"I was just a twentieth century pagan," Ernie openly admitted. Like England's slip into practical paganism by the early 1700's (before the time of John Newton), American paganism was on the rise by the late 1930's. "I followed construction work, and I worked, lived, and drank with the roughest crowd...I missed work for days at a time to drink." American paganism had a hold on Ernie.

What must Mima Jane, his young wife, have thought? "My wife was almost ready to leave me because of the miserable life I was living," Ernie said. They had moved from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to Maryland. Mima Jane would not take Don, their preschool son, to the neighborhood Sunday School because of the way Ernie was living. They used to watch as children cut across the yard on their way to the non-denominational Sunday School. Ernie's friend from work, Elmer Albright, helped out there. He persisted in asking Ernie to come to church, and kept on praying for him. After a year, Ernie decided to take Don with him to the church. The words of "What A Friend We Have In Jesus" struck Ernie. Yet, he stayed away for the next eight weeks. He became very aware of his own sin and his drift from the moral living learned as a child. While drinking bootleg whiskey with a friend one night, the friend suggested they go to Sunday School and turn over a new leaf. Ernie agreed to go. Elmer and the Sunday School teacher spent Sunday afternoon (at Ernie's request) answering his questions and asking him, "Are you saved?" That question prompted him to stay home from work on Monday reading the tracts they left and his Bible. One tract he found stuck in his unused family Bible pointed him to John 5:24, "...he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."
So that’s what being saved meant! By the end of the week, he was dying to go back to that Sunday School and soon made a public statement of how God had saved him. This "twentieth century pagan" had been hit with the same gospel and Spirit that turned England around in the 1700's.

Ernie's life, like those impacted by God's grace during those revivals (mentioned in previous chapters) in Wales, England, and Scotland, began to change. Jane did not leave him. Instead, after more than sixty years together, Ernie said, "I could voice what John Newton said, when speaking of his wife: 'I never followed her advice, without being thankful that I did, and I never deviated from it, but I ended up having reason to repent.'" Their home life stabilized. Ernie began seriously studying, soon seeing his need for baptism, and joined the First Southern Baptist Church of Havre de Grace, Maryland. He became an ardent soul winner--sitting his whole extended family down for an explanation of salvation. His mother thought he would lose his mind like his father had if he did not put aside that Bible!

Ernest Reisinger eventually became a spunky defender of the Doctrines of Grace and an advocate of experimental preaching in the tradition of John Calvin which blended doctrine and personal devotion. He always remained an ardent evangelist, using a book ministry to expand his warm, relational application of doctrinal principles. He drew me into the Doctrines of Grace with caring and persistent mentoring. He became a spiritual father to me, introducing me to Henry, Newton, Jay, Spurgeon, and Lloyd-Jones by giving me their books. He gently led me into warm-hearted Calvinism.

20th CENTURY PAGAN BECOMES AN ARMINIAN DISPENSATIONALIST
Ernest Reisinger cut his Christian teeth on a Dispensational interpretation of scripture.

I want to be on record as acknowledging that the formative years of my spiritual development were under the ministry of godly men who were committed to dispensationalism. It was under such a ministry that I was taught the importance of a personal devotional life. I was taught to be missionary minded. I was taught to be a personal witness for Christ.5

In answering the question, "What does this passage in the Bible mean?" Ernie, at first, used the lens of Dispensationalism. He did not even know the terms then, but that is how he approached the scriptures for the first ten years of his Christian life. That taught him some lessons; exposing the errors of both Arminianism and Dispensationalism would be a part of his life's work. Like William Jay's speaking up against Antinomianism, Spurgeon's battle with a liberal interpretation of scripture, and Martin Lloyd-Jones's stance against ecumenicalism, Ernie sought to expose Dispensationalism's imposed conflict between the law and the gospel and the gap they put between Israel and the Church. He figured the consequences of that approach would be a weakened use of the moral law and a rise of Antinomianism again. Ernest Reisinger came to see Dispensationalism as an interpretive system to expose because it was "a departure from the historic faith of our fathers." By that he meant the leaving of the Reformed Protestant way of determining what the whole Bible meant, of seeing unifying themes between the Old and New Testaments, of "putting on your gospel spectacles" when reading the Old Testament. By the late 1990's he warned against the various stances of this system: "We are now reaping some of the fruit of this unbiblical and unhistoric theology, especially in the work of evangelism (justification) and in teaching on the Christian life (sanctification)."6 He, like Spurgeon in controversy with liberalism, lost some good friends over this issue. He became a defender of the Doctrines of
Grace and immersed himself in Reformed literature. The result was his becoming a warm-hearted Calvinistic preacher himself, always seeking the balance between doctrine and devotion.

Ernie, at twenty-four, had plenty of time to read and study. He sailed 80,000 miles in the South Pacific from 1943-46 on the U.S. Navy's Westmoreland, an amphibious attack transport ship, as a Second Class petty officer. Soon other men were saved. He was introduced to the Navigators and used their materials, even meeting their founder and exploring a move to Los Angeles after the war where he could study and help the ministry with his carpentry skills. That did not stick, but his studying and reading did, along with a gnawing desire to show his gratitude to Second Presbyterian Church in Carlisle for helping his family during the depression. So, when he was discharged, he returned to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and was the first lay preacher to be commissioned by the local presbytery.

Memories of his childhood must have flooded back during these days of reestablishment. Ernie's father had sold oil stock on the margin to his friends and neighbors before the Crash of 1929. When he and they lost everything, the senior Ernest lost his mind, and was institutionalized for the next thirty years. Ernie and his two brothers were temporarily put in an orphanage. Members of the Second Presbyterian Church gave clothes and taught him in Sunday School. These were dark days for Ernie. His family was later united again, with Ernie working odd jobs to help support his mother, sister, and two brothers. He left school in the ninth grade and never took another dime from anyone else for his support.

Now, with carpentry skills and certification in reading construction plans and estimating jobs (and with naval experience under his belt), the young Reisinger started his own construction partnership with his
brother, John, who soon left town to escape Ernie's attempts to save him. By now, Ernie was attending college and teaching Sunday School, leading the Wednesday prayer meeting, using Moody Bible School's correspondence courses at a mission of Second Presbyterian. As his business expanded, something had to give, so Ernie dropped out of college, devoting his time to business and preaching and teaching until his early retirement at forty-seven. Reisinger Brothers was no small business. He had created 150 jobs, owned hundreds of pieces of construction equipment, took on jobs in four states, built highways, bridges, sewers, and schools. He expanded by forming Allen Dairy Farms, Inc. which his son, Don, then developed into a major breeder of show cows. Ernie would retire from business at forty-seven in 1966.

But business was never everything or all consuming. He never forgot Elmer's example of the power of a holy life, patience, and compassion for sinners meshed with prayer. Employees heard the gospel informally during the course of doing business and formally at the company's yearly banquet. Christian Business Man's Committee was organized by him in Carlisle, the Christian Gospel Foundation was founded to support Christian causes, and after leaving the Briddle Mission because of growing liberalism at Second Presbyterian, Grace Chapel, an independent church, was planted with only twenty-five people. Ernie would remain a leader there until 1965 and connected with them until his death. Intervarsity Fellowship was organized at Dickinson College and Ernie tirelessly taught, prayed with, and gave books to students.

These were busy days with Ernie sticking his neck out for the gospel and exerting himself for the salvation of others. He tried to take one day a month off for his own devotional retreat--for prayer and self-evaluation. He met regularly with Christian friends like
Duke Irwin for prayer and fellowship. He loved the truth and wanted to serve and please God. He listened to Donald Barnhouse from Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia preach the Doctrines of Grace.\textsuperscript{13} He read John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* over and over. He was ripe for theological conflict with himself.

**THE SOUL WINNER BECOMES A REFORMER**

The 1950's were times of refining the truth for Ernie and those working with him at Grace Chapel. His brother, John, a minister by now, became friends with I. C. Herendeen who patiently introduced John to the writings of his friend, Arthur Pink, and C. H. Spurgeon's sermons on theological issues such as limited atonement. "John came to believe in those old Protestant teachings, which men have come to call 'the Five Points of Calvinism: that is, Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and the Perseverance of the Saints.'" Ernie was now confronted with "What is the truth?" These doctrines were not what he had embraced and preached.\textsuperscript{14}

But, he was a reader and a thinker who knew how to ask the right questions. "I came to Calvinism kicking, fighting and screaming," Ernie admitted.\textsuperscript{15} This soul-winner worried that election and limited atonement stifled evangelism. And compassionate evangelism was the mark of his Christian life so far. He later wrote much on this topic, *Will Calvinism Kill Evangelism?* (a self-published pamphlet later reissued in *The Founders Journal* in various articles in the 1990's). He came to believe both these and the other points of Calvinism. A Reformer was born without having to give up his ardent love for souls! And by 1956, the leadership at the church affirmed them as well. In 1959, the name was changed to Grace Baptist Church and the *1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith* was
adopted. A book room was run by Katie Irwin, who accepted Ernie's watchful oversight.

Ernie was given his first Banner of Truth book in 1960 by his brother, John. This British publisher introduced him to Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the British Puritans, and the Eighteenth Century Revivalists. He read widely, and liked what he read. Continuing to read himself, he gave away Reformed books. For instance, he gave R. F. Kendall, later pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, Lloyd-Jones' *Sermon on the Mount*. In 1966, Ernie financed Puritan Publications to warehouse Banner Books. He gave daily oversight to the operation run by James Eshelman. Soon the leadership of Banner of Truth Trust investigated their chief U. S. customer. Ernie was elected to their Board in 1968 and served until his death in 2004. He spoke at their conferences. This led to his contacts with Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Iain Murray, Mervyn T. Barter, and Geoffrey Thomas. (From 1966-1996, he also served on another board, the Den Dulk Christian Foundation.)

Therefore, his love for the truth led him into a whole new realm of Christian service for which he was profoundly grateful:

I could not complete this autobiography without expressing my deep gratitude for the privilege of being a BTT (Banner of Truth) trustee for over thirty years. I regard it as one of the most cherished Christian services that I have experienced....One of the greatest services that the Banner rendered to me was the introduction to the Puritans.

The direction of Ernie's second career was profoundly impacted by his willingness to ask the right questions and dig for the truth. Ernie never lost sight of his being a pilgrim walking a narrow path, avoiding ditches on either side, with his eyes on the City of God, shining on the hill ahead. Are you willing to ask questions, seek truth, even if it takes you in a different direction or changes your
associates? Years later, I benefited by this willingness in Ernie. As my pastor, he introduced me to the Reformed faith instead of building on the Arminianism of my youth. Ernie kept his passions for soul winning and literature, but by the mid 1960's, his path was the one trod by historic Reformed Christians of old.

