

Do You Want to Be Like Christ?

by Rolfe Barnard

The sermon emphasizes that salvation is the reproducing of the character of Christ in human lives, and that predestination refers to God's determination to make people like Christ.

Duration: 40:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 5:40, John 6:44, Romans 8:29, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:15-16

Topics: "Christ Likeness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being conformed to the image of Christ. He shares a story of a pastor who expressed his desire to be holy and made like Christ. The preacher affirms that God's purpose is to have a multitude of people who are like Jesus. He explains that salvation involves surrendering to God and allowing Him to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

Transcript

Now, tonight, if you'd like to start with us in the Scripture, we'll start at Psalm 45. I've got a subject I want to meditate with you tonight. God willing, tomorrow night, I want to teach on the subject, who are the Bible whosoever wills.

Who are the Bible whosoever wills. And then, if I can, on Friday night, I want to deal with the two Scriptures. One is John 5, 40, He will not come unto me, that ye might have life.

That's the most pessimistic statement in the New Testament. And then I want to deal with John 6, 44. No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him.

That's the most optimistic text in the New Testament. And I want to show you how, instead of that being something to dampen somebody seeking the Lord, that shows you how. Shows you how.

And I hope that the Lord will help us as we, in this fine atmosphere, open up God's Word on that. Now, I want to talk tonight on a very simple subject. Do you want to be made like Christ? Do you want to be made like Christ? That is the Bible doctrine, where the Bible term predestination is used.

And tonight, if I can, I want us to find out that this determination of God is the very heart of the gospel and constitutes the very heart of gospel faith. To preface my remarks, the word to predestinate occurs five times, and five times only, in the New Testament. Now, this will be helpful.

I'm not trying to answer tonight all the caricatures of this teaching. I am trying to encourage you not to let go of what the Bible says, because if you do let go of the Bible teaching of predestination, you'll have to let go of the gospel, because they're one and the same thing. Now, one reason that that word is made so much fun of is because the men who make it understand that they either got to get rid of it or change their gospel.

And they're not going to change their gospel, so they make fun of Bible terms. For if we'll look into this as the Bible opens it up, we'll find out that the gospel is a holy gospel. And salvation is a holy salvation.

And that what salvation actually is, is the making of men and women like the Lord Jesus Christ. That's all that God ever predestinated to do. That's what predestination is.

Let's start in Psalm 45 for an opening scripture. Do you want to be made like Christ? If you do, it'll be good news to you that God is determined to have a people just exactly like his Son. He has marked it out aforetime that he'll have a people, and they'll be numberless, and they, when he gets through with them, will be exactly like the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's encouraging to anybody who would like to be like Christ. If you want to be holy as Christ is holy, to hate sin as Christ hated it, and to love righteousness as Christ loved it, well, that is encouragement to know that some people are going to be brought to that place. And perhaps you might be one of that blessed number.

Certainly God wouldn't hinder you, and nothing could hinder you except your own perverted will. Now, in Psalms 45, verses 6 and 7, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.

Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness. Now, a person is as far along in the matter of being saved as his progress in hating righteousness and hating wickedness and loving righteousness can be measured. You're just deceived as you hate wickedness and love righteousness.

I use that, of course, in the Bible sense, that nobody here is saved yet. You're on the way, I trust. You're not yet arrived.

You're being saved. I hope all of you are. But you haven't become saved yet.

You'd understand that. You'll not become saved until you're just exactly like Christ, because that's what it means to be saved. Isn't that right? That's exactly what salvation is all about.

Salvation isn't a fire steeped from hell. Salvation is the reproducing in you of exactly the same character that was in the Lord Jesus Christ. And this text tells us that two things characterize Christ.

They always go together. In other words, you love righteousness just as much as you hate wickedness. You hate wickedness just as much as you love righteousness.

Do you understand? They go together. There's no such thing as loving without hating. There's no such thing as regarding without disregarding.

Life wouldn't mean a thing to us except as it's the opposite of darkness, you see. And righteousness, we wouldn't even know how to spell the word, much less know what it meant, unless it were in opposition to wickedness. And it was said of the Lord that he loved righteousness, and said of the Lord that he hated

wickedness, and therefore God thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above all thy fellows.

Somewhere many years ago, and I do not know now where, I ran across this expression that was the thought, at least it was written down by somebody in some kind of a book, and I copied it down, and I've been looking at it for maybe 30 years. Repentance, I'm quoting, Repentance is a pilgrimage from the mind of the flesh, that means everything about old Ralph Barnett, to the mind of Christ. Repentance is a pilgrimage, it's a journey.

It has its start, it has its continuance, and it has its ending. And it starts with old Ralph Barnett, the way I look at things, and the way I feel about things, and what I want to do, me, you. But repentance is a journey that starts with me, with my way of thinking, and my way of doing, and my this, and my that, my mind, and mind in the New Testament means the whole of me.

