

Reforming the Church

by Ernest C. Reisinger

The sermon emphasizes the critical need for reformation in the church, highlighting the characteristics and commitment required from its leaders.

Duration: 51:28

Scripture: Jeremiah 9:1, Jeremiah 13:17, Ezekiel 34:26, Matthew 10:32, Revelation 3:1-6

Topics: "Reformation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of seriousness and dedication in the work of God and the word of God. He emphasizes the need for men in the ministry to be focused on success and to approach their work with faith, hope, and love. The speaker also highlights the significance of laying a strong foundation in the church through prayer, preaching, and teaching. He concludes by urging the audience to strengthen what remains and to hold fast to their faith, reminding them of the rewards for those who overcome.

Transcript

Thank you, Dr. Nettles. I was beginning to feel like the man in Jericho. I thought I saw a telemonkey.

Thank you, Tom. Thank you very much. Vance Hasner, a quaint, a quite quaint, but good preacher, once said, if you don't come apart sometimes, like we've come apart now, he says you'll come apart.

We've come apart. Well, as we open this fourth conference, I pray that, by the way, there's a lot more people coming. This is not all of them.

I think we're up about somewhere between 10 and 20 percent, but more people are staying off campus this year. That's encouraging to us. But as we do, I pray that the experience of somewhat of that which is expressed in Ezekiel 34 will be our experience these days.

It's a promise. It says this, I will make them and the place all around my hills a blessing, and I will cause showers to come down in their season, and there shall be showers of blessings. Spurgeon has a sermon on this text, and it has two points.

Point one, he said he thought it was the Church of Christ. That's what he called the sermon, represented the Church of Christ. Point one, Christ's Church is a blessing.

Point two, Christ's Church is to be blessed. I pray that this week you will be a blessing to others, and others will be a blessing to you. Well, that's not my subject.

My subject is supposed to be Reformation, and I believe that we are going through a Reformation. I believe we're in it. I don't think that Martin Luther ever intended at the outset to leave the Roman Catholic Church that he loved, but I do believe that he was interested in propagating the truth, and whether it's Martin Luther or somebody else, where the truth is faithfully and owned by the Holy Spirit, there will be Reformation.

And as I say, I believe it's going on right now. I think the literature that's being printed, not only by Banner of Truth, but by Lloyd Sprinkle, and Sprinkle Publications, and many, many others that I couldn't begin to name, and all the literature is having a profound effect on the Reformation that's going on. I'd like to read a couple verses of Scripture from Revelation chapter 3, verses 1 to 6, as our Scripture lesson.

I'm not going to preach from this, but I do want to read a few verses of Scripture. Chapter 3, verses 1 to 6. And unto the angel or messenger of the church that sawest right, write these things, saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars. I know thy works, that thou hast the name that thou livest, but are dead.

Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain. Strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die. For I have not found thy works perfect before God.

If I had a text for what I plan to say today, that would be my text. Strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die. For I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I come upon thee. Verse 4. Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.

There was a few people that had not faded away. And they shall walk with me in white, and they are worthy. He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not buy out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before the angels.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit has to say. A study of these churches in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. A study of the people of God in the Old Testament. A look at church history will vividly teach us that there is always, always need of reformation.

And bringing the church back to her moorings. As I pointed out in verse 2, Jesus is saying to the church of Sardis, Wake up, you're not dead, not completely dead. There's still something remaining.

And Jesus' word is, strengthen the things that remain. And then again in verse 4, how he says that there's still some who have not spotted their clothes. Wake up, wake up.

Now many churches without a doubt are sleeping the sleep of death. Some are more sound asleep than others. And some are like Laodicea.

They think they need nothing. But in truth, they are pitiful, poor, and naked. But God does not let us go to sleep unworn any time in the history of the church.

He does not let us sleep and go unworn. It has never been universal sleep. There's always been a little light somewhere, somewhere.

There's always been some children of light. Always a few living among the dead. And the Bible and history are full of records of awakenings and revivals and reformations.

Many wondrous reformations, scenes have been witnessed from Pentecost to this very day. Sometimes it's a single church. Sometimes it's a whole community that has been revived.

Sometimes, in a few cases, nations have been affected by a revival of religion. Now, no reformation is perfect, not without some problems. No revival is without problems.