Even though he was now a Calvinist, he continued his compassion for the lost and concern for struggling Christians. Two missions were planted by Grace Baptist at Chambersburg and Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, with Ernie preaching. (He would later come back from fishing in the Florida Keys to pastor this church from 1969-71.) Ernie was never a "loose cannon" (as he put it), but believed in the corporate responsibility of the church, and always worked with church authorities while, at the same time, serving on various Christian Boards or helping schools and seminaries. Now that he had embraced historic Christian Reformed doctrines, working through the church remained important to his decision-making. He was still a lay preacher only; he was not ordained until 1971. But, he was ever a church planter and reformer while never showing favoritism to people of position or power. He was willing to befriend simple Sunday school teachers like my husband, John, and me.

His Reformed position never overshadowed his compassion for people. He loved children and evangelized them as energetically as any adult in high places. He strongly advocated and practiced Christian liberty--never failing to express an opinion if you asked, but never imposing his opinion in indifferent matters either. On issues that were not indifferent, such as sin or doctrinal principles, he was openly firm. He was firm with me lots of times.

Yet, I learned never to expect an authoritative command; he was no one's priest! For instance, I once asked him whether we
should move from Florida to Indiana. His response was, "You've got a nice home there on the river," staying out of the whole question. Like William Jay, he was kind to women. He treated me with dignity and encouraged me to write and teach. He never put down women even though he believed they should not preach or hold authority in the local church. But, he did not extend that beyond scripture either. He was less interested in gender roles than in everyone knowing by experience the "real thing."

His Calvinism defied the cold, austere prototype. He was ever warm and relational; intense, busy with no time for the frivolous, but never detached or cold. He did not know it all yet, and even though firm in his Reformed convictions, he never claimed to have all the answers. He did not mind responding, "I don't know, Carol,"or "I wonder about that too." He frequently quoted Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." He was smart and could devour difficult books, later citing particular passages. His theology affected his devotional life. One of those spiritual experiences was a growth in humility.

Do you know it all and have to have it your way or no way? Ernie would not go with you in what he considered a wrong direction, but he always believed you had the right, under God, to go. He might warn you, but he would not tie you up in knots. Even though he looked at the church as strong and with authority to discipline, he never wanted to use that as a battering ram against anyone. To him, church discipline was about public sins. He was wary about elders inspecting a family's coffee table books or websites on home computers or setting up rules for child-rearing. He preferred reserving church discipline for public sins. He, like Jay, was a kind Calvinist.
THE TIE THAT BINDS

Like Matthew Henry, he remained devotional and applicational. He studied Henry and read John Newton's letters. Somehow he discovered William Jay and was involved in Sprinkle Publications' reprinting of his works. He identified with Charles Spurgeon's heart for evangelism. And he sat at the feet of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, learning about expository preaching that was evangelistic and applicational. He was tied to all these teachers by the value he placed on the practical. In *Doctrine and Devotion*, published by Chapel Library, he pictures a tree loaded with fruit of the Spirit and examples of Christian experiences like worship, love of brethren, witnessing, etc.. The tree is rooted in Christian doctrine.

'Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine...Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” II Timothy 4:13; 16. These two passages of scripture bring together what should never be separated, that is doctrine and devotion; belief and practice; biblical truth clothed with genuine Christian experience. What God has joined together let no man put asunder.

Doctrine is to Christian experience what bones are to the body. A body without bones would be a lump of 'glob' -- like cut flowers stuck in the ground--they may look pleasant for awhile, but ultimately they will wither and die.

The other side of this truth must also be taken into account, that is, bones without flesh are but a dead skeleton...It has been a life-time goal and desire to bring together sound biblical doctrine and genuine Christian experience, both in my own life and in my teaching and practice.Indeed, he did not want a Reformed theology that was like a dead skeleton. He wanted dry bones to rise up with warmth and love for God. He wrote,

I am using devotion and Christian experience
Ernest Reisinger had concluded the same thing as our other five teachers. No doctrine and unbiblical doctrine were both equally bad. But, so was doctrine devoid of a holy life and passion for God and compassion for others. He was blessed by the tie that bound him to previous generations--practical heart-warming Christian doctrine alive with real Christian experience in devotion, worship, witnessing, love, patience, self-control and self-denial. He was a reformer with a kind streak. He never pretended to be sinless. His emphasis was on his being covered with the righteousness of Christ. Really knowing God meant something to him.

**THE REFORMER REJECTS DISPENSATIONALISM**

As Ernie read more and more of the Puritans, and developed relationships with Iain Murray and Martyn Lloyd-Jones, he faced another theological dilemma. He was not finding Dispensational teaching in any of them!21

He always asked three questions when he studied a passage from the Bible: What does it say? What does it mean? How can I apply it? As has been noted earlier, he had used a dispensational lens for discovering the meaning. Meaning was important to him because application to everyday life depended on getting the meaning right. "What good is a Bible without error if you don't know what it means?" he used to quip. Now that he believed the Doctrines of
Grace were themes flowing throughout both Old and New Testaments, he came into conflict with the basics of Dispensational interpretation. Ernie never advocated argument for the sake of argument; he was not polemic or censorious; he did not want to be uncharitable or disrespectful. But, he wrote in 1999, "I must be candid and say that I cannot approach Dispensationalism in an unbiased or dispassionate manner. I strongly believe it to be a departure from the historic faith of our fathers."\textsuperscript{22} He acknowledged that "the dispensational position is complex and hard to pin down and their scholars have modified their views over time."\textsuperscript{23} Yet, he would agree with Keith Mathison, editor of \textit{Tabletalk}, that the cornerstone of the system is the fundamental distinction they make between Israel and the church.\textsuperscript{24} Ernie came to see many dangerous implications stemming from this division or dichotomy.

"I did not find my way out of dispensationalism easily. Leaving took time and tears, and it cost me fellowship with some genuinely committed Christian friends."\textsuperscript{25}

Regardless of the various changing positions of Dispensational adherents, Reisinger concluded there were four basic principles that went to its heart. In 1994, he outlined them in \textit{Lord and Christ}:

1. A literal interpretation and a focus on Old Testament prophecy from a Jewish and messianic kingdom perspective.
2. When Christ was rejected, Jews failed their test of obedience. Thus, the church was really plan B and a parenthesis in history between Israel and the Messianic Kingdom.
3. There is a division and conflict placed between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church.
4. There is an antithesis between the law and the gospel.\textsuperscript{26}

It was this last pillar that really upset Reisinger who had, by
this time, wholeheartedly adopted the Puritan use of the moral law as a measure or standard to evaluate one's own progress in Christian duties and responsibilities. He never advocated justification or sanctification by obedience to that law. He never used the outward evidences of faith as the sole ground of assurance. But, he felt the Dispensationalist error was to interpret the law in contrast with grace, and the gospel period as grace in contrast with law. Thus, he believed this very antithesis led to a false view of the law. It was the setting up of antitheses instead of seeing the unity of the Bible that bothered him. He worried about this reinterpretation of scripture dividing Protestants down the road just as Charles Spurgeon had seen liberalism as a wedge and hindrance to the spread of the gospel. Ernie had become an heir of the Puritans and the particular Baptists of England. Geoffrey Thomas wrote when explaining Reisinger's position on the moral law, "The Puritans and their heirs did not contrast law and grace, as do the Dispensationalists, but they set law over against gospel, both under the canopy of grace, with grace working by the instrumentality both of the law and of the gospel. What, then, is the purpose of the law? It prepares us for Christ." 

Thomas goes on to explain three senses in which this preparation takes place:
1. "The moral law convicts us all of sin; of commands transgressed, of demands disregarded."
2. "The moral law reveals not only human failure and transgression, but the essential sinfulness and rebellion of the human heart."
3. "The moral law continues to reveal sin in the believer...and so drives him continually to seek renewed forgiveness and sanctifying power..."
Therefore, thoroughly convinced of all of this, Ernest Reisinger warned others of the consequences of dividing the people of God and setting up a conflict between the law and the gospel. He republished a letter by John Newton on the right use of the law as a standard for pleasing God. And he blamed evangelicals for abandoning that instruction and, thus, contributing to the moral decline in America. Immorality, loss of assurance, and Antinomianism were dire consequences indeed. Deviation from the historic confessions such as 1689 Baptist Confession, the Westminster Confession, Heidelberg Confession was a very serious matter:

All honest Dispensationalists would agree that the Dispensational system of theology has a different view of the grace of God, the law of God, the church of God, the interpretation of the Word of God and the salvation of God. That is, its teachings are different from tested, respected, historic creeds and confessions...

The issue before us is not a few minor differences or disagreements between those who hold basically the same position.

It is not just a difference in eschatology. It is the whole system of theology that touches every major doctrine of Christianity. What is at stake is the saving gospel of Jesus Christ and the sinner's assurance that he is living according to God's plan for history.

This plain speaking carpenter, construction worker, and astute businessman was not willing to fudge the issue or fail to warn others. He came to believe Dispensationalism was a grave error with stinking consequences and said so! If Ernie were alive today, I think he would tell you to find out the roots of your Bible teachers--whether they were out of the Reformed tradition, or speaking like a Calvinist while approaching scripture like a Dispensationalist. However, he never used this as a hobby horse
with me, always riding it. Leading me into the Reformed faith and authentic Christian experiences was much more important to him than exposing an error I knew little about.

Have you learned the difference between being just difficult and argumentative versus being unafraid to lead by pointing out dangers ahead? Ernie hated divisions among churches and individuals who loved the scripture; he was by nature congenial and charitable without being exclusionary. But, he never believed identifying what a person believed was being unloving. He was more concerned about protecting the flock. Ernie's changes from an Arminian Dispensationalist to a modern day Puritan cost him a lot. Friends broke away; his ministry took a different route. He loved to fish and play golf. He could have retired in his fifties and done just that.

**REFORMER UNDER TRIAL**

Bone fishing in Islamorada, Florida, and retirement was a goal after his pastorate in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Yet, he still was a church-centered reformer. And now he was an ordained minister. He was able to fish a lot during 1971-73 as he served as pastor in First Baptist Church in the Florida Keys. His friend, R. T. Kendall, showed him the Calvinistic roots of the Southern Baptists resulting in Ernie's accepting a call to North Pompano Baptist Church from 1977-86. Perhaps he remembered his own early Christian days in that Southern Baptist Church in Maryland. His role as reformer in North Pompano caused much work, tears, and prayers. II Timothy 2:24-26 became his motto: "But, a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they
may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." He remarked, "The people were doctrinally illiterate, and by the time I got there, the superficial superstructure that remained was falling apart."34

Jane used to feel sorry for him as he left the house before six each morning! The church was in a sad state financially, structurally, and spiritually. Out of 900 members on the roll, only twelve to fifteen showed up for a mid-week prayer meeting. No one even knew 550 of the members.35 But, the Reformer had a plan.

