

Ernest C. Reisinger

1919-2004

A short biography by Carol Brandt

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“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.”¹ 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.² This “twentieth century pagan” had been hit with the same gospel and Spirit that turned England around in the 1700’s.

Ernie’s life, impacted by God’s grace, began to change. Jane did not leave him. Instead, later 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.’”³ 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!⁴

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 Matthew Henry, John Newton, Charles Spurgeon, and Martyn Llyod-Jones by giving me their books.

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. He learned some lessons; exposing the errors of both Arminianism and Dispensationalism would be a part of his life’s work. His battle was not unlike those of evangelical men before him. It was 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, 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 on board 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.⁷ 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.⁸

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.⁹

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 age 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Employees heard the gospel informally during the course of doing business and formally at the company's yearly banquet. Christian Business Men'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, he was instrumental in starting Grace Chapel with only twenty-five people at the first service. Ernie would remain a leader there until 1965 and connected with them until his death. Intersity 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.¹² 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.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.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.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?*² (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 thought carefully about what he read. 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*.¹⁶ In 1966, Ernie financed Puritan Publications to warehouse Banner of Truth books. He gave daily oversight to the operation run by James Eshelman¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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 slander of 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 demand 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 William 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.¹⁹

Indeed, he did not want a Reformed theology that was like a dead skeleton. He wanted dry bones to rise with warmth and love for God. He wrote,

I am using devotion and Christian experience synonymously, To put it another way: the devotional house must be built on a doctrinal foundation. We must ever keep before us, however, the realization that doctrine and creeds are not an end in themselves. Many fail at this very point. That is, they make doctrine an end in itself. This will produce nothing but dead orthodoxy. Many never get off the foundation. They are doctrinally as straight as a gun barrel and just as empty. They are very sound doctrinally, but unfortunately, they are sound asleep.²⁰

Ernest Reisinger had concluded that 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."²² He acknowledged that "the dispensational position is complex and hard to pin down and their scholars have modified their views over time."²³ Yet, he would agree with Keith Mathison, editor of *Tabletalk*, that the cornerstone of the system is the fundamental distinction they make between Israel and the church.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."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 *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.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.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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."²⁹

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..."³⁰

Therefore, thoroughly convinced of all of this, Ernest Reisinger warned others of the consequences of dividing the people of God be in the Old Testament from those in the New Testament 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.³¹ And he blamed evangelicals for abandoning that instruction and, thus, contributing to the moral decline in America.³² 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.³³

This plain-spoken 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 perhaps, 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 and avoided controversy.

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 'buts' 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 I and 2 Timothy reading and rereading them during the dark times. Striving not 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 applied to the mind, affections and will by the Holy Spirit."³⁸ 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 his ministry: 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.

This blending of doctrine with application and reliance on the Holy Spirit connects provides 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 have these experiences, 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 books and men Ernie recommended. But it was harder doing it on my own. Are you on your own without a Reformed church? 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 experimental Calvinism. Balancing doctrine with devotion was stated as 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! The church mortgage was paid off and a mission church started in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.³⁹ 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 sad day. But that controversy over the role and attitude of elders 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."⁴⁰ "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 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 and offense. They were not warm-hearted Calvinists. That put them a world apart from Ernie's style of shepherding the flock of God. We felt others had poked their noses into business that was not theirs.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. There is still no viable Reformed Southern Baptist work in northern Palm Beach County, Florida.

The Reformer as an Author

Continuing to serve on the 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 this 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.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 Euless, 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, 1987.⁴² 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.⁴³ 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. The Founders Press was established to promote the same objectives. From 1992-2004, Ernie, even on Hill Difficulty, asked the right questions, thought about the answers, and wrote on his yellow pad out by his pool in the Southwest Florida heat. Much was published and a lot was not. I have attempted to give you a taste of his thoughts from both. I hope you will hear his voice, yearn for others who speak a warm-hearted version of the five points of Calvinism applied to the heart and life and then to flock to it when you hear it.

