

Preventing and Healing Our Divisions

by Ernest C. Reisinger

The sermon emphasizes the critical need for unity within the church and addresses the causes and consequences of divisions among believers.

Duration: 1:07:26

Scripture: Acts 18:24

Topics: "Division"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses six important aspects of preaching the word of God. These aspects include preaching sound doctrine, dividing the word rightly, speaking plainly without using enticing words, faithfully teaching the whole council of God, wisely applying the message to the needs and capacity of the hearers, and zealously preaching with love for God and the souls of His people. The preacher emphasizes the importance of direct and plain preaching, using the example of a young preacher who lacked the ability to effectively communicate despite his knowledge and devotion. The sermon also highlights the need for preaching to be done with wisdom, considering the necessity and capacity of the audience, and with zeal and love for God and the salvation of people.

Transcript

...soldiers in the gospel battle, I first want to greet you from America and express my deep gratitude and joy for being able to spend these few days with you in what I call genuine Christian fellowship. I'm a debtor to the banner. I'm not only a trustee, but I'm a debtor to the banner.

Some over 20 years ago, I got my first banner book and I was a rank zealous Arminian. Somebody asked me if I believe in the second blessing. I said, yes, I've had it.

I was an Arminian and now I'm a Calvinist. I have personally been blessed and I have seen thousands of others blessed by banner books. So when I say genuine Christian fellowship these days, I mean every word of it.

If I had a text for what I'm going to try to do, it would be the great apostle's question to the church that was infected with schisms, divisions, moral and doctrinal problems, that church at Corinth. And that question would be, is Christ divided? He asked that question in the early part of the book, or maybe his words to them later, where he said, I hear there are divisions among you, or possibly by the Lord's words, woe to that man by whom offenses come. I'm going to make no effort to make this a sermon or a paper.

If I was to title from my heart, what I hope to try to do, it would be, I would call it a heartfelt exhortation. We would all agree, I believe, that the great peacemaker in offering himself a sacrifice for the sins of his people intended not only to reconcile us them to God, but to unite them as a body among themselves, even those who were at enmity with each other. Gentile and Jews, he died to unite.

The oneness that he died is represented and exhibited in his supper. The same design is the principal part of that intersection, which Mr. Marshall read, John 17. Yes, he pressed and prayed for their salvation and sanctification in that prayer, but it was for the reason that they may be one.

Verse 21, that they all may be one as thou father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. Upon this very same ground, the great apostle said in Romans, For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one member one of another. We confess it in our creed when we confess our faith and say we believe in one holy Catholic church.

Behind Paul's question, is Christ divided, is obviously, you learn from the context, a concern for oneness, a concern about the divisions that were among them. The whole matter of unity, unity of the church, is a real issue today. And I might add, highly sensitive, highly sensitive.

It was a live and sensitive issue in the days of the Reformation. It was a live and sensitive issue in the days of the Puritan. Believe it or not, as much as we have this wonderful fellowship together, if we were going to start a church, it would become a live and sensitive issue right here.

Years ago, I was at my first Puritan conference, I think it was 1966, and I witnessed two giants that I consider giants in the faith, giant theological leaders, giant Christian leaders, have a sharp difference over the subject of the church. That debate of those two great men ended the Puritan conference at Westminster Chapel, or at least it changed the name and the leadership. We blush before the world at the contemporary scene, the United States, Canada, Australia, UK, of the many denominational splits.

We blush, and we with our tongue in our cheek, only with our tongue in our cheek, can we speak of the unity of the church and the oneness of Christ. There can be no dispute among us as to the teaching of Scripture in respect to unity. The church is one by nature.

It's one by definition. If we examine the metaphorical designation and the figurative language in the New Testament, it is utterly impossible to think or to speak of the church in kind of plural language. For example, we cannot think of Christ's brides.

We don't think of Christ's bodies or Christ's vines or his flock. Rather, we say Christ has a bride, Christ has a body, Christ has a flock. Oh, I'm not talking just now about the local church.

I'm talking about unity. Is Christ divided? And we can say without controversy that the unity of the church is a biblical mandate. It's a biblical truth.

Yes, we can say it's a biblical emphasis, and I personally don't consider it a secondary consideration. Equally true, there can be no question among us as to the church's present dividedness. How many denominations? Could anyone count them? Multitudes and multitudes and multitudes.

How many different kinds of Methodists? And you're not cursed with as bad in this country as we are. How many different kinds of Presbyterians? Do you believe in talking with somebody this week? He set out nine

different Presbyterian denominations in the United States, nine different Presbyterian denominations. And then there's some that call themselves, there's some churches that call themselves independent Presbyterians.

I don't understand that. It interferes to me, but we do have them. We do have them.

Many different kinds of Pentecostal churches and Baptists. Ah. At this conference, we all rejoice in the fellowship that we have together these days.

And not only have any, we won't have any serious religious quarrels, but there's a oneness here among us, at least at all the Banner conferences I've ever attended. There's a oneness that we don't even enjoy in our own communions and denominations. The fact is, there's a oneness that we do not enjoy, some of us, in our local churches.