The Reformation was not without a lot of problems. Martin Luther, that Christian reformer, only gave the church the first sweeping. The Puritans gave it the second sweeping.

And though we should never expect to see a perfect Reformation, for a perfect Reformation, our vision, our vision must stretch beyond the boundaries of time and earth. Only by faith can we see her future beauty as the faultless bride of Christ. She is not faultless now.

But this view, this view should never make us complacent about existing conditions. But rather it should give us a passion and a determination to see God's people on earth act as consistently as is possible for redeemed sinners to act in their relationship to the claims of the saints. Now, in considering this subject, we must remember also that there is a supernatural element in all true Reformation, just as there is the supernatural element in true conversion.

The Holy Spirit works in an unusual way. Reformation is not a natural thing at all. There must be the divine agent, holy beyond the reach of man.

However, there are biblical means to be employed, and they, and they only, which God has ordained in His Word, are to be so employed. How does a Reformation come about? Well, it always comes from above. There is the divine side.

That's not my emphasis today. That's not going to be my emphasis today. John Calvin said, It is just as important to assert the true validity of the secondary agent.

That's man. It's just as important, not almost as important, but just as important to assert the true validity of the secondary agent as it is to assert the ultimate validity of the final cause. And it would be a great day if all preachers would know the difference between the cause and the means.

That is, that they wouldn't describe things to man that belongs only to God, and that they wouldn't describe to God the things that must be of man. It would help our situation an awful lot. Tonight or this afternoon, I want to consider their character, the character of the men that God used in Reformation.

Surely they were men of like passion. How then, this vast success. And I want to consider the men, some of the things about the men that God used, whatever generation, whether it was the Bible or history or presently.

What kind of men were they? What weapons did they employ? What were their methods? Now we ask on the human side, Whence comes their success? There were always men involved. There will be no life in the church if there's no life in the pulpit. Well, the first thing I want to say about the men is this.

They were always in dead seriousness and dead earnest about the Word of God and about the work of God. They were men who asked the right question. And that question, is it true? Not, does it work? Now that is a good question, but that's not the first question.

The first question ought to be, and it will be in any true Reformation, Is it true? Is it true? Our Jehovah's Witnesses, they have doctrine and it works. It works. Our dear Roman Catholic friends have a different doctrine than ours, but it works.

The Mormons have great success. It works. Christian scientists have success.

But they don't ask, in all cases, is it true? I could go down a lot of Protestant denominations. I've been in churches where I see things working. They're working by statistics.

They tear your heart up if you believe the Bible. There must be some felt responsibility as stewards of the mysteries of God. When we examine the churches that have come alive, there's always been men, there's always been men, some men who lived and labored and preached like they were in dead earnest about eternity and about eternity bound souls.

Everything they did and said was marked by earnestness and seriousness, not just religious excitement. They were genuine and earnest. Men who knew the necessity, men who knew that necessity was laid upon them.

They felt the urgency and the weight of the cause of the gospel that was entrusted to them. They threw their whole souls into the conflict. There was earnestness, not indifference, not religious politicians trying to climb the denominational ladder.

Well, that's the first thing. They were men who were dead serious and dead in earnest about God's word and about God's work, without exception. The second thing that always precedes or accompanies true reformation is that there are always some men who are bent on success.

When a man enters Christ's army or the ministry, he must be bent on success. If men are not bent on success, they're traitors to Christ and to his cause. I said success, not statistics.

And there's a difference. There may be spiritual success with statistics or without statistics. Without or with.

And if we would see our churches come alive and stay alive, we must be warriors who have set our hearts on victory and fight with bleeding anticipation of victory under the guidance of our great captain. As shepherds, we cannot sit on the mountainside in the ease of the breeze, heedless to the straying, perishing, bleating flock. But rather, there must be watching and guiding and guarding and feeding the sheep committed to our care.

They must be bent on success. Without exception, that's true too. Thirdly, if we would see reformation in the church, there must be some men of faith.

There must be plowing and sowing of the right kind of seed. Plowing and sowing in hope, in hope something will come of this seed. Something will come of this seed.

