

Dr. Roger Green, American Christianity, Session 2, Puritanism in America and Roger Williams

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This is Dr. Roger Greene in his teaching on American Christianity. This is session 2, Puritanism in America and Roger Williams.

We are down to E, the decline of Puritanism, and I just want to kind of remind you about what that was all about.

Then we're going to look at the contributions of the Puritans, and then we want to look at some of the Puritan theology that was so important to them. So, we're down to the decline of Puritanism. Now, we mentioned, I'll go forward here, we mentioned which comes first, lack of religious zeal or the increase of wealth, which came first.

We dealt with that right at the end of our time last Friday. And you can't really. It's hard to say which came first, but the Puritans initially made money because they were very frugal. The initial Puritans, the first generation and second generation, were very careful about their money, and they poured their money back into their churches and into their businesses.

But the third generation, fourth generation, and fifth generation started to use the money on themselves, building their beautiful homes, like on Chestnut Street in Salem, and building really lovely colonial churches, which was not true of the first Puritans. So, they started to pour their money really upon themselves. That increase in wealth led to a lack of religious zeal.

You start to kind of live for yourselves, and you lose that religious zeal of the first Puritans who wanted to bring Christ to the world and the world to Christ. Or did it work the other way? Did they start to lose their religious zeal, and because they lost their religious zeal, did they decide to pour their money back into themselves? Which way? Well, I don't know. I have no idea.

But we do know that Puritanism did decline. I did have that business; I just wanted to show you this, but that business of earning money and being frugal and pouring it back into the business, into the church. Some of you have read Max Weber's book, Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

How many of you have read that book? Have you read it for a course? Okay, it's something you might want to put on your summer reading list: Protestant Ethics and

the Spirit of Capitalism. When he talks about the Puritans in this book, he talks about the Puritans who did not like the monasticism of Roman Catholicism, the getting away from this world. We'll mention this later as well.

But they lived a very ascetic life, and Weber calls this a this-worldly asceticism. So they lived out the Christian life in this world but in a very ascetic, very disciplined way. Not a monastic way, of course, but a very disciplined way.

And it was this worldly asceticism, this discipline, this living not for yourself but for others, and putting money back into the business and into the church. It's this-worldly asceticism that caused these people to gain the wealth that they acquired. I don't know if there's anything else we want to say about the decline of Puritanism.

Now, whenever a religious group declines, there's going to have to be something to take its place. We'll see that a lot in the course. The pendulum is going to swing from one to the other.

Okay, so let's go on to the contributions of Puritanism and some of the contributions that Puritanism made. Okay, one is certainly, and here, these contributions are not just religious contributions but cultural contributions to the broader culture as well. So, they're not just kind of religious in the narrow sense of the word, but one is respect for lawful government.

The Puritans certainly had a respect for lawful government. What you saw in the Mayflower Compact was by people who were already separatists now; they weren't technically Puritan, they were separatists. They had already become independent from the Anglican Church.

But you saw in the Mayflower Compact that same thing, respect for lawful government, ordering ourselves as a community in a lawful way, in which citizens are going to be obedient to the laws of the contract that we're making with each other. So you see that the value of useful work, of course, is a very important part of the lasting contribution of Puritanism. We are still, as I understand it anyway, Americans work harder than anyone else in the world.

And where did we get that kind of work ethic from? Well, certainly, partly, that comes from the Puritans' value of useful work. Civic participation and responsibility are ingrained into the American cultural life. And where did that come from? Partly, of course, from the Puritans as well.

So, a concern for education and a good example of this would be Harvard University, which was founded in 1636. Now, remember, the huge immigration of the Puritans didn't start until 1628. So, in 1636, we already get the formation of Harvard University.

John Harvard gave his library, basically, to start Harvard University. Whenever I talk about Harvard, we'll talk about it later on because we want to see the evolution of Harvard. So, we mention it here.

What is the motto of Harvard University? And I've got to be careful I don't get in front of this screen because Dr. Hildebrandt's doing so well with this. But I've got to be careful not to stand in front of the screen. Okay, what's the motto of Harvard University? Veritas.

Veritas means truth. So that's the motto of Harvard. That's on the T-shirts and the sweatshirts and the caps and everything.

Veritas. That's Harvard's motto. Very interesting.

It is interesting that that was not the original motto of Harvard, however. Does anybody know what Harvard's original motto was? Yes. Veritas in Christo et Ecclesiam.