But as I mentioned before, brother, if we were going to start a church with the same group, we would have no end of divisions. It's amazing what divides churches. In our country, we have separate, different Mennonite denominations.

We have what we call, and this is a designation. They're designated by this black bumper Mennonites. Now, do you know what that, do you know why they get that designation? They paint, they believe that this chrome is quarreling.

And so they paint the chrome on the cars, and they buy them black. That is a literal fact. I was preaching at a Mennonite church for a week, a couple of falls ago, and the fellow told me, and I thought he was joking at first, he said, we have, Mennonites is divided over suspenders.

But I'll tell you, it's a bit sad. Years ago, that group of Presbyterians that split, I believe properly from Prince, formerly Orthodox Presbyterian church, they weren't existing very long until there was a separation. You know what it was over? Two little things.

Well, they may not be so small, eschatology and Christian liberty. That was the basis of the separation. With the same wonderful concession, the confession of confessions, the same standards separate.

And it would take a book of 600 pages to list the causes that Baptist split over. And some just absolutely ridiculous, ludicrous, and unbelievable. Well, when we think of solutions, well, we cannot seek a solution in a liberal ecumenical movement that has no regard for truth.

Our Catholic brother made that clear. That has no regard for truth. Or can we cop out on some special eschatological view that puts this piece somewhere else? Nor take a position that this desire of unity is only with the invisible church.

Now there's a measure of truth in that. But I want to assure you that if you will carefully and seriously read John 17, you will be forced to say that the unity that is meant and the unity that Christ paid for, the unity that he longs to see prevail among his people is a visible unity. And I quote our Lord, make thy people one so that the world may see that their unity and believe that thou has sent me.

Behind Christ's prayer to the Father for unity of his people is an evangelistic purpose that the world may know that thou has sent me. This is unity that can be perceived and can be seen by the world in which we live. It's important to assist that no denomination or congregation is the church of Jesus Christ.

A denomination at most is a form of the church, a manifestation of the church. And it's wrong for any Christian group to appropriate to itself with presumption or pretension the title church of Jesus Christ. Well, I spent these early remarks, well, I'm nervous, I do.

Somebody asked me some time ago, do I get nervous when I preach? And I said, well, I said, as long as I've realized that I'm dealing with eternal verities, matters of life and death, and sometimes matters of heaven and hell, you ought to be a little nervous about what you're trying to do. I spent these early remarks largely about the big picture concerning the church. But as you all know, I'm sure that many of these great divisions and schisms began in local churches, sometimes with two individuals.

And I want to take some time to talk about some of the major causes that I have observed over 40 years working in the church. Not always as a pastor, I was licensed when I was in 1958, but I wasn't ordained until I was 50 years old. I've had part in those years of starting about six churches, and under God, reforming two.

And in these experiences, I've made some observations and a few mistakes. One of my motives is that I might help some young ministers here who may be in difficult church situations, or who may later be in difficult, or they may be in a reforming situation. Because of the great rise of the doctors of grace, Calvinism in the United States, many young men are facing reforming situations.

And I suppose that that would be true here. And we try to fight divisions because divisions breed scandals, both in practice and doctrine. And there's a difference between heresy and schism and division, and I'm not going to try to make that division today.

How do offenses and schisms and divisions come about? Well, I probably couldn't list all the reasons, but many come about by different understanding of biblical truth or biblical text. Many divisions, I suppose that would be most of them. And then the different application of truth equally held.

For instance, the confessions who equally hold the same truth in their application of it. Others, difference in emphasis over one truth above another. That is, when one man stresses the light that he has, or another man who doesn't have that particular light, and especially in matters that are not fundamental or secondary matters, that causes a great many divisions.

But I suppose the chief causes are, would come under the area of church government and polity and worship, corporate worship. These two are the most common sources. The application of the regulative principle.

I didn't say the regulative principle, I said the application of it. You know, there are applications and there are applications. It causes no small amount of problems.

Discipline, power of authority, Christian liberty. And of course, sometimes unfortunately just personality problems. The result, I hope what you see is when you think of the result, they're painful, they're sad, they're damaging, and sometimes damning.

I don't know what old Puritan I read, he said, the temptations and controversy are more dangerous than the temptations of wine and women. Divisions cause jealousy and suspicion. They bring forth the carnality as nothing else.

It creates, usually the divisions create greater problems than the problem itself. Almost every division that I've been associated with or know, it may have been a small thing, and then when they start to take sides, the things that happen afterwards are a million times worse than the issue itself. I have a mailing list of about 900 preachers or a thousand, and that of course fosters some correspondence.

And some of the things that I want, they're predominantly young men. Some of the things that I want to say today comes from experience and talking with them and the letters they write and the questions they ask and the phone calls. And I'm thinking about the serious one.

I'm not going to speak about the problems with the odd balls, and there's a few of those too. I'm not going to talk about those who apparently have no business in the ministry, and I believe they're not a few. I'm thinking of men who have a desire to be true to the Bible, a desire to be true to the Word of God without unnecessary divisions or compromise.