Analyze; Plan; Execute. Ernie applied his business skills to each defunct area--doctrine as well as the church's superstructure. Then he clung to God's sovereignty to change hearts and open understandings: "Oh, how I thank God for the 'but's' in the Bible. We were by nature children of wrath; but God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:4)."36 He returned to 1 and 2 Timothy reading and rereading them during the dark times. Striving not to be quarrelsome and praying for patience, he began to work his plan. His construction experience had taught him the importance of a good foundation, so now he laid a solid doctrinal foundation. A "School of Deacons" studied the London Baptist Confession of 1689, the confession adopted by Grace Baptist in Carlisle in the 1950's. In conjunction, he preached twenty-seven sermons relying on Martyn Lloyd-Jones' *Sermon on the Mount.*37 Ernie's wide reading stood him in good stead during this reforming attempt and he was blessed by this tie binding him to experimental Calvinism.

It was no wonder to Ernie that things were falling apart. "Christian experience is the influence of sound biblical doctrine
Because he was already blessed by this tie with the other men in this book, he did not lay a *theoretical* doctrinal base, but sought to apply those principles to the everyday lifestyles and thinking of his congregation. All this was done with a reliance on the Holy Spirit to bring it home to each individual. But, Ernie's conviction here is crucial and illustrates a main point of this book: Without a strong doctrinal base warmly and affectionately applied by the preacher and the Spirit to the mind, affections, and will, nothing very lasting results from attempts to rebuild or reform a church. Matthew Henry, John Newton, William Jay, Charles Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Roger Ellsworth all worked from this same premise.

This blending of doctrine with application and reliance on the Holy Spirit connects them with one another providing a useful road map for us. Preaching and teaching aimed at promoting real Christian experiences of the heart and mind is the essence of reformation and church building. Simply agreeing with what the Bible teaches is one experience. Changing your thinking and behavior is another. Being comforted by God's providence is another. Being humbled by a glimpse of His power and holiness is another. As the congregation began to experience these kind of things, debt and organizational difficulties could be dealt with more easily. It was very much like what happened under Martyn Lloyd-Jones' leadership in Sandfields, Wales, in the 1930's.

I remember my own such experiences as I sat under Ernie's preaching and teaching in the early 1980's. My heart was unexplainably warmed; I began to praise God more and to rejoice in my salvation. And what wonderful times they were. It was revival; I just did not know it then. But, when that style of preaching was lost for me, I was tossed back on my own. I fled to
the writings of these seven men. But, it was harder doing it on my own. Are you on your own? Support this kind of preaching when you hear it. It need not be entertaining or great rhetoric to warm the heart and point you to Christ.

Teach this way yourself. We are all teachers in our families. Do you teach your children isolated Bible stories without tying them to doctrinal principles like the sovereignty of God or perseverance of the saints? Do you remember to apply principles to your teen's everyday struggles or forget to plead with the Spirit to open their understanding and to convict them of their sin?

While pastor at North Pompano Baptist Church, Ernest Reisinger was developing his writing and publishing skills. He was serving on two Boards (Banner of Truth and the den Dulk Foundation) and writing a weekly newsletter, The Good News, pamphlets such as What Should We Think of 'The Carnal Christian'? and The Nature of Saving Faith and a book, Today's Evangelism during this time. He was sixty-three in 1982. Eventually, more than 1600 Good News were mailed out weekly. Naturally, a book table was going strong. And the church began the Boyce Project, republishing and distributing Dr. James P. Boyce's Abstract of Systematic Theology to graduates of the six Southern Baptist seminaries. Ernie made trips to the Southern Baptist Seminaries giving away free copies, meeting Tom Nettles in Ft. Worth, Texas, in the Spring of 1977. This relationship led to the organization of the Founders Conferences, with Ernie serving as chairman of the oversight committee for the next ten years. These conferences were all about experiential Calvinism. Balancing doctrine and devotion was stated in their purpose. The first conference was held in August, 1983. Ernie was sixty-four. His deacon board began to be concerned for his health and directed him to slow down!
church mortgage was paid off and a mission church started in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. The Reformer seem to have pulled it off! Was this to be an enduring work like his leadership at Grace Baptist in Carlisle?

Following the directions of his deacons to slow down, Ernie quit making weekly trips to Palm Beach Gardens to preach and lead the new mission church. The Mission began to unravel and finally dissolved in the Fall of 1983. That was a very sad day. But, that controversy infected the mother church, and North Pompano split when an associate pastor placed his independent Baptist loyalties ahead of Ernie's desires to influence the Southern Baptists. "It was a painful division--one from which the church never recovered, even to this day. I still cannot understand or explain why this young man willingly fostered division and controversy when he knew going in that he was being called by a Southern Baptist Church to minister in a Southern Baptist Church." I believe Martyn Lloyd-Jones would have looked at this as a secondary issue not worthy of splitting a church. "There are many nights I have only the pillow of God's sovereignty to rest my head on," Ernie would say. And, comforting himself with the doctrines of providence, sovereignty, and Romans 8:28, Ernie retired again and moved to Cape Coral, Florida, in 1986.

My husband, John, and I were involved in the Mission and experienced first-hand the influence of Reformed Baptist independents and Ernie's associate pastor on several of the Palm Beach County Mission leaders, resulting, in this case, in a hard-handed leadership style. Their lack of gentleness led to irreparable controversy. (At the time, we could not put our finger on what it was but now we know. They were not warm-hearted Calvinists. That put them world's apart from Ernie's style. The other pastors in this book would have been very unhappy with their
methods of shepherding the local church.) We felt others had poked their noses into business that was not theirs.\footnote{41} We, too, needed that pillow at night! As it turned out, learning to comfort ourselves with the doctrines of providence and sovereignty was good practice, and Ernie went on to expand his ministry to Southern Baptists and hone his writing skills. But, it was a sad and consequential circumstance. Twenty-six years later there is still no viable Reformed Southern Baptist work in northern Palm Beach County, Florida.

**THE REFORMER AS AN AUTHOR**

Continuing to serve on Banner and den Dulk Foundation Boards of Trustees, Ernie soon came out of retirement again. (It is important to note here that Ernie considered his work for Banner of Truth Trust as one of the "most cherished Christian services that I have experienced." He served on the Board of Trustees until his death. He was elected President of the den Dulk Foundation Board of Trustees in 1996) Now, at age sixty-seven, he agreed to be the interim pastor for Grace Baptist Church, Cape Coral, Florida. "It was more like a religious social club with a lot of very nice congenial people but without a clue as to what a Baptist Church was meant to be," Ernie later wrote.\footnote{41} But, Reisinger began again--giving away books, building doctrinal foundations, introducing the historic Christianity he loved, praying for the Holy Spirit to apply that doctrine to Christian experience. He could have played golf or gone fishing. There was no hard-handed leadership here but neither did he back away from truth and its application. He was back preaching and teaching to promote spiritual experiences including conversions.

He had met Tom Ascol at a prayer meeting and formation of Founders Conference in Eulass, Texas, in November, 1982, when he
was busy with North Pompano, the Boyce Project, and the Mission and mentoring my husband and I. Now, in June, 1986, Tom accepted the pastorate, set up a book table, and Ernie retired again, only to come back as an unpaid associate pastor in June, 1987. Now he could focus more on his third career of writing. Together they worked with the Board of the Founders Conference to call Southern Baptists back to their warm-hearted Calvinistic roots. Ernie continued to chair the Board while serving with Tom as Associate Editor of the *Founders Journal*. Ernie wrote regularly for the *Founders Journal* and promoted the use of literature, encouraging Fred Huebner to start the Cumberland Valley Book Service and working with Lloyd Sprinkle of Sprinkle Publications and L. R. Shelton, Jr. of Chapel Library to distribute and reprint books. He wrote the preface for the republication of *Morning Exercises* by William Jay. He and Jane continued their worldwide book ministry geared primarily to ministers, but generous to others as well. In 1990, they mailed out more than 10,000 books and pamphlets. The Reisingers and the Spurgeons had a lot in common.

He was becoming more and more a writer when in February, 1990, he lost all sight in his left eye. We all prayed he would not lose the right one. He needed that pillow of God's sovereignty again! He had to practice what he preached and apply the Doctrines of Grace as a comfort and encouragement during these difficulties common to the aging process. He needed those spiritual experiences he had promoted in others. He returned again to *Pilgrim's Progress* and Bunyan's picture of Hill Difficulty as he turned seventy-two.

In spite of growing health difficulties for he and Jane, Ernie refined his writing skills. God gave him the continued use of his right eye. He never claimed to be an accomplished writer but thought of
himself as "a gatherer of other's flowers." That may be true, but what he brought to his little table out by his South Florida pool was a sharp mind. He still knew how to ask the right questions and to lay out the answers simply. In 1991, the *Founders Journal* was begun as a quarterly publication growing out of the Founders Conference. Ernie had laid the foundation for this conference in 1983 (My, how he loved foundations!). Now the *Founders Journal* was to extend the work of the conference to call Southern Baptists back to their EXPERIMENTAL Calvinist roots. (There is John Calvin's word choice again.) You can hear Reisinger's influence in their stated purpose: "The purpose is to be a balanced conference in respect to doctrine and devotion expressed in the Doctrines of Grace and their experimental application to the local church, particularly in the areas of worship and witness." (emphasis mine) The Founders Conferences were to be blessed by warm-hearted Calvinism. Even though Ernie could no longer attend the conferences after 1992, his letters greeted the attendees each year, he still served on the governing Board, and the *Founders Journal* published his thoughts worked out on that patio. In 1996, Founders Press would expand his influence by publishing some of his writings.

**THE MASTER BUILDER LAYS STRONG FOUNDATIONS**

Ernie, the carpenter turned contractor, was busy laying foundations again. His first five articles for the *Founders Journal* simply laid out the main theme of this book and the tie that bound him to previous generations. He used the word "experimental," like Calvin, to mean experiencing the reality of doctrinal truth in everyday life.

**RELIANCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT**

In Issue 2, he defined being filled with the Spirit as a day to
day reliance on the Holy Spirit, not a second work of grace. Instead, it was power for gospel work--power to witness, worship, obey, experience comfort, humility, repentance, etc. His teaching of the Holy Spirit's important role was his first foundation for the young men being drawn into the Doctrines of Grace. His doctrine of the Holy Spirit undergirted his whole approach to doctrinal application, Christian liberty and usefulness. He expressed it often, signing his correspondence with "Sincerely yours in Christ's service according to my light and power." That summed it up. He wanted these young pastors and laymen coming into the Doctrines of Grace and their Southern Baptist Calvinistic roots to rely on the Spirit for enabling and transforming power in themselves and those they taught. This was the ground for his hope that making reformation and revival work in the Southern Baptist Convention of churches was possible and encouraging and, hopefully, enduring.

Ernie did not forget women in this either. He encouraged wives of pastors and laymen to attend the Founders Conferences and to read the *Founders Journal* in the desire that they, too, might experience these truths as well. For instance, he taught me by example and by encouraging comments to look to the Holy Spirit to deal with my children and younger women. I learned to apply this to their Christian liberty as well. He looked to the Spirit to make dead men walk and dry bones live. "Only God can make a crooked stick straight," was one of his favorite sayings.

