

The Counterfeit and the Genuine

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discernment in recognizing the counterfeit and the genuine, and highlights the dangers of capitalizing on human suffering and neglecting spiritual needs.

Duration: 44:42

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:11, Acts 19:9, Acts 19:13-20, Acts 19:22-41, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Counterfeit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the dangers of counterfeit religious views and attitudes. He emphasizes that successful counterfeits will have many characteristics similar to the genuine. The preacher also highlights the importance of recognizing Jesus as the ultimate goal and not just a means to an end. He references the story of the sons of Sceva in Acts chapter 19 as an example of those who used Jesus as a tool rather than exalting him. The sermon concludes with an invitation for personal prayer and discussion for those in need.

Transcript

Will you turn please to Acts chapter 19, Acts the nineteenth chapter, and I shall begin reading with the thirteenth verse and conclude with the twentieth verse. Listen carefully, remember this is what God said, we'll do our best to try and share with you what we think God meant, but this is his word. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, the exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth.

And there were seven sons of one Sceva Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, Paul I know, but who are ye? The man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus.

And fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came and confessed and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men.

And they counted the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. Now this is a study in the counterfeit and the genuine.

I am told by those that work in banks, whereas there's constantly a danger of counterfeiting and the possibility that counterfeit money should get into the banks, that they do not spend their time indoctrinating the tellers in counterfeit money. But they allow them to handle, in the course of their work, genuine money to such a degree and extent that when anything counterfeit comes into their hands, they censor it. There's something missing.

And it is my conviction that we ought to do the same thing with truth, with the word of God. We ought to spend so much time in the genuine that when the counterfeit comes, we recognize it by intuition or by instinct or because of a certain flavor or spiritual odor that's associated with it. I believe furthermore that the Church of Jesus Christ has, through the centuries, stood in constant need and dependence upon the gift of discernment.

Certainly this was a gift used by the Apostle Paul and one that was stated by the Lord that he had given to the Church. And undoubtedly, we are in great debt to those who, through the centuries, have seen. You can thank God if you see.

Years ago, I talked with a pastor who said, you know, when I'm in the presence of Dr. Tozer and others, it seems so clear. I can see the issue, I can see the problem, I can see the difficulty. But when I get alone in my own study, it's as though a haze settles down around my mind.

How grateful we ought to be that God has given to the Church, through the centuries, those that have seen, seers, not in the Old Testament sense alone, but in the New Testament sense. And you also ought to ask God to enable you to see, to have that insight that's given by him that will enable you to tell what is right and wrong. Constantly, you're being asked to buy ideas.

They're being peddled, they're being promoted, they're subtly being suggested. And many times, they're filled with error and poison, like a fishhook that, if once swallowed, is so difficult to dispose of. So it should be that you would be careful what you swallow.

Don't swallow everything that comes along. Test it by the word of God, as the noble Bereans, which we've seen in other studies in the Book of Acts. Now, the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Acts is so important.

Important because we find that the Lord has given to us here a comparison. For instance, notice in the ninth verse, if your Bible is still open, Paul has been three months disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God in the synagogue. But when divers were hardened and believed not, but speak evil of that way before the multitude, when they speak evil of the Lord Jesus Christ, when they had come against truth and rejected it, he couldn't stay there any longer.

He separated himself and the disciples. He just was not going to compromise on something that was as fundamental as the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, as they speak evil of that way, there was a separation, not from as much as unto a testimony that had become precious to him.

But we notice something else, that it was a ministry not only centered around the work of the apostle Paul, but it was centered around the word of God. And he disputed daily in the school of one tyrannist for two years. He was having a Bible school going on daily for two years.

It was a work that was centered in the word of God. It was a work that had as its prime purpose the glory of Jesus Christ and its foundation the truth of God, as it is in the word. This we see was associated with an utter submission to the sovereignty of Christ in every area of life.

There wasn't any question as to the one who was ruling, it was the Lord Jesus. And furthermore, it was that out of this ministry, where Paul is working with his own hands to support himself and others that are dependent upon him, following his trade as a tentmaker, using none of the offices for his own advancement, that they took the cloths that he used to wipe his brow, the sweat cloths, and sent them to the sick to whom Paul could not come or could not be brought to him for prayer, and they were healed. And it says an evil spirit went out of them.