Truth in Christ and in the church. That was the motto of Harvard University when it was founded in 1636. Now, when it became virtually Unitarian, a couple hundred years later, it dropped the in Christ and the church from the motto.

And so, the motto stays today as veritas. But the Puritans never would have founded Harvard just with the motto of veritas. It's always truth in Christ and in the church.

So, there is a real concern for education. We'll see that a lot as the course goes along. Then, there was a sense that the nation, under divine guidance, had a special mission for the world.

Askew and Perard really deal with this quite a bit. But divine guidance, a special mission to the world. This is eventually going to be cast in a broader net and called American exceptionalism.

This will lead to the American exceptionalism business. That is, America is an exceptional place and can be a motto to the world. However, American exceptionalism might not see any religious component to that exceptionalism.

Whereas the Puritans, of course, did. So, we're a nation under divine guidance with a special mission to the world. And then finally provided the religious background for many more social reform movements in the following centuries.

And that becomes important as well. So, it's hard to understand these movements in the 18th century, the First Great Awakening. 19th century, the Finite Revival.

20th century, the movement called Evangelicalism. It's hard to understand these movements that were so strong and more on social reform if we don't understand that they were grounded in the Puritans. So, we're going to see how the Puritans have a long-lasting contribution to make.

So those are some contributions of the Puritans. Askew and Perard deal with these as well. So, between the two of us, I hope that that has helped.

Any questions about the contributions of the Puritans? Right. That they were under divine guidance and that they had a special mission to the world. But that evolved into a broader notion of American public life called American Exceptionalism.

The broader label is American Exceptionalism. So, there are people who come along in the 18th century, 19th century, 20th century, and our century who believe that America has a special place in the world to kind of model what a community life should be like. However, American exceptionalism might not try to base that on any religious foundation, as the Puritans did.

So American Exceptionalism is carrying on some of this Puritan understanding of a special mission to the world but without necessarily all the religious grounding of Puritanism. And we'll see American Exceptionalism as we go along in the course. There is something else here in terms of these contributions of Puritanism to the broader kind of cultural and social life of America.

We have inherited a lot from the Puritans. We may just not be aware of that. Okay, let's move on then to the Puritan theology.

Let's talk about Puritan theology and what that is all about. What I have done with Puritan theology: I have chosen four aspects of that theology. This is a course we're trying to cover four centuries in the course.

We could spend the whole rest of the course just here. So that's true in a lot of places in the course. So, I've got to move along a bit sometimes.

So, with Puritan theology, I've chosen some highlights and aspects of their theology that I think are important. Okay, number one in terms of, and I don't have these up on PowerPoint. I'll just talk about these.

But number one would be God made the world, and God rules the world. God is the creator of the world, and God is the preserver of the world. That is very important to Puritan theology.

And so, the earth and everything in it is the Lord's as far as the Puritans were concerned. Okay, now let me say a couple of things about that. One thing is because God ordered the world, created the world, God rules the world, God preserves the world, and everything on the earth is of God.

Because that is true, God has assigned everybody certain stations in life. God has assigned vocations. We'll talk about that later.

But also, God has assigned certain stations in life, and these stations are ordained by God and, therefore, are good. One does service to God, and one, in a sense, worships God by understanding what one's vocation is and what one's station in life is. And so, because it's ordered by God.

A perfect example of this is the one that I think is closed now, but the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston had a wonderful display of 17th-century Dutch art. And it was great. What 17th-century Dutch art did was depict art as a reflection of the various stations in life that God has created.

And so the first part of the, when you went into the first part of the exhibit. Did anybody see that exhibit by any chance? Did you see that? Yeah. I thought it pretty interesting, wasn't it? And when you went into the first part, it would have been the part where there are kind of the rulers of the Dutch world and so forth.

And the second part might have been the merchants and the artisans of the Dutch world. And then maybe the third part was maybe the servants, people who served in the Dutch world and so forth. But they made the point through the display that as far as these Dutch reformed people are concerned, who were Calvinists like the Puritans were Calvinists.

As far as they were concerned, all these stations and orders in life were ordained by God. And so whatever station, whatever vocation you find yourself in, whatever station you find yourself in, that's been ordered by God. So, you just enjoy what God has given you.

So that was very much true of the Puritans, no doubt about that. Now, in terms of God ruling this world, the way you honor God. Therefore, the best way to honor God is to honor God and glorify God by the way you conduct your life. Your life is a living witness to the fact that you want to honor God, that you want to glorify God.

