



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“INVITATION TO THE PROTESTANT FAITH”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: Ephesians 2:8-22
Date: April 23, 1950

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on April 23, 1950.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Ephesians 2:8-22).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

You might also want to look at the words of the hymns that were part of the service that day:

I Love Thy Kingdom

The Church's One Foundation

Lead On, O King

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

I. Why an invitation?

A. Many Roman Catholics are finding their faith untenable.

1. 10% of all those joining by transfer have come from the Roman Catholic church.
2. Our church receives at least one each communion.
3. We do not boast of this fact, for we have not brought them out of heathenism but have transferred them from one Christian denomination to another.

B. Why the shift to the Protestant faith?

1. Policies of the Roman Catholic church.
 - a) *Problems regarding burial*
 - b) *Family planning*
 - c) *Permitting a mother to die at childbirth rather than the child.*
2. Authoritarianism
 - a) *Parochial schools -- indoctrinate*
 - (1) No how to think, but what to think
 - b) *Intolerance*
 - (1) Not permitted in Protestant worship
 - (2) Mixed marriages -- demanding all the privileges
3. Church-state issues
 - a) *Some of the hierarchy's chief opposition is coming from Roman Catholic statesmen*
 - b) *Concordat with Hitler, Mussolini*
4. Roman Catholics know better than we

C. Roman Catholic Church abroad is losing its influence.

1. We have a missionary to Brazil.
 - a) *Roman Catholic religion is far from that here.*
 - b) *Priests illiterate -- know no Latin.*
 - c) *Exchanged the statue of the virgin for the pagan idols.*
 - d) *Haiti -- voodoo -- drum blessed by priest.*
 - e) *Roman church sends more missionaries than do the Protestants*
 - f) *Economic factors -- Mexico and others have overthrown Roman Catholic church to regain land.*
2. European Catholicism
 - a) *The problem of land holdings*
 - b) *Communism has thrived where the Roman Church has taught its totalitarianism.*
 - (1) Note Italy, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary vs. Netherlands, Britain, Scandinavia, Australia, U.S.
 - (2) Totalitarianism in religion breeds totalitarianism in politics

D. The alternative

1. A Catholic who has lost his faith may simply ignore religion, turn to Communism, or find a satisfying faith in keeping with their democratic ideals -- the Protestant faith.

II. Is There a "Protestant Faith?"

A. Protestants are not non-Catholics

1. Protestantism is a positive faith --

- a) *We are Protestant because of what we believe -- not what we deny.*
- b) *Pro-test*
- c) *Evangelicals*

B. We share the Apostles Creed with the Roman Catholics

C. We believe in the Holy Catholic Church

1. "Catholic" means universal -- ecumenical

- a) *We let our Roman brethren get a corner on the word*
- b) *The Romans are the only major Christian body to refuse to take part in the World Council of Churches of Christ*

2. What is the Church

- a) *The Church is the fellowship of those who believe in Christ and follow Him*
 - (1) The 12 disciples were the first "church"
 - (2) Organization grew -- as a tool to aid the church
- b) *The organization grew perverse -- had to be cast aside*
 - (1) The Church remained intact -- as a fellowship of believers
 - (2) If I gave away a saw, I do not thereby lose my identity

3. There is only ONE Church, and we, the Roman Catholics and Orthodox Catholics are all included in it.

D. We believe in confession and forgiveness

1. Confession to fellow men
 - a) *Episcopalians have the confessional.*
 - b) *Increasing role of confession in the Protestant Church*
 - c) *Confession is first of all to God*
2. No man can forgive sin -- only God
3. Forgiveness is not earned, but given
 - a) *Salvation is not to be achieved, but has already been granted*
4. Life is lived -- not in fear of hell, but in gratitude for heaven

E. Direct access to God

1. Christ said "Our Father"
2. He said, "I have called you friend"
3. We may have access to His Word
 - a) *It is for our personal study*
 - b) *Not merely to confirm our prejudices, but to learn new truths*

