

Reformation Now 2017 – S2: The Sword of the Spirit

Introduction:

Dr Tim Chester in Tabletalk magazine:

“Underlying the Reformation was a rediscovery of the Bible and a commitment to its authority. Martin Luther came to his understanding of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone through his study of the Psalms, Romans, and Galatians. At first, he assumed the medieval Roman church would agree with his message. After all, it was plainly taught in the pages of God’s Word. Instead, the church opposed him, forcing him to choose between the authority of the Bible and the authority of the Roman church. He chose the Bible. Scripture alone would be the ultimate authority of Reformation churches.

“That meant the Reformation was always intended to be an ongoing project. It is a commitment encapsulated in the Latin phrase *semper reformanda*. It is usually translated as “always reforming,” **but a better translation is “always being reformed.” We are not the ones doing the reforming. We are being reformed by God’s Word. God’s Word is the reformer of the church. Or rather, it is Christ who renews His church through His Word.** *Semper reformanda* does not describe a movement forward to some uncharted horizon but a continual movement back to God’s Word.

“... the Reformers saw the Bible as the touchstone of orthodoxy. But they saw it as much more than this. It is a life-giving Word. And this is how we should celebrate the Reformation—by committing ourselves to constant renewal through the life-giving Word of God.”

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

As has been said many times, it is not just that we read the Bible, but as we read it, or hear it spoken, the Bible reads us.

Calvin: “If any one thinks that the air is beaten by an empty sound when the word of God is preached, he is greatly mistaken; for it is a living thing and full of hidden power, which leaves nothing in man untouched.”

Part One:

Bringing 'Reformation' to England, or, how do you 'roll out' a Reformation?

Despite the fact that Reformation formally began with Luther on October 31st 1517 it isn't until the late 1570's that it begins to have any impact in England at the grass roots level.

According to JI Packer, in his book: "A Quest for Godliness" (from which I shall be quoting extensively in the first half of my talk):

"Ten years after the Elizabethan settlement (1558/9) the Church of England was in a bad way".

- Lacking money and many parishes lacking a clergyman;
- Many of the clergy had no ability; no religious convictions and were immoral.
- Untrained artisans were ordained, to read the services on Sunday, which the people, by law, were required to attend, while continuing with their trades during the week.
- Many churches had not had a sermon preached in them for years and the majority of sermons were read not preached.

Packer: "The only competent protagonists of Reformed religion in England were the returned Marian exiles and of those who had not become bishops or deans practically all had settled either in the Universities, Oxford or Cambridge, or in London".

The Reformation was as yet, locked up in Holy Huddles.

J I Packer:

"For all the difference it had made to religion in England during 20 years, the doctrinal reformation of the English Church might never have happened. In the time of Edward VI and again after Mary, there had been a superficial move among large sections of the community in the direction of Protestantism, but by 1570, it was clear that this amounted to little more than a violent anti-Papalism.

"The religion of justification by faith was as little known and superstition was as widespread and deep-rooted as it had been for the previous century. England might profess a Reformed Protestant religion and come obediently to church on Sundays (it was illegal not to) **but England was not yet converted.**"

What would 'Reformation' look like?

Packer:

"... historians and evangelicals regularly conceive of 'reform' and 'reformation' in the church as a matter of externals only, **doctrine publicly professed and order publicly established**, without reference to **inward renewal of heart and life**; so they miss the **spiritual dimensions of the goal of 'reform'** which the Reformers ... always had at heart.

"In line with this, the ideal for the church was that **all the members of each congregation should be 'reformed'** – brought that is, by God's grace without disorder into what we would call a state of revival, so as to be truly and thoroughly converted, theologically orthodox and sound, spiritually alert and expectant, in character terms - wise and steady, ethically enterprising and obedient, and humbly but joyously sure of their salvation."

How was Reformation at this level, to be achieved?

Not by some spectacular 'outpouring' of the Holy Spirit, as in later Revivals, but, in the wisdom of God, **by the raising up of true shepherds, pastor-teachers, men who would faithfully feed the sheep, not feed off them.** Men who were themselves regenerate and revived, who would become pastors and spiritual guides, Preachers of righteousness and repentance. **'Reformed' in the sense that they themselves were truly converted and committed in their own lives to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.**

And, as is so often the case, it starts with one, who hears and obeys the call of God:

Packer: "Toward the end of 1570, Richard Greenham **resigned his fellowship** at Pembroke Hall Cambridge to become a minister of Dry Drayton, seven miles out of the city. 'He was the first genuinely able man as far as we can tell, to tackle in an authentically apostolic way, the task of rooting the Gospel in rural England.'

