

Evangelism and Historic Calvinism

by Walter Chantry

The sermon highlights the importance of Calvinism in fueling evangelistic zeal and the role of Samuel Pierce and Andrew Fuller in inspiring others to go on missions.

Duration: 47:28

Scripture: Psalm 2:8, Isaiah 43:2, Matthew 28:19-20, John 3:16, Acts 1:8, Acts 8:26-40, Romans 10:14

Topics: "Calvinism", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the connection between historic Calvinism and evangelism, specifically focusing on the aspect of world mission. He highlights the fiery evangelism of Calvinists throughout history and attributes it to their deep understanding of Calvinistic distinctive. The speaker mentions the importance of the conversion of the heathen and references the text in Isaiah that predicts the spread of the gospel to Ethiopia. He also mentions the influence of Jonathan Edwards, a Calvinistic Baptist from England, and his biblical convictions that fueled his zeal for evangelism.

Transcript

I'm sure I'm speaking for everyone when I thank the people of the Trinity Church here in Allentown for very gracious hospitality and for their prayerful preparation of this conference. It's been a great blessing to my heart. I've noticed some things they do differently here.

This is the first time I've ever been anywhere that they have a fellow in the front row with a stopwatch. But the evidence of any bad spirit in having that stopwatch, however. Now we've already just heard a message on evangelism and historic Calvinism in Bob Saltzman's message to us about our dearly beloved saint of our own country.

But I am also going to limit my paper, How Can You Talk About All of Historic Calvinism and All of What's Evolved in Evangelism, by talking about one man who ought to be dear to us, that is Baptists who are Calvinists, and by limiting our consideration to one aspect of evangelism, and that is world missions. Large volumes ought to be recorded to tell about the fiery evangelism of Calvinists in history, and significant chapters should be written on the direct cause of their evangelistic spirit than is nothing else than a hard understanding of their Calvinistic distinctive. Our mind has been remembering Jonathan Edwards, and I've chosen the brief life of a man who also came from a place called Northampton, but over in England.

Some of the biblical convictions that lit the fire of zeal in his heart we'll notice as we go through his life. On October 2 in 1792, as you know, in the town of Kettering in England, there were 14 men gathered together to form a mission society that was destined to be the most influential in modern missions. There were 12 pastors there, and one student, and one deacon.

All were Calvinistic Baptists, though they had a broad Catholic spirit, and they promised from the very start that they'd do anything that they could to help the Presbyterians and Moravians in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. At this meeting, they formed the society which was to become the great impetus for modern missions, that was to set the pace and the standard practice for taking the gospel to the ends of the earth that prevails to this very day. Of course, the pastor most remembered among them is William Carey.

And many of you know, too, the first secretary of the mission who was elected on that day, Andrew Fuller, the author of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, a classic for the free offer of the gospel and an excellent refutation of Hyper-Calvinism. Also present were John Sutcliffe, who was a pastor who, because he was influential in reprinting Jonathan Edwards' works in England, and because of his own sermons, stirred up a prayerful spirit of longing for another revival. It was John Sutcliffe who, eight years earlier, had moved the Northampton Association of Particular Baptists to have monthly prayer meetings for the conversion of the heathen all throughout the world.

In each of their churches they were to have such a prayer meeting. And this was three years before the association ever met William Carey. So the whole idea that William Carey stood alone against a bunch of stodgy old Hyper-Calvinists who had no interest in missions, and he alone brought the Baptists to their missionary zeal is a myth.

This John Sutcliffe was a great force for missions before Carey came on the scene. Also at the meeting was John Ryland, who had just become president of the Baptist College in Bristol. And there was another youthful pastor in that small room, ten by twelve, and he's the man that we're going to focus our attention on.

He's Samuel Pierce. He was twenty-six years old when they formed what they called the Particular or Calvinistic Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen. A subtle title, wasn't it? Pastor Samuel Pierce for barely two years, and he was almost a stranger to the Northampton Association.

He didn't know the leaders of that association very well. But he was to become a major force in modern missions. The Calvinistic Baptist Society, with these humble beginnings of fourteen men, was destined in God's providence to inspire the world, the English-speaking world, with giving their money and sending men throughout the earth in preaching the gospel.

