

**Articles and Sermons :: How long have we talked of reformation?****How long have we talked of reformation? - posted by boG (), on: 2008/11/20 19:07**

THE REFORMED PASTOR

by Richard Baxter

CHAPTER 3

SECTION 2 -- The duty of personal catechizing and instructing the flock particularly recommended

PART I -- Motives to this duty

ARTICLE I -- Motives from the benefit of the work

17. Lastly, Of so great weight and excellency is the duty which we are now recommending, that the chief part of Church reformation that is behind as to means consisteth in it; and it must be the chief means to answer the judgments, the mercies, the prayers, the promises, the cost, the endeavors, and the blood of the nation; and without this it will not be done; the ends of all these will never be well attained; a reformation to purpose will never be wrought; the Church will be still lo w; the interest of Christ will be much neglected; and God will still have a controversy with the land, and, above all, with th e ministry that have been deepest in the guilt.

How long have we talked of reformation, how much have we said and done for it in general, and how deeply and devoutly have we vowed it for our own parts; and, after all this, how shamefully have we neglected it, and neglect it to this day! We carry ourselves as if we had not known or considered what that reformation was which we vowed. As carnal men will take on them to be Christians, and profess with confidence that they believe in Christ, and accept of his salvation, and may contend for Christ, and fight for him, and yet, for all this, will have none of him, but perish for refusing him, who little dreamed that ever they had been refusers of him; and all because they understood not what his salvation is, and how it is carried on, but dream of a salvation without flesh-displeasing, and without self-denial and renouncing the world, and parting with their sins, and without any holiness, or any great pains and labor of their own in subserviency to Christ and the Spirit: even so did too many ministers and private men talk and write, and pray, and fight, and long for reformation, and would little have believed that man who should have presumed to tell them, that, notwithstanding all this, their very hearts were against reformation; and that they who were praying for it, and fasting for it, and wading through blood for it, would never accept it, but would themselves be the rejectors and destroyers of it. And yet so it is, and so it hath too plainly proved: and whence is all this strange deceit of heart, that good men should no better know themselves? Why, the case is plain; they thought of a reformation to be given by God, but not of a reformation to be wrought on and by themselves. They considered the blessing, but never thought of the means of accomplishing it. But as if they had expected that all things besides themselves should be mended without them, or that the Holy Ghost should again descend miraculously, or every sermon should convert its thousands, or that some angel from heaven or some Elias should be sent to restore all things, or that the law of the parliament, and the sword of the magistrate, would have converted or constrained all, and have done the deed; and little did they think of a reformation that must be wrought by their own diligence and unwearied labors, by earnest preaching and catechizing, and personal instructions, and taking heed to all the flock, whatever pains or reproaches it should cost them. They thought not that a thorough reformation would multiply their own work; but we had all of us too carnal thoughts, that when we had ungodly men at our mercy, all would be done, and conquering them was converting them, or such a means as would have frightened them to heaven. But the business is far otherwise, and had we then known how a reformation must be attained, perhaps some would have been colder in the prosecution of it. And yet I know that even foreseen labors seem small matters at a distance, while we do but hear and talk of them; but when we come nearer them, and must lay our hands to the work, and put on our armor, and charge through the thickest of opposing difficulties, then is the sincerity and the strength of men's hearts brought to trial, and it will appear how they purposed and promised before.

Reformation is to many of us, as the Messiah was to the Jews. Before he came, they looked and longed for him, and boasted of him, and rejoiced in hope of him; but when he came they could not abide him, but hated him, and would not believe that he was indeed the person, and therefore persecuted and put him to death, to the curse and confusion of the man in body of their nation. 'The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in. But who may abide the day of his coming and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.' And the reason

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was, because it was another manner of Christ that the Jews expected; it was one who would bring them riches and liberty, and to this day they profess that they will never believe in any but such. So it is with too many about reformation. They hoped for a reformation, that would bring them more wealth and honor with the people, and power to force men to do what they would have them: and now they see a reformation, that must put them to more condescension and pains than they were ever at before. They thought of having the opposers of godliness under their feet, but now they see they must go to them with humble entreaties, and put their hands under their feet, if they would do them good, and meekly beseech even those that sometime sought their lives, and make it now their daily business to overcome them by kindness, and win them with love. O how many carnal expectations are here crossed!

Re: How long have we talked of reformation? - posted by MJones (), on: 2008/11/21 22:13

Quote:

boG wrote:
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Intriguing article. It was hard to narrow down the quotes, but I think the ones I have chosen convey the main point of the article. (1)We want as much of God as we can get without it costing us anything. (2)We desire reformation but expect God to give it. (3)When we think of it coming, we think of the benefit it will bring to us.

I am reminded of quote by Hudson Taylor, 'God does not give us overcoming lives. He gives life to those who overcome', which I later found support of in Rev. 2:17, 'To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna'.

One last thing, I do believe we start out more interested in what God can do for us than what He can do in and through us, but that should eventually change. The poem, 'God's True Blessing' relates to this. I'll post it separately.

Re: - posted by MJones (), on: 2008/11/21 22:14

God's True Blessing

How is God's blessing
determined today?
Is it an increase at church,
in business or pay?

Is it in a good job,
good husband or wife;
two kids and a pet,
would that suffice?

How about a nice home
in a nice part of town

and a few good friends
that won't let you down?

An absence of hardship;
things going well,
the list could go on,
is this how we tell?

Of all the things listed above,
Jesus had one or two,
but of all the things His list contained,
most have just a few.

He had no home, no wife or kids,
no wealth of which to speak;
but everywhere that He went,
God's wonders He did see.

And then there's Paul, who's walk with God,
began when stricken blind;
full attention now obtained,
God's calling he did find.

This calling did not bring Him wealth,
but there was a little fame;
instead God showed him he would suffer
for preaching in His name.

For preaching he was put in jail,
beaten and left for dead,
but signs and wonders confirmed the grace
God put upon his head.

The disciples who had followed Him
in hopes of earthly fame,
once that hope of fame was gone,
received power to proclaim.

That power seems to only come,
when other hope is lost;
it is then we seek with all our heart,
it's Him at any cost.

We may lose things, but count them not,
in light of what He gives.
God's true blessing is His wonders;
they confirm our calling lived.

MJ