Many times these men in this group are struggling between compromise and accommodation. And that's a fine line, not always even humanly able to discern. In fact, there are maybe situations where it's properly to accommodate on some circumstances in one place, where in another place the same thing would be a compromise.

And I think I have New Testament support for that. In the New Testament we see the Apostle Paul did accommodate to spiritual immaturity of others. Paul himself was quite clear on the subject of circumcision, the circumcision issue.

He knew and he taught that the ritual of circumcision was not a prerequisite to salvation, and he vehemently opposed and taught to the contrary. But behold, Paul says in other cases, this is how much he was opposed to that, when circumcision was used wrong. He said in Galatians 5.2, Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

To circumcise would have been a blatant compromise. These Christians to whom this epistle was written had already yielded in some measure to the teaching of the Judaizers. He therefore reminded them of the danger of not resting on Christ alone.

It was not only wrong when he, when it was performed out of such a design to be in respect to acceptance with God. Thus we see the Apostle had no qualms on another occasion in circumcising Timothy. In Acts 16 it says Paul took and circumcised him, and the Bible even gives his reason, because of the Jews, because of the Jews which were in those quarters.

And as these Jews knew, all the Jews at that particular, knew that Timothy's father was a Greek, and they therefore concluded that Timothy had not been circumcised. And Paul desires not to unnecessarily prejudice the Jews against Timothy's ministry, anticipated their objections and circumcised him. He accommodated their ignorance for proper purposes and with the proper motives.

Acts 21 is a parallel incident. In verses 18 to 26 we see the Apostle accommodating some Jewish Christians upon advice and consent of James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem, by subjecting himself along with four other men to ritual purification. James and the elders advised Paul that he had been falsely accused by some of them as having no regard for the law of Moses.

That was the accusation brought against him. Do thou therefore this, this is what they said to him, do thou therefore this that they say unto thee. We have four men, four men which have a vow on them.

Them take and purify thyself with them, and here's the purpose, that all may know that those things whereof they are informed concerning thee are nothing, but that thou thyself also walkest orderly and keepest the law. Now Paul was putting into practice the principle, the principle that he penned in first Corinthians 9 20. Unto the Jews I became a Jew that I might gain the Jew, to them that are under the law as under the law that I might gain them that are under the law.

Interesting Charles Hodges comment on this passage and I think I'll give it to you. He says, this is Hodges, Hodges says, to the Jew he became a Jew, that is he acted as they acted and he conformed to their usage, observed the law, vowing at the same time that he did it as a matter of accommodation, end quote. There is such a thing, a doctrine of biblical accommodation and that's it.

Paul consented to accommodate these Jewish Christians in Acts 20 when he knew that his credibility and reputation were at stake. Now somebody says, oh he has it wrong, let God take care of that. Well he did it, he was practical, he had common sense.

I liked what our brother said about common sense. Can you teach a man common sense? His wife asked him a good question and he refrained himself from further statement was that if he didn't have it he hoped his wife had it. Common sense.

Well the next, I want to talk about another most common concern, common antidote and common problem that young men have, particularly some old men have it too, but we can't do much with us anymore, we're best doing. Some men are too quick, they're too quick to leave their present place of service because of some problem in the church. I usually tell them to read 1 Corinthians when they talk to me about some little problem and they've figured out somebody or a little division or something.

I say read 1 Corinthians. Among the Corinthians many had gone astray, in fact almost the whole body was infested. There was not just one kind of sin but many.

They were not just corrupt of morals or corruption of morals but of doctrine and not on any doctrine but the key doctrine of the Christian faith, the resurrection. Think of it, the church not a hundred years old. Chapter one, divisions and quarrels about the preference of their preachers, Paul or Peter, all good men.

Chapter two, they were fighting over the preference of the preachers. Chapter one it says there were quarrels and divisions. Chapter five, sexual immorality, incest and no repentance.

Chapter six, lawsuits against one another, defrauding one another, wronging one another. Chapter seven, sexual problems between man and wife. Paul had to teach them that sex was for moral appropriation.

Chapter nine, paying the minister and Paul's apostleship. Chapter ten, Christian liberty. They were problems in his church.

Chapter eleven, problems with men and problems rather with women and their hats and their hairdos. Chapter twelve to fourteen, spiritual gifts and lack of love. Chapter fifteen, doctrinal error of the worst sort.

You ever heard anybody say to you, oh if I could have just been in an early apostolic church. I say among these Christians, the current, no small number had gone astray. We can say that the whole body was infested.

What does that holy discerning apostle do? He's the instrument of the heavenly spirit, by whose testimony the church stands or falls. What did he do? Well, he didn't separate himself from them and start St. Paul's Incorporated for Christ. Did he kill them with the ultimate thunderbolt of anathema? No, no.

He does nothing of the kind. Hear him, onto the church of God which is a current to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He didn't athematize them.

He certainly dealt with their sins. He didn't depart from them. I wish all people before they make these great changes would read John Calvin's Institute's book four, chapter one.

I was helped much from that and what things that I have to say today. I suppose it was one of my chief help, that is John Newton, which I'll quote later. Among these problems the church abides.