There must be some going forth weeping, bearing precious seed, knowing that in due season, in due season we will reap if we faint not. Knowing that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. Knowing that we will

return bringing our sheaves with us.

Fixing our eyes on God and pleading with the psalmist, remember thy word unto thy servant whereunto thou hast caused me to hope. Thou must have said your word has caused confidence in the Savior whose commission we bear. Confidence in the Holy Spirit's mighty power.

Faith in his power to take the wax of this world from men's ears. Faith in the power to open men's eyes that are blinded by the just of this world. Faith in the power of the word of God.

That's the message of the gospel. Knowing that it will not return void. The gospel of Christ is, not it ought to be, is the power of God unto salvation.

And if we would see a church come alive, there must be going forth with faith in the power of the gospel. Well, fourth thing that precedes and accompanies true reformation, there must be labor. There must be some bearing of the burden of the heat of the day.

There must be some unwearied toil of body and soul, of time and strength and substance. This is what the New Testament reveals, and history reveals it as well. There must be some of what that great apostle speaks of when he uses language like this, in weariness, painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger, in thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

There must be some labor. No time for levity, no time for sloth, no time for pleasure. There must be laboring for eternity.

And I know a lot of lazy preachers, a lot of lazy preachers. Fifth, there must be much patience in the work of reforming a church. Now, I wish I could brag about my patience, but I'd be a liar.

I have more than I used to. I used to get upset if I missed one of those sections in a revolving door. I don't do that anymore.

There must be patience in the work of reforming the church, willing to labor long, sometimes without seeing all the fruit that you desire. In other words, there's Sunday school teachers and there's deacons and there's pastors. They sow and sow and sow, day after day, teach and teach and teach, week after week.

And they don't always see great results immediately. We must not be soon weary in well-doing. We must keep that passage in mind from James that says, Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.

Behold, the husband that waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth hath long patience for it until he receives the latter rain. Be ye also patient. There must be patience.

Many a good plan. And many good labors have been aborted by a lack of patience. And I've had some of that experience myself.

Many a good day of toil has been thrown away by impatience. We cannot force reformation. We cannot force a church to lie.

Yet there must be that intense, I say intense longing for success But with patience, it must be joined for that intense longing as well. William Carey labored for seven years before he baptized his first convert.

Adam Adam Judson, that great missionary to Burma, labored seven years before he harvested one sow.

Morrison sowed seven years in China before he baptized his first Chinese. Moffat declared he waited seven years to see the first evident moving of the spirit in Africa. Henry Richards spent seven long years in the Congo before he saw his first convert.

And some of you guys aren't even willing to wait a year. What were they doing in these seven year periods? What were they doing? Listen, young brothers, they were laying foundations. They were sowing heavenly seeds, divine truth.

They were thinking of the future. We live in a church age where the foundations largely have been removed. Ignorance of divine truth and Christian doctrine is appalling.

It's appalling in the pew. I've gone to a church and not too long ago, though I'm a Protestant, I would have felt more comfortable in a Roman Catholic church, say in the Apostles Creed. They're so ignorant.

Ignorance, ignorance marks a great deal of our congregation because there's no foundation. God began by laying a foundation. The psalmist said, God said through the evangelical prophet, The Bible has the answer.

Solomon began where every true builder begins by laying the foundation. How long did it take? Well, if you read the sixth chapter, you'll find it took four years just to lay the foundation. Notice, there's a passage in Kings that says, The foundation, it was costly.

When Ezra rebuilt the temple, it says this, 67 this year, and I have been in this war a long time. I have. There's no easy way.

There's no easy way. It's not fun laying foundations. It's costly.

It'll cost you. And even at cursory glance at any reformation, you'll see that to lay the foundation was very costly. Most churches do not have a doctrinal foundation enough to have sound evangelism.

They don't have enough doctrinal foundation to have sound evangelism. I believe, now don't go making a doctrine about this. I believe we live in pre-evangelistic days, pre-evangelistic days, where true worship and true witness is very rare.

And the reason it's rare, I'm talking about true witness. There's plenty of feverish activity in evangelism. I'm not talking about that.

True worship and true witness will be certain, a certain result of a good foundation. And it'll bring forth reformation. But I say again, laying foundations is very costly.

Very costly. Very costly. True evangelism is the product of reformation, rather than the source.