I.e. He left the high towers of academia and went to where the people were.

"As well as being a gifted pastor and teacher, both in his own parish and through preaching at the University, 'Greenham was a special instrument and means under God to encourage and train up many godly and learned young men in the holy service of Christ in the work of the ministry '.

"Greenham was typical of the new generation of pastors whom he led out into the spiritual darkness of rural England. Some of them were non-conformists, but

many were satisfied with the existing framework of the established church and deplored only its lack of pastors”.

They were called, but were they received?

Packer: “Despite their being spiritually trained and qualified as pastors, most found it difficult to gain livings within the Anglican Church, which, in many respects remained under the patronage of the wealthy and unconverted.”

Some of them even made a plea to Parliament, complaining that although Christian, gifted and trained as pastors, they were being passed over for men who were being appointed out of expediency or personal convenience.

Packer: “No official action was taken, but **lectureships were endowed in many parishes, where the work of preaching was shared or delegated by the incumbent**, to provide preaching-posts for these young men and thus the leaven of the Gospel spread through England in the days of Elizabeth James and Charles.”

Thus, without necessarily being given their own living, they were eventually released to preach within the parishes.

The Spread of Gospel Literature

The seeds sown through preaching and teaching, were irrigated by a steady stream of Gospel literature, books and treatises and expository sermons, whereby the common man and woman could access the Reformation doctrines of grace. Many were evangelistic, such as Richard Baxter’s ‘A Call to the Unconverted’, some were written to give comfort and assurance to those who were regenerate, such as his ‘The Saints’ Everlasting Rest’. Subjects such as justification and righteousness, repentance, how to live a holy life and the means to know if you were truly saved or not and many others, were written with the ‘common man’ in mind, designed to be understood by the unlearned.

Packer: “England had had no devotional literature worth speaking of until this flow started; hence, writing at laymen’s level, the same level at which they preached, the pastors were soon able to capture a very large readership, and the influence of their published works in the first half of the 17th century was far-reaching and profound.

‘... Some sense of the impact ... over two generations may be gained by comparing Greenham’s ministry at Dry Drayton with Richard Baxter’s at Kidderminster. Greenham laboured for twenty years, from 1570-1590 with virtually no fruit, Baxter worked (in Kidderminster) for fourteen: 1641-42 and 1647-60, in a situation where **they had hardly ever had any lively serious preaching**’ and

saw **the greater part of the town which was about 800 families and 2000 adults strong**, make a meaningful profession of faith.

“... Baxter’s England, leavened by two generations of preaching and religious writing, was a different place from Greenham’s. The fallow ground had been broken up, the seed sown faithfully over many decades and now harvest time had come. In ministries like Baxter’s **the vision of converted communities** that had led men like Greenham ... into their pastoral charges was finding fulfilment at last.”

What kind of men were they?

Packer: “These great ... pastor-theologians were men of outstanding intellectual power, as well as spiritual insight....

- They sought to ‘reduce to practice’ [ie put into practice] all that God taught them.
- They yoked their consciences to His word, disciplining themselves to bring all activities under the scrutiny of Scripture and to **demand a theological, as distinct from a merely pragmatic, justification for everything that they did.**
- They applied their **understanding of the mind of God to every branch of life**, seeing the church, the family, the state, the arts and sciences, the world of commerce and industry, no less than the devotions of the individual, **as so many spheres in which God must be served and honoured.**
- They saw life whole, for they saw its Creator as Lord of each department of it and their purpose was that **‘holiness to the Lord’ might be written over it in its entirety.**
- Many of them became superb pastors. From scripture they mapped the often bewildering terrain of the life of faith and fellowship with God with great thoroughness and their acuteness and wisdom in diagnosing spiritual malaise and setting out the appropriate Biblical remedies was outstanding. They remain the classic pastors of Protestantism, just as men like Whitefield and Spurgeon stand as its classic evangelists.
- On paper, just as in the pulpit, they used words in a way calculated not merely to inform, but to make men feel the force of truth and to show them how they should respond to it.
- They were **‘physicians of the soul’**. **They valued God’s revealed truth for its healing power in sinners’ lives and purely theoretical discussions seemed to them false to the true nature of theology.** Theirs was a **‘practical theology’**, taught with a **‘studied simplicity’**. Perkins spoke for them all when he defined theology as **‘the science of living blessedly forever’**. **‘Truth obeyed’, ‘will heal.’** Referring here to the spiritual sickness caused by sin.

