thoughts of these things make me cry.

Then said Evangelist, If this be thy condition, why standest thou still? And he answered, Because I know not whither to go. And he gave me a parchment roll and therein was written, Flee from the wrath to come. The man therefore read it and looked upon Evangelist very carefully and said, Whither shall I fly? Then said Evangelist, pointing his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder wicked gate? This man said, No.

Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? God had put a little light in his path. Do you see yonder shining light? He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that light in your eye and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate at which when thou knockest it shall be opened and thou shalt be told what to do.

No false comfort. But direction, a quote by Spurgeon from Iain Mary's book *The Forgotten Spurgeon to the sinner*. He said, Go home alone, he would say, trusting in Jesus.

Then Spurgeon spoke to the sinner, I would like to go into the inquiry room. I dare say you would, but we will not pander to your popular superstition. We fear that in those rooms here there is few of a supposed convert of inquiry rooms turn out well.

Go to your God at once, even where you are now. Cast yourself upon Christ now at once, turn on an inch. It's amazing, the reoccurring warning in many of his later and inquiry rooms were just then beginning.

They're only about 120 years old, so don't think you're very historic. They were only beginning. And if Spurgeon saw this at the beginning, this is what he said, the reoccurring warnings at the end of his life.

He said, quote, God has not appointed salvation by inquiry rooms, for the most part, a wounded conscience, like a wounded stag, delights to be alone, that it may bleed in secret. A few more quotes in connection with assurance. I quote now from the last source that I want to use today on that particular thing, and then this is the end of the quotes, and we'll try to point out some of the differences.

But I quote now from that concession, the mother, and incidentally, on this point, it's exactly like the old Baptist confession of 1689, later called, I quote, from the Westminster Confession of Faith, what was referred to this morning, in chapter 18, under assurance of grace and salvation. And let me highly commend it to everyone, and also G.I. Williamson's comments on it, or Hodges' comments on this great section. But I quote from not the whole section, but just one part of the third paragraph.

We've had it today. This infallible assurance doth not sow but many, but many, but a tree before he be a partaker of it. He may, not necessarily, he may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it.

And for my purpose just now, the words that I want to refer to are these. That a true believer may wait long before he be a partaker of it. And I don't care what your view of infallible is at this particular point, but whatever it is, he be a partaker of it.

That's Puritan. That's Biblical. That's Westminster Confession of Faith.

How would most of our present day counseling of sinners and evangelistic preaching fit into this truth that I read to you from the Westminster Confession today? That is, the possibility, the possibility of waiting long before they be a partaker of it. Our present day methods not only overlook this truth, but are apparently ignorant of it, because in most cases they teach the very opposite. That is, that to have any doubt, to have

any doubt about your decision is to make God a liar.

You must overlook it. The sad result is that most people in our age have no doubt about their salvation, because they have been given some psychological or intellectual assurance based on their inference of catechism answers or some proof text salvation like John 1-12, as Dr. Packer mentioned this morning, and that shows lack of faith in God. Now, I'm sure that as I've gone along and pointed out, that may I quickly reiterate for what I consider four major areas of difference and be sure my motive in talking about the Puritans and interested in the Puritans is not for the Puritans themselves or compare them to today.

I am not interested in just comparing some antiquarian practices of the Puritans with some present-day practices. But rather, I have sincere desire to compare both with the Scriptures. What say the Scriptures should be the desire of every Christian on every subject? The difference is, first I point out, the Puritan practices and appeals were God-centered as compared to present-day man-centered.

That is, the Puritans boxed men up to the mercy of God. You heard it last night from that text. Crying out for mercy.

They boxed men up to the mercy of God and tried to show sinners that they were imprisoned and that they didn't have the key to get out. Now, today's practice, they teach men that they're in prison, but then they tell them they've got the key in their pocket. And who minds being in jail if you've got the key in your pocket? The Puritans told men that they were deaf and blind and dead and went on to tell them that only God could unstop deaf ears and only God could open blind eyes and only God could raise the dead.

What say the Scriptures? Why, of course, it supports the God-centered view. Blind Bartimaeus doesn't try to put one eye in while he's getting Jesus to put the other in. The leper, in Luke chapter 5, quote verse 12, when he came to pass, as Jesus was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy who seeing Jesus fell at his face.

That's what McCain told him. Seeing Jesus fell at his face and they saw him say, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou! That's God-centered, friend. God-centered.

The Puritans put the sinners to seeking and applying to Jesus to do something for them, not trying to get sinners to do something with Jesus. That's the difference between God-centered and man-centered. You say, oh, that's only semantics.

No, that's principle. Second difference I would point out, the Puritans made it very clear, Mr. Martin bore down on this the other day, the Puritans made it very clear that repentance was involved in coming to Christ. They made it clear that Christ came to save men not only from sin, I mean, not only the consequences of sin, but they made it clear that Christ came to save men from the consequences of sin.

Not just a kind of a hell insurance policy or this kind of little celestial bellboy type of deal, suitcase of domestic problems. No, no. What's there for scriptures about repentance? See the doctrinal content in what we call the Great Commission as we read 24, verse 47, Christ's final charge.