**THE MEANING OF EXPERIMENTAL APPLICATION**

Next, he explained "experimental application." In "Doctrine and Devotion, Part 1 and 2," he explains that "Christian experience is the influence of sound biblical doctrine applied to the mind, affections and will by the Holy Spirit." He urged the study and
preaching of the Doctrines of Grace and the building of a personal devotional house. It does not take much—just a quiet time and a Bible! But, his point was that doctrine espoused in isolation is like dry bones laying in a field. They need the Holy Spirit to bring them life and warmth. And your responsibility was to maintain your own devotions. Doctrine and devotion.

Of course, experimental application did not mean an experiment! It meant to experience reality in your spiritual life. The Spirit would apply doctrine to your heart—bringing comfort from Providence; to your mind—bring wonder at limited atonement and election; you would ask: Why me? You would learn to live a life of gratitude for what God was doing in and for you. The Spirit would use your devotional habits to apply those five Calvinistic doctrines, as well as the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, to your will—changing attitudes, behaviors, life directions. But, omit building and maintaining that devotional house and God's sovereignty would overshadow your responsibility. You would lose your balance and fall into a ditch as John Bunyan pictured. You might presume on your own ability or position; you might despair about your sinfulness or that one big sin. You would start to separate what God had joined together and instead, of humble, contrite attitudes you might exert your authority with a heavy hand or think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. He wanted the Founders Ministries to be blessed and bound together by this tie and the young pastors coming into the Doctrines of Grace to promote these experiences through their teaching and preaching.

Then, in laying this foundation for the Founders, he applied this theme of experimental application to the family and witnessing. "The means of evangelism are teaching the Holy Scriptures with patience and prayer." You must "be" before you can "do." Again,
he relied on the Holy Spirit to "make one a witness (being). The Spirit empowers one to witness (doing)." The narrow path included, in Ernie's mind, sound doctrinal understanding used by the Holy Spirit to change the way a person thinks, what he loves, and what he does, culminating in how he lives and relates to others. In his mind, all of this was foundational to how the Founders called Southern Baptists back to their roots.

**DISPENSATIONALISM IS NOT SOUTHERN BAPTIST**

Ernie was not as interested in establishing his reputation as a writer as in setting Southern Baptists to thinking. He knew that young pastors attending the conferences were reading his articles and, thus, his ideas would affect their preaching. After laying this foundation of experiential application, Reisinger wrote thirteen sequential articles exposing Dispensationalism as the root of the non-lordship controversy.

He wanted this foundation to include confessional Christianity and the Doctrines of Grace, and since he believed good leadership required warning of trouble, he was straightforward in showing how Dispensationalism's interpretation of scripture affected every major doctrine. He did not mince words. "The twisted theological system of dispensationalism,"... "the havoc dispensationalism has caused in American Christianity." He warned, "The Lordship issue will never be solved in addressing it by itself because it is inseparably connected to a theology system that cannot be divided..." Throughout 1992, 1993, and 1994, he hammered at this same theme. Remember, he spoke from personal experience; he spent ten years in a Scolfield Bible! Now, he laid out a history of Dispensationalism calling it a frontal attack on covenant theology and the unity of the Old and New Testaments. He accused it of
having different views of grace, law, repentance, church, justification, sanctification which led directly to this heresy of the doctrine of salvation, the non-lordship view, a new hat for Antinomianism. Ernie believed Dispensationalism linked with Arminianism would inevitably lead to Antinomianism and he saw that in the non-lordship teachers. He was calling Southern Baptists back to their Calvinistic roots. He warned them, Don't be deceived! You've fallen away from teaching the truth! It will have grave consequences for your people!! "What good is an inerrant Bible if you don't know what it means?"

From the winter of 1993 through 1994 in article after article, he made his case: a systematic theology is necessary and reasonable. It shows relationships and brings harmony and balance to the whole Bible. The Doctrines of Grace taught by Southern Baptist founders established that harmony and contiguity between the Testaments whereas Dispensationalism divided what God had intended to be together. Non-Lordship Dispensationalists divided faith and repentance confusing both justification and sanctification. "True repentance is to repent as bitterly for sin as if you know it should damn you, but to rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all."

He warned against a redefining of regeneration. He called for a rebirth of man's nature resulting in "right thinking, right feeling, and right acting." Authentic Christian experience was his goal. Thinking and defining in terms of principles like Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Reisinger saw regeneration as a transforming principle--a principle planted in the soul by the Holy Spirit. It was not a result of faith or another "I" who can choose to be holy or not. He pleaded from the writings of James P. Boyce and Dagg, calling Southern Baptists to note from where they had fallen. He urged they read John Owen, Thomas Adams, Robert McCheyne, Spurgeon, John Newton, the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.
Then he showed how sanctification was warped by Dispensationalists. In four articles in 1994, this was his theme: Dispensational rules of interpretation placed them out of step with historical Christianity, and Southern Baptist history in particular; wrong on sanctification as well as justification. The Carnal Christian was just the Second Blessing error in new dress. He came right back to his foundational writing on the Holy Spirit and experimental application. "Any teaching that sends Christians on a quest for a kind of holiness that is obtained by some single, religious, crisis experience rather than by daily submission to the will of God is both erroneous and dangerous." He hated "two classes of Christians" made popular by Campus Crusade For Christ booklets and called for recognition of spurious believers. So he called for new evangelism methods and preaching from Southern Baptist pulpits that summon "men not to rest without biblical evidence that they are born of God." When Reisinger finished these thirteen articles in 1994, no one could be confused about his serious convictions that Dispensationalism was wrong and was adopted by those Southern Baptists who turned from the Doctrines of Grace taught and loved by James Boyce, John Broadus, and Southern Seminary professors. Do not stay there was his plea. Return to historic Reformed interpretations! All of this came from his view of leadership's responsibility to warn of dangers through analyzing the times correctly. Martyn Lloyd-Jones would have been proud of him. (You can read these articles at www.founders.org).

**STRENGTHENING PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS**

In addition to these thirteen articles, Ernest Reisinger published *Lord and Christ* in 1994, containing many of the ideas already published about Dispensationalism. *God's Will, Man's Will and Free*
Will came out in 1995, and The Church’s Greatest Need by Chapel Library (included at the end of this chapter). He continued writing articles for the Founders Journal through 2000 on salvation, doctrinal preaching, John Bunyan, and hyper-Calvinism. His study of Dispensationalism’s twisting of doctrinal meanings led to his biggest concern: the wrong application of the moral law. In 1999, writing with only one eye left but his mind still clear, he published, Whatever Happened to the Ten Commandments? by Banner of Truth Trust. Ernie was now turning 80 and had some serious difficulties requiring care for Mima Jane who suffered with paralysis from an "accidental" stoke in 1996. (Now he had another tie with William Jay whose wife needed his care for many years.) He had to lean on the Holy Spirit each day for encouragement and perseverance and patience. He must have been thankful he was free from any expectation of a second work of grace enabling him to rise above it all in some religious mysticism. Instead, he kept on learning and working and relying on God as he hiked Hill Difficulty. He self-published his Autobiography and worked with Geoffrey Thomas on his biography, put out by Banner of Truth Trust in 2002. He partnered with a lawyer, Matthew Allen, writing A Quiet Revolution and Beyond Five Points and Worship -- books aimed at strengthening pastors and church leaders in reforming efforts. Ernie remained a defender of the Doctrines of Grace; he was still spunky at 80.

In Founders Journal articles from 1995-1998, his aim was also to anticipate what was needed for reformation at the local church level. Ernie encouraged pastors to accommodate to indifferent cultural traditions without violating their own consciences. Yet, after knocking Dispensationalism out, he now exposed the wrongs of the invitational system. He warned that many would equate coming forward to coming to Christ no matter how the invitation was phrased. He first explained "coming to Christ" as,
... used to express the act of the soul. Coming to Christ includes leaving all self-righteousness and sin, and receiving His righteousness to be our righteousness and His blood to be our covering--our atonement.

Coming to Christ embraces repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Coming to Christ is the first effect of regeneration."\(^{59}\)

He then went on to confront the use of Mark 1:17 and Matt. 10:32-33 to justify an invitation at the end of a service and to explain the difference between "may" and "can" showing man's inability to come. He anticipated the objections that would arise in a Southern Baptist congregation and armed his men with information to respond. He wanted spiritual experiences to be true ones.

Reisinger also urged them to be direct and bold in their preaching. But, he again returned to his major distinctive: that preaching should always be doctrinal AND experiential. He knew they would hear the cry of "boring" about doctrinal preaching. "Doctrinal preaching should not be cold theological lectures or dogmatic polemic arguments. Doctrine should always be clearly defined and established and developed in its practical and experimental context. Therefore, all Christian practice must be based on correct doctrines and rooted in Christian principles in order to be that kind which accompanies salvation."\(^{60}\) We have heard this before, have we not? Henry, Newton, Jay, Spurgeon, and Lloyd-Jones would, at least, nod in agreement if not shout "Amen!" And he did not want them to forget the capacities of their congregations: "Sound doctrinal preaching must always be practical and experimental, applied to the necessity and capacities of the hearers."\(^{61}\) "I have too much respect for their anatomy to do that!" he used to say about long, tedious sermons. He wanted everyone to get to the point--no dallying around. He used J. C. Ryle and George Whitefield as models of directness. He wanted church
leadership to be diligent, plain, faithfully expository, wise, zealous, and sincere. There would be no revival led by closet Calvinists.

But, to these emerging Baptist Calvinists, he drew a metaphor from John Bunyan. Neither should they be Wild-head, Inconsiderate, or Know-it-all. "How do we get along with those who are Christians yet hold some different views...?" Watch your own heart. Do not lash out with words or doctrine. Don't lose your head! But, do not try to promote a false unity based on friendly getting along instead of doctrine. Promote truth and rest in God's sovereignty and the Holy Spirit's operation to bless the truth and leave it to the other's conscience. But you do not have to ever violate your own conscience. "Because we have good feelings towards them and even thank God for what He is doing through them does not mean we can join them in all they do or teach...This is not true love but false unity. We must carefully, humbly and with great love and understanding point out why we cannot join them or cooperate with them." Wild-head, Inconsiderate, and Know-it-all would never bring revival or reformation.

ARMOR FOR BATTLE

Anticipating the objections from Baptists long fed on Arminian Dispensationalism, Ernie provided some armor and weapons for those pastors and teachers introducing the Doctrines of Grace. What about our free will? His armor was the examination of the powerlessness of the will to obey God, showing this to be the underlying question of the Reformation. Whether man's will can freely obey God was related to depravity, election, and effectual calling. He heard a cry from Southern Baptist congregations, "We've been freed from the law; we're under grace and Christ's law of love." There was the Dispensational interpretation
again--separating the Old and New Testaments. So he showed the vital, eternal connection between law and love. "What God has joined together, let no man pull asunder!" Teach your people they are not truly loving outside of the moral law. "As a principle of action, law directs us in the true expression of love....That is the proper connection between law and love." 65 Then he came back to pointing out the wrong biblical interpretation which separates the Old and New Testaments. He used an analogy to make his point. Dividing the Old and New Testaments made about as much sense as separating the Father from the Son! "No doctrine concerning Scripture is of more importance to the Bible student than that which affirms its unity and harmony." 66 He was still warning everyone of the implications of Dispensationalism.