They were problems but the church abides. Why? Because of the ministry of the word and the sacrament still remains unrefudiated, said Calvin. Who then would dare snatch the title church from those who cannot be charged with even one-tenth such errors and misdeeds? What, I ask, would those who rage with such curlishness, that's an interesting word, that's Calvin's word, what, what, I ask, would those who rage with such curlishness against present-day church and what they have done with the church at Galatia? All most deserters of the gospel.

Among them seems this, among them this same apostle still recognizes churches. Chapter one, verse two and three. And to the brethren which are with me unto the churches at Galatia, grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, beauty.

Don't solve the vision by running too soon. Young preacher, I hope you'll remember that. Let me add this.

These people that talk to me, they think there's some ideal place to serve God. I'll be 67 this year and I have not found any ideal place except the place where God has you put down right now. I wonder how many young Calvinist preachers, I wonder how many young Calvinist preachers right here would be able to share a ministry with an Armenian, with him preaching in the morning and you preaching at night one week, and you preaching in the morning the next week, and vice versa.

How many young men here could share a ministry like that? Well, Dr. Martin Lloyd Stone did it for over four years at Westminster Chapel with G. Campbell Morgan. I would say there was some accommodation. You can call it what you want.

I've called an accommodation. I'm weary hearing these young preachers call me on the phone and write me letters, call me long distance, send me their resumes. I got a stack of resumes.

Oh, Mr. Reichinger, there's a very difficult area where I'm working in, where I'm trying to labor. It's predominantly Roman Catholic and they're very religious and it seems hopeless. Do you know any churches without a pastor? My brethren, Jerusalem was a hard place for the apostles to launch the gospel and they had plenty of religion.

Everyone's aunt and uncle and mother and grandmother had religion and plenty of it. They were Jews, but they needed the truth because neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men. And perhaps God launched the gospel first in Jerusalem so that no one would ever entertain the idea that there was a place too difficult for the power of the gospel that ought to

encourage it.

Oh yes, I know that most churches are in trouble, bad faith spiritually. I know that. The doctrinal ignorance is appalling and discouraging.

Indifference to real Christian living and holiness is painful. Inadequate leadership. I've never met many true elders.

I've met a few, thank God. Thank God for the few I've met. I've met a few true deacons, but they're sparse when we're thinking the broad sense.

There's much to discourage us, but let me give you some things that I believe is an antidote to discouragement. And it's been emphasized, thank God, in this conference powerfully, powerfully emphasized in this conference already. And that is real communion with God.

Oh, fight to maintain a devotional life. And I wish I could look you honestly in the eye with judgment day honesty and tell you there's a time when that's not a battle to fight for a devotional life, but I'd be a liar. I don't know that time.

If somebody else does, bless God, I don't know about it. It's a fight to maintain a devotional life. So let's all pray for the work.

No, no, no brother, prayer is the work. It's been emphasized. Thank God in this conference.

Well, first the real communion with God is a good antidote. And let me tell you another one. And I'm sure that everybody here, this, this will take you to everyone.

I don't, I'm not going to miss anyone now. You have a lot of friends on your shelf. You have a lot of friends on your shelf.

And many of times at my lowest discouragement, I'd pick up one of those books that I don't read theological stuff. When I'm discouraged, I try to get some warm biopsy or something. I'm pacing my forehead.

Oh God, send back Jonathan Edwards to America. But a voice seems to come to me. And I don't mean a literal voice, but it seems to come to me.

If anybody is going to serve this generation, you have to be a little penis like you. You got a lot of friends, but you got to read them. You got to take them down.

And that's a good antidote to discouragement in bad times because you can, just what Ian Murray did for us last night, didn't that encourage him seeing what those men did? And there's some of the quotes from those men and some of the trials that they were through while we, ours look insignificant then. But you got to be a book reader, not a book collector. I know a lot of preachers are, they're book collectors.

They should be in the antique business. All right. The second, first antidote, real communion with God.

Second, use the friends that you have on your shelf. Thirdly, and I'm going to spend some time. The Lord must want you people to hear something about preaching.

I didn't prepare this after I got here. Is have a real view. This is a third antidote to problems.

Have a real biblical view of the place and power of preaching. And it is right here that I feel some young men are in trouble and they start counseling stuff. The Holy spirit is a good counselor.

And he, and the spoke is his sword. Have a biblical view of the place and the power of preaching. Some of these young men don't learn to preach.

I wonder if anybody ever learned to preach in seminary. I don't know. It may be.

I mean, I know they got help. I know they got help and I'm not against that. And yet preaching, preaching and teaching is the principle means for correcting divisions, systems and everything else.

That's the principle means. I'm going to catechize you today. I'm going to, I want to talk to you about a catechism question from the larger.

I'm a larger catechism man. I'm not a shorter guy. I like that, but they cut out about a hundred questions and especially that section on the law vital, the right use of the law of the unconverted, the right use of the law for the converted, the right use of law to all men.

That's not in the shorter catechism, but I'm going to catechize you today from the larger catechism. And it's question one 59. And I'll tell you before I say anything about it.

If you young preachers will master the answer to this question, you'll probably be better. You'll get more, more help homiletically and in preaching than you did in seminary. What's the question? How is the word of God to be preached by those that are called there unto.