I quote our Lord, and, this is the final charge, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations. Repentance and remission of sins they're together. No remission without repentance.

Our Lord himself preached it. Not only did he tell them to do it, but he preached it. Mark, chapter 1, verse 15.

Quote, The time has fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe the gospel. Not trust Jesus, trust Jesus.

Repent ye and believe the gospel. Three, the disciples preached it. Mark, chapter 6, verse 12.

And they went out and preached that men should repent. Peter's first two sermons revealed this. The sermons that we've made reference to this morning.

Acts, the very first sermon in the New Testament of Peter. Acts, chapter 2, verse 38. Peter said, And be baptized.

The second sermon, Acts, chapter 3, verse 19. Peter said, quote, Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Not only did Peter, but Paul preached it.

In Acts, chapter 20, verse 20 and 21, we see Paul in a very unique situation. He's called the elders of Ephesus together, and we see here, we see a summary, a summary of his doctrine as he meets with these elders for the last time. Notice part of that summary, what he says.

Paul says, quote, And I, how I kept the faith. We see in Acts, chapter 26, where Paul stands before Agrippa, defending himself and describing his ministry as a ministry of repentance. Quote, Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do work meet for repentance.

Spurgeon said, Repentance and true belief are twins, and it would be idle to say which one was born first. The old Westminster Confession again says, and it's quite a terrific section on this, on the repentance, it says this, talking about preaching, Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine of which is to be preached by every minister of the gospel as well, not either or. Now the third area of difference is the area of the invitation by wanting men to count the cost, maybe I should say by being honest with them at the outset.

We saw this as I read some of the other quotes, how Scofield says, you must do it personally, you must do it cordially and heartily, rationally and resolutely. That's what they say. What's the answer to Scripture about counting the cost in coming to Christ? I read in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter, chapter 7, verse 13, quote our Lord, Enter ye in at the straight gate, and that's not S-T-R-A, Enter ye in at the straight gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.

Christ our Lord made the way narrow at the beginning, total different thing altogether. Christ was honest about the cost at the beginning, hearing himself, in Luke chapter 9, verse 23, where he says, And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, that's at the beginning, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. And he goes on to try this with quite a long talk about discipleship.

See him at the end of that same chapter, in Luke chapter 9, who is saying what's there for Scripture, Luke chapter 9, verse 57 and 58, quote, See our Lord in action, about inviting men to himself. And it came to pass, as they went that way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I'll follow you wherever thou goest. For we'd have signed him up, baptized him, and if he'd have been from Hollywood or some big... But our Lord knew better than that.

What did Jesus say? And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay his head. Not a very good way to get judgment. Read Luke chapter 14.

The whole principle of counting the cost of a tower, and also anticipating the enemy before the king goes to war. The whole two things in that parable are all tied in to his invitation. Before you come to me.

Their preaching was not like high-pressure salesmanship with everything geared to a climactic moment of decisions, even the light and the soft music. The quick sales technique was completely absent from their method. And bless God, they were absent from our Lord's method.

The fourth difference, and this has been touched on several times, but they did not appeal directly, now hear this, they did not appeal directly to the will or the emotion, but indirectly to the will and the emotion through the mind. Two words, I think, would summarize their practice. Two words.

Exclamation and application. Exclamation and application. Godfrey said, quote again, How can a man savingly receive what he has not seriously considered? It is obvious from their directing and instructing to the seekers that they believed that the gospel was divine information about God, about sin, about man's condition and destiny because of sin, about Christ, his person, his work, who he was, what he did, why he did it.

And they believed, dear brethren, they believed that it had to be learned before it could be lived, and it had to be understood before it could be applied. What sayeth the scriptures? What sayeth the scriptures? Well, I look at what we call the Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28, verse 19 and 20. Go ye therefore and, what's the next word, class? Teach, dear disciples, teach all nations.

And then it goes on later, teaching them. Oh, you say, that's just one. It didn't say decision them, it says teach them.

Not huckster me off like you're trying to drum up votes for me, but teach them who I am, what I did, why I did it. Christ's example of inviting men to himself. Look at his own example.

Learn of me. In Acts chapter 4, verse 1 and 2, we learn that the priests and the Sadducees were grieved at the apostles. Note the reason.

Quote, being grieved that they taught the people. Acts chapter 5, verse 21, the apostles were miraculously delivered from prison, and it says they went about and taught, they went to the temple rather, and taught the people. I'll skip over this, but in Acts chapter 17 is a wonderful example.

We see a beautiful gospel opportunity for St. Paul. Study how St. Paul took advantage of that gospel opportunity. He didn't hold John 3, 16 up, and see what that's all about.

Study the great sermon of Mars Hill in a terrific gospel. I was going to comment on it, but I think I better pass it, because I want to get down to the, toward the end. I want to be fair.