In one of his last articles in the Journal, Ernie responds to the Arminian objection that Calvinism kills evangelism. His life was a living rebuttal! He gave answers for four objections commonly made by Southern Baptists: "We are not followers of Calvin, but of the doctrinal principles he systematized. We do not baptize babies or kill heretics. Our foundation is not predestination but God's sovereignty in all things--even salvation." His response to them was: "Lots of Southern Baptists in positions of influence and power have preached these doctrines. Get to know them. We are not against missions." 67 Ernie agreed with Martyn Lloyd-Jones that good leadership required anticipating problems and addressing them before they caused serious problems and harmed serious Christians. He knew subscribers to the Founders Journal looked for guidance and encouragement and he took his responsibility seriously. 68 He was training his readers to be leaders.

So we should not be surprised Ernie's last published article was to those men who had been reading his works since 1982. "The Kind of Man God Uses In Reformation" was at the press when he died. Defining revival as a theologically-driven,
conscience-heightening, heart-expanding, church-altering, culture-changing movement of God's Spirit, he put the responsibility (from man's point of view) for revival flat on those pastors. Then he outlined characteristics of "revival men." They are: in dead earnest, determined to succeed, men of biblical faith, men of constant labor; men of patience, strong doctrine, boldness and determination, men of prayer, of spiritual sobriety (solemn deportment and deep spirituality). It was not that they were super-Christians, living on a higher spiritual plane, no longer affected by sin. But, they would fight against their own laziness, looseness, levity, and lethargy and count the cost of revival. It would cost them money, prestige, being misunderstood, but they would enjoy the joy of a conscience void of offence before God and man. These were last words from an old warrior.

Early one morning while it was still dark, Ernie died without any warning. His family could not go with him to the hospital; his son, Don, was out of town and Barb could not leave Jane home alone. It was May 30, 2004. He was 84. (William Jay also died at 84.) He had planned his funeral already. He chose the last song that Spurgeon sang before his death in Menton, The Sands of Time Are Sinking based on Samuel Rutherford's letters applying the Doctrines of Grace to the experiences of members of his congregation in 1660's. Ernie remained a warm-hearted Calvinist preacher to the end. His wife, Jane, his helper through all of this, lived almost two years longer under the care of her son, Don, and his wife, Barbara.

Remember, Ernie was primarily interested in men in the ministry, but he never forgot the people in the pew. So he hoped lay men and women would apply these strengths to their own lives and gifts as well. He could be straight-forward, brisk (after all he
was a Pennsylvania German, not a Georgia politician), and in a hurry. But, he always knew what questions to ask. Are you building your devotional house? Searching for biblical principles? Happily working out the doctrines? Pleading with the Holy Spirit to apply them to your heart and everyday life? Relying on the Holy Spirit to work in your children's lives? Preparing yourself for revival? Strength is not only for men. Reformation is not gender specific.

He might also probe whether you take your leadership seriously and anticipate problems before they harm others. Have you ignored the way some with roots in Dispensationalism handle the interpretation of scripture differently from historic Reformed Protestants? Have we so lost our freedom of speech that to identify how someone differs in their interpretation of scripture is to be labeled divisive and mean-spirited and uncooperative? Are you sitting by without protest as others take historic Reformed leaders and claim them as their own when their own roots are not in that tradition nor do they approach the scriptures from the same perspective? Can you anticipate objections to Calvinism and voice a defense without being a hot-head or a meddler in others' affairs? Or are you a closet Reformed historic Protestant, enjoying it all in your study but not distinguishing between riding a hobby horse and plainly applying the meaning of the passage within its whole context? Have you built a devotional house with strong doctrinal foundations so your spiritual experiences are true ones? Is your character indicating God might use you in revival and reformation?

This old-fashioned experiential preacher with an infectious grin would not hesitate to ask you such piercing questions.

QUOTES FROM ERNEST REISINGER
• "Only God can make a crooked stick straight."
• "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."
• "Look before you jump."
• "He's one brick short of a full load!"
• "There's one book missing from that shelf."
• "And I want to say at the outset, I'm concerned about boys and girls in this assembly who need to be saved. I don't know where people get this idea that children can't be saved. If I didn't believe children could be saved, I'd stop preaching!..I want to be simple and I want you to understand what I'm saying this morning."
• "As we come tonight, we would pray that you would encourage us to do your work in earth and whatever the torments are, we pray thee, our Father, give us the comfort and the encouragement of the great truth that you did make the heaven and the earth. You made us. You are sovereign over the kings of the earth. Power does not rise or reside in Moscow or Washington. All power is thine. Thine is the power, Thine is the glory, and so we pray Thee, give us encouragement as your people. For those here who have never felt that power, that inward power, those who know nothing about that inward pressure to do your will, Lord, those who are swallowed up this very night by the pressure of the world because they don't have any pressure within...We pray Thee that you'd preserve them by thy mighty power and accompany them with restlessness until they rest in Jesus Christ. Hear our prayer, Father. Thank you for this wonderful day. Bless and sanctify all of us, all of His blessings to all of us this day. Bless our little children as they go off to school tomorrow, some to play, some to work. Be with our boys in the armed services far away from us. Be with our men in school. Hear our prayers for all of our family, our church family, the sick and the needy. Be with them and manifest your sovereign power and comfort in their lives. We ask it in thy name's sake, Amen."
"I felt this morning I wanted to just drop you a few lines telling you how greatly God has used you in my own life and in the lives of many, many men in this country. Time would not permit me to recount the number of testimonies of preachers as to the great help they have received from your writings..."\(^3\) (letter to Martyn Lloyd-Jones, May 20, 1968)

"The 'heart-work' that was central to Puritan piety--self-examination, self-condemnation, self-motivation, self-dedication, and the continual focusing of faith, hope, and love on the Lord Jesus Christ--had nothing morbid or self-absorbed about it; it was simply the inner reality of disciplined devotion. The Puritans never tired of urging cheerfulness and joy--set in a frame of faith, humility, watchfulness, and obedience ('duties')--the essence of the true Christian life."\(^4\) (italics mine)

"The Puritans brought sound doctrine and genuine experience together better than any body of Christians in the history of the Christian Church."\(^5\) (italics mine)

"Not only am I indebted to my brother, John, for introducing me to that exalted system of Pauline Theology referred to by the theologians as Calvinism, but also for giving me my first Banner book. This was a wonderful providence. Banner books have been the principal source of my theological and spiritual instruction and understanding. The Banner books have insisted on the inseparable relationship between right doctrine and right living. These books taught me that the objective and subjective dimensions of the Christian faith must never be separated and indeed rightly, cannot be separated."\(^6\) (italics mine)

"Jack, as I survey all that you have done and are doing for Christ and His Kingdom a passage that has come to my mind on several occasions is the passage in Matthew 6 where our Lord talks about 'doing in secret.' If I have ever met one person, in my life, who operates on this principle, I believe you are that man. May the Lord
give you great joy inwardly and rich reward and peace for that secret service performed unto Him."\(^7\) (letter in 1969 to D. W. J. Cullum, founder of Banner of Truth Trust, publishers)

• "Men, we have gotten to this point because of many good faithful co-workers. I am and always have been concerned about every man doing a good job, I am looking for a dollar's worth of work for a dollar's worth of pay. I am also, yes, more concerned about your relationship to the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Lord, that I wish to take this opportunity to invite you to stop in my office anytime (company time) to talk about these four questions."\(^8\) (Note from the boss, Reisinger Brothers, Inc.,)

**EXAMPLES FROM HIS WRITINGS**

**Will Calvinism Kill Evangelism?**

The Founders Journal, Issue 40, Spring, 2000

Ernest C. Reisinger

The answer to the question is yes and no. Yes, it will kill unbiblical man-centered evangelism and some of the carnal unbiblical methods employed in man-centered evangelism.

No, it will not kill God-centered evangelism where biblical methods are employed in the great work of carrying out our Lord's clearest command.

Before discussing evangelism and Calvinism, it may be wise and helpful to make a few general comments in respect to some misconceptions about Calvinism. The subject is one that immediately arouses diverse feelings. There are bigots both for Calvinism and against Calvinism. The subject is also one that poses some vitally important questions that are very relevant at the present time in the SBC. I hear many sincere voices of inquiry, especially among seminary students and young pastors.

There is no doubt that the founders and faculty of our first seminary as well as the majority of early Southern Baptist ministers, were committed, experiential Calvinists. Calvinists are not followers of John Calvin. The root principles of the two great systems of theology are to be found embedded either in Calvinism or in Arminianism. However, these systems were in existence eleven hundred years before John Calvin was born. Then, these two systems were called Augustinianism and Pelagianism, so named after the two men of the fifth century who defined them. Yes, we call it Calvinism.
We could, with justice, call it Augustinianism which would not mean we are following Augustine into the Roman Catholic Church but rather that we are following the principles of theology that Augustine taught. Indeed, John A. Broadus, a great Southern Baptist of the last century, was right when he said that this system goes back to the Apostle Paul. Hence, Broadus called Calvinism "that exalted system of Pauline truth."

John Calvin may well have been the man who first formulated these doctrinal principles into a formal system, but as I have said, the doctrinal principles did not originate with John Calvin or Augustine but with the apostle Paul. Therefore, Calvinists are not followers of John Calvin, but rather, we hold to the doctrinal principles that he formulated into a system of Christian doctrine. (The same thing is true of the Apostles' Creed. The Apostles did not write the Apostles' Creed; the biblical truths of the creed were systematized many years after the Apostles were gone to their reward.) Therefore, it is a serious mistake to say or imply that we are followers of John Calvin. We do not baptize infants or have anything to do with burning heretics. We can safely say Pelagianism is the ancestor of Arminianism, so Paulinism and Augustinianism are the ancestors of Calvinism.

The Doctrinal Foundation Upon Which Calvinism Rests Is Not Predestination. Moreover, the foundation principle upon which the whole doctrinal system of Calvinism rests is not predestination. No, the primary teaching of Calvinism rests on a much broader basis and one which, it is not too much to say, touches the very nature and character of God. The one rock upon which Calvinism builds is that of the absolute and unlimited sovereignty of God. It is, indeed, this doctrine of divine sovereignty that is held and emphasized by Calvinism, and which forms the source from which every other principle of Calvinistic teaching is founded.

It is important that we understand that Calvinism does not center primarily on its doctrine of predestination separately considered. Predestination is simply the outworking or application of God's divine sovereignty to salvation. Calvinism asserts that the sovereignty of God is supreme in salvation as in everything else.