And I want to tell you a careful study of this will change a lot of preaching and will be used to heal a lot of divisions. And the answer is this, they that are called to labor in the ministry of the word are to preach sound doctrine. And there's six things I'm going to read them.

And I'm going to give you the answer. And then I'm going to elaborate on them a little. They are to preach sound doctrine diligently in season and out of season plainly, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirit and power faithfully making known the whole counsel of God, wisely applying themselves to the necessity and the capacity of the ears, zealously with fervent love to God and the souls of his people, sincerely aiming at the glory of God and their conversion edification and salvation.

That's the answer. I want to talk about those six things a little because it's an antidote. If preaching is what I hope you believe it is, and the power of preaching is certainly the best antidote for divisions, systems, and so on.

Let's consider these six things. Diligently, the scripture in speaking of Apollo, who it says was an eloquent speaker, says this man was instructed. This is even, he was eloquent before this, this man was eloquent, but it says in Acts 18, this man was instructed in the way of the Lord.

Being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord. Diligently. That's why they got the answer.

The word of God is to be preached diligently. We have in first Timothy, preach the word, be prepared in season and out of season, correct, rebuke, and exhort with all along an instruction. To paraphrase that is this, preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort, be unfailing, that's diligence, be unfailing in patience in teaching.

Second thing, plainly. Not in enticing words of man's wisdom, plainly. You know some young preachers think that they have to refute all the higher preachers, and they're trying to solve problems that people don't have.

That's like trying to scratch where it doesn't itch. And they go to grace and they spend all their time on this sort of thing. I think Ian touched on it last night when, preach the word, and that's the way to fight these things.

Well just plainly, and I think we see the pattern of a faithful minister. He is our pattern, St. Paul is our pattern, that's what it tells us in Timothy. And he said, and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirit and power.

Plainly. There's a lot of things come under plainly, I'm going to dwell on that a little bit. Now Hebrew and Greek and Latin all have their place, which I was a master in all.

They all have their place, very well in their place, and they're very well. But their place is not where Pilate put them, over the head of Jesus, but rather at his feet. And the pill is not so much interested in how you impress them with your grief, they're more, they don't care so much about your tools, but they're interested in how you use them.

That's plainly, that's why it comes under plainly. Plainly, surely under plainly would come direct preaching. You know this preacher's wicked we as the enemy of direct and plain preaching.

I remember we got a young preacher at our church, probably the dearest friend I have on this earth today, this is over over 25 years ago, had a good education, good seminary training, but he couldn't preach his way out of a paper bag. But he used this pulpit weed, and so I started to take notes, you know, I listened to more sermons probably than anybody here, because I sat in the pulpits 20 years before I started to plus all the Bible conference, you add that up over 15 years and see how many sermons I listened to. So you're a busy preacher, so that's why a preacher doesn't have an opportunity to listen to all those sermons.

So I started to take those notes, because I wanted to, I loved him, I loved him then just like I do now. And so when he'd say, we don't give, then he'd go on with it, we don't pray, we don't witness, I'm taking notes now, we do not have any compassion, we are not converted, we have no fear of God. Now those are all quotes.

So one Monday I took two sermons, one of Whitefield, one of Spurgeon, put my arm around him, I want to talk to him about this, and I started to ask him if he gave to the church, he said yes, not as much as I should probably, I said do you pray, he said yes, not as much as I should probably, do you witness, yes, went on, do you have compassion, yes, but not as much, I said are you converted, yes, I said do you have any fear of God, yes, well I said in the pulpit there's no place to confess your sins, there's no place to confess, and then I told him what I wanted to talk to him about, and we read these sermons. I want to read something from J.C. Ryle, he's been quoted a lot in this conference, and I want to read something to him. He has a sermon in our book, The Upper Room, if you don't have it, there's some good material in it.

The title doesn't make it feel like it would be valuable for preachers, but it has some valuable things in it. He has one chapter that's worth a book for preachers, and that is The Simplicity of Preaching. And under that, one of the heads under Simplicity of Preaching is direct preaching, you've got to be a direct preacher.

You see if you use all those weeds, you take all the barbed wire out of preaching, there's no more barbed wire. The fellow in the pew sits there, well the preacher doesn't pray, the preacher doesn't give, the preacher doesn't witness. I'm not going to witness either, it takes all the barbed wire out.

You've got to have a little barbed wire in preaching, right? Well Ryle said this, he said, if you wish to preach simple, use a direct style. I don't think you've got this in your homiletical class, what I'm going to give you today from Ryle. What does this mean, says Ryle? Well 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's conceited and egotistical. The result is that many preachers are never direct, and always think it very humbling and modest and becoming to say we. But I remember Bishop Milner saying that we is a word for kings and corporations should use, and they alone.

But the parish clergy should always talk of I and you. I endorse that saying, says Ryle, with all my heart. I declare, says Ryle, I never could understand that famous pulpit we, what it means.