Let me say that again. True evangelism is the product of reformation, rather than the source. There is reformation, and this must be, by the Holy Spirit's making.

How does the Holy Spirit do it? He takes doctrinal truth of the Bible and makes it experimental in our life. What is Christian experience? It's nothing less or nothing more than the Holy Spirit taking the doctrinal truths of the Bible and by supernatural power making that part of our experience. We live in a day with

cheap, slick, frothy foundations.

And our churches are sad and pitiful for the painful results. Carnal men do not want to be in the foundation business. Carnal men, carnal preachers do not want to be in the foundation business.

They're not concerned for future generations. The only men who are interested in true foundations are those who have their eyes fixed in eternity. We ought to come to this pulpit with a sense of eternity.

All the time. With a sense of eternity. And it's costly.

It's painful. It's laborious. It's not showing.

Who wants to see concrete poured in the foundations? I was in the construction business for a lot of years. I worked my way up through the trades. And I worked in some of those foundations.

The big bridges. The big buildings. And let me assure you it's dirty work.

Dirty work. It's hard. Sometimes wet.

Dirty work. The great apostle was a master builder of churches. He was a master builder.

But where did he begin? Let me quote. As a wise master builder says Christ, chiefest apostle. As a wise master builder I have laid the foundation.

How did he do it? How did he do it? Now this is for you. This is practical. How did he do it? Well the book of Acts has the answer.

Prayer, preaching, teaching, and tears. Not gimmickry. Not platform artists.

Prayer, preaching, teaching, and tears. And I believe what's missing in our generation and even amongst some of you. Not so much the preaching.

Not so much the teaching. What's missing with some of you is the prayers and the tears. Let's look at one example that I'm talking about.

I said you find out in the book of Acts if you want to know how he did it. But you find it out. In Acts chapter 20 he leads those elders at Ephesus.

What a beautiful picture of a relationship the elders with the minister. He calls them together. And he rehearses among them his three years with them.

And among other things, and I'm not going to go into all that he said. But among other things he said while rehearsing that time with them was this. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with tears.

And temptations which befell me by the lying weight of the Jews. Therefore he said to them watch and remember that by the space of three years I cease not to warn everyone night and day. With tears.

With tears. If there were more tears there would be less splits and more souls one. That's only one case.

When he writes to the Corinthians he wrote with tears. He didn't write any scathing letters. He didn't write any scathing letters.

He wrote with tears. 2 Corinthians 2 verse 4 he says this. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I write unto you with many tears.

Not that you should be grieved but that you know the love which I have more abundantly toward you. Hear him writing to the church at Philippi. He said for many walks.

Whom I have told you often and tell you even now weeping. There are the, how do you tell them? Weeping. That they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Now we have the best facilities. Comfort, you're not so comfortable now except when the air conditioning comes on. But we have comfort, equipment, literature, church machinery.

Communications for promoting the gospel is at an all time high. The church has never been better in these areas. As far as machinery and mechanics is concerned.

But where, where are the Christ likes? Where are the tears of Saint Paul? Where are the foundation men? Now I think when he talks about tears it doesn't necessarily have to be literal. They don't have to be those little tears that roll down your cheeks. I believe it's a disposition of heart.

A disposition of heart. Joel the Old Testament prophet who prophesied of Pentecost wrote in Joel 2. He writes in this chapter of Joel 2. Even now declares the Lord. Return unto me with all your hearts.

With fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your hearts and not your garments. Oh my brothers.

Let's try tears. What am I talking about? I'm talking about something that is produced in the soul. Rather than some physical pain.

Tears that indicate distress of spirit. Agony of a broken heart. I'm talking about a disposition of heart.

The first time the word tears was found in the English Bible in 2 Kings 20. And it's the occasion of God telling Hezekiah that he's going to soon die Hezekiah. And this drove him to prayer and tears.

And the king became so desperate. That the attention of God was turned not only to his prayers. But to his tears.

God said to him. Hezekiah. I've seen your tears.

That's 1 Kings chapter 20 verse 5. I've seen your tears. Now I don't know if the law of first mention means anything or not. There's people who put a lot of stock on.

The first time a word is mentioned in the Bible that's how you get to know. I don't know about that. I haven't been satisfied about that.