And the profound influence that they had is indebted, of course, to the heroic, sacrificial labors of Carey. But Carey was, for the most part, laboring in India through most of the history of the mission, and he could not by himself hold the fascination of the English-speaking world and spread with untold effort their missionary spirit. It was rather Andrew Fuller and Samuel Pierce at home that spread the fame of Carey and inspired Great Britain with missions, be they Baptist, Anglican, or Presbyterian.

While Carey was plunged into the obscure and time-consuming work of translation, Pierce and Fuller preached, wrote, traveled through Britain, talked about missions, and inspired men to go all over the world in preaching. Now there's something missing in our own Baptist circles. We have so many young men who

are training for the ministry.

A third of the men at Westminster, our Reformed Episcopal Seminary is almost a misnomer. Take away the Reformed Baptists and there wouldn't be too many students left. The Reformed Seminary in Jackson and in other seminaries across the country, Covenant.

Large numbers of men. I only know of one who is seriously and prayerfully aiming at taking the gospel somewhere else in the world besides the United States. He had to come from Great Britain for that preparation.

Now there's something wrong if we do not see some of our young men and that fault is not in the heart of the young men in not feeling inspired to go and to preach the gospel, but it must lie with the pastors at home who aren't talking much about it and urging men to do it. It was Pierce and Fuller at home that was the spearhead of the mission to send money and men to taking the gospel to England. Samuel Pierce was born at Plymouth, England in July 20, 1766.

His father was a silversmith and a deacon of a Calvinistic Baptist church that held to the Confession. Being raised in a church with a sound gospel ministry, Samuel Pierce experienced a childhood that's very much like this. There were periods when he was strongly convicted of sin and miserable in his heart, but there were other times when his life was marked by eager pursuit of sin.

Nothing open and gross because he would have gotten it too if he had been open with his sins, but he felt his heart strongly attracted to the world and he knew that selfishness was... When he was 15 years old, Samuel's father asked him to help with his deaconing duties. He sent him to visit a man in the neighborhood with anything that the church could do for his condition, to help his wife and family, to help with defraying medical expenses and so forth. And Samuel left the silver shop in a cheerful mood.

But while he was in that neighbor's house, he heard the dying man cry that dreadful words, pierced the heart of this young man so that he determined that he must find God and he must... About one year later, while listening to his pastor preaching a sermon, the Spirit of God applied the gospel remedy for sinners to Samuel's heart. And he recalled of that day, I believe few conversions were more joyful. The change produced in my views, my feelings and my conduct were so evident to myself that I could no more doubt of its being of God than of my existence.

And then Pierce records a profound, yet a very simple observation about Christians. He said it is very common for young converts to feel strong desires for the conversion of others. And that's a biblical remark.

We know that Andrew went and sought out Peter when he found the Messiah, that Philip at once had to find Nathanael. And throughout history, the saints of God trace the origin of their evangelistic spirit to the hour of their conversion and the excitement and the thrill of meeting God, not just hearing about Him, but now coming to know Him as their Savior and Redeemer. So evangelism is the instinct of the Christian species.

And it's not surprising if non-Calvinists who are true Christians are interested in evangelism. Samuel Pierce said, these desires immediately followed the evidence of my own religion. And I remember that they were particularly fixed upon the poor heathen.

I believe the first week that I knew the grace of God and truth, I put up many fervent cries to heaven and at the same time felt an earnest desire to be employed in promoting their salvation. Soon he was baptized and he joined the church at Plymouth. And he thought of going to New Zealand to preach the gospel there.

And he talked about it so much to people that it became the rumor of the town that this young Christian was going to actually go to New Zealand as a missionary, which was unheard of. They didn't have missionaries going out to lands like that. He gave up the idea, however, because he didn't know how to go about it.

Soon it became evident to everyone in the church that his spirit was breathing the response of Isaiah. And so they made him a probationer. It's interesting to notice the procedure of the church in days gone by.

They made this young man with spiritual interests a probationer to teach and preach within their own church. And seeing that he really had some gifts for the ministry, they suggested that he go to Bristol. One note from his career at the academy suggests the abiding evangelical spirit of the young man.

Now I'm reading his own account. Being sent by my tutor to preach two sabbaths at Colford, I felt particular sweetness to going from house to house with people who dwell in the forest of Dean. And coal miners then were the very poor class of the society, very despised socially, and a very... Pierce says that he spent the evenings conversing and praying with them and preaching to them.