Therefore, some of the sins of the Puritans were slothfulness and idleness. If you're slothful and if you're idle, and if you're not working to glorify God, then that can be a sign that you're not living up to the vocation that God has given you. And you're not doing what you should be doing to honor and glorify this God who has not only

created the world and redeemed the world but who preserves the world and so forth.

So, very, very important. Now, we mentioned before, in terms of lasting contribution, the value of useful work. Here is where that value of work, that work ethic, comes into American civil life and public life.

And we're still living with that in a sense in American public life, in American cultural life. The work ethic is very strong in American public life, partly because, again, of the Puritans. Okay, number two.

The second kind of theology that I think we should, well, need to talk about is the Puritan understanding of vocation. The Puritan understanding of vocation. Okay, so where should we start? We need, in terms of vocation, to probably start with the medieval world.

And let's kind of figure out what was going on in the medieval world and then kind of fast forward that to where the Puritans really have a disagreement with that. In the medieval world, if you were thinking of medieval Christian thinking, if you were a genuine Christian, a really true Christian, you would go into a monastery or a nunnery. You would get yourself out of this world, and you would live a life of obedience to God in your vocation as a monk or a nun.

You would be an ascetic in a sense. Okay, that would be the highest kind of level of spirituality. Okay, the next level of spirituality, if you couldn't go into a monastery or a nunnery or something like that, the next level of spirituality for the men was you could become a priest.

At least you could become a priest. At least you could serve the people in a priestly way. You could preach.

You could give the sacraments and so forth. If you weren't spiritual enough to become a monk or a nun, well, maybe you're spiritual enough to become a priest. Okay, the bottom of the ladder in the medieval world were lay people.

They were the ones who, all right, you can't be a monk or a nun. Okay, you can't be a priest. All right, you're going to marry and have kids and have some kind of work on a farm or something.

All right, we'll allow that. But that's not the best of all possible worlds. But it's going to be allowed.

There was definitely a hierarchy of vocation in the medieval world. All right, Protestantism comes along with Martin Luther and Calvin and then, later in the 17th century, the Puritans. Protestantism comes along and says no to that.

Martin Luther himself said all vocations are equally worthy. All vocations and all callings from God are equally worthy. They're on the same plane.

So, if you're called to be a priest, that's fine. Or if you're called to be a minister, that's fine. But if you're called to be a laborer, that is equal to the calling of a minister.

Luther also used the imagery of the housewife. If you're called to be a housewife and rear children and so forth, that's equal to being a priest or a monk or a laborer or whatever. So that all vocations are equally worthy.

So what the Protestant Reformation did was it leveled vocations to be on the same plane. And the Puritans pick up on that. The Puritans are good Protestants.

They don't like this kind of Catholic notion of hierarchy of vocations. Therefore, we can glorify God in all vocations. All vocations are ways to glorify God.

Now, that's good Protestant theology, and that's a good kind of Puritan theology. I don't know how it was with you growing up. I grew up in an evangelical church, and maybe some of you did too.

I don't know. Maybe we'll find out at the end of the course where we all are and what our allegiance has been. This may not resonate with anybody in this room, but if it does, shake your head yes.

But growing up in evangelicalism, you definitely got the feeling. It might have been more implied than spoken, but you definitely got the feeling that if you were a real Christian, you're going to be a missionary for sure. That is absolute.

Those are the super Christians. We would have these great missionaries come to the church, and oh my word, this is God's prime vocation. Secondly, if you couldn't be a missionary, well, you can be a pastor.

You can be a pastor. At least you can be a pastor. Now, for the rest of us, there's this kind of lay people down here.

I don't know what they're all doing. I grew up with a notion of almost a medieval Roman Catholic notion of vocation. Now, it wasn't explicit as it was in the medieval world, but it was implied.

I don't know if any of you grew up in traditions like that, but there was a very strong implication that if you're really a believer, missionary work is going to be for you. That's God's chosen vocation for you. If you're not, well, you could be a pastor.

If you couldn't be that, either of those, well, you're going to be a layperson. That's fine. That's medieval Roman Catholic.

That is not Protestant. That's not the Protestant way. The Puritans taught us that the Protestant way is all vocations are equally worthy.

I feel a long sermon coming on now, but I don't have time for a long sermon. So, if any of you kind of grew up in that tradition, let's do an exorcism right now and get rid of that. Get rid of that kind of thinking.