But if it meant something. If the law of first mention meant anything here. It may indicate that God does not come to our rescue.

Until He sees our tears. That distress of spirit. That broken heart.

Paul's teachings was watered with tears. Jeremiah 3. A voice was heard in the high places. Weeping and supplication for the children of Israel.

Who have prevented their ways. They have forgotten the Lord their God. They need to be reformed and returned.

Return you backsliding children. And I will hear your backsliding. Another place.

Chapter 9. Oh that my head were waters. And my eyes were fountains of tears. That I might weep day and night.

For the slain of the daughters of my people. Chapter 13. But if we will not hear it.

My soul shall weep in the secret places for your pride. And my eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears. Because of the flock is carried away captive.

To bring a church. To reform a church. To bring it alive.

There must be some willingness to lay some foundations. There must be some demolition work. And you do that.

If you do it in a biblical way. You do it by prayer. And preaching.

And teaching. And if you put these four things together. I don't care your situation right now.

If you put these four things together. You will soon see reformation in life. You will soon see some dust.

Also from the exodus. Because people will leave. I can ask men to stand up right here.

Tell them about the experience of their church. Our men left. And it's painful for us to see people leave.

But you can expect that in days of reformation. You know when the gospel is preached. There's not always saving results.

And in reformation. It doesn't mean that every single division is going to get saved. Jesus preached.

Next to the longest sermon he preached. As recorded in the Sermon of the East. Is John 6. And he preached the crowd away.

They went away because of hard things. Did he fail? No. It was accomplishing it's purpose.

There will be reformation. Result. Not always saving results.

Some will leave. Some will want you to leave. But listen.

Some will get right with God. There will be three results. If the gospel is preached in holy ghost power.

You study the epistles. And you will see that Paul laid a foundation. I believe we are in a reformation period of history.

Where many of you will be called on to lay some foundations. In many cases the foundations have been removed. Churches.

Large churches. Have no doctrinal foundation. And if there is to be a reformation in the church.

If there is to be breadth. And depth. And power in preaching.

There must at least be some understanding of the law and the gospel. The difference between the law and the gospel. The connection between the law and the gospel.

And how they mutually serve each other to establish each other. Psalm 11.3 says. If the foundations be destroyed.

What can the righteous do? What can the righteous do? Oh my dear heart. Spiritually if the foundations be removed. They can do nothing.

Nothing that will stand. Nothing that will be solid. We live in a day when the moral foundations are being removed from society.

From our schools. And our homes. And the doctrinal foundation removed from the church.

We are all rejoicing. We are Southern Baptists right now. We are all rejoicing.

That the conservative cause in our convention. Is looking up. But that in itself.

Will not do the job. It is fundamental. But that in itself will not do the job.

But it has dealt. Because it has to deal with the foundation. The biblical doctrines.

The doctrines of our Southern Baptist fathers. Like James P. Boyce. Whose mentor was Charles Hodge.

And he studied those great truths and expressed them to Westminster Standard. One place in his book of systematic theology. He calls the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Our confession. Don't you be so hard on that my dear brother. Boyce got his training.

Charles Hodge was his mentor. I'm talking about the doctrines. Of Boyce.

Of Broadus. Of Johnson. Dr. Nettles has already named some of these great men.

I'm talking about the doctrines. Not any doctrine. Not any doctrine.

Every church has a doctrine. Every individual has a doctrine. You have a doctrine.

I'm talking about that exalted system of polytheology that's nicknamed. These men stood on the same doctrinal foundation. All of those men that we've named.

They stood on the same doctrinal foundation. And let me tell you something. The Bible has not changed.

And God of the Bible has not changed. Therefore. If their doctrine was true in their day.

It is still true today. Because neither God or the Bible has changed. Again I say we do rejoice in the conservative victories.

But let me assure you with all the pathos of my heart. And all that. Everything I could put into it.

Let me assure you. That even if the conservatives had a complete victory. If they do not get back to the Bible doctrines.

Which is the foundation of our fathers. In 30 years they'll be back where they are. Question.

What good is an infallible Bible. If it's doctrines and content is ignored. Disregarded or even perverted.

What good is the Bible. If it's doctrines are perverted. Ignored or disregarded.

