

An Exhortation to Church Members

by Rolfe Barnard

Rolfe Barnard's sermon urges church members to recognize their need for personal commitment to Christ and to enthrone Him in their lives amidst the pain and disorder in the church.

Duration: 35:46

Scripture: Matthew 7:21, Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23, John 5:22, John 14:6, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Revelation 19:12

Topics: "Repentance And Faith", "Spreading The Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of repentance and committing oneself to Christ. He shares a story about an old man who couldn't bring himself to repent, and tragically passed away. The preacher urges the congregation to surrender to God and worship Him. He also discusses a Native American chief who, after experiencing God's grace, sought to respond by offering his most prized possession. The sermon concludes with a reflection on the brokenness of society and the need for churches to fulfill their mission of spreading the Gospel.

Transcript

1960, in the month of October, I hadn't been home a few days and my boss made me mow the lawn. And while I was mowing our little yard, just like this, I was stricken with a terrible, stabbing pain, right in the center of what they call the... this thing here, what is that thing, huh? Right where your nerves are. And I suffered physically nearly every hour of the day for five years.

When the pain didn't go away, they took me to a clinic and the doctor said, you ought to be mighty thankful you're hurting. It's a warning something's wrong. I brought the pastor, God bless you, you've been sweet to me.

And I believe that they're God-called pastors and I believe they're God-called evangelists, and I think we've got the same thing. All I've got to say is, we've been in pain, huh? And it's a blessing from God that so many of us are hurting. That's a sign there's something dead wrong, huh? I remember when I borrowed the money to get a specialist from whatever that treatment is in Rochester, Minnesota, and got a specialist to come and examine my mother.

She's a widow. And he said she had cancer. And he was being kind to my mother.

He could have lied about it and let her die, but he didn't and he operated and she lived 30 years, later on. Told the truth. The pain was a warning something dead wrong.

So I went through clinics and they picked me and they did this and they did everything that medical science could do. And I had people lay hands on me and pray for me. I was annoyed about you.

But it didn't do me any good. For five years, in and out of the hospitals I kept preaching and I'd go into the pulpit full of almost dope to kill the pain. They could not correct my trouble.

They didn't, at least. And I didn't do a very good job for five years. It's awfully hard to work when you're hurting awful bad, isn't it? What I'm saying, ladies and gentlemen, is that the pain signals are everywhere now and I think that we must recognize the acts of God's mercy and there's something desperately wrong with our church.

The institution to which the commission to carry out the great commission was given. We haven't done a very good job. But you and I are living in a generation that is told everything of value is being scrapped now.

I'm saying we must not ignore the pain. We must say thank you, Lord, for warning us of something deeply wrong. And I am, whether rightly or wrongly, I ask nobody to agree with me, just to hear me, conscious of the fact that the deepest need of the hour is the correction of the disorder that's caused so much pain, so little of the presence of Christ, whatever the reaction shall be.

I don't say I'm a meddler. I say I'm coming to you. It may be that I am right.

If I am, I have to give God the glory. And it may be you're going to be responsible for getting busy toward the correction of the disorder that's caused and has fixed us so we're not doing the job like we ought to do it. For King Jesus, amen.

I've just said that, I don't know whether you should have or not, but you forgive me, because I've got sense enough to know I'm going against years of tradition, years of custom, and I'm just a little peanut preacher. And so I appreciate you listening to me. Now, let's not depart from the message.

I want to seize upon two words. In this description of the exalted Lord, when he comes back to deal once again with this world, he came one time to die. He's coming again to judge.

And the description of the Holy Spirit through the lips of John says on his head were many crowns. On his head, when the thing's all over, and the last battle's been fought, and the issues have been decided, now it's time for reward and judgment. On his head, when he comes back, will be many crowns.

And I want, God knows I'm telling the truth, I want that one crown on the head of Jesus Christ will be put there by myself. And I want that crown to be me. I have but one thing that I can give to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I haven't got a nickel. He owns all the money. I haven't got any time to give him.