That's medieval Catholic thinking. That is not good Protestant thinking. The Puritans helped us to remember that all vocations are equally worthy, and you glorify God then by your vocation.

So, you glorify God by your vocation. So, you roll up your sleeves, and you work in this world, this thing we mentioned before, this worldly asceticism. You do your work in this world for the glory of God.

So, vocation is very important, obviously. Okay, number three, a third thing for the Puritans, and that is the transcendence of God. The transcendence of God.

There are a lot of words we could use for the transcendence of God. We could say the glory of God, the majesty of God, and the greatness of God because the Puritans put an emphasis on the transcendence of this great God, who's the creator, preserver, and governor of all things. So, the transcendence of God.

God is not your good buddy. God is not your good friend. God is not the man upstairs, and you're the man downstairs or whatever.

So that's not God for the Puritans. That's not the God of the Bible for the Puritans. So, there's this great kind of transcendence of God.

Now, there is a therefore that comes from this, and I don't know if you want to see the therefore as positive or negative. It kind of depends on how you understand the Puritans and what they're getting at. The therefore that comes from this is, therefore, beware of any attempt to try to depict God.

Any attempt to try to depict God is out. Therefore, the Puritans did not like art that tried to depict God. They didn't like sculptures that tried to depict God, or they didn't

like paintings that tried to depict God, or they didn't like stained-glass windows that tried to depict God.

They found that offensive to the transcendence, to the majesty of God. Therefore, the Puritan religious life is a life of great simplicity. And Puritan churches, now we don't have Puritan churches now, the original, you know, first-century Puritan churches.

But Puritan churches were built in very, very plain, very plain churches. There'd be a window or two in the church, and there'd be benches that you sit on, and then there'd be a pulpit for the preaching because the service, the sermon, might be three hours or so. But there are no crosses, there's no stained-glass windows, there are no statues in the church.

All of that, as far as they were concerned, spoke against the transcendence and the majesty of God. And so, the simplicity of Puritan life in their worship service is really, really important. Yeah.

Yes. No, it was for elaboration of anything that's religious, God or Christ or the angels or the Holy Spirit or whatever. So, are there? Okay.

All right. For the same reason? Because it brings down the majesty of God? Maybe for a different reason. Yeah.

Yeah. A little more strength. The Puritans actually had a theological reason for all of this.

And so those first Puritan churches. And also, it's interesting. Have any of you been to the Old South Meeting House in Boston by any chance? If you've done the Boston Freedom Trail, you've been to the Old South Meeting House? If you go to the Old South Meeting House, which is Puritan, be careful because it's a fourth structure on that site. So it's not the original Puritan church.

And by the way, all these congregational churches that you see or Unitarian churches that you see in New England are the results of Puritan theory, but they are rather elaborate compared to early Puritan churches. But when you go into the Old South Meeting House, they will make the point. They'll say to you in the Old South Meeting House, they'll say, look around.

Do you even see a cross in this meeting house? And then you start to figure, I don't even see a cross in this meeting house. Well, that would be true of the Puritans. It wasn't just the simplicity of the church with no stained-glass windows and no statues.

It wasn't just the simplicity of the church. It was also that every function that we do in life is religious. Everything we do in life is for the glory of God.

So, when you come to Sunday morning service in the Puritan church, that's a religious act for sure. But when you meet on Tuesday nights to maybe set up a government or to deal with laws of the government, that's a religious act as well. So, these Puritan understandings of simplicity in terms of depicting God and working for God come out in so many different ways.

So, for the Puritans, this issue of God being transcendent is really strong. Let me just mention there are two words to describe this transcendence in a sense. We get a sense of who God is by his transcendence.

So, let me mention these two words. Number one, the power of God. The power of God is you just rejoice in that power of God.

You don't question the power of God. And the second word is a word we don't use very much today, but it's the inscrutability of God. God is inscrutable.

Now by inscrutable, we mean that God's ways are mysterious to us. They're beyond knowing. They're inscrutable.

We just have to trust. We have to trust his way of doing things because he is God. So, this transcendence of God talked about the power of God, and then it talked about the inscrutability of God.

Okay, now the one doctrine where this becomes very evident is the power of God, the inscrutability of God because this God is transcendent. But for the Puritans, the one doctrine where this becomes very, very evident is the doctrine of predestination from John Calvin. The doctrine of predestination, the doctrine of election.

Now, predestination had already been really dealt with by Saint Augustine and others. And even Martin Luther, of course, worked out some understanding of predestination. However, predestination up until Calvin's time, and then the Puritans are going to reflect Calvin, is kind of a single predestination.