Now there was a byproduct of the miraculous, the supernatural. But notice what there was, the centrality of Christ, the authority of the word, the complete commitment to the lordship of our wonderful Savior, and a unwillingness to profit from the people. He was not using them for his own gain.

And in this and through this, in the most unlikely of ways, without his participating in it, for they took them, he didn't do it, he didn't send them, they took these handkerchiefs and sent them to those that were ill, and God honored their faith and submission to the word and to the lord. So here we have the genuine, here we have the work of God. Now we come to the counterfeit.

And there are many ways in which this is going to be somewhat similar. You know, if you've heard it said in the past, a person can't tell the difference between his right hand and his left. Well, looking at them, they're very similar.

You see, they're very similar. It's just a matter of direction. It isn't that they're so diverse, but it's where they're headed.

This is headed in the proper direction, this is headed away. But otherwise, same number of fingers and so on. Can you tell the difference between your right hand and your left? Can you tell where an idea is headed? Not just how many pieces it has and its shape and size, but how is it aimed? Where is it headed? Where is it directed? And it's extremely important that you should be able to tell your right hand from your left which direction it's headed.

Because many ideas are going to come across your vision, which may have as much honesty as my left hand has, and be headed in just as wrong a direction as my left hand is if this is the proper direction. This is what you find here. First notice in verse 13 that these are Jews.

They're Jews. They have all the lineage of Israel. They're descendants of Abraham.

They are part of that nation to whom was given the oracles of God. They are those that have been heirs of the promise. They're Jews.

And furthermore, we're going to find that the particular ones involved in this account are seven sons of one man, a Jew, and the chief of the priests. Here was one who was responsible for the 12 courses, one of the 12 courses in the temple. There were, excuse me, 24 courses.

There were this number, and each of these courses would have a chief, someone in charge, to see that those that were responsible were there on time or a replacement was given so that the work of the temple could continue. And there's nothing against Sceva. There's not anything here to indicate that he was bad at all, probably very faithful and very earnest.

And yet he signally failed with his family, seven sons in all of them, because of their rebellious spirit and their obdurate hearts and their unresponsive minds. The Jews, though they are, and well-related and

probably intimately acquainted with the activities of Israel and the church, they knew the language. Oh yes, they were acquainted with the terminology.

They knew the theology. They knew the history. There isn't any question about this.

And so you, looking at these seven boys, you'd say, why, I know their father, and I know his connections, and I know the family to which they belong, and I know the heritage that they have, and I know the theology in which they've been indoctrinated. I know all of these things. It must be good what they're doing.

But wait, let's look at it a little further. These things can be very valuable. You would have said somewhat the same thing about Paul, but when Paul was in this state and only in this, he spoke of himself as the chief of sinners.

So let's not accept good connections. Let's not accept approval. Let's not accept an acquaintance with the terminology.

Let's not accept an understanding of the theology. Let's see where it's headed. Let's see the direction.

Let's see what they're doing with what they have. Now, obviously, people were in trouble then as they're in trouble now. There were demons that possessed people then as they possess them now.

There were sicknesses then as there are now, probably far more in terms of the percentage than we have at present. And thus there was always the concern, how can I get over the sickness? How can I be freed from this demon power that possesses me? Jews, being the heirs of the promises and having the scriptures, could turn this to their prophet. They could twist it just a little.

Now, there were witch doctors. There were priests of the temples to the Roman and Grecian deities. There was all the necromancy and magic that has been associated with the control of people by Satan down across the centuries.

But can't you see how successful it would be if someone that knows all the theology and all the terminology and has the best connections can somehow work it in so as to what? Gain a profit. And so here's what you have. These are certain Jews who are exorcists.

That is, they're going about wandering from fair to fair and market to market, minstrel to minstrel, and finding people and who say, well, you're Jews, you are devout and earnest, you fast and tithe and pray. Why, certainly those words you call, those amulets that you sell, those potions that you prepare, those names that you pronounce, will have more power. And so here is one who's already associated with the best that's come along thus far, with that which was revealed in the Old Testament.

But you see, their concern for success is so pressing, so driving, that they're willing to use any and every method which will further their trade. What's their trade? Their trade is to get money from people, to ostensibly have them delivered from demons and sicknesses. They're in business, in other words.