Does the preacher mean all, does the preacher mean that all through his sermon he keeps saying we? Does he mean himself and the bishop? Or himself and the church? Or himself and the early fathers? Or himself and the reformers? Or himself and all the wise men in the world? Or after all, or after all, does he utter Thomas Jones? If he only means himself, what in earth reason can he give for using the plural number, and not say simply I? When he visits his parishioners, he sits, he sits back on a sickbed, who sits back on a sickbed, and catechizes his school, and so on. Or when he goes to the baker, or the butcher, does he say we? Or does he say I? Why then should he, I would like to know, can he not say I in the pulpit? What right has he as a modest man to speak for everyone but himself? Why not stand up on a Sunday and say, reading the word of God, I have found this text, and I come to set them before you. My people, many people, I'm sure, do not understand what the preacher we means.

The expression leaves them in kind of a fog. If you say I, your rector, I, your vicar, I, your curate of this parish, come to talk to you of something that concerns your soul, something that you should believe, something that you should do, or at any rate, at any rate, they'll be understood. But if you begin to talk in vague plural language that we ought to do what we ought to do, many of your hearers do not know what you're driving at.

And whatever you are speaking to yourself, or whether you're speaking of yourself or to them, I charge and entreat young brethren in the ministry not to forget this point. Do not try, do try to be as direct as possible, never mind what people say. Some of the things that were apparent in Whistfield, I read one author said this about his preaching.

He was preeminently, it was preeminently a manifestation of truth. Sin, sin, your heart, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, absolute need of repentance, faith, and holiness. It says he preached, his preaching was singularly lucid and simple.

He was a bold and direct preacher, not this abstract expression we. This is a different author now. I have come to speak to you about your soul.

This is a constant vein of application all through his sermons, not a tailpiece stuck on at the end. This is for you. He was descriptive.

He turned men's ears into eyes, earnestness with grace often feeling. Well, so much for plainly, that's still, we're into the one, we're in the number two of the Westminster answer. Plainly, faithfully, make known the whole counsel of God.

That means expository to me. Jeremiah 23, 28, it says, he that hath my word, let him speak faithfully. Colossians 4, 1 and 2, it says, let a man so account of us as ministers of Christ, as stewards of the mysteries of God.

Moreover, it is required in a steward that he be found, what class? Faithful, faithful. And then it says wisely, that's number four, wisely. And it says this, this is still a catechism question, applying themselves to the necessity and the capacity of the hearers, the necessity and the capacity of the hearers.

I gave a year of my life to Westminster seminary to travel with them, try to help them just doing PR work and preaching in their churches. And I'd visit the church and I'd usually preach at one church once a Sunday and listen to the preacher the other Sunday, the other service. And I got to one place where there was a young preacher and he couldn't preach his way out of the wet paper bag either.

But the sad part about it was, I'm talking now about the necessity and capacity of the hearers. This is a true story. He had about 12 shriveled up people there, but like I am now, and, uh, and, and he had about 12 of them.

That's all he had. And this was his sermon. The historicity of second, the historicity of second, wisely, what does the old confession say? Wisely applying themselves to the necessity and the capacity of the hearers.

Colossians 128 says, when we preach warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, we teach and warn them and preach to them in all wisdom. I believe that comes under that some of that common sense that our brother was talking about the other night. Fifthly, zealously with fervent love to God and the souls of his people.

I already mentioned Apollos. He was, he was eloquent. He was mighty in the scripture, but he needed some instruction.

And then he became fervent in spirit. Then he spake and taught diligently, zealously for the love of Christ and strength. That comes under zealously.

And lastly, sincerely, but having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, Paul says, having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by a manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience, to every man's conscience. I hope you heard Mr. Murray last night, to every man's conscience. This kind of preaching, my dear brethren, will solve a lot of divisions and systems.

Have a high, this is, this is the other antidote. Have a high view. Don't run or preach.

I accepted a call to a church that had 880 members. I don't know where half of them were, but they had 880 members. It was a bad situation.

I'm not going to tell you about it, but some people who knew about that situation, it's the Calvinistic church today. They don't have 880, but it's a Calvinistic church. And somebody said, what did you do? I said, well, I said, I held my nose and I got my knees and I opened my Bible.

Well, so much for that. This direct kind of preaching, the kind of preaching that's described in that blessed answer would solve, would go a long way in solving divisions and systems. Most divisions, as I've already mentioned, in churches are in the area of church government and corporate worship, and especially areas that are not clearly set out in scripture.

And there's some good advice. Listen, you young men, there's some good advice. You who are so strict in applying the regulated principle, there's a great statement in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter one.

It says this, and let me give it to you verbatim. There are circumstances concerning the worship of God and the government of his church, common to human actions and society, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence. That's common sense.

Christian prudence according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed. Did I read that again? You might not. Look it up.

There are circumstances concerning the worship of God and the government of the church, common to human actions and society, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word. And we all know that since the great reformation of the 16th century, there have been wide, wide differences of opinion among God's people concerning the local church. Its constitution, its offices, its discipline, even where there's oneness of mind that I mentioned a while ago, respecting the fundamentals of the faith, godly men have differed considerably in their ecclesiastical views.