Our Calvinist Baptist Heritage

In looking back to the rock from which we are hewn we cannot overlook some of our great Southern Baptist Convention fathers and leaders who were committed, articulate Calvinists.

Take Basil Manly, Sr. for example. One historian said of Manly that he played the part of a concertmaster in orchestrating the events that resulted in the call for a conservative convention of Baptists. Manly produced a strongly worded six-point resolution which led to the separation of Northern Baptists and Southern Baptists. This resolution was "passed standing and unanimously." Basil Manly was a Calvinist of the first order.

In one sermon entitled "Divine Efficiency Consistent with Human Activity," Manly told a group of ministers:

"Let us not then give up either the doctrine of human activity and
responsibility, or that of the divine sovereignty and posed to doubt, or
disbelieve, or explain away the other?” Manly continued:

The greatest reason . . . why the Christian family is
divided on one or the
other side rejecting one or the other of these great doctrines is that the
doctrine of dependence on the Divine being, throws us constantly into the
hands, and on the mercy of God. Proud man does not like it; [he] prefers to
look at the other side of the subject; becomes blind, in part, by gazing
at one view of the truth, alone; and forgets the Maker, in whom he
lives and moves and has his being.

Consider James P. Boyce, the principal founder of our first seminary
(Southern Baptist Theological Seminary). Long after Boyce's death, one of
his former students, Dr. David Ramsey, gave a Founders Day address on
January 11, 1924, entitled "James Petigru Boyce: God's Gentleman." A few
lines from Dr. Ramsey's address will tell the story that Boyce was a
committed Calvinist and that, at the same time, he loved the souls of men.

My contention is that no other theology than that of an overwhelming
and soul consuming love for men will account for James P. Boyce and his
career. This passionate love was the motif that directed his thinking in those
early conferences and in the preparation of those papers which led to the
establishment of the seminary. This purpose to help his fellow men ran
through all his plans, through his conversation, his writings and his
preaching and teaching as the scarlet thread that runs through every foot of
cable of the English Navy. This zeal for souls called out the finest of his being
as the morning sun causes the dew-laden flowers and plants to bend toward
the god of day.

His love for his fellow man was such that, after Boyce died, Rabbi Moses of
Louisville said about him,

Before I came to Louisville, I knew Christianity only in books,
and it was through such men as Boyce that I learned to know
it as a living force. In that man I learned not only to
comprehend, but to respect and reverence the spiritual power
called Christianity.

Boyce not only loved men, he loved God. Ramsey said, concerning this
point,

Let the thought embrace both the subjective and objective
love; man's love for God and God's love for man." Boyce's
close friend and fellow founder of the seminary, John A.
Broadus, expressed his own feelings about the theology of
Boyce which we call Calvinism: It was a great privilege to be
directed and upborne by such a teacher in studying that
exalted system of Pauline truth which is technically called
Calvinism, which compels an earnest student to profound
thinking, and when pursued with a combination of systematic
thought and fervent experience, makes him at home among
the most inspiring and ennobling views of God and the universe He has made.

Boyce's legacy to us and to our posterity is the biblical theology expressed in the Abstract of Systematic Theology, which is nothing other than his classroom teaching. It is pure Calvinism.

In defense of Boyce's Calvinism, William A. Mueller, author of A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said,

As a theologian, Dr. Boyce is not afraid to be found 'in the old paths.' He is conservative, and eminently scriptural. He treats with great fairness those whose views upon various points discussed, he declines to accept, yet in his own teaching is decidedly Calvinistic, after the model of 'the old divines.' Difficulties as connected with such doctrines as the federal headship of Adam, election and the atonement he aims to meet, not so as to silence the controversialist, but so as to help the honest inquirer.

Rev. E. E. Folk, in the Baptist Reflector commented on Boyce's abilities and fruits as a teacher of theology:

You had to know your systematic theology, or you could not recite it to Dr. Boyce. And though the young men were generally rank Arminians when they came to the seminary, few went through this course under him without being converted to his strong Calvinistic views.

Boyce and Manly were strong Calvinists. They were not alone. Their theology was no anomaly in early Southern Baptist life. W. B. Johnson, first President of the SBC, was a Calvinist. R. B. C. Howell, second President of the SBC, was a Calvinist. Richard Fuller, third President of the SBC, was a Calvinist. Charles Dutton Mallary, first recording secretary of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, was a Calvinist. So was B. H. Carroll, founder of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Patrick Hues Mell, President of the SBC for seventeen years, longer than any other man, was a polemic defender of Calvinism.

Mrs. D. B. Fitzgerald, a member of Mell's Antioch Church in Oglethorpe, Georgia and a resident in Mell's home for a number of years, recalls Mell's initial efforts at the church:

When first called to take charge of the church, Dr. Mell found it in a sad state of confusion. He said a number of members were drifting off into Arminianism. He loved the truth too well to blow hot and cold with the same breath. It was a Baptist church and it must have doctrines peculiar to that denomination preached to it. And with that boldness, clearness, and vigor of speech that marked him, he preached to them the doctrines of predestination, election, free-grace, etc. He said it was always his business to preach the truth as he found it in God's Word, and leave the matter there, feeling that God would take care of the results. (The Life of Patrick Hues Mell, p.. 59.)
I could go on and on giving names and biographical sketches of our Founding Fathers who were equally committed Calvinists and strong on evangelism, but I will just name one more. Dr. John A. Broadus, a great preacher and one of the founders of our mother seminary said,

The people who sneer at what is called Calvinism might as well sneer at Mont Blanc. We are not bound in the least to defend all of Calvin's opinions or actions, but I do not see how anyone who really understands the Greek of the Apostle Paul, or the Latin of Calvin or Turretin, can fail to see that these latter did but interpret and formulate substantially what the former teachers taught.

Let me summarize by pointing out five things that Calvinism is not.


2. Calvinism does not destroy the responsibility of man. Men are responsible for whatever light they have, be it conscience (Rom. 2:15), nature (Rom.1:19, 20), written law (Rom. 2:17-27), or the gospel (Mark 16:15, 16). Man's inability to do righteousness no more frees from responsibility than does Satan's inability to do righteousness.

3. Calvinism does not make God unjust. His blessing of a great number of unworthy sinners with salvation is no injustice to the rest of the unworthy sinners. If a governor pardons one convict, is it an injustice to the rest? (1 Thess. 5:9).

4. Calvinism does not discourage convicted sinners, but welcomes them to Christ. "Let him that is athirst come" (Rev. 17:17). The God who convicts is the God who saves. The God who saves is the God who has elected men unto salvation. He is the same God who invites.

5. Calvinism does not discourage prayer. To the contrary, it drives us to God, for He it is who alone can save. True prayer is at the Spirit's prompting; and thus will be in harmony with God's will (Rom. 8:16).

Calvinism is authentically, historically Baptist. Unlike the liberal movement, the Charismatic movement, the Dispensational or the Keswick movements, Calvinism is the only one that can claim to be endemic to our Baptist history, heritage, and teaching. Until this last century with its pragmatism, Southern Baptists and their progenitors have always been Calvinists. The present day resurgence of Calvinism is simply an effort to restore our theological past, which will have a profound effect on our evangelism.

What About Calvinism and Evangelism?

First, what is evangelism? Evangelism is the communication of a divinely inspired message that we call the gospel. It is a message that is definable in words, but must be communicated in word and power. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance..." (1 Thess. 1:5). That message begins with information and includes explanation, application and invitation.
The information is how God, our Creator and Judge, in mercy, made His Son a perfect, able and willing Savior of sinners. The invitation is God's summons to mankind to come to that Savior in faith and repentance, and find forgiveness, life and peace.

And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment (1 John 3:23). Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent (John 6:29).

One definition of evangelize is as follows: "To present Jesus Christ to sinful men, in order that they may come to put their trust in God, through Him to receive Him as their Savior and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His church."[1] You will notice that this definition includes the church. Our Lord gave the commission to the church.

Evangelism Must Have a Doctrinal Foundation

The doctrinal foundation for biblical evangelism is as important to the work of evangelism as the skeleton is to the human body. Doctrine gives unity and stability. It is the doctrinal foundation that produces the spiritual strength that enables evangelism to endure the storms of opposition, hardship and persecution that so often accompanies true evangelism and missions. Therefore, the church that neglects the true doctrinal foundation for biblical evangelism will soon find its efforts weakened and spurious conversions will be produced. The lack of a doctrinal foundation will work against unity and will invite error and instability in all evangelistic efforts. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of a sound biblical foundation for true God-centered evangelism.

Doctrine shapes our destiny, and we are presently reaping the fruits of unbiblical evangelism. The great apostle, instructing a young minister to do the work of an evangelist, tells him that doctrine is the first purpose of Scripture. 2 Tim. 3:16 "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for DOCTRINE." Evangelism without a doctrinal foundation is building on the sand (cf. Matt. 7:24-26). It is like cut flowers stuck in the ground without doctrinal roots; they will wither and die. Calvinists have a doctrinal foundation for evangelism.

The doctrinal foundation of God-centered evangelism guarantees its success. First, because God the Father has some chosen ones:

* John 1:18 "I know whom I have chosen"

* John 15:16 "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

* Eph. 1:4 "Even as He chose us in Him."

* 1 Thess. 2:13 "God chose you from the beginning unto salvation."

* John 6:37, 39, 44, 64, 65: "All that which the Father gives me shall come to me... this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he has given me I should lose nothing... No man can come to me except the
Father which sent me draw him..."
That sounds to me like a guarantee of success!

The second guarantee of success is found in the fact that God the Father gave his Son, the Great Shepherd, some sheep and the Great Shepherd made atonement for the sheep that the Father gave Him.

The atonement that we are considering is a planned atonement—the cross was not an accident. God planned it. He was not sleeping or caught off guard at the cross. He had an unchangeable, immutable plan, and it was being carried out. The apostle Peter preached this as part of his first message: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

The apostles not only preached it; they prayed it. Hear their prayer in Acts 4:27-29: "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done". God was the master of ceremonies at the cross.

Jesus also taught that God the Father had an unchangeable, immutable plan and power to execute it:

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day (John 6:38, 39).

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep (John 10: 11).

I know my sheep (John 10:14-15).

Jesus makes clear why some do not believe on Him. Have you ever wondered why some do not believe? Well, Jesus answers that question here:

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you (John 10:26).

He describes two characteristics of His sheep:

My sheep hear my voice [a disposition to know His will], and they follow me [a disposition to do His will] (John 10:27).

This truth, that the atonement was for the sheep, is underscored by our Lord's prayer found in John 17. Hear His prayer: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John 17:2). "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine" (John 17:9). "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).
This view of the extent of the atonement makes the cross a place of victory, because what the Father planned, the Son purchased, and these He prays for. This is consistent with that great declaration in that messianic prophesy of His coming: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11).