So, coming into Ephesus, learning about the ministry of Paul, they say, why, this is wonderful, here's one of our own, here's a Jew, Jesus. And he's Lord, certainly, we're prepared for that. And thus, they incorporate the name of Jesus into their magical formulas.

It's right here, right in this very point, where we've had one of the most remarkable statements made in the New Testament concerning the supernatural. As though the Lord is saying to us, now watch, watch, where there's the genuine, there's often the counterfeit. Don't let this frighten you from the genuine, but by the same token, don't let your eyes be put out and blinders be put on.

See, discern, observe, know. What do we discover then? Well, the testimony is that God was so concerned about his name that the demons were enraged and turned upon these boys and put them to flight and beat them, and even the devils were prepared in this case to contribute to the glory of Christ. God was turning the wrath of hell to the glory of God's Son.

But unfortunately, it doesn't always happen that way. It doesn't always happen that the pretenders and perjurers are put to flight. Sometimes the people of God are put to flight, unfortunately, because they haven't been able to see the difference between their right hand and their left.

Now, the first thing that you've got to recognize in all the religious views and attitudes and presentations that come over the radio and by literature is that if they're successful counterfeits, they're going to have to have a great many characteristics similar to the genuine. A couple of years ago, some well-meaning friend gave one of my younger children a box of this stage or play money. You've seen it, you know.

You get rich for 25 cents. You have \$1,000 bills and \$500 bills and \$100 bills. And when I came home one evening, somehow they'd been spread around on the floor.

And I said, if anyone had been passing and looked in and seen our floor littered with bills, \$500, \$1,000, \$100, \$10s, \$20s, oh, just like snow on the living room rug, they might have been tempted to have broken in and gathered it up. Of course, one look at it was sufficient to let anyone that was observing it all realize that this was nothing but the child's plaything and did not endanger our currency at all because it was so grotesque. It wasn't even a good attempt at counterfeiting.

It wasn't intended to be a counterfeit, just a toy, a plaything. Well, if the enemy is going to somehow injure and hurt the cause of Christ, there has to be a similarity between the genuine and the counterfeit. There must be.

It's imperative that there be a great similarity. Therefore, you're going to expect to find two kinds of error. The one is a complete disavowal of the cardinal doctrines of the Bible.

An announcement in the sect or cult, whatever it is, that the Bible isn't the Word of God and Jesus Christ isn't the Son of God. You can tell about half of all of the religious, spurious religious systems that call themselves Christian or in some sense Christian by this. Is the Bible the Word of God? Who is Jesus Christ? When anyone ever comes to our door to sell literature, we always say, Now, wait a minute.

Before I listen to your sales talk, I want to know one question. Who is Jesus Christ? Whose son is he? And this is the touchstone. They'll hammer, they'll stutter and they'll stammer and they'll hem and they'll haw and they'll do everything until finally you actually pin them down.

Is Jesus Christ God come in the flesh? And the answer will be no or some other muttering because the whole system is built on a disavowal of the nature and work and person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the authority of his Word. This is easier to detect. The other kind of counterfeit is going to be a counterfeit which says, Oh, yes.

Oh, Jesus Christ is God. There's no question about that. This is the Lord Jesus.

Jesus whom Paul preaches completely accepting orthodoxy. But here's the touchstone. Without submitting to the personal authority and sovereignty of Christ in their lives.

Not submitting to the authority of the Word. It's one thing to say, Yes, he's Lord. But our wonderful Savior recognized this and so he declared, Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, didn't we cast out devils in your name? Didn't we prophesy in your name? And I will say unto them from within, away with you. I never knew you. Now, what was the problem? Was the prophecy wrong? No.

Was the demon exorcism wrong? No. What was wrong? They had said that he was Lord without submitting to his sovereignty in their lives. They had accepted a tentative doctrine.

They had accepted as a facet of history that Jesus Christ was Lord. But they had not committed themselves to his person. Thus, the test of orthodoxy isn't, do they know how to, does one know how to use the name of Christ? But do they in heart submit to his sovereignty, the sovereignty of his word? Do they in life submit to his authority? Is it a question of what thus saith the Lord? Or is there a sense in which lip service is given to his lordship and clever means by which one can escape from the obligation to his word? This is the first thing.