- They turned their backs on the airs and graces which won 'witty' preachers reputations at Oxford and Cambridge and court. They chose instead a plain, straightforward style, solemn yet lively and homely, for their messages and their plainness was with power.
- They were clear that the **preacher's job is to display Christ's grace, not his own learning and to design his sermons so that they bring benefit to others rather than applause to himself.**

John Flavel: 'Prudence will choose words that are solid, rather than florid... An iron key, fitted to the wards of the lock, is more useful than a golden one that will not open the door to the treasures.. **Prudence will cast away a thousand fine words for one that is apt to penetrate the conscience and reach the heart.'**

- Pre-eminently, they were holy men, and the authority that their printed words carry is the **authority not just of Scripture itself, as the Word of God, but of Scripture in experience - their own experience - as the power of God, through what they recognised as the illuminating and applying agency of the Holy Spirit.**

Baxter's book 'The Reformed Pastor', written for pastors and clergy, opens by admonishing God's shepherds as follows:

"Take heed to yourselves, lest you be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others.... Be also careful that your graces are kept in vigorous and lively exercise, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons which you study, before you preach them to others... watch therefore over your own hearts: keep out lusts and passions and worldly inclinations; keep up the life of faith and love and zeal; be much at home and much with God... take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine.. lest you unsay with your lives, what you say with your tongues.. We must study as hard how to live well , as how to preach well. We must think and think again, how to compose our lives, as may most tend to men's salvation, as well as our sermons..."

John Owen: "...If the Word do not dwell with power in us, it will not pass with power from us."

Who were they?

Because of their desire to 'reform' the Church, based as purely upon the Scriptures as possible, they mockingly became known as the Puritans.

Part Two

A closer look at the practical ways in which the Word of God was taught and applied in reforming and sanctifying the lives of the converted.

To repeat J I Packer:

These were men who walked in: **“the authority not just of Scripture itself, as the Word of God, but of Scripture in experience – their own experience – as the power of God, through what they recognised as the illuminating and applying agency of the Holy Spirit”.**

They knew at first hand, from their own experience, the sanctifying power of the truth. The sword of the Spirit, in the hand of the Spirit.

They understood, that truth, acknowledged and applied, leads to godliness. Godliness, or piety, which was one of Calvin’s major themes, **“designates the right heart-attitude of man toward God, including true knowledge, heartfelt worship, saving faith, filial fear, prayerful submission, and reverential love.”** (Joel Beeke).

The Roman church had effectively usurped Christ as Mediator between God and man, denying ordinary people access to God’s Word and the Puritan shepherds laboured with their flock to teach them dependence on Christ alone, through His word.

They fully appreciated that, although judicially declared righteous before God, we have to ‘work out’ this inner principle of righteousness and deal daily with the sinful nature that still seeks to have the upper hand. Every regenerate person is equipped by the Holy Spirit to do this, without the necessity of the external mediation of a priest. This was a key covenantal OT promise:

Jeremiah 31: 31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 **And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.** For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (ESV)

All people, from whatever station in life, from kings to parlour maids, were to be taught the knowledge of God and how to walk in His ways, becoming wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Packer, from an article on 'The Puritans and Conscience': "To accomplish this, they understood the imperative need to **train people's consciences to become fully attuned to the mind and will of God.** Otherwise, we cannot help going wrong, whatever we do; for flouting conscience, and following an erring conscience, are both sin....

"The degree of sharp-sightedness which our consciences show in detecting our own real sins (as distinct from the imaginary ones on which Satan encourages us to concentrate) is an index of how well we really know God and how close to Him we really walk—**an index, in other words, of the real quality of our spiritual life.** The sluggish conscience of a "sleepy," "drowsy" saint is a sign of spiritual malaise....

"The healthy Christian is not necessarily the extrovert, ebullient Christian, but the Christian who has a sense of God's presence stamped deep on his soul, who trembles at God's Word, who lets it dwell in him richly by constant meditation upon it, **and who tests and reforms his life daily in response to it.**"

James 1:21-25 (JB Phillips translation)

"Have done, then, with impurity and every other evil which touches the lives of others, and humbly accept the message that God has sown in your hearts, and which can save your souls. Don't I beg you, only hear the message, **but put it into practice**; otherwise you are merely deluding yourselves. **The man who simply hears and does nothing about it is like a man catching the reflection of his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, it is true, but he goes on with whatever he was doing *without the slightest recollection of what sort of person he saw in the mirror.*** But the man who looks into the perfect mirror of God's law, the law of liberty (or freedom), and makes a habit of so doing, is not the man who sees and forgets. **He puts that law into practice and he wins true happiness.**"

These men, who were committed to labouring to bring 'Reformation', to bear in their own hearts and in the hearts of others, were preachers of righteousness, committed to training their flock in righteousness, working out in their daily lives the spiritual reality of the righteousness they had freely received through Christ's atoning death and resurrection. To do this, their ability to 'rightly handle' the Word of God was essential:

2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for **training in righteousness**, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (ESV)

Our modern culture is greatly concerned with physical fitness, such that many people pay for the services of a 'personal fitness trainer'. The Puritans were the equivalent of spiritual fitness trainers. They were concerned to ensure that the Scriptures were taught in such a way that they would be applied, not merely heard and so bear fruit.