III. The Protestant Church is not perfect -- but is perfectable

A. Organically -- we must work for closer union

1. Our divisions are more superficial than real

a) *Ministerial Association*

b) *Comity*

c) *Theology, reading, preaching*

B. Theological

1. Second coming

2. Ecclesiology

C. The Roman Church cannot revise a position

1. Infallibility has imposed rigidity

2. A house of cards -- their theology

VI. Conclusion

We would invite our Roman friends to know the freedom of the gospel of Christ -- the freedom of soul granted by Christ's assurance of eternal life . . . the freedom of mind of those who need not fear ideas differing from their own . . . the freedom of society born of men who know freedom of mind and soul.

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: Ephesians 2:8-22

Ephesians 2:8 through 10 say: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- Why do you think it was so important to follow the verse about being saved by grace through faith and not works to be followed by one telling us that we were also created *in advance* to do good works?

Ephesians 2:11 and 12 say: "Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called 'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision' (that done in the body by the hands of men)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world."

- Why do you think this passage dwells on Christian Gentiles having been excluded, without hope and without God?

Ephesians 2:13 says: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."

- Do you feel that you were ever far away from God? If so, what was it that brought you near to God? Was it Communion? A particular moment? God's comfort in a difficult time?

Ephesians 2:14-16 say: "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility."

- Christ was sent to make "one new man out of the two" and yet there continues to be religious division even within Christianity. What concrete steps can we take as individuals to end those hostilities?

Ephesians 2:17 says: "He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near."

- The verse specifically notes preaching peace to those who were far away and those who were near. Why do you think it doesn't just say "to everyone?" Was it just literary style or does it serve another purpose?

Ephesians 2:18 through 20 say: "For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."

- This verse tells us there are no foreigners but fellow citizens. How can you act on that conviction as you interact with people from other communities? Other countries? Other denominations?

Ephesians 2:21 and 22 say: "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

- So often we think about a church as the building where believers gather. Do you think a Westminster service held in another location would feel different? How do you feel when you first enter another church to attend service? With that in mind, what can you do to make others feel at home when they visit us?

Study Questions -- Part II

Sermon :

I.A. This sermon was preached in 1950. We continue to see Catholics joining Westminster. Do you think that is easier or more difficult for them in today's world?

I.B. What policies and actions on the part of the Catholic church do you think might be leading to that shift today? Is it still Dr. Galbreath's list?

I.C. Do you think it is still true that the Roman Catholic church is losing its influence abroad?

I.C.2 What impact do you think the fall of the eastern bloc has had on Catholicism in Eastern Europe?

I.D. Do you think that nations that have moved toward democracy are also moving toward Protestantism?

II.A.1.a. Do you agree that we are Protestant because of what we believe?

II.C.2. If someone asked you to define "the Church" would your first inclination be to define Westminster? The Presbyterian Church? Protestantism? Regardless of which would come to mind first, how would you define it?

II.C.2. Are there ever times when it feels as if the Roman and Orthodox Catholic churches are very different from the Protestant faith? In what ways?

II.D.3 Knowing that forgiveness is given not earned can be difficult for some people to accept because of feelings of unworthiness. What do you do to accept forgiveness?

II.E. Why is it so important that we have direct access to God? How does that shape your faith and religious practice?

III. Dr. Galbreath noted that the Protestant church is not perfect but is perfectable. Do you think we've made progress toward perfection since 1950? How have we changed for the better? Are there ways we have moved away from perfection?

III.B.2 Ecclesiology is the study of church doctrine. What do you think is the best way for individual Christians to study that doctrine?

III.C.1. Do you agree that the doctrine of infallibility might be a reason Catholics continue to join Westminster and other Protestant congregations?

IV. Looking at the sermon as a whole, how do you think it was accepted in 1950 by Westminster members? How would it have been accepted by Catholics who heard it? What about today?