Or they said, Jesus whom Paul preaches. They well knew how to use his name. But they weren't prepared to submit to his person.

Then you will find another test. And that is the ability to adjust to all companies. For here were those that could go with the pagans.

They could go with the idolaters. The sons of Zeal were at home in Jerusalem in their father's house. They knew how to converse with the Pharisees.

They were quite prepared to be friendly with the Sadducees. They knew how to say shibboleth, whether it was pronounced sh or su. They were quite prepared to pronounce it to suit the demands of the occasion.

They, in other words, were at home in all companies. I believe that this is a test that you can apply. For you will discover that when the Spirit of God is leading, when there is any attack on the person and work of Christ, those that are led by the Spirit of God cannot stay in intimate union and fellowship with those who are attacking the wonderful Lord Jesus.

The Spirit of God will not allow any in his presence to call Jesus a curser. This becomes a test that there is a commitment to the truth concerning the deity of Christ, the fact that he is the eternal God who has become flesh and dwelt among us, and we are to stand on this as the foundation of our fellowship. There is a third test that you can apply.

Paul is concerned about the sick, but he's realizing that God has told him to see that a church is established, and therefore he has to spend days every day for two years teaching the Word in order that there can be established in this key city a well-taught people. And incidentally, there are those that have been healed by his hands, as God has led and directed, but he can do nothing of himself, and those that

have been healed by the handkerchiefs. But his primary burden and his primary concern is not the healing of the body, but the glorifying of the Lord Jesus Christ through that which he wants done, and he wants it done through the church.

On the other hand, we discover that the sons of Sceva are primarily concerned with capitalizing on human need and suffering. They are concerned particularly about getting the sick and those that are demon-possessed to them so that they can use them to promote their own trade, their own interests. This, I say, is a factor.

Where the Spirit of God is in control, there is the balance of truth. It includes, it includes the testimony of the sufficiency of Christ for the body. I am just as opposed to any presentation of the whole, the message of the Word that ignores or rejects this as I am one that capitalizes.

I feel exactly the way Dr. Simpson did seventy years ago when Mr. Dowey said, let's go on the road together, Simpson, we'll have healing campaigns. Brother Simpson, Dr. Simpson said, no, God put four wheels on my chariot and I won't make a unicycle out of it and ride on just one of them. Now, I agree with that completely.

It's there, but it's not to be mistaken for a capitalizing on human need and human suffering as though the whole concern of Christ is simply this. This is part. But the sons of Steve are particularly addressing themselves to this aspect of people's need.

We're forgetting the fact that they have inner needs and spiritual needs and that God has so much he wants to do if they were concerned and today as well and capitalize on this one aspect. The obvious. The body twisted is so obvious.

The cancerous flesh so obvious and odious. The demon possession that distorts and twists and rests human personality to a caricature of what it ought to be is so obvious. But oh, how often it is that God is dealing with the heart with the more subtle but probably more real problems of undisciplined spirit and selfishness and pride and arrogance and the warping of the mind.

These are things where the spirit of God is concerned as well as just the tissue and the bone. And so the sons of Sceva were primarily concerned about the obvious. This was their focus and you can always if not being critical at least be suspicious when the primary focus comes to that which is obvious.

Then there's something else about the sons of Sceva that we need to see. Even in the name of Christ they promise more than they can produce and this troubles me. This troubles me.

Because I find in the word of God when the Lord Jesus prayed he healed all that came to him. He didn't promise more than he could produce. And he first taught them and then he healed them.

But he healed all. And I don't know the answer to that. I don't know it at all.

Perhaps someday the church will know. Perhaps someday I will be able better to know. But I know this that we certainly cannot promise that all that are prayed for are going to be healed.

Nor can we say categorically that it is the will of God for all to be healed. We can say however that it is God's will for men to prosper and be in health as their soul prospers because his word says that. But we're still standing on the threshold of mystery.

But the sons of Sceva simplify it down to black and white, one and two, right and wrong, this and that. Buy and you get. You don't get because you didn't buy.

And it isn't that simple. It just doesn't. And yet this is one of the evidences of this man's family.

The inability to meet the total need and the focus on the physical and then to promise far more that can then can be produced. Now we need to see something else here about this man. It is extremely important that you should recognize that this is probably the greatest indictment.