Paul uses the concept of 'training' in 1 Timothy 4:6-8:

(ESV) 6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being **trained in the words of the faith** and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather **train yourself for godliness**; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

The same thought is repeated in Heb 5:11-14

(ESV) 11 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 **But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.**

The New King James Version puts it this way:

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 **But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

The word 'trained' or 'exercised' in the Greek comes from γυμνάζω *gumnazo*, (Strong's 1128) from which we get the word 'gymnasium', a place of physical training and exercise.

'By reason of use' or 'by constant practice' means by habit. One of the key elements of training in a gym is the repetition, whether it be sits ups, press ups or lifting weights. It is the same principle in the spiritual context and the natural. We build up our spiritual muscles 'by constant use'.

Tyndale New Testament Commentaries on Heb 5:14: "the mature are defined as those who have their faculties trained by practice. **The building up of**

experience through a continued process in the past. *The word occurs only here in the New Testament.*

“... Spiritual maturity comes neither from isolated events nor from a great spiritual burst. It comes from a steady application of spiritual discipline.”

The purpose of this regular exercise is so that they may develop their discernment so as to distinguish between good and evil.

Paul makes a similar point in:

Phil 1:8 For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And it is my prayer that **your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment.** 10 so that **you may approve what is excellent,** and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 **filled with the fruit of righteousness** that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Tyndale NT Commentary: “he gives a call to ‘choose what is best’ (gnb), to discern ‘the best among the good’ (Bengel), which is far harder to do than preferring good to evil courses of action.”

For this to happen, their love has to abound more and more. **Many Christians would stop there. They would agree: ‘all you need is love’.**

But Paul is of the church of Matthew Mark, Luke and John, not the church of John, Paul, Ringo and George. He makes it clear here that, although love is essential, it must abound in knowledge and discernment.

Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary: “It is not a **blind love** that will recommend us to God, but a **love grounded upon knowledge and judgment.** Strong passions, without knowledge and a settled judgment, will not make us complete in the will of God, and sometimes do more hurt than good. The Jews had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, and were transported by it to violence and rage, Rom. 10:2; Jn. 16:2.”

The Greek word for knowledge in Phil 1:9 is the same that is used by Paul in Titus 1:1

(NIV) ‘their **knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.**’

The word here for ‘knowledge’ in the Greek is ‘epignosis’.

Complete Word Study Bible: Strongs 1922. “ ἐπίγνωσις **epígnōsis**; gen. epignōseōs, fem. noun from epiginōskō (G1921), to **recognize**. It is more intens. than **gnōsis** (G1108), knowledge, because it **expresses a more thorough**

participation in the acquiring of knowledge on the part of the learner. It often refers to **knowledge which very powerfully influences** the form of religious life, a knowledge laying claim to personal involvement. ...**The insight obtained by penetrating knowledge, going down to the foundation."**

It is a knowledge that motivates to action:

Paul describes the beautiful synergy of the Holy Spirit's gracious work of sanctifying the children of God in Phil 2:12-13:

(ESV) 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

We are to 'work out' that which God works within. How does God work within us, in such a way that His will is worked out in us? The answer, in my view, is in this word 'epignosis', by the Holy Spirit revealing to us the 'knowledge' of God, primarily through the Word of God, which we then walk in. As we saw from J I Packer earlier:

These were men who knew: **"the authority not just of Scripture itself, as the Word of God, but of Scripture in experience – their own experience – as the power of God, through what they recognised as the illuminating and applying agency of the Holy Spirit".**

This is the essence of 'epignosis', the truth that leads to godliness, it is the Holy Spirit, both illuminating and applying the Word of God to our hearts and lives. As the Puritans said: "Truth obeyed will heal", will heal the spiritual sickness of sin and bring us into a righteous walk of faith and obedience.

Before I close, I want to look at one further key element within the Hebrews 5 passage that we were looking at:

What is fascinating in this passage is, what is it that is being trained?

(NKJV) 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use **have their senses exercised** to discern both good and evil.

The KJV, the NKJV, the NASB and the Christian Standard Bible say: **senses**. The Geneva Bible says '**wits**'. ESV says '**powers of discernment**'.