God elects some people to be saved, and what happens to the rest of them? Well, they're left, in a sense, to their own devices and so forth. So, predestination up until Calvin's time was a single predestination. It wasn't as articulately and clearly explained as it was with John Calvin.

John Calvin comes along, and he says, well, I agree with Augustine. I agree with Martin Luther. But they haven't said enough.

So, what we need to do is focus on predestination as a reflection of the transcendence of God. So, Calvin comes along, and the Puritans follow him. Calvin comes along and preaches a double election, a double predestination.

That is, that God not only elects those who are going to be saved, but he elects those who are going to be damned as well. So, God's election is short. Now, it's inscrutable.

His ways are beyond our knowing, how he does this, why he does this. And we don't understand the power of God. He certainly has the power to do this.

It's a bit inscrutable. Nevertheless, they did believe in double election as a sign of the transcendence of God, the glory of God, and the majesty of God, which means he's powerful, which means he's inscrutable. So, to explain the double election from Calvin and from the Puritans, let's divide the room in half here, just for fun.

I mean, this is just for fun. But let's divide it right in half right here. Let's say, for the sake of argument, that to explain double election, let's say... These are movable chairs, though.

This is a problem. Let's say, for the sake of argument, that these people were elected by God before the world began to be saved. We're rejoicing in this, aren't we? So, we're rejoicing in this.

Now, I did that because Dr. Hildebrandt is here with us. So, I want him to be on the saved side. Okay.

What that means is this side right here, this side, before the world began, by God's inscrutable, unknowing will that we cannot understand totally. This means that this side was predestined to be damned by God. It's inscrutable. We don't... Okay.

Now, the question is, what should your attitude be toward them? It should be... What should your attitude... Now, I'm not saying what it is, but what should it be... It should be, you know, wonderful that God's grace is working so beautifully, even though I'm not part of it. That's what it should be. But it's not, it's not, and you have some things to say about these people.

And by saying these things about those people, you are demonstrating that God was right in his election to you to be damned all the time. So you're just demonstrating by your prophetic or whatever the word is. You're just demonstrating that God is right in his judgment.

What should your attitude be toward these people, of course? It should be there, but for the grace of God go I. If it weren't for God's grace, yeah, I'd be sitting on that side

of the room. So that should be your attitude toward these people. So there is this kind of double election.

Now, we'll put all the chairs together, and everybody will be back together again. But we're just trying to explain how the Puritans felt about this transcendent nature of God and about his power to predestine. And they believed in that.

Now, let's just say that preaching this kind of doctrine brought up the question of assurance. So, it always brought up the question of assurance. That becomes a problem in Puritan theology: assurance.

So, the Puritans answered that problem of assurance because if you're, you know, can you be assured that you're a child of God? Can you be sure that you're not one of the sinners, you know? Can you be sure of that? Brought up the question of assurance. The answer, in a sense, to that question of assurance was, are you living out the vocation that God has given you as much as you possibly can? And are you worshiping God in every aspect of your life? That becomes the Puritan kind of answer to the problem. Because if the answer to that is yes, then it's a demonstration that you are called by God to be saved.

If you can, answer yes. Now, if, on the other hand, you're living a life of rebellion against God and you're not good about your vocation. You don't go to church.

You don't study the Bible and read the Bible. You don't love to hear three-hour sermons. If that's your life, it's probably a sign that you were elected to a damnation.

That's probably a sign. So, you can have some sign of assurance. And you can even have some sign that maybe you have been elected to damnation.

But it depends on how you're going to follow your vocation and how true you're going to be to the life of the church and to the life of Christ and so forth. So there are ways to kind of get over this issue of assurance, no doubt about that. But it did cause a bit of a problem of assurance.

So what the Puritan preacher does then is encourage you when he is preaching his three-hour sermons. And I use he because that's what the Puritans ordained on him. So, by his preaching and by your listening for three hours to his sermon, he's encouraging you to live the kind of lives that will honor Christ.

And if you do that, you can be fairly certain of your assurance. Okay, let's do number four. Let's do the fourth.

And the fourth would be the priesthood of all believers. The priesthood of all believers. So let's say a few things about this priesthood of all believers.

The priesthood of all believers should not be confused with vocation. And we do this all the time. Protestants do this all the time.