I want to be fair in this paper. But I say a gospel which merely says come to Jesus and offers him as a friend and offers a marvelous life without conviction of sin, without repentance, without explanation of who Christ is and what he did, and his absolute lordship at the outset is not New Testament evangelism. You, I beg you again, I know you've done it, but I beg you again to examine the ministry of our Lord, and you will

not find one example of him high pressuring or decisioning people to follow him.

The very opposite seems to be true sometimes. He seems to almost put obstacles in the way, and if you read John 6, you'll see that he preached the crowd away. Oh, may we have a heart, not like the Puritans per se, but like our Lord Jesus Christ in being honest with men.

Now I come to the end in a few minutes. Why is it different? Isn't that a good question? Probably the question, maybe you'll like it better than the answer. But why is it different? Why is it different? Obviously it differs, and I feel keenly about it, the question about which is scriptural, but why is it different? Why is it different? I want to offer briefly, and I mean it, five, I could answer with one word.

You know what it is? It's theology. That's right. That's the difference.

Because I believe, and I think you'll agree, that our theology determines our message. I don't preach what I don't believe, and I don't use methods that I don't believe in. What I believe about God and man, that has to do with it.

So I say theology. Theology, and it's theology, I'm going to suggest five areas that it appears in that makes the difference. The first area, the difference, in the area of our view of man.

That is, his condition and his responsibility. Not only his condition, but his condition and his responsibility. Our view about what man is and what he is responsible to be will have a profound effect on how we approach this creature.

On this point, we see the difference between God-centered and man-centered, inviting men to Christ. May I give you another quote? Christ went to the cross to die and bleed for you. Will you come a few steps? Won't you come a few steps in this beautiful arena for him? Quote.

That's not Puritan. Come now! If you do not receive him, you will die in your sins. Not Puritan.

What would the Puritan do? Puritan invited men like this. Strike in with the Spirit when he begins to work upon your heart. When he works convictions, all do not stifle them, but join in with him and they should give you saving conversion.

Man-centered God-centered. The second area of theological difference would be the purpose of God in election. And I was a Christian a long time before I even ever heard the word election.

I saw it in the Bible. Somebody asked me this. The Puritans bleed.

Therefore, efficaciously, the Father draws men to Christ faithfully and actively. They believed election to be the free, sovereign, unconditional choice of sinners to redeem by Christ given faith and brought to glory. The third area of theological difference, and I'm only just calling these to your attention, would be in the area of the accomplishment and the application of Christ's atonement.

The Puritans did not believe in an atonement that just made salvation possible while the Father and the Son and the Spirit stood idly and helplessly by waiting to see what this great, big, sovereign sinner would do with Jesus and begging him to do something about it all the time. No, the Puritans knew that the atonement had as its end and its goal the salvation that the Father planned. They knew and believed that the atonement did more than create an opportunity, but rather the atonement made surface the salvation of an innumerable company of sinners that no man could number.

The other view, of course, pictures a kind of a Father and the Son quietly and helplessly on the sidelines waiting to see what these sovereign sinners are going to do with this pitiable Savior who represents a pathetic and an infinite God. The fourth area of theological difference would be the power and the prerogative of the Holy Ghost in applying the redemption that was planned by the Father and purchased by the Son. The Puritans knew that the work of the Spirit is not only an enlightening work but a regenerating work of God in man.

On this point, again, I quote the Baptists and the Westminster Confession chapter 10. Quote, this is their view, talking about the work of the Spirit, taking away their heart of stone, giving them a heart of flesh, renewing their will, and by His almighty power determining them to do that which is good and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ yet so as to come most freely. They don't come against their will.

Yet so as to come most freely, being made willing by His grace. And I say the work of the Spirit never fails to accomplish in application what was planned by the Father and purchased by the Son, otherwise you have war in the Trinity and a frustrated God. And I say that again, the work of the Spirit never fails to accomplish and apply that redemption that was planned by the Father and purchased by the Son, otherwise you have war in the Trinity.

The work of the Spirit never fails to accomplish. My fifth and last and final theological difference, the area would be in the character of that redemption that was planned by the Father, purchased by the Son and applied to the Spirit. That is, the Redeemer preserving those who He has redeemed and the redeemed ones persevering in holiness and obedience unto the end.

Therefore, the Father who planned to save some sinners, the Son who purchased their redemption and the Spirit who applied it, this great redemption will perform, He'll perform it by justifying, sanctifying and glorifying all the sheep of the great shepherd. Dr. Packard gave it to us in Romans a couple of times. All the sheep of the great shepherd.

And the theological difference in these five areas is not... Now listen, brethren. If you forget all I said, remember this because I have heard twenty people say, Oh, Mr. Riesinger, that's your emphasis. May I say with all the power of my little voice today, these theological differences in these five areas is not one of emphasis but one of content.

One view proclaims a God who actually saves sinners. And the other view, a God who makes salvation possible and standing idly, helplessly, powerlessly by waiting to see what sinners will do with our blessed Lord. A man's view of these theological points will have a profound effect on his message and his method in inviting the unconverted to Christ.

And thus we have the difference between the old historic, biblical method and much of today's practice.

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