The times are in his hands, is that right? And got any talents? Isn't that silly? You ought to use your talents for the Lord. That's not biblical. That's hellish.

I haven't got anything except he gave me. But I got myself. And strangely enough, that's what he wants, me.

He don't want my talents. He can take somebody to make better music on an old country crosscut saw than he can some talented operatic singer. Strangely enough, that's what he came down here to get me.

He already had everything I got. But he lost me. I haven't found the only thing in this world that's estranged.

And because you and I are estranged, their atmosphere is. Yes, since cowboy in West Texas would be riding his chaff pony along the plain. He'd get hungry and he'd shoot a steer, slice off a meal, hang the quarter up on a mesquite tree and 30 years later somebody come along, take his knife and scrape the meat that'd be fresh.

Can't do that now. The difference is the people there now. Every day, every disease, every... Make meat small.

Me and you. We are the only fly in the ointment. And bless God, that's exactly why.

And we can't give him a little of that. And we can't give him a little of that. And we can't give him some of that.

To his all out givenness. Is an all out giving of out. That simply means to dethrone, to the universe, to abdicate.

And in the language of the scripture, that's the reason that my Lord will say that if any man would come after me, let him deny himself, not make a good gift or an offence. Mean as I am, once again I want one crown to have been placed on his head. That's the crown of Ralph Barnett, what there is of me.

Warden of all, here I am Lord. And I don't believe anything short of this, is saving faith. I know that Christ will not be your saviour apart from being your utter Lord.

And I know that the heart of what we call salvation is the establishment of the sovereign rule of Christ in one. I know that this whole universe is created to echo the Lordship of Christ. I've just been saying one thing in the hope that it makes some contribution to the creation of a climate again in which this sovereign Lord would make himself felt again.

There is no such climate now. He can't even attend our church services and he's dead sure not manifesting himself outside. Oh, for a climate in which my blessed Lord would make his power and his powers in this person and his presence felt again.

I want to worship him on the throne. I want to be under his discipline in the church. I want the glory in him as a man in glory and as the spirit and head of the church.

I want to be joined to him, thus have his life. God knows I'm 64 years old. Most of my race is wrong.

I'm telling you the truth. I'm not a novice. I want to be committed to his person and his passion.

I used to preach to the Indians a lot in Oklahoma. I forget the first time I went to hold a meeting in a strictly Indian church. There are a lot of Indians in Oklahoma.

Women sit on one side, men on the other. Men keep their hats on. Most of them sit there and smoke their pipe.

The old Indian chieftain here since in Oklahoma went to hear the Jesus man, the missionary. He heard him and heard him and heard him. And he'd listen to him.

Then he'd go back to his teepee and he had sense enough to know that the gospel is not only an announcement of something wonderful of what God has done and is doing, but that it has claims and demands. And if God has done this, anybody's got any sense, he'll have to do one or two things. He'll just have to shut his ear or he'll have to say, well, that's called... And the old Indian's trying to figure out in view of what the Jesus man said and was doing for him, he's trying to figure out what he could do in response.

And so finally he thought he had it. He got his favorite prized hunting rifle and he oiled it up, or whatever you do to a rifle, and he carried it into the presence of the Jesus man and said, here Jesus man, you tell me, me bring my rifle, me give it to Jesus. And the Jesus man said, no chief, Jesus.

And the poor old chieftain, utterly perplexed, went back to his teepee, didn't know what to do. But he kept listening to the Jesus man and some days later he decided he knew now Jesus had done for him. And he got his most prized possession, dearest Indian chieftain's heart, he got his most prized possession, his hunting moccasins, his best ones.

And he tallied them up and made them shine so he could look like a mirror. And he cradled them in his hands and he went into the presence of the Jesus man and said, here Jesus man, you tell me what Jesus do for me. I bring my rifle, me say me give my rifle to Jesus.

Jesus no take. Now me bring my moccasins, me give them to Jesus. And the missionary said, no chief, Jesus, no want your moccasins.