I hear these two words interchangeably used. We shouldn't confuse their understanding of the priesthood of all believers with their notion of vocation. Because in their notion of vocation, some people are called by God, that's their vocation, to preach the gospel, to preach from the Bible, to give the sacraments.

That's a calling from God. The priesthood of all believers does not mean that all people in the church can do that. It doesn't mean that everybody in the church can stand up and preach from the Bible or interpret the Bible or give the sacraments.

The priesthood of all believers doesn't mean that at all because of the notion of vocation. The ability to preach and the ability to give the sacraments and be pastor over the congregation is a vocation. Okay, what the priesthood of all believers means is that we can; however, even though not everybody is called to preach, we can be priests to each other in many ways.

So, I can be your priest and pray for you. You can be my priest when praying for me. We don't need somebody in a priestly office to do that.

I can be your priest in counseling you. You can be my priest and counsel me. So, the priesthood of all believers is a doctrine that really is a kind of pastoral care for the people of God by the people of God.

And that's what the priesthood of all believers means, not to be confused with vocation. So, the priesthood of all believers is really, really important for these people. Now, what this did was it increased the importance of the laity in the church.

The priesthood of all believers meant that the laity in the church was very, very important. They are not people who just sit in the pew and listen to a sermon. These are people who sit on a pew, listen to a sermon, and then put all of that in operation in their community life for the sake of each other.

So, the priesthood of all believers really kind of accentuated this personal issue of the laity, no doubt about that. Now, what word am I using for this? The importance of the laity. We are going to see this as a primary aspect of American Christianity.

This is going to flow into the 18th century and the First Great Awakening. It's going to flow into the 19th century and the Second Great Awakening. It's going to come into the 20th century in fundamentalism and evangelicalism.

This is going to be an important issue for American Christianity: the importance of the laity. Okay, now let me stop there to see if there are questions so far, right to where we are. Any questions about this first Puritanism in America? Anything to try to understand the Puritans? Yeah, let me get a couple of names here, too.

Again, go ahead. Were Puritans not the harsh punishments like the Iscariot Isles? The Puritans, unfortunately, did come to criticism for their harsh punishments, and two things come to mind. We'll mention the first one we mentioned in the second lecture.

I think we've already maybe mentioned it, but they were hanging Quakers on the Boston Common. It was not a good thing to do, but they were hanging Quakers on the Boston Common because the Quakers were so heretical as far as they were concerned. And then, of course, the witch trials, what we call the Salem witch trials.

Where's the monument for the Salem witch trials? Of course, it's in Danvers because Danvers was part of Salem, and the Salem witch trials didn't take place when you go to the town of Salem. They took place in what is today called Danvers, and there are monuments to the Salem witch trials. So, the witch trials were also this Puritan necessity not to allow heresy to cause disruption in the social order.

So, yeah, they did earn some of the bad aspects of this, I would say. Something else? Yeah. Ricardo.

Yeah, Ricardo. So, I just wanted to make sure, since the Puritan theology wasn't on the slide, that I had the main point of that. Right, right.

Yep, we did in four. So, God made the world. Right.

So God is transcendent. Right. The understanding of vocation.

Right, yeah. The baptism of predestination. Yep, that has to do with the transcendence of God as well.

Right, yeah. Those are the four that I choose. I chose them partly because there are four kinds of prevailing themes in American Christianity.

And there's a lot that we could do with Puritan theology, obviously, but I choose those four to get kind of a highlight. Does that help, Ricardo? Yeah, Eric. So, I have a question about reassurance.

Yes, right. So, because of that, okay, you can come with anything you want. There's just that point of being free.

Right. Or is it just each other? Right. The job of the preacher is to assure them that they are the children of God.

And part of the way he did that was, are you going to church? Are you reading your scriptures? Are you loving Christ? Are you serving Christ in your vocation every single day the best you can? So, are there kinds of external markers to those who have been called by God to be predestined to go to heaven? And that's the job of the pastor, the job of the preacher, to keep giving you that assurance that you are called by God. There was, and Martin Luther is a perfect example of that because while Luther didn't develop a whole doctrine of double election, Luther still believed in predestination. And, you know, when you read Luther, part of Luther's problem that he came to grips with was every time he thought about predestination, he thought he was predestined to be damned.

So, it didn't help him at all. And so, Luther really had to work that out, this whole problem of assurance. He had to work all of that out in his own life, still believing in predestination but then believing that there are certain signs that you are elected by God to salvation and kind of rejoicing in those signs.