That's why you have nine Presbyterian bodies in our country. Numbers of the most gifted of Christ's servants have, over the years, risen extensively, extensively upon church quality and policy of the local church. And though widely varying positions have been taken, and though each claimed to appeal to scripture for authority, yet none, up to now at least, none succeeded in carrying the majority of professing Christians with him, or of persuading his opponents of that their system was right or wrong.

Nobody's been able to do that yet. Let me quote John Newton. I think it's about time to ring the bell, but let me quote John Newton.

I'm on third base. I'm headed home. While on the one hand, Newton says, we admire the wisdom of him who has providentially ordered as a great variety of types of ecclesiastical shapes, as he has in the physical and social, which, though not a rule for us to walk by, is a subject for our admiration.

That is, that God ordered a great variety of types of ecclesiastical shapes. It's not a rule for us to walk by, but a subject for our admiration. Yet on the other hand, we cannot deplore that they who are united in the same foundation and agree on all the cardinal truths of Holy Writ, should lay such emphasis on their circumstantial differences in the sentiment as to prevent the exercise of mutual love and forbearance, and instead of laboring in such within their respective departments to promote the common cause of Christ, which so often vex each other with needless disputes and uncharitable censures, far better be silent altogether than contend for any portion of truth in a bitter and angry censorious spirit.

No true Christian would hesitate to acknowledge that Christ himself is the one infallible authoritative legislator and governor of his church, that he is the only Lord of conscience, and that nothing inconsistent with his revealed will should be practiced. Nothing that's inconsistent with his real should be practiced, and

that nothing he has definitely enjoyed be omitted by those professing allegiance to him. But however generally acknowledged these principles are, we cannot get away from the fact that the misconstruction, misapplication of them have contributed more to the division of people of God and to alienate their affections one from another than any other cause that can be assigned.

Surely those who are built upon the common foundation are led by the same spirit, who are opposed by the same enemies, should be as brethren, bear each other's burden. But alas, a mistaken zeal for Christ's honor has filled them with animosity against their fellow disciples, split them into innumerable factions, and given rise to fierce and endless contentions. When he said this, this is another quote of Newton, he said, quote, men are born, educated, called under a variety of circumstances.

Habit of life, local customs, early connections, and even bodily constitutions have more or less influenced in forming their character and giving a tincture or turn to the manner of their thinking. So that though in whatever is essential to their peace and holiness, they are led by the same spirit, the same mind, the same things, in others of secondary nature, their sentiments may be different in secondary things, just as the features of their faces. You know, I like to be delivered from all these people who see everything black and white.

And a lot of young, young preachers want to see everything black and white. A lot of young preachers counsel people, and they counsel on the black and white deal. The older you get, the more you know that everything is black and white.

And I'll tell you why it is. I believe it's black and white with God. But we do not have, we have imperfect judgment, even as Christians.

We have imperfect affections. We have imperfect understanding. If we have imperfect understanding, imperfect judgment, imperfect affections, how can we declare everything absolutely positively black and white in every situation? If you were God, you could do that.

And only God can do it. Well, thanks. I want to just tell you, William Cunningham in the Reformation of the Theology and the Theology of the Reformation, oh, I'm about finished.

Well, I had a quote from Owen, but it's about the same as the one in the Westminster. You want Owen's quote? I don't want to tire you out. Well, I'll take them.

I'm a man under orders. I'm glad, though. I'm glad to do it.

In affirming that the New Testament, and this is not a quote, in affirming that the New Testament supplies us with general rules and principles, which are sufficient, I get this, which are sufficient elastic as to allow for human discretion to be exercised in the application of them to particular instances of the Church's outward conduct, I'm quite prepared to face the charge that this statement is a dangerous one. And my reply is this, that I am affirming no more than what is usually, or what is universally, acknowledged the regulation of the details of the life of the individual believer. When I'm affirming that difference, as far as the Church is concerned, in minor detail, I'm not doing anything other than affirming what we all believe about the regulation of the individual life.

John Owen said, and this is that quote, there are in the Scriptures general rules directing us in the application of natural life unto such a determination of all circumstances in the acts of the Church's rule and worship are as sufficient for their performance decently and in order. In other words, there's plenty

given that it ought to be decently and in order. Wherefore, as was said before, it is, this is still Owen's quote, it is utterly in vain and useless to demand express institutions of all the circumstances which belong to the government, order, and worship of the Church, or for the due improvement of things in them themselves indifferent unto its edification as occasion shall require.

Nor are they capable to be otherwise stated but as they lie in the light of nature and spiritual prudence, general directions by the general rules of Scripture. Well, you have examples of it. There's nothing in the Bible about a midweek prayer meeting.

Suppose I decide it has to be at seven o'clock in the nature of that prayer meeting, and you decide it ought to be at eight o'clock. We could have a split. There's nothing in the Bible about Sunday schools, but we have the general rule that we're to teach children, we're to teach.

I know places that won't have a Sunday school because they can't find it in the Bible. But the general rule of the word is that we teach and instruct. It doesn't say whether you do it on Wednesday, Sunday afternoon, or Sunday morning.

There's nothing in the Bible about the kind of pulpits we ought to have. Nothing in the Bible how long sermons ought to be or how short they ought to be. Nothing in the Bible about what time we ought to meet on Sunday.