And sometimes spoken against. What good is an infallible Bible. It's not just a book with a black cover.

It's what it says. What does it say. It's not just what it says.

What does it mean. And it's not just what it means. But how does it apply to now.

1986. To me. To my congregation.

What does it say about God. What kind of a God is He. You don't just get one verse and say God is love.

And that's your doctrine of God. You've got to take all the Bible says about God. From Genesis to Revelation.

And then you'll have the God of the Bible. What does it say about God. What does it say about His law.

His son. About man and his condition. What does it say about God.

Infallible immutable plan of redemption. I hope you all buy Dr. Nettles book. For an honest history of Baptist life.

And Baptist doctrine. He's got me converted on one point in that book. But I haven't been converted yet Dr. Nettles.

But it's a great book. Somebody said what do you think about Dr. Nettles book. I said well I bought 2,000 copies.

What do you think. Jesus was strong on foundations as well. He was strong on foundations.

In that great sermon on the mount. How does he end it. What is the emphasis after he lays out all those great principles for life and death and eternity.

How to live in this world. How does he end that sermon. He ends it basically by an illustration.

Of two men. One man built his house on the sand. Bad foundation.

The other man built his house on the rock. The both houses the superstructure looked the same. The difference was in the foundation.

The difference was in the foundation. It takes patience to lay foundation. And listen these superficial men.

Think only of the big show now. He's not too concerned about how it comes about. As long as you can have a big show now.

He's not concerned about how it comes about. He's only concerned with the superstructure. And I believe he's concerned more about the results of results.

Than he is the results themselves. I believe he's concerned more about the results of results. Than he is results.

The results in most cases that accrue to him. And that's what he's concerned about. The man who is not interested in foundations.

Mr. Pragmatic many times is the enemy of the truth. And back of that is usually not so much concern. As I say for results.

But the results of results. Well God is concerned about foundations. And future generations.

Let me underscore it. With a verse from Psalm 145. One generation shall praise thy works to another.

And declare thy mighty acts. They're always concerned about future generations. Let me take you back to the year 1536.

And see William Tyndale taken to the place where he was martyred. What was he doing? Why was he martyred? He was seeking under God to reform the church. By putting the Bible in people's hands.

But back of putting the Bible in their hands. Was that insatiable desire. Let me take you again to Smithfield, England.

On July 1st, 1555. I mean not 19, 1555. And see John Bradford die the martyr's death.

What was he doing? Under God he was trying to reform the church. Again let me take you to Oxford. Dr. Nettles already mentioned Hugh Latimer.

There he was martyred. I just looked at that statue. There.

Down in the center of Oxford. For what was he martyred? For what was he martyred? Was he a bad man, an ugly man, a heretic? No, he was trying, seeking under God to reform the church. And Nicholas Ridley died at the same time, the same day.

For what? Reforming the church. Let me take you to Chester. Not Chester, Pennsylvania.

Chester, England. Let me take you to Chester. April 24, 1555.

And see George Marsh die the martyr's death. What was he doing? Seeking to reform the church. Let me take you to Essex on March the 26th.

1555. And what do we see? Two men. Thomas Huston and Thomas Higbed.

H-I-G-B-E-D. Higbed. Dying a horrible death.

For what? He was trying to reform the church. Come to Gloucester, February 9th, 1555. See John Hooper lay down his life.

What for? Trying to reform the church. Oh God, give us a man who will pay the price to reform the church. What did it cost Luther? It cost him his all.

I don't believe Luther ever intended or wanted to leave the Roman Catholic Church. What did it cost him? It cost him all. What did it cost the Puritans? Listen to this.

Some of you guys are having problems in your churches. You fuss about it. What did it cost the Puritans? Two thousand Puritan preachers were rejected from their pulpits.

Never went back. Two thousand preachers. Somebody says, well, you get labeled as a troublemaker.

That's what Elijah was labeled as, a troublemaker. He was labeled as a troublemaker. Elijah troubled Israel.

Jesus did some troubling too. He was a troublemaker. Saint Paul was a troublemaker.

That's what got him in jail. Well, the sixth essential to reforming a church is there must be some men with holy, bold determinations. And I'm not going to say much about that.