Jesus teaches the same thing in John 6:37: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me..." Not, maybe they will come, or, it would be nice if they came, or, if they decide they will come, but rather, "shall come." This, then, is an important element of the message of the cross, the message of evangelism. This means that Christ's death was not in vain, but rather, everyone for whom He savingly died, will come. It is interesting to note that when the angel announced His birth to Joseph, the angel was straight on this point: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Please note the text says, "save his people," not every single individual, but His people--the sheep.

God used the fact that He had some people, some sheep, to encourage the evangelizing of that wicked city of Corinth. The great apostle was afraid to go to Corinth, and God encouraged him by saying, "...be not afraid... for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9, 10).

1. His coming was for His people (Matt. 1:21): "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

2. His purchase on the Cross was for the sheep--His people (John 10:11, 14, 15): "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."

3. His prayer was for all that the Father gave Him (John 17:2, 9): "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him... I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."

Is this the message of the cross that you have heard? A Christ whose death is not in vain and will not fail to accomplish all that was intended? Or, have you heard the message of a poor, impotent, pathetic, and sometimes, effeminate Jesus who died just to make salvation possible and who is standing impotently by, waiting to see what these mighty, powerful sinners are going to do with Him?

This is not just a different emphasis. It is a different content of the message of evangelism. The biblical gospel is God-centered, God-honoring, and good to sinners. God-centered evangelism has a doctrinal foundation, and this

### A Lesson From Bunyan

#### On Truth's Friends and Foes

Ernest Reisinger

All true Christians are lovers of the truth. They desire to fellowship in the truth; they desire to be taught the truth and they want to be dispensers of the truth. The Bible tells us that men perish "because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10). Christians follow in a line of many men and women who sealed their testimony for truth with their blood.

It is my heart's desire to encourage everyone to seek diligently after truth and to defend it--to be valiant for truth and to seek to dispense it by life, lip and good sound literature. However, some dangers accompany all those who would be valiant for the truth.

The prophet Jeremiah faithfully reproved sin and threatened God's judgment for sin (Jer. 8-9). As he rejoiced neither at iniquity nor calamity, he bitterly lamented the people's sin and God's judgment, expressing great grief for the miseries of Judah and Jerusalem. He justified God in the greatness of the destruction brought upon them, and called on others to bewail the woeful cause of Judah and Jerusalem.

The great prophet showed the people the vanity and folly of trusting in their own strength, wisdom, privileges of their circumstances or anything but God alone. But the people were not "valiant for the truth" (Jer. 9:3). They were filthy adulterers; they were false, unfaithful to God and one another. They bent their tongues like their bows for lies, and their tongues were fitted for lying as a bow is bent for shooting arrows, turning as naturally to lying as a bow to the bowstring.

They did not defend God's truth, which was delivered to them by the prophets. They had no courage to stand by an honest cause which has truth on its side--if greatness and power be on the other side. Those who will be faithful to the truth must be valiant for it, undaunted by opposition. But the truth had fallen in the land, and the people could not lend a hand to help it up.

"And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for
truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment" (Isa. 59:1-15). Men will answer not only for their enmity in opposing truth but also for cowardice in defending it.

To point out the dangers that accompany the defense of truth, I refer to Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, a character from The Pilgrim's Progress, my favorite book next to the Bible. In John Bunyan's metaphor can be found some heart lessons.

Mr. Valiant-for-Truth was "born in Dark-land" and his mother and father are still there. Dark-land was on the same coast as the City of Destruction. Valiant found Dark-land unsuitable and unprofitable and thus he forsook it. He gave these reasons for leaving:

"We had one Mr. Tell-Truth come into our parts, and he told about what Christian had done. How he had left the City of Destruction to head for the Celestial City. That man so told the story of Christian and his travels that my heart fell into a burning haste to be gone after him, nor could my father and mother keep me, so, I got from them, and am come thus far on my way."

The great lesson which Bunyan would have us learn from his impressive character, Valiant-for-Truth, comes from the terrible fight Valiant had with three ruffians who attacked him all at once and almost put an end to him. Valiant--his name tells us he was a contender for the truth. He had the truth. The truth was put into his keeping. He was a custodian of the truth. He was bound to defend the truth. He was thrown into a life of controversy and knew all the terrible temptations which accompany such a life. One old saint said, "Temptations in a life of controversy are worse than the temptations of whoredom and sin."

Bunyan called the three enemies who attacked Valiant by these names: Wild-Head, Inconsiderate and Pragmatic. In his wisdom, John Bunyan is warning every defender of the truth, in religion or in other matters, of the besetting temptations to be wild-headed, inconsiderate, and officious, opinionated, dictatorial and intolerably arrogant.

Now, this bloody battle--and a bloody battle it was indeed--was not fought at the mouth of any dark lane in the midnight city. This terrible, bloody battle was fought in Valiant's own heart.

Bunyan's Valiant was not one of these smooth, double-tongued, calculating, supposed friends of the truth. He did not wait until he saw truth walking in silver slippers before he identified with it. He was not a church politician. No, no.

Let a man lay a finger on the truth or wag a tongue against the truth, and he would surely have to settle it with Valiant. His love for truth was a passion. The fierceness of his love for the truth frightened ordinary men, even when they were on his side. Valiant could have died for truth without a
But Valiant had to learn a hard and cruel lesson: Although he thought he was the best friend of truth, in reality at the same time he was a great enemy of the truth. He had to learn that although he meant to defend the truth he had indeed done it harm. The truth is often heard to say, "Save me from my friends." We have all seen examples of this and most of us have experienced it.

We have seen Wild-Head in operation many times. Sometimes with his pen in hand. Sometimes behind the pulpit. Sometimes in private conversations or debate. We have seen him rush at the character of some saint who was just not enlightened, whose understanding was not as good as his Christian experience. Will Wild-Head never learn that truth apart from the Spirit will not develop Christian character? Grace and truth must be together. Mercy and truth must be together as they are in Jesus.

In this awful, confused and divided Church today we need great care, wisdom and charity in applying the truth as we have come to see and love it. I mean applying it as to time, manner and method.

What is one safeguard at this point? Not putting asunder what God has joined together. Mercy and truth, Psalm 85:10, 86:15, 89:14; Proverbs 14:22, 16:6, 20:28. Kindness and truth, and truth and love, Ephesians 4:15--"speak the truth in love." Grace and truth, John 1:14, 17--"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Yes, He was full of "grace and truth." One great safeguard, therefore, is not putting asunder what God has joined together.

The second ruffian or rogue who attacked Valiant was Inconsiderate. Now remember, these enemies were in his own heart. Inconsiderate never thinks and certainly doesn't pray before he speaks--nor after he has spoken. He never puts himself in another man's place. He has neither the head nor the heart to put himself in another man's place.

Matthew Henry commented on this from a passage in Job 19:2, 5: "Those who speak too much seldom think they have said enough; and when the mouth is open in passion, the ear is shut to reason." Inconsiderate seems to forget that all truth must be revealed." For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why doest thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4:7).

Truth must be revealed to the heart by the Spirit in Christian growth, even as it was at conversion. We must remember that in the eyes of other Christians we differ from them as they differ from us.

May the Spirit help us to see with their eyes and feel with their hearts and sympathize with their principles--yes, and with their prejudices. I did not say compromise but sympathize, and agonize a little more in prayer for the Spirit to teach their hearts. Every Valiant must beware of that ruffian in his heart called Inconsiderate. Bunyan was a champion for God’s truth, and he suffered for the truth.

The third ruffian who attacked Valiant was Pragmatic. This word had a
different meaning then from what it has today. In 1616 pragmatic meant "officiously busy in other people's affairs; interfering, meddling," and in 1638 it meant "opinionated, dictatorial, dogmatic" (Oxford Dictionary).

It is the picture of someone always setting everyone right on every little point. There is nothing he will not correct in you. He forgets that truth does not stand on points but principles. The truth does not dwell in the letter but in the Spirit. Truth is not only given to set others straight; truth, like charity, begins at home.

Truth suffers in the hands of a wild-headed, inconsiderate and pragmatic man who is never satisfied, never pleased, never thankful, always setting his superiors right. This kind of man, intending to be a friend of the truth, is an enemy of the truth.

Bunyan, by warning us of these enemies within, does not mean to discourage us from being Valiant-for-Truth. It is only to point out the enemy. We know he wishes to encourage us rather than discourage us from the rest of the metaphor.

Let me emphasize that Bunyan points out these enemies, whom we face in our battles for truth, not to discourage us but to encourage us in our warfare. To make us good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

The first time we see Valiant he is standing at the mouth of a place Bunyan calls "dead man's lane." He is standing there with his sword in his hand and his face all covered with blood. His words are, "They have left upon me, as you see, some of the marks of their valor and have also carried away with them some of mine."

I believe, in like manner, we see Paul with the blood of Barnabas still upon him as he wrote 1 Corinthians 13. Or can you not see John, with the blood of the Samaritans still on him, in old age, when he wrote his first epistle, especially 3:10-19, 4:7-12? Where do you suppose I got the key to this veiled metaphor of Bunyan's Valiant-for-Truth? The key does not hang on the outside doorpost of my experience but rather on the wall of my own place of repentance.

How many times have you trespassed against humility, love, with unadvised sermons and conversations? While whirling words, yes, and without shame and remorse or self-condemnation? None of these passages of Paul or John or Bunyan were ever written without remorse and self-contempt. And may I add they are not rightly read without a little of the same feeling.

Now, let me take you further with Bunyan for encouragement in being Valiant-for-Truth. "Then said Mr. Great-Heart to Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, 'Thou has worthily behaved thyself; let me see thy sword.'" Valiant shows him his sword. "When he had taken it in his hand and looked thereon awhile the guide said, 'Ha, it is a right Jerusalem blade!'

"It is so," said Valiant. "Let a man have one of these blades with a hand to
wield it, and skill to use it and he may venture upon angels with it. Its edges will never blunt--it will cut flesh, bones, soul, spirit and all" (Heb. 4:12).

This is the wonderful blade we have in our hands. This sword--and a sword it is (Eph. 6:17)--was not forged in an earthly fire nor whetted to its unapproachable sharpness on an earthly whetstone. And best of all, when a good soldier of Jesus Christ has this sword girt on his thigh he is able to go against himself with it, against his own worst enemy as in Bunyan's metaphor: his own wild-headedness and pride of heart, against his own lack of consideration. Great-Heart the guide, "Thou has done well . . . . Thou has resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Thou shalt abide with us, come in and go out with us, for we are thy companions."

This Jerusalem blade is a two-edged sword. Like the Arabian warriors who used their swords as a mirror to dress themselves for battle, every Valiant-for-Truth must look in his sword to see thoughts and intents, the joints and marrow of his own disordered soul. Yes, it has two edges, one to slay error in others but also one to slay evil in himself.

The last lesson from Bunyan's Mr. Valiant-for-Truth is one of great encouragement, and I pray that it will encourage all of us to be not only lovers of truth but also to be Valiant-for-Truth.