Sons of Sceva were prepared to use Jesus as a means rather than to exalt him as the sublime end. I want to dwell on that for just a moment. Wherever the spirit of God is in control, the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the end.

Not just a means. He's not a tool. He's not a lever.

He is the glorious end of all being. And the purpose of all church and teaching and worship and all that has to do with the name Christian is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and not just to use him. We saw last Sunday night in the seven evidences of the spirit of God's coming that where he is in control, it is summarized by saying, and he shall glorify me.

And we see with these men that they were prepared to use the name Jesus, but they weren't prepared to exalt him. He wasn't the end. He was the means.

Something else was more important than Christ. And whenever I find in any religious expression that something else becomes more important than the Lord Jesus Christ, then I know that it's out of balance. It may not be wrong, but it's out of balance.

Because this word puts him on the throne. He stands upon the sea of glass and sits upon the throne. And all the voices of all the ages glorify him.

And wherever the spirit of God has liberty to work, he's always glorifying Christ. And all other ministries, all other work, everything is to the end of exalting Christ. And this we see, this is as patently clear as anything can be.

The sons of Sceva were prepared to use Christ but not to exalt him. And thus you have to be alert. You have to be discerning.

When the cup is put to your lips and you're encouraged to drink, see what's in the cup. Well, they say, look, there's Jesus. Ah, but do I drink to get or to give? Do you see? Is this potion mixed in such a way that I get something from Jesus or I bring something to him? There's all the difference in the world.

Maybe the same cup, but not the same mixture. Maybe the cup of the word, the cup of truth, the cup of doctrine. But what's your end? The sons of Sceva said, Jesus whom Paul preaches, he's a lever and we're going to pry you into something you want.

Paul said, worthy is the lamb who slayeth. All glory be to the Son, the exaltation of the Lord. Here's the contrast.

One using Christ, making him the means, the other exalting Christ, making him the supply man. And in every ministry, every movement, everything that you test, you have to test by this. Is it for the glory of God

in Jesus Christ? Something else.

This may be related to what I've already said, but I want you to look at it. The sons of Sceva were more interested in phenomena than they were in the person of the Son of God. They were more interested in what was happening than in the one whom they were seeing.

And the moment that you become interested in phenomena, if it's of the Lord, the phenomena ceases very largely. I've been in recall once, pastoring in Indiana, a little country church. Hendon Harris, a Baptist pastor from up in northern Indiana near Chicago, came down for a two-weeks meeting.

My, how the Lord blessed. The sense of God's presence was, as I've seldom known before, more sense. And yet, you know, everything that God was doing stopped that Sunday morning.

You know why? Because when they, when the people, and myself included, went home, all we talked about was the atmosphere. Did you sense the atmosphere? Did you sense, oh, you... And you know, we never had that revelation of the Lord's presence again because we had been thinking about our sin and His grace. We'd been viewing the fountain of blood and cleansing.

And God was able, because our eyes were on Him, to bring blessing. But we were so poorly taught in such children that no sooner did the first little mercy drop of blessing come than we began to count the drops. And God had to turn off the faucet of blessing.

Couldn't come anymore. You understand why? Because we got our eyes off the Lord. And this is what we have had in the Word so clearly, looking off unto Jesus.

Oh, anything that takes your eyes away from Him is the family trait of the sons of Sceva. They were looking at phenomena rather than looking at the glorified Son. And so we see this man's family didn't die when these seven sons passed away.

The family's continued. Like Adam's family, it's with us still. And you're going to have to bear these tests in your mind.

You're going to have to think about them again and again. Not everything that trades on orthodoxy is necessarily true. It isn't enough to say, Lord, Lord.

But there has to be in all a submission to the sovereignty of Christ. There are those that have so submitted to the sovereignty of Christ that they must find that they are not at home or at ease or in good company when they are with others who don't. That the foundation upon which the fellowship is built is the rock Christ Jesus upon which rock they've fallen and been broken.

And therefore, everything that's religious and everything that's nice and everything that's attractive and restful and peaceful doesn't pass. It has to be that they are established in this same commitment. Then we discover that we can't capitalize on one aspect of human need and suffering.

This isn't right. It's there. We're concerned.