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)⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵

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 undergirded 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."⁴⁶ 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.”⁴⁷ 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).⁴⁸ 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.”⁴⁹ 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...”⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ 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.”⁵² 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.”⁵³ 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.⁵⁴ 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.”⁵⁵ He hated “two classes of Christians” made popular by Campus Crusade For Christ booklets and called for recognition of spurious believers.⁵⁶ 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.”⁵⁷ 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 wwwFOUNDERS.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" stroke 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.⁵⁸ 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.⁶² 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.”⁶³ 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.⁶³ 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.⁶⁹ 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.”¹
- “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."²

- "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.,)

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.
4. Treat others as Ernie did as fellow pupils in “Christ’s School” relying on the Holy Spirit to make doctrine clear and to give them the spiritual experiences needed for their sanctification. Perhaps you will be more patient and kind with them, avoiding harsh actions and attitudes that turn many away and cause much pain!

Footnotes

- ¹ Ernest Reisinger, "I've Found A Sure Thing," (self-published, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 195_), p. 2.
- ² Reisinger, "I've Found a Sure Thing," p. 2-6.
- ³ Ernest Reisinger, *The Life of Ernest C. Reisinger: An Instructive Teaching Autobiography*, (unpublished), p. 5.
- ⁴ Geoffrey Thomas, *Ernest C. Reisinger*, (Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2002), p. 31.
- ⁵ Ernest Reisinger, *Lord and Christ*, (P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, N. J., 1994), p. 18.
- ⁶ Reisinger, *Lord and Christ*, p. 19. 20th Century pagan
- ⁷ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 24.
- ⁸ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 25.
- ⁹ Thomas, *Ernest C. Reisinger*, p. 8-10.
- ¹⁰ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 38-47.
- ¹¹ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 6-12.0
- ¹² Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 6.
- ¹³ Thomas, *Ernest C. Reisinger*, p. 73.
- ¹⁴ Thomas, *Ernest C. Reisinger*, p. 68-70.
- ¹⁵ Thomas, *Ernest C. Reisinger*, p. 73.
- ¹⁶ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 182.
- ¹⁷ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, picture insert.
- ¹⁸ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 298.
- ¹⁹ Ernest Reisinger, *Doctrine and Devotion*, (Chapel Library, Pensacola, Florida), p. 1.
- ²⁰ Reisinger, *Doctrine and Devotion*, p. 11-12.
- ²¹ Thomas, *Ernest C. Reisinger*, p. 77.
- ²² Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 88.
- ²³ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 88.
- ²⁴ Keith Matheson, *Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, Phillipsburg, N. J., 1995), p. 8.
- ²⁵ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 87.
- ²⁶ Reisinger, *Lord and Christ*, p. 22.
- ²⁷ Reisinger, *Whatever Happened to the Ten Commandments*, (Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1999), p. 105.²
- ²⁸ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 92.

- ²⁹ Thomas, Ernest C. Reisinger, p. 81-82.
- ³⁰ Thomas, Ernest C. Reisinger, p. 82-83.
- ³¹ Reisinger, *Whatever Happened to the Ten Commandments?*, p. v.
- ³² Ernest Reisinger and Tom Ascol, *God's Law and God's Children*, (Grace Baptist Church, Cape Coral, Florida, 1993), p. 9-17.
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- ³⁵ Reisinger, *Autobiography*, p. 172.
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- ⁴⁵ Joel Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*, (Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids), p. 425.
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- ⁵⁸ Reisinger, *The Founders Journal*, Issue 19-20, Winter/Spring, 1995.
- ⁵⁹ Reisinger, Issue 19-20, p. 23. ²
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- ⁶⁵ Reisinger, *The Founders Journal*, Issue 31, Winter 1998, p. 17.
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Quotes

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- ² Prayer during Sunday P.M. service, North Pompano Baptist Church, date unknown.
- ³ Letter to Martyn Lloyd-Jones, May 20, 1968.
- ⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 299. (Italics mine)
- ⁵ *Autobiography*, p. 304. (Italics mine)
- ⁶ *Autobiography*, p. 298. (Italics mine)
- ⁷ Letter to Jack Cullum, principal financial backer of Banner of Truth Trust, April 5, 1969, *Autobiography*, p. 308-9.u
- ⁸ Note from the Boss, Reisinger Brothers, 1955," *Autobiography*, p. 45-46.