The Tyndale NT Commentary says: "This is another word (like 'practice' or 'habit') without parallels in the New Testament. It is used here for faculties (ta

aisthētēria), which **denotes those special faculties of the mind which are used for understanding and judgment.**"

Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary: "There are **spiritual senses** as well as those that are natural. There is a spiritual eye, a spiritual appetite, a spiritual taste; the soul has its sensations as well as the body; these are much depraved and lost by sin, but they are recovered by grace... **It is by use and exercise that these senses are improved, made more quick and strong to taste the sweetness of what is good and true, and the bitterness of what is false and evil. Not only reason and faith, but spiritual sense, will teach men to distinguish between what is pleasing and what is provoking to God, between what is helpful and what is hurtful to our own souls.**"

This is something that really bears pondering on.

Complete Word Study Bible: "The Greek word is: 145. αἰσθητήριον aisthētērion; gen. aisthētēriou, neut. noun from aisthánomai (G0143), to perceive with the external senses.

"... 144. αἴσθησις aísthēsis; gen. aisthéseōs, fem. noun from aisthánomai (G0143), to perceive with the external senses. **Perception, with the senses as well as the mind. Involves knowledge based upon experience.**"

We can read all about honey, it's constitution and benefits, but we will never truly 'know' honey until we have looked at it, tasted it, smelt it and touched it. Our senses further inform our minds, helping us to build a true knowledge and understanding.

How are our senses trained? One example might be learning to dance:

Listening to the music and, with your mind, counting the beats, watching your feet, intense concentration in synchronising every element; or

Learning to drive, learning to use the gears, the intense concentration on applying the clutch, 'feeling' for the disengaging of the gears, changing gear, releasing the clutch slowly, feeling the gears bite, striving to keep the whole process nice and smooth.

Until, finally, your senses have been trained and your feet and hips respond directly to the music, there is no 'lag', no time delay, your response becomes instinctive, instant, no longer having even 'to think about it'. Or, with driving, without having to consciously think about it, eventually, after constant practice, you find yourself starting the car, driving off, changing gear all instinctively, without having consciously thought about it.

Then people say, you're a 'natural' driver, you're a 'natural' dancer.

In the same way, we become 'spiritual' Christians, (which is not natural to our flesh!) honing our spiritual senses, through training in righteousness, through habitual obedience, learning God's ways and how to walk in them. A scripture that portrays this process beautifully is:

Gal 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also **keep in step** with the Spirit.

This verse is preceded by verse 24 "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

To 'walk' or 'keep in step' with the Spirit, requires a life of training and discipline, whereby we learn to discern soul, or flesh, from Spirit and put to death or put away the pull of the flesh, our sinful nature, which would trip us up and entangle us, as Heb 12:1 puts it again so descriptively:

(NIV) let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

('Fixing our eyes on Jesus' – it's a lovely thought, that when dancing, the man leads and the woman, rather than fixing her eyes on her feet, fixes her eyes on the one who will lead her through the dance, who, if she trusts and follows him, will 'keep her from falling' or stumbling.)

Finally, with that thought in our minds of 'fixing our eyes on Jesus', there is one further point that I wish to draw out of our passage in Hebrews:

The Greek word for senses, here, *aísthēsis*, is the Greek root of our English word: aesthetic, which means, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary means: **appreciative of, responsive to, or zealous about the beautiful; responsive to or appreciative of what is pleasurable to the senses.**

And that for me, sums up what the Puritans discovered for themselves and sought to train others in: they were men and women who, through the Word of God, through meditating upon it, praying it and applying it in their lives, 'proved' and bore witness to its reality and power in the Holy Spirit, to transform them from within and live out the righteousness of God that had been freely given to them though faith alone, in Christ alone.

They had trained their spiritual senses to discern, to 'taste', increasingly the excellencies and beauties of God and His Gospel and their obedience was motivated, not by a dry and joyless legalism, but by an ever-increasing joyful appreciation of Christ and a desire to know and experience His grace and beauty

of character, manifesting in their own lives as the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work within them. This is the motivating knowledge that leads us to godliness, creating in us the desire to turn away from all that would defile or mar the beautiful image of God that is being restored in us.

Rev 19:6- 8 sums up the beautiful synergy of sanctification:

(ESV) The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.

7 Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

8 it was **granted her to clothe herself**
with fine linen, bright and pure"—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

The Puritans, through the Word, illuminated and applied by the Holy Spirit, were making ready a Bride for the coming Bridegroom, as we also are both called to do and to be.

And together, the Spirit and the Bride say: 'Come.'

Revelation 22:20 (ESV) He who testifies to these things says, "**Surely I am coming soon.**" Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!