In these exercises, I found the most solid satisfaction in a poor hut with a stone to stand upon and a three-legged stool for my desk, surrounded with 30 or 40 of the smutty neighbors. I have felt such an unction from above that my whole auditory have been melted into tears whilst directed to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. And I, weeping among them, could scarcely speak or they here for interrupting sighs and sobs.

Many a time did I then think, thus it was with the apostles of our Lord, when they went from house to house among the poor heathen. In work like this I could live and die. Indeed, had I at that time been at liberty to settle, I should have preferred that situation to any in the kingdom.

He was experiencing revival in a real sense, even when he was a student in Strictly Hughes in the 18th century. In 1789, after he finished his schooling at Bristol, Robert Hall, the famous Baptist preacher, recommended Samuel Pierce to a particular Baptist church in Birmingham. And again he went to Birmingham as a probationer.

And he preached there for a full year before he was called as pastor and ordained. In 1790, William Carey visited Birmingham and Pierce met him for the first time. At that time, Pastor Carey was the pastor of the Moulton Church and still teaching in school and making shoes to support his family.

The two of course had a kindred spirit with their interest in the heathen. Pierce had already stirred up interest in missions by his monthly prayer meetings. And his monthly prayer meetings were the largest and strongest in the whole Northampton Association.

This is what Pierce himself says, I continued to preach much upon the promises of God, respecting the conversion of the heathen, and by so doing, and by always communicating to my people every piece of information I could obtain, respecting the present state of missions. They soon imbibed the same spirit. That's how people got interested in going and in giving.

By preaching God's promises that the nations of the world must be converted, and by giving them every piece of information available concerning missions. And then he went on to say, For the more extensive spread of the gospel, that in our monthly prayer meetings, both stated and occasional, I should have been as much surprised at the cause of the heathen being omitted in any prayer as at the omission of the name and merit of Jesus Christ. When Pearce heard of the meeting at Kettering in 1792, October, and no doubt heard it through Carey, he was not very familiar with the leaders of the association, but he couldn't resist going.

This meeting fired Samuel Pearce even more, if possible. And we find that the next week after the meeting, he wrote these words to a friend, the breathing of his spirit. Oh, when will the time, the longed-for time, arrive when the Messiah's ensign shall be lifted high and Jews and Gentiles, pagans and Mohammedans, Africans and Indians be gathered unto it? One journey I made to Northamptonshire was with a view to assist in setting on foot a mission to the unconverted heathen.

It has long engaged the unusual concern of many ministers in our connection about the center of the kingdom. Brother Carey of Leicester published on the subject, and last Wednesday evening we drew out a sketch of an institution for so great a design. May he whose glory I trust we have in view direct all future deliberations and make the embryo effort ripen and succeed till future ages prove that the plan begun at Kettering in October of 1790 comprehended in its consequences the salvation of the world.

There were 14 men there. Listen to the way he's speaking. Soon, my brother, soon it is said, Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God.

May we, like our divine master, not fail nor be discouraged until the gospel be established in the earth and the waiting aisles have received the law of him who is the approaching desirer of all nations. That was the spirit of the men, the Baptists, who met in Kettering in October of 1792. Now it's interesting that Pearce and Fuller and Carey and others dwelt much on the divine sovereign increase of the church.

And they used texts like Psalm 67, 3, glorious things of the earth spoken o'er the city of God. And they spoke of the texts that deal with the conversion of the heathen like Psalm 68, 31, Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Now, to some degree, it was their view of prophecy that was affecting their great zeal for the evangelism of the church.

But even more fundamentally, it was their distinct views of the sovereign grace of God. We read, for instance, Samuel Pearce writing, Oh, what praising living Christians should we be if we lived as our obligations to sovereign mercy teach us, dead to the world, alive to God, far from gloom, full of glory. Now these few quotes hint to us of the doctrinal sparks which kindled and rekindled the missionary spirit of Pearce and Fuller and Carey.

And an examination of the record will find these elements prominent in the awareness of evangelists and missionaries that we revere all across the ages. And they stick out all over Jonathan Edwards as you read his works. First, he hints of sovereign mercy.

The Baptists of 1792 were staunch believers in the biblical doctrines of grace. Far from dampening the fires of evangelistic zeal, their Calvinism was the oil that kept it burning. The doctrines of sovereign grace put wings to the feet of evangelism.