Luther is a perfect example of this, but the Puritan pastor and preacher are supposed to help you with this. And then the priesthood of all believers was praying for each other, counseling each other, and part of that is assuring each other by your actions, by your vocations, by your love of Christ, that you are a child of God. So, yeah, they had to work at this.

Yeah, no doubt. No, they did believe there were certainly other people. However, the Puritans were pretty; I think they were pretty convinced that they were the true interpreters of the Word of God and, therefore, the true followers of Christ and so forth.

Of course, they had a very strong anti-Catholic bias because they looked upon Catholicism as a religion of works and not a religion of grace through faith and so forth. They hanged the Quakers because the Quakers, as far as they were concerned, were heretics and so forth. So, you know, toleration, I wouldn't say that was a major thing for the Puritans.

I think they felt basically that they were the true people of God. Right, that's a good question, and for that, we'll go back to Calvin because Calvin had this very strong notion of double election, and so some people say, well, boy, what is that to evangelism, to preaching, and so forth? Calvin was a great evangelist and a great preacher for the reason that those who are elected by God before the foundation of the world, those who are elected by God need to know. They need to know of their election by God and of their assurance in God's grace.

Therefore, the necessity of preaching and evangelism is absolutely critical. You've got to get the story out so that whoever you're preaching to, those who are elected, will be able to respond to that. So, it did not detract from evangelism; rather, it strengthened it for the Puritans.

Right, there are kinds of external things that you can... Right, and it's up to the preacher to remind them that it's not. So, how important it is, but we're not saved by the work that we're doing. Those works are a sign of the electing will of God and not a way to hold on to the electing will of God.

But the preacher is pretty important in Puritan life and culture to remind people of these very things. That's why the sermons had to be three and four hours. You had to really get this.

And you're sitting on benches with no backs on them, remember. So, you're sitting there for three or four hours. What a wonderful way to spend the Sabbath.

The Puritans were big on the, not the Jewish Sabbath, but Sunday as the Sabbath. Something else on these folks before we leave them? So, just clarifying, their thing was they were big on the works being evidence of your salvation. Yes, yes, right.

Not salvation itself. Salvation itself solely comes by God's grace through the predestinating will of God. But the works are a sign of that.

Your vocation is a sign of that. Loving those three-hour sermons, that's a sign. Good sign.

Okay, something else here? Five-second break. Take a five-second break. I like to give you breaks in five seconds.

On Fridays, I give you ten seconds. So, just take a quick break here. No one, while you're taking your five-second break, has joined the course today, has you? No? Everybody has a Finney article, right? Everybody's got the syllabus? Yes.

Everybody's got the work on how to write a paper? Finney article. I did. Okay.

If you missed the Finney article, I can give it to you later. Yeah. Five seconds.

Okay. We're doing okay. You can do this.

Bless your hearts. Okay. Lecture number two.

We'll go to lecture number two and get that started today. And lecture number two is called Roger Williams and Religious Diversity in Rhode Island. So, lecture two.

If you're following along in the outline, if that's helpful to you. So, we're going to talk about Roger Williams first. We just mentioned him the other day, but now we need to talk about one of the most important persons in American Christianity, no doubt.

I mean, if someone forced me to say, you know, give me the ten or fifteen most important, Roger Williams would have to be on the list. There's no question. So, this is kind of a sketch of Roger Williams.

Now, we said that we were going to say a little more about Roger Williams. So, I'm going to do that right here, right now. So, okay.

First of all, Roger Williams was born in London, born in England, and was Anglican. Was a good Anglican, reared in an Anglican family there in England. However, during his time in England, he became a Puritan.

He was on the side of the Puritans. He wanted to purify the Anglican Church, both in its church polity, he wanted a more congregational kind of church life, and in its liturgy, he, like the other Puritans, didn't want the liturgy to be a Roman Catholic liturgy. He wanted that simplified in a biblical sense.

So, he becomes a Puritan, and then he comes over to Boston, where he is accompanied by Puritan immigration to Boston and the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Now, while he is in Boston, Roger Williams begins to have a serious confrontation with the other Puritan leaders of Boston. The confrontation was over the issue of religious liberty or religious freedom.

Roger Williams was convinced that you do not need to belong to a Christian denomination, or even to be Christian, to be a member of the state, to be a member of the colony, or to be a member of the community. And, of course, we've already said in his day, you could vote only if you were male and only if you were congregational. So, there was a limitation by state authority on what you could do.