It is a picture drawn from Christiana, the widow of Christian. It is a vivid picture indeed, because it is the last time she sees Valiant-for-Truth on this side of that river that has no bridges. Just let me review the first time she saw him. His own mother would not have known him! He was hacked to pieces with the swords of his three enemies, Wild-Head, Inconsiderate and Pragmatic. But as the blood was washed off the mangled man's head, face and hands, she saw beneath the bloody wounds a true, brave and generous-hearted soldier of the cross.

The heart is always the man. She had lived long enough to know that. And in spite of all the scars, behind the scars was his love for the truth that had put him in all those bloody battles. She could never forget how, when she was introduced to Valiant, he exclaimed. He almost embraced her as his own mother when he burst out with his eyes full of blood. "Why, is this Christian's wife? . . . What, and going on pilgrimages too? It gladdens my heart!"

"Good man (speaking of Christian). How joyful will he be when he shall see Christiana and his children enter after him at the gates into the Celestial City." Valiant was not too busy to salute an old woman in the way. And she could see in him all the manly beauty of a young soldier. It gladdened her heart to hear him as it did his heart to hear her.

Their parting shows the place of all the Valiants-for-Truth in Bunyan's characters. At the river, when the post had come for her, we see the widow. She sets aside all her companions, even Mr. Great-Heart the guide, to leave her children under Valiant's sword and shield. Her words to Valiant are, "I would also entreat you to have an eye to my children."

How do we get along with those who are Christians yet hold some different
views about the atonement or the application of the atonement? J. C. Ryle, John Brown, Richard Baxter and John Owen had different views. Many Christians are Arminians. How do we get along with them?

Bringing together Valiant-for-Truth, Christian charity, Christian unity and having a proper catholic spirit is the difficult part. How? How is always before us.

We cannot lend support nor sympathy to any error. We cannot countenance it or we will be betraying our Lord. There are always those easy-minded people who are ready to blink at error as long as it is committed by some clever or good-natured brother, one of those mush-mouthed men who have so many fine points about them.

At times we must put a fresh bolt on the door of truth. And at all times we must beware of sailing under the flag of peace and friendship in cooperation with God's servants when in reality we are robbing the God of truth.

The best way to promote unity is to promote truth. We will not be a friend of truth by yielding to each other's mistakes and errors. We are to love each other in Christ, but we are not to be so united that we are unable to see each other's faults and errors. And especially so united that we do not see our own faults.

We must keep our priorities in proper order. For example, on some truths no true Christians disagree: the deity of Christ, the trinity, the necessity of conversion, and so on.

Our attitude, actions and words about those Christians who differ with us should be Christian--Paul's attitude. "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil 1:15-18).

Paul did not intimate that he could join them. The Lord will accomplish His purpose. We must not deny the sovereignty of God in our attitude, actions or words about those who differ with us.

This is not to suggest that God blesses error; He is the God of Truth. He blesses the truth though it sometimes is mingled with the error.

We find ourselves in a perplexing situation at this present time. All true Christians desire to be catholic in their sympathies, gracious and generous in their relationship with other Christians. But there are some things we cannot accept. Because we have good feeling towards them and even thank God for what He is doing through them does not mean that we can join them in all that they do or teach. God forbid. This would be love at the expense of truth. This is not true love but false unity.

We must carefully, humbly and with great love and understanding point out
why we cannot join them or cooperate with them. We often find ourselves with those of different backgrounds different Churches, different stages of doctrinal understanding. The question we should keep in our minds is this: "Who maketh me to differ from another and what have I gotten that I have not received?" (1 Cor. 4:7).

Be seekers after truth. Be lovers of the truth. Defenders of the truth--Valiant-for-Truth. Dispensers of the truth by life, lip and literature. Be mindful of the enemies from within as well as the enemies from without, especially Wild-Head, Inconsiderate and Pragmatic.

I would like to add another to Bunyan's list, spiritual pride. Jonathan Edwards, speaking on revival along with other things, mentions the danger of spiritual pride: "This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of truth. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit to darken the mind and mislead the judgment."

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS? (The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1999)

Conclusion

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more (Rom. 5:20).

We have considered the duties required by the Ten Commandments, and surely all will agree that no person has performed or can perform these duties. There is no power in the commandments to perform the duties required. We have considered the sins forbidden in the Ten Commandments, and must admit that we are guilty! We find no power in the commandments to enable us not to sin. Therefore, again we must say that we are guilty law-breakers and have no hope of being saved by perfectly obeying the Ten Commandments. Likewise, the law of ceremonies was never intended to save anyone. The ceremonies were pictures to set forth the way of salvation; but ceremonies were not themselves the way but a map, a model of the road but not the road itself. When the Ten Commandments were announced by God, he knew that everyone to whom he gave them had already broken them and could not claim justification by keeping them. He never intended the Ten Commandments to be a way of salvation. In fact, He had revealed his covenant of grace and the way of faith hundreds of years
earlier to his servant Abraham. The Ten Commandments were not meant to negate, replace, or change the ancient assertion: Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness? (Rom. 4:3). 'The just shall live by faith' (Rom. 1:17).

God sent the commandments into the world and addressed them to every creature so that an offence might be seen to be an offence. The commandments increase the sinfulness of sin by removing all excuses and ignorance of our duty. The commandments do not make us sinful, but they do display our sinfulness. In the presence of this perfect standard we see our imperfections, our shortcomings, yes, our sinfulness.

Thus, the commandments become like a mirror by which we can see the spots of dirt on our face, but we do not wash our face with the mirror. Just so, the commandments do not make us clean; they show us that we need cleansing and prompt us to seek cleansing. Our Saviour is the only one who can change us. He alone can say, 'You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you' (John 15:3). He alone has the water that cleanses. He said to the poor sinful woman at Jacob's well, 'Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst' (John 4:14). Reader, if you come short of Christ, you miss the intent and design of the Ten Commandments. Romans 5:20 makes it very clear that God gave the law so that the offence might be seen and felt to be an offence, and might abound.

The following statements can be taken as axioms, as things self-evident:

- There can be no grace where there is no guilt.
- There can be no mercy where there is no sin.
- There can be just benevolence, but there cannot be mercy unless there is criminality.

**Conclusion**

If you are not a sinner, God cannot have mercy upon you, because where misery is not felt, mercy will not be regarded.

If you have never sinned, God cannot display pardoning mercy toward you for there is nothing to pardon.

It is double-talk to speak of forgiving a man who has done no wrong or of bestowing undeserved favour upon a person who deserves reward.

It would be an insult to innocence to offer it mercy. None will seek mercy until he first pleads guilty. Then, only the free, rich, sovereign grace of God can save him.

One of the principal purposes of the Ten Commandments is to show sinners that they have sinned and have need of forgiveness, pardon, grace, and mercy. We can preach forgiveness, mercy, and grace until we are hoarse, but those who think that they have never broken the law and are not guilty
will never embrace our message of grace and forgiveness found only in Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Let me ask, who can lay his own character down side by side with the two tablets of divine precepts without at once being convinced that he has fallen far short of that holy standard of righteousness? Our comeliness utterly fades away when the commandments shine their spiritual light on us. On the other hand, a proper use of the law will make a person always hold tenaciously to salvation by grace alone. The Ten Commandments show every creature that all have sinned and need a Saviour.

Study each commandment separately as to our duty to our Creator and to our fellow creatures and as to our sins against the Judge of all the earth. As you study each precept separately, you will find that in these ten short precepts you have all the moral virtues, the full compass of your accountability to your Maker and your neighbour. The essence of all just decrees and statutes is found in the Ten Commandments.

If the whole human race had kept the Ten Commandments, not violating one, the law would not stand in so splendid a position of honour as it does today when the man Christ Jesus has rendered satisfaction to it. God incarnate has in his life, and yet more in his death, revealed the supremacy of the law; He has shown that not even sovereignty can set aside justice. Who shall say a word against the law to which the Lawgiver himself submits? God the Father demanded the perfection of the law from His own dear Son.

In a sermon on Galatians 3:24-25 entitled 'The Stern Pedagogue', C. H. Spurgeon made the following statement:

And remember, last of all, that the law which is so sharp and terrible to men when it only deals with them for their good, will, if you and I die without being brought to Christ, be much more terrible to us in eternity, when it deals with us in justice for our punishment. Then it will not be enshrined in the body of Moses, but, terrible to tell, it will be incarnate in the person of the Son of God sitting upon the throne. He will be at once the Lawgiver, the Judge, and the Saviour; and you that have despised him as the Saviour will have to appear before him as your Judge. No such judge as he, his justice will be clear and undiluted now that his mercy has been scorned. Oil is soft, but set it on fire, and see how it burns! Love is sweet, but curdle it to jealousy, and see how sour it is! If you turn the Lamb of Zion into the Lion of the tribe of Judah, beware, for he will tear you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver. Rejected love will change its hand. The pierced hand was outstretched with invitations of mercy, but if these be rejected - Oh, sirs, I am telling you solemn truth, and hear it, I pray you, ere I send you away' if, from that hand that was pierced, you will not take the perfect salvation which he is prepared to give to all who confess their guilt, you will have to receive from that selfsame hand the blows of that iron rod which shall break you in pieces as a potter's vessel. Fly now and kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him! Amen.

Before I conclude, let me issue a solemn call and invitation to all the poor
lawbreakers who read these words. Be sure of this, you will not get to heaven by keeping the commandments; you are a guilty lawbreaker and need pardon, forgiveness, and mercy. Any serious consideration of the Ten Commandments will make every honest person cry out, 'Oh, the load of guilt that is on my soul! My head and my heart are full of sin. Oh, my sins! Every commandment takes hold upon me; how great then is the sum of my guilt!'

The commandments should cause every lawbreaker to cry out, 'Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly to my rescue. Save me, Lord, or I will perish.'

Our Lord's invitations are as wide as the needs of man. Let me quote just one such invitation:

Ho! Everyone who thirsts,  
Come to the waters;  
And you who have no money,  
Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk  
Without money and without price...  
Incline your ear, and come to Me.  
Hear, and your soul shall live;  
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you?  
The sure mercies of David (Isa. 55:1, 3).

Only Christ can save you from the hand of justice. He alone will be your protection from the arm of the law. Oh, reader, if you have any pity for your poor, perishing soul, close with the present offers of mercy. Do not shut the doors of mercy against yourself, but rather repent and be converted.

ECCLESIA REFORMATA ET SEMPER REFORMANDA—THE CHURCH REFORMED AND ALWAYS REFORMING

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WHAT YOU COULD DO

1. Follow Ernie and Jane Reisinger to the post office. Mail books that promote warm-hearted Calvinism and help people balance doctrine with their own devotional house.

2. Know the times in which you live. Analyze them carefully to warn of coming consequences.

3. Tell others of Ernest Reisinger as an example of humble service in spite of limitations of formal education and prestigious positions and titles.