These are the kind of things that have divided people. I don't doubt there's people here divided on such things as that. The size and shape of a building, or whether the minister should wear a robe when he preaches or not.

I know people, if I'd come out with a robe on, they'd think I was going to perdition. I do wear a robe in discussing things relative to the application of the regulative principle. Please understand that I'm not talking about the regulative principle.

I'm talking about the application of it. In connection with that, William Cunningham in that book, *Reformation and the Theology of the Reformation*, he quotes Calvin. And this is what Calvin says, Calvin, with his usual magnanimity, was always willing to have a reasonable regard for time, circumstances, for the weakness and the infirmities of those concerned.

Isn't that blessed? I can think of 50 splits that wouldn't happen if they just applied that. That's an exaggeration, of course. Now, there are two dangers to what I'm talking about, and I'm not going to skip this.

One is to allow our principles to be so broad that we compromise everything. That's wicked, wicked, wicked, unbiblical. The other extreme is, the other extreme is to drive some principles to death.

That is, having a kind of a cast-iron system for secondary things, black and white answers for everything. I know some churches are in trouble right now, good churches that are in trouble right now, because they have answers for everything, answers for everything. They have, there's such a thing, listen, my brothers, listen to this.

This is a, this is coming from the heart. This has some blood mixed with it. There's such a thing as having a kind of an idealism that is not properly related to the idealism.

And particularly young ministers have this problem. Let me tell you, this is not original. Every young preacher, in his preparation to preach, in his prayer time, when he prays for his people, when he prays for the work, he needs to have two churches before his mind all the time.

He needs one that is conceived from the scriptures in idealism, never to be set aside. If he just set that aside, he'll be lower in the standard, and lower in the standard, and lower in the standard, and he won't have any church. He must have one in his mind, in his heart, in his prayer that's conceived in idealism.

They must also have another church in their mind when they preach and pray, and that is that one that they look at at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning, and there's a world of difference. And let me tell you what will give him joy and encouragement. If he only has the ideal, it'll be despair and discouragement.

But this is what'll give him the joy. When he sees this one that he looks at at 11 o'clock, when he sees that one making little advances toward the one that he's conceived in idealism, it'll be joy to his heart. I know it was joy to me when I started to hear the prayers changing.

When I went to the church, it sounded like the waiting room in the city hospital. Every prayer was for somebody sick, or a wart getting taken off of grandmother's toe in the hospital or something. When I started to read the Psalms, go through the Lord's Prayer, and I know it was a joy.

They weren't the finished product, but when I started to hear people pray spiritual prayers, and for revival, and pray for the Sunday services, and pray for the Sunday school teachers, pray for the salvation, I said, thank you, Lord. Now I went through agony. I don't know how many weeks I had, maybe a year.

It was terrible. Well, that's what I'm talking about. You must have those two churches.

But if you only have the ideal one, you're going to be in fights all the time with somebody. And you're going to have splits, and divisions, and schisms, and it leads to a lot of other things. For healing disputes, it'll take some men.

It'll take some human instruments who are in touch with heaven. Men who have an eye fixed on eternity. Men who have learned what William still learned at Aberdeen.

He said, and I quote, when I went to Aberdeen, he was determined of two things. Oh, this is what the author said about it. When he went to Aberdeen, he was determined of two things, which he later proved to be utterly incompatible.

He was determined to be a successful ministry as the worldly church sees it, and determined also to be faithful to Jesus Christ. But he discovered he had to be one or the other, for it was impossible to be faithful to Jesus Christ and not incur the opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Men must learn what Daniel Rowland learned.

According to Edward Morgan, and I quote now from, a quote from Edward Morgan, Rowland used to say in his last day that he had been endeavoring to learn four lessons all the time he's in the vineyard in service of his Lord. But notwithstanding that, he was yet but very dull and an imperfect scholar in his old age. These are the following truths.

We'll have to ask the men like this if we want to solve the problem. To repent without despairing, to believe without presuming, to rejoice without levity, and to be angry. We're going to have to be some men like

John Knox, who had some of God's love burning in his heart in his old age.

I read and I quote, in his old age he was helped to the pulpit by some friends, and when he rose to preach the spirit of God's love burning in his heart. Now don't forget that. You ought to read first Corinthians every time before you preach.

Don't forget this was the spirit when he rose to preach. This is a quote, when he rose to preach the spirit of God's love burned in his heart in such a fashion that an attendant said, so mighty was his yearning that I thought he would break the pulpit to bits. Holy yearning, oh for some men like that, with some holy yearning, with God's love burning in their heart.

Well you've been patient, but that's my prayer. And I told you that I wasn't going to preach to you, but that's my heart's self feelings today about some things. Let's bow in a brief word of prayer.

Oh Holy Dove, you gave us the word through holy men, and only you can apply it. The desire for application is not past our desire, oh Lord. The desire for application is not past our prayer, oh Lord, but it's past our reach.

It's past our reach, and thus we pray. Heal our cries, and apply thy truth for Jesus' sake, and for our good. Amen.

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