We read these words, written by the first missionaries who were in India. We are sure that only those who are ordained to eternal life will believe. They'd never get into mission societies today.

Nevertheless, we cannot deny the great champion of those elements. Paul has been incarnate of the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision. Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace.

For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee. For I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Paul was lying in Justice's house. In other cities, he had felt the stones pelting against his own flesh. And when you feel that, it doesn't make you any more bold to face them.

But I think Paul would romanticize what Paul... His churches were like your churches, rather than like the huge churches of our nation. They were little, struggling... There were only a few that got converted. And after they believed what he preached, he had to go on being driven out by persecution, and he left them to struggle into little society themselves being persecuted.

What was the use of going on? Well, God tells him what the use was with going on. He said, I have many people. I have much people.

In this city, in particular. Now what was God saying? Not that many were already converted. Had sovereignly chosen many.

That God the Son had spilled His blood for many in that place. And that precious blood, O Son of God, shall never lose its power. Till all the ransomed church of God shall... Many were ordained to eternal life in Christ from eternity past.

There were many whose sins propitiated on Calvary's hill... There were many who would yet be quickened by the Spirit in the future. And what did Paul react to that? Certainty that there would be much people in the city converted. Did Paul say, well, if it's so certain, why bother? Stocked with brook trout.

And they're biting so well... Will he lay his pole down and say, well, what's the use in trying? Boy, he'll grab that rod and be done. And even if it's the last quarter of... Do the players say, tell a farmer that there's a great harvest out there. And he'll be busy at work.

And will indeed grip through the veins of mental... Not only is it true that when a man is saved, but it is also true which are broad and far-reaching. It's not just that man is so sinful that if any of them happen to get... But when you read that Bible, you find that in the day... But when he would roll in the midst... That predicts the words of Jesus. And in the first part, our Lord in the prayer.

And in the latter part of the... And notice verses 27 and 28. Where the Lord... All the ends of the world... And all the kindreds of the nations... All of the nations of the... Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen.

That ought to make you want to go. At least pray about it. I will be exalted... Turn to Isaiah chapter 54.

This was the text that William Carey used in preaching to the... And what was he preaching but that... Say no barren and thou that didst not... Enlarge the place of thy tent. Let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations. Spare not even the... Lengthen thy cords.

Strengthen thy stakes. Why? For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left. And thy seed shall inherit... The Gentiles shall be brought in.

And make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not. For thou shalt not be ashamed.

Neither be thou confounded. For thou shalt not be put to shame. For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth.

And shalt remember the reproach of thy... For thy maker is thine husband. And thy redeemer is the holy one of Israel. To the brightness of thy rising.

Lift up thine eyes round about and see. All they gather themselves together. Then thou shalt see.

And flow together. And thine heart shall fear and be enlarged. Who are these that fly? To bring thy sons from far.

Their silver and their gold with them. All the great... The forces of the Gentiles. And their kings.

The great host shall be... We're getting a little ahead of the story. And from the very first. And the way he knew they were converted is that they... Pierce offered himself to go to India.

And we find that during that year... And the more communion I have enjoyed with him. And all for men like this for the church. And after copying out... Not without occasional pantings of the spirit.

After the publishing of the gospel. Oh how I loved him. I long to realize my dream.

How pleasant would it be to sit down at the Lord's table with our... But he believed that his own desires were no safe rule of guidance. No call... He would give his sons in the faith to go to India. And he would give... He would pile up the resources necessary... Who's on the home front.

Unknown to himself or to the... He would die at the young age of 33 and... During these last five years most of the way to the... But with a congregation of... And with a high priority... Irish labors grew from firm... And a constant awareness of God's purpose in this generation. There were times when he had doubts of his own. There were periods of almost... But always there was a thrill for him.

In thinking of a sovereign God. More meditation... I want a more habitual sense of the divine presence. I want to walk with God as Enoch.

All for much of Enoch's spirit. Or again... I am fully persuaded that a Christian is no longer really happy... Deathbed he wrote these words. Now I see them.

And far rather would I be a poor emaciated creature like I am. Than be an emperor... With every earthly good about him but... All tis a heaven worth dying. It has been a frequent means of... And I think you find it the same.

Yea all kings shall... His name shall endure... Who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever. And let the whole earth be filled with his glory.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14122.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/walter-chantry/evangelism-and-historic-calvinism/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net