He won't take them. Utterly confused, the old chieftain went back and for days didn't come out of his teepee. And finally emerged and went into the presence of the Jesus man and said, Jesus man, you tell me what Jesus do for me.

I want to do something for Jesus. Me bring my rifle. You say Jesus no take.

Me bring my moccasins. You say Jesus no take. Me bring me.

Will Jesus take? And of course the Jesus man said, yes, he'll take you. Ladies and gentlemen, that's all he'll take. You Sunday morning church people going to split hell wide open.

You know nothing about giving yourself to Jesus. You church members that come to the house of God on Sunday. This isn't a worship service.

The only worship service in the New Testament is around the Lord's table. That's you young people who've gone through some sort of an experience, but you had to stay home this week and study, that's their price. You know nothing about.

You businessmen are too busy to be utterly committed to the redemptive program of Christ. You've missed Christ. You women that are so busy rearing your children, you're too busy to be engaged in the redemptive program of Christ.

You've missed Christ. Brother, when Jesus died, you engaged him and gave him this world. You're a willing or an unwilling subject.

If you continue to be an unwilling subject, there's nothing but hell for you. And a willing subject is a person who's gladly in the service of the commander-in-chief. And in the army, the buck private, don't tell the general, you don't feel like showing up for the war.

Nothing short of the giving of myself, that is thrown out of myself. And the enthronement of Jesus Christ is saving faith and committal to the great act of God and Christ on a bloody cross. Now this is central, brother.

You should try to get back to discipline of Christ if we're both here. If this church is made up of undisciplined rebels that want to say, I'm saved, but you will not my God. Well, there's just no hope for you, is there? Is there? That's the central.

Millions of women who are not their own. Millions of women on a cross been raised to a new discipline. Isn't that the gospel? That's what it is.

Brother, you can't make a bunch of undisciplined rebels. I know you've got something and I've not tried. But surely there's some people whose stubborn wills have been conquered in our organized churches.

Surely there's some people who have been able to tell the book, to say this is the way. If your will's been broken and your heart's been conquered, the willingness to serve him has been settled, hasn't it? And this is the core of it. A word of exhortation.

Every human being ought to crown Jesus Christ with yourself. You've got to someday, but you ought to crown him now. He'll make you someday, but you ought to do it now, because he's worthy.

For his sake, men and women ought to dethrone themselves and enthrone him, place a crown on his head, Lord of Lords, King of Kings. He's worthy. He's worthy.

Down our way, we sing a little chorus, only he's worthy. Let us praise him. He is worthy too.

He's worthy because of who he is. He's worthy because of what he did. He's worthy because of what he's doing.

He's worthy because of what he's still to do. He's worthy. They were having a Bible conference in England.

They were trying to unravel the mystery of the Trinity. God is one, yet three. One God, yet three.

Three, yet one. They had in that community a fellow that they called a half-wit. Didn't have all his wits about him.

He never missed when the congregation met. He met with them. And he, they thought, detected that somebody and one of the wardens, I guess we, and the preacher looked at it.

Three and one? One and three? That's too much for them. Has died. He's worthy.

Greater love hath no man than he lay down his life for a friend. He's worthy. And after this year, 1929, I was a student there.

And I have an absent-minded way. It's a fault, not a virtue. And liable to pass you by and never see.

And I had my head down and I walked across the campus and I ran smack dab in to Hyman Appelman, a Jewish evangelist who was a fellow student. And he ran into me because his eyes was full of tears. He couldn't see.

And he clutched me and we hugged each other and he began to sob. And he said, Rafa, you're very busy. I said, well, I don't know.

He said, could you come to my room a little? And I went up to his dormitory and he told me what happened. This was on a Tuesday, the week before his old Jewish daddy from Chicago had spent Monday night through Friday afternoon in Hyman Appelman's home. Hyman had a little church 50 miles away.

Ordinarily he stayed in the dormitory room four days a week in Fort Worth on the seminary campus. And then on Friday afternoon he'd drive out. His family was out in the night.