I see my time's gone. I'm sick. So I'm going to skip that point.

The seventh thing, when churches have been reformed, there's always been men with some solemn deportment. Solemn deportment. No levity.

Men of deep spirituality of soul. There's always a danger in the ministry of laziness I've already mentioned. There's a danger in the ministry of looseness.

There's a danger in the ministry of levity. There's a danger in the ministry of lethargy. And if you can escape laziness, looseness, levity, and lethargy, you're well on the way.

No frivolity. No flippancy. No gaiety.

None. More. More.

How are the churches to be reformed, renewed? How are they to come alive? Let me give you the summary. I'm on third base. Let me give you the summary.

One, dead seriousness about the work of God and the Word of God. Two, men who are bent on success. Three, men who plow and sow in faith and hope and love.

Men who labor and bear the burden of the heat of the day. Five, men who have much patience. Six, men who have some Holy Ghost boldness and determination.

Seven, men of prayer. Prayer is the work. You hear people say, pray for the work, brother.

I want to tell you, prayer is the work. Eight, men of solemn deportment. No frivolity.

No sober men. Do you want to know how it looks in the making? Do you want to know how it looks in the making? I'll tell you what you'll see. You will see, you will see a faithful minister of Christ surrounded by a small band of praying Christians leading the battle, leading the battle against the powers of darkness.

You will not see a lot of pomp, nor display, nor carnal attractions. You will not see a platform artist or a master gimmick maker or a manipulator of crowds. These things make a fine show, but they will not bring a church spiritually alive.

It might cause some artificial excitement. Oh, for some men. Oh, for some men.

With a deep yearning for God and for souls. One of the purposes of this conference is to encourage reformation of the churches, to encourage preachers to lay biblical foundations, to encourage them to count the cost. And it is the duty of all men to labor and pray for reformation.

But it's also the privilege of all to hope and expect reformation. And it's going on right now. John Knox, in his old age, was helped to the pulpit by friends.

And when he rose to preach, the spirit of God's love, notice the spirit of God's love. When he rose to preach, the spirit of God's love burned in his heart in such a fashion that one of the attendants that was helping him said, and I quote, So mighty was his yearning that I thought he would break the pulpit. So mighty was his yearning that I thought he would break the pulpit.

May these days erode this week when we are stirred to some holy yearning. Oh, Holy Father, Righteous Father, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, We come because you first loved us. And now we love you, not with perfect love.

We love you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. May we come from churches of different sorts and different problems. May this be a week when we are released from those problems and rejoice in you and with your saints.

Help us, oh Lord. Help us, we're so weak. Help us, preachers.

Encourage us. You are a God, a great God. And you have great power.

Help us, we pray thee. Your understanding is infinite. You heal the brokenhearted.

You heal the brokenhearted. And you bind up their wounds. Hear us today.

Oh, Lord, hear us. Hear us, we pray thee. Give to all of us that desire of the great apostle when he said that I might know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering being made conformable unto his death.

Lord, grant to us some of this desire. Grant to us as we walk this campus this week to manifest the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, wrong-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance.

Lord, you said against such there is no law. May we demonstrate it. And give us some joy, Lord.

Give us that joy, your joy. That joy that's based on forgiveness. That joy that many times is nourished in affliction.

That joy that's dependent upon obedience. And that joy that is independent, independent of circumstances. Hear our prayer, we pray thee.

Make us lovers of your truth. And give us the kind of love that suffers long. The kind of love that is not puffed up.

The kind of love that is not easily provoked. The kind of love that you describe in your word that thinks no evil, that bears no evil. That kind of love that hopes all things and bears all things.

Oh, Lord, we know what we're asking. This kind of love, we were not born with it. It never grew on Adam's vine.

It must come from you. Do it for your name's sake. That kind of love that rejoices in the truth.

That rejoices in the truth. And we would ask you to send your spirit in great measures this week. Lord, you said to us that if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more you would give the spirit to them that ask.

Lord, collectively we ask for that spirit that opens hearts and minds, that opens the scriptures. Grant to us that, may each speaker come to this podium with the atmosphere of heaven. Hear our prayers.

Forgive our sins. And pardon our iniquities. For we ask it in the worthy and matchless, purest name of the Son of God.

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