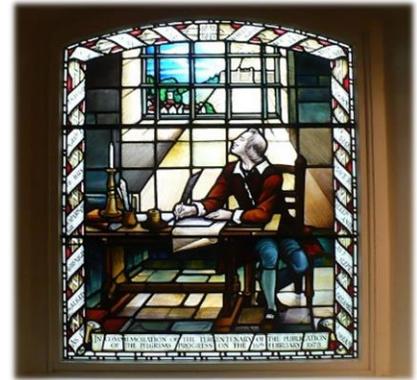


May 8, 2020

Good morning, Everybody.

For many of our students, today had been scheduled to be thrillingly busy with grand pomp and circumstance. It was to be commencement at BJU; a happy celebration of the completion of years of preparation for the Lord's high calling on their lives.



All of us share with you graduates in feeling the disappointment of your not being able to enjoy walking across the platform to be hooded and handed your degree. But we're clapping for you today, and we wish you heartfelt CONGRATULATIONS! You've persevered to accomplish God's calling to prepare yourselves to be His servants. We honor you for it, and we're excited to see the Lord's leading of you in the near future.

The staff have attempted to compile the names of everyone who would have marched across the platform today. We know of ten who would have been handed a bachelor's degree, eight a master's, and two a doctorate. We're hoping that on Sunday evening we can display the names of all of these, and in addition, the names of our high school graduates. We want everyone to be able to see who all of the honorees are and to share in their happiness.

M'Cheyne Challenge

You graduates know that for many years we've encouraged the church family to make use of the Bible reading schedule that Robert Murray M'Cheyne developed for his church members in Dundee, Scotland. Many, perhaps most of you have used it yourselves. M'Cheyne developed that schedule when he was about the age of some of you (late twenties). It seems to have been prompted by an examination which he had made of his own spiritual life about the same time. He entitled his personal assessment, *Reformation*, and began with the sentence,

It is the duty of ministers in this day to begin the reformation of religion and manners with themselves, families, etc, with confession of past sin, earnest prayer for direction, grace and full purpose of heart. Mal. 3:3, "He shall purify the sons of Levi." Ministers are probably laid aside for a time for this very purpose.

As reprinted in Andrew Bonar's *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, the paper then runs to nine full pages. (I'm including a link to this title in Google books if any of you would like to read M'Cheyne's *Reformation*. You'll find it on pages 149-158.)

[https://www.google.com/books/edition/Memoir and Remains of the Rev Robert Mur/cFHAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Memoir+and+Remains+of+Robert+Murray+M%27Cheyne&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Memoir+and+Remains+of+Robert+Murray+M%27Cheyne&printsec=frontcover/AJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Memoir+and+Remains+of+Robert+Murray+M%27Cheyne&printsec=frontcover)

The first paragraph of *Reformation* is especially appropriate for you graduates as you think about and plan for life.

I am persuaded that I shall obtain the highest amount of present happiness, I shall do most for God's glory and the good of man, and I shall have the highest reward in eternity, by maintaining a conscience always washed in Christ's blood, by being filled with the Holy Spirit at all times, and by attaining the most entire likeness to Christ in mind, will, and heart that is possible for a redeemed sinner to attain to in this world.

I really think that I should include the second paragraph as well. It's not possible to grasp the depth of conviction that M'Cheyne felt about what he had just written without seeing how he continued.

I am persuaded that whenever anyone from without, or my own heart from within, at any moment, or in any circumstance contradicts this,—if anyone shall insinuate that it is not for my present and eternal happiness, and for God's glory and my usefulness to maintain a blood-washed conscience, to be entirely filled with God's Spirit, and to be fully conformed to the image of Christ in all things,—that is the voice of the devil, God's enemy, the enemy of my soul and of all good—the most foolish, wicked, and miserable of all the creatures.

Aren't those two paragraphs unusually wise and scriptural? Don't they amount to considerations that are especially fundamental to all your hopes of future happiness; in aspirations, commitments, convictions, occupation, marriage, leisure, values, worship, etc., etc.?

You're already hearing lots of voices about how to live after graduation. Some of them come across as well intentioned. But if you'll filter them, they actually sound a lot like those in paragraph two. *You're different. . . . The times are*

different. . . . Your parents are good people, but they don't really understand. . . . Your church is kind of old fashioned; a little bit odd . . . nobody thinks like that anymore . . . you can't make a living that way. . . .

But does anyone who's talking to you sound like paragraph one? Are they not your more caring, credible counselors? Ought not they be given a grateful hearing?

This is your graduation day, even though there's no public ceremony celebrating it. Maybe the Lord planned something even better for you today. Here's a possibility: that He wants it to be less frenetic and less filled up with people than it would have been; that He wants more of it for just for the two of you--you and Him. Maybe He designed it this way to give you the opportunity to think and pray and begin your own Reformation document.

What if tonight, before you go to sleep, you intentionally shut yourself up in your room for the express purpose of reading the first three chapters of Proverbs? If you couldn't take in all three tonight, you could read the first chapter tonight and the other two in the morning. What if you "clipped" from those three chapters a punch list of counsels to guide your life from now on? What if you wrote them in a personal journal, began to pray them back to the Lord, began to live them? What do you suppose would be your future (smile)?

The first four words of the English Bible are, *In the beginning God*. F. B. Meyer, an English preacher of the last century used to include those words with his signature whenever someone asked him to sign their Bible. Why? To remind the person ever afterwards that it should always be that way with any new beginning;

In the beginning, God.

If you'd have enjoyed commencement (beginning) today (and you **should** have enjoyed it; and so should a lot of the rest of us; smile), your "beginning" would have been mostly about people. Maybe the Lord set all of that aside so that "commencement" could be (if you wish it, and choose it) much less about people and much more about Him; about getting you started in *the fear of the LORD, the beginning. . . .*

Praying for You Today (and CONGRATULATING you today),

Pastor Minnick