He came here, he'd come back. But this week his old daddy had visited him. And of course this was the first time he'd seen his daddy since he'd been saved.

He'd never been allowed to go back home. And now his old daddy after some years had come to see him. Hyman said, my daddy was a good man.

Devout in the religion of his father. Said he never said a cross word to me on four days he was in my home. Said he'd kiss me goodbye when I'd get in my car to drive over to school early in the morning.

And he'd just wait there and when I'd get back in the afternoon he'd be waiting for me. I was his firstborn, born in Russia, a Russian Jew. But he'd talk a little bit and then pretty soon my daddy would say, Hyman.

And he'd call Hyman by his Russian Jewish name. I can't pronounce it. He'd say, Hyman, my firstborn, give up your Jesus and come home.

I'd have to get up and run out of the house. Friday afternoon came and I rushed home as quickly as I could from school. My old daddy sitting in the front room his suitcase was packed his hat and overcoat over on the chairs almost time for the train.

I reached over and got his overcoat helped him put it on he put his hat on I reached down to get the suitcase and as I stooped my old daddy hugged me. Would not turn loose. He said, Hyman, you can have your clothes sent later.

I'll buy the ticket. Don't make me go home to mama without you. It'll kill her.

And he said, I had to take, I had to take my, if you've ever seen him he's powerful man, Hyman, he said I had to take it by main strength. Disengage my daddy's arms. Reached down to get the suitcase and said, come on dad.

Went and got in the car and hill away stopped the car. Got out, here came the train. It stopped and I put his suitcase up on the, whatever you call it.

He put his hand on the rail and his foot on the step. We kissed each other goodbye and then all at once just like that he turned and embraced me again. In his heart I could feel it bumping.

He said, Hyman, it'll kill mama. I can't go home without you. Get on the train with me.

I'll buy the ticket. We'll send for your thing. Give us your Jesus and come home with me.

And Hyman said, Ralph, I had to once again by the strength of my arms take my daddy's arms from around me and I held him. Since Jesus loved me enough to cut his glass from a man to dethrone self and enthrone him. For your sake you ought to do it.

It's that or hell, folks. It's just that simple. There's no way on earth you can make it any nicer.

It's that or the wrath of God that abides on you now. He's angry with me with it every day and the day is coming when the throne of God that's now a throne of mercy will be a throne of God and descend on every human being that has lived in this world as if he were God instead of bowing to him who is on Easter Sunday in my wife's hometown in Oklahoma. She went to high school there and later years I met her in Texas and we were married.

Later years I went back and held three meetings in that great church. It's a big church that holds about 1,900 people. It's always full.

It has two balconies in the lower floor. On Easter Sunday morning the services to close that night I preached. Before I preached I looked.

Finally I found the man. He's up in the topmost balcony in that corner where we're under on the last row on the last seat. He's this fine.

He is 83 years old. The pastor and I have been in his home time after time after time. I'd see weep tears come down off his cheek just make a puff.

He's agreed with everything I said. We get out and pray. He said we should pray for him.

I did everything I knew. Some things I didn't to be true to his soul. I cursed him! Sink or swim, live or die, hell or heaven, salvation or damnation.

Commit yourself to give yourself to Christ to do with you what he pleases. That's faith. Always with pierced stained eyes he'd say, Preacher, I can't.

Now it's the last Sunday morning. It's Easter. Showers of blessing have been dropping.

Kingdom of God take the invitation. Yeah! Up, down, up the steps, up the first balcony, up the steps, way down the way through. He doesn't invite, he commands.

Commit yourself to Christ. Through pierced stained eyes that 83 year old man looked at me and said, Preacher, I can't. And that afternoon at three o'clock on the dot he went out to meet God who commands all men everywhere to repent.

You ought to, if you haven't got the place, you can't. You ought to crown my Lord. Amen.

Will you bow your heads, our Father in blood-stained Jesus' name. I commit myself and this congregation to you. Have mercy upon us, for Christ's sake.

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