Nor do we find where the Word of God is that there's more promised than can be performed. It isn't a panacea to meet every need. Nor do we find that we use Christ as simply a mean, but rather He's the glorified end.

We find that we're more interested in Him than we are in anything, any manifestation, gift, or phenomenon. And by these things, you disassociate yourself with this man's family that's continued down across the centuries. And you no longer are children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but established and settled and strengthened because you've eaten the meat of the Word and drunk at the cup of truth.

And therefore, you're not becoming belligerently critical and going around with a hammer and tongs to fight anything that doesn't match your particular opinion. But having eaten of that bread and eaten of that meat and drunk of that water, there's been that inner spiritual nourishment that enables you to say, as for me in my house, this we see, and we're not going to become assimilated into Ziva's family. Look at it now in terms of our day and our generation.

Lo here, lo there. Go this way, know that. These are the voices that you hear in literature, the voices that you hear on the radio, the voices that you hear one way and another.

But which is the way? What is the way? Oh, remember, the way is a person. I, said the Lord Jesus Christ, am the way. And so you know the way when he's central, when he's the end and the means, the alpha and the omega.

I am the truth. All truth begins in me, all truth settles in me, all truth focuses in me. I am the life.

And life isn't something that I send, it isn't something that I attribute, it's something I become in you. For he that hath the Son, hath thy eye. Christianity is Christ.

And a Christian is one in whom Christ is. And everything that the Spirit of God does and everything the Word of God teaches is to reinforce this central affirmation of our Lord. I am the way.

I am the truth. I, said he, am the life. Oh, see this, when you have a highway marked and plain and a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.

As long as the Lord Jesus is central as the way, central as the truth, and central as the life, and all focuses to him, then you can walk through the Word confidently, joyously, and know that asking for bread you will not be given a stone, or asking for meat you will not be given a cockatrice. But be alert to the fact that see those seven sons have multiplied themselves and the family is plenteous in the present. Tell me about our hearts in prayer.

I want to ask you tonight is Jesus Christ in you, the hope of glory? Is it your confidence that you have life, eternal life, in him? Is it so just in what he's done? Is it in what he has become in you and to you? Is it Christ in you, the hope of glory? Oh, everything in Jesus, I'm Jesus, everything. Have you seen him? Have you come to love him? Is he the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the altogether lovely one, the lily of the valley, the rose of Sharon, fairest of ten thousand to your souls? Or is he just a means to an end, just a tool? Oh, see him, the way, the truth, the life. And if you do not know him, invite him into your heart tonight and he'll become all that we've said of him, perhaps for you, dear child of God.

You need to ask for wisdom and discernment. Why don't you in this silent moment, knowing that you've got to walk through a whole world of literature, a whole world of entreating, of activity of words, why don't you just now in this silent moment, in obedience to the word which says, covet earnestly the best gifts, ask God to give you the gift of discernment, the discerning of spirits and to give to you the gift of wisdom. Why don't you do that so that you will not be able to tell your right hand from your left and the sons of heathen from poor that the cry of your heart be, O God, give to your church again these gifts so necessary if we're

to be able to tell the difference between stone and bread, cockatrice and egg, serpent and meat.

Give to us discernment. Give to us wisdom. We do not want to become involved with Seba's family.

We want to walk worthy of him who's called us out of darkness into light, wisely and well. Father of our Lord Jesus, breathe upon us now. Seal to our hearts the word we've heard.

Let the meditation of it, the thought upon it, strengthen, nourish, encourage us. Help us to realize that the touchstone is the Lord Jesus Christ, his sovereignty in the life of the individual, his authority in the word. He becomes the end toward which all moves, the object of every motion of our hearts and thought.

He is the way, the truth, and the life. Grant our Father that in seeing this we shall be armed and equipped to walk well, wisely, in our day and in our generation, approving things that are excellent, being found without offense till the day of Christ. So establish us, so strengthen us, so meet us as a church and as individuals for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this invitation, if you'd like to have us talk personally with you, pray with you, do not leave. We're not singing and thus inviting you. The nature of the ministry is hardly that.

If you have spiritual need, don't hurry. Remain where you are. Someone will come to you or you come to me.

We'll talk and pray together. The whole purpose of this ministry is to be of help and blessing to you as well as of glory to Christ.

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