Roger Williams disagreed with that, and he didn't just believe in tolerance; he believed in freedom, absolute freedom. So, he came into confrontation with his other Puritan leaders. So, the only thing for him to do is to get out.

And so, he heads down south into the wilderness, remember? I like to say, you know, he takes Route 95 south into Rhode Island, gets on a Bonanza bus in Boston, and ends up in Providence in a Bonanza bus, and he founds Rhode Island. And, of course, he names the city, a great kind of Puritan name, doesn't he? He named it Providence. So, he found this place called Rhode Island, and the city he calls Providence, his settlement he calls Providence.

Now, there's going to be one kind of prevailing characteristic of this new place, this new settlement. It is founded on absolute religious freedom. And therefore, in order to maintain that religious freedom, there's going to be a separation of church and state.

The church is not going to tell the state what to do, and the government is not going to tell the church what to do. And we are going to maintain that absolute because he was afraid; he was fearful of his European background. He knew places where the state governed the church, and he is fearful of that ever happening again, of the state controlling the church.

So, he's not going to have it in his colony. It's happening up in Boston. He's fearful of that.

It's not going to happen in Providence, you know? So, the separation of church and state. It's very interesting that early discussions about the separation of church and state were over the fear that the state was going to govern the church and run the church. Today, it's interesting that in the discussions of separation of church and state, we're so afraid that the church is going to have an influence on the state.

That's what we're afraid of. And so, we've got to have this separation so the church won't have this influence on the state. So, things have changed a bit.

Okay, so he's down in Providence. He's settling into Providence and founding Rhode Island. Something happened in 1639 that's important to take note of.

In 1639, Roger Williams joined the Baptists. There are some Baptists who have come to this location, and they are mainly English and Welsh in terms of their background. They had come under some persecution in Europe.

We're going to talk about the Baptists later on. They had come under some persecution in Europe, and so to flee this persecution, they came to Rhode Island. They wouldn't have been welcomed in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but they came to Rhode Island, where they knew they were free to be who they were, and they believed in the separation of church and state.

So, in 1639, he helped them build the first Baptist church in America. So, the first Baptist church in America is in Providence. But, again, when you look at the structure, you're going to look at that structure and say, wow, that seems a little bit ornate because it's the fourth structure on the site.

The original structure that was built by the Baptists would have been a very simple structure. So, in 1639, he helped them build their church, and for a period of time,

Roger Williams became a Baptist. So, for a short period of time, he becomes a Baptist, which is very interesting.

Now, because of the Baptists, there are probably some Baptists out there. I don't know. We'll find out at the end of this.

There are Baptists out there. The Baptists love to claim Roger Williams. They love to claim him.

So, some of you Baptists, you may have seen, maybe you've got pictures of Roger Williams in your church, I don't know, but some of you Baptists love to claim him. Don't be fooled by that because he was a Baptist for only about three weeks. So, he wasn't a Baptist for very long.

But he does help them build their Baptist church, and he does have sympathies with the Baptists, no doubt. But the way he ends it, what happens after that, then? Now, here he is with his city of Providence and so forth. After he leaves the Baptists, Roger Williams becomes a seeker.

A seeker is kind of a broad term for a person who doesn't have any particular religious home or any particular denominational home. And so, Roger Williams, kind of toward the end of his life, became a seeker. So, what's his pilgrimage? He had been Anglican, then he was Puritan, then he was Baptist, and then he was a seeker.

Now, Perry Miller wrote a great biography of Roger Williams. Actually, I've listed it in your book for your summer reading. In his book on Roger Williams, Perry Miller says this:

He says that at the end of his life, Roger Williams began to believe there were only two Christians in the world, him and his wife. And then he began to doubt his wife. So, when you become a seeker, you have to be careful what that does to you because you're kind of intellectually starting to believe that you are the only Christian left and that there are no other Christians left around.

So, in a sense, that happened, I think, a bit to Roger Williams when he became a seeker, a quest for the true church. I don't think he ever finally found the true church, but he did go through those areas in his life. Okay, let's just mention Rhode Island here.

Number B, I'll just mention Rhode Island. Rhode Island became the great center of religious freedom in the colonial period, the first center of religious freedom. Not religious toleration but religious freedom.

Okay, we'll pick up on that on Friday. Have a good day. For people who need some of the finny articles or if you need syllabi or anything, I can give those to you.

Have a good day, and see you on Friday.

This is Dr. Roger Greene in his teaching on American Christianity. This is session 2, Puritanism in America and Roger Williams.