Let this mind be in you, the whole of me. Repentance is a pilgrimage, it's a journey, it's a warfare, it's a walk, it's a way, from the mind of the flesh, that's mine, to the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ. And incidentally, I was struck by that expression, for that's exactly what it means to be a person who is being saved.

You're going from you to him, from your way of doing things to his, from your character to his, from your likeness to his likeness, that's what salvation is. And that's what God is doing. He's taking men and women, finding them where they are, in the pit of corruption, with minds, spirits, and souls that are hotbeds of enmity and hostility against God's holy high commands.

And he's conquering them, and he's staying with people until that which he marked out from a poor time is a reality in those people. And they are made to be conformed to the very express image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you like to be made like Christ? Would you like someday in eternity at least somebody could write and say, Walt Chantry loved righteousness, just like Christ did.

And Walter Chantry hated wickedness, just like Christ did. Well, that's what it means to be saved, brother. That's exactly what this salvation's all about.

To be and stay with you until you're perfect in your love of righteousness, perfect in your love of hatred of wickedness. While the most beautiful portrait, the most well-rounded, most full-bodied portrait of Jesus Christ in the entire Old Testament, you couldn't say better, higher, nobler, grander things about even God's Son. And what my text in Psalms says, Thou blest righteousness, Thou heaviest wickedness.

And for that reason, God anointed him with the oil of gladness above all of his fellows, even to the extent that the Scripture goes far to say he's the firstborn among many brethren. Would you like to be made like Christ? That's gospel faith. People are brought to that place in order to be saved.

Did you get it? People are brought to that place for the Holy Ghost using truth. That's gospel faith. Somebody come into Christ, turn myself over to you, lock, stock, and barrel.

I want to be like you. Not this fire escape Sunday morning stuff you have all over America, oh no. But men and women who've been conquered and humbled.

And they long to be holy. And long to be made like the Lord Jesus Christ. That's gospel faith.

Now God has a purpose to redeem a people and to make them exactly like Christ. Now, I think I mentioned it five times in the New Testament. This purpose is denominated by the word predestiny.

One time is 1 Corinthians 2 and 7. There the gospel is said to be ordained. But the word ordained there is the same Greek word for predestiny. And then twice in Romans chapter 8 and twice in Ephesians chapter 1, God's predestinating purpose is written down.

Now I labor that because I want to ask you to see something. I love to read the old Puritans and I know many of you are doing. I love to read what saintly, godly men of old had to say.

But I also have to remember that they were just men. They weren't much smarter than I am, not that much different than men. And I want to honor them where they suffered for the gospel's sake and to stand on their accomplishments and try to reach higher.

But I do believe that what I'm going to say now would glorify God and would help us in trying to reach men and women if we would stick to Bible terms. I believe we'd get along better. In other words, if we'd had people fall out with what the Bible says, not what John Calvin or John Owen or Ralph Barnard or somebody else said, I'd eat bread of people if they got mad, would get mad at what God said in his word than what I said he said in his word.

And for that reason, I want to help you if you'll let me. The doctrine of God's election is not predestination. God's elective grace has something to say about who shall be saved.

Now, I do not pretend to be able to explain that, but I just know that's so. Sometimes in the New Testament you'll find the word foreknow or foreknowledge. But every single time in the New Testament, either the word foreknow, that's the verb, or the noun foreknowledge, that's the noun that's used.

It has to do with God's elective grace, never with his purpose and predestination. I hope you'll follow me here. The great old timers, we're not worthy to untie their shoelaces, and they sometimes use the word predestination to include the whole shooting match.

But in the Bible, God is never said to predestinate anything. Will you get this? The Bible does not teach that God predestinated anything. Predestination doesn't say a word about things or events.

God's eternal decrees that I know, or his eternal decree by which he planned out the way he'd do everything, that has to do with things and events. And election has to do with who's going to be saved. But predestination doesn't have a thing to do with who's going to be saved.

Now I labor this, not in Bible terms. In the books, men like John Calvin, those men, they take the word predestination, they can make it mean, Brother Walt, it's served for the whole outfit. But in the Bible, only five times is the word used.

And each time it refers not to God deciding that this would be and that wouldn't, but it refers to what salvation is. It refers to persons that God almighty has determined to make just exactly like his Son. If you want to fight predestination, fight that, for that's the heart of the gospel.

That's the issue today. I wouldn't waste five minutes trying to prove a doctrine, somebody just prove a doctrine, but involved in all the controversy and caricature of this great truth is what salvation really is. And salvation is the reproducing of the very character of the eternal Son of God in eternity bound men and

women.

That's what salvation is. That's what it is. I repeat it, to take you and stay with you until it makes you like the Lord Jesus Christ and our glory in the fact that everybody that God saves, the salvation that he gives them is the beginning, the continuance, and the culmination of the reproduction of Jesus Christ in human lives.

To me, that's precious. That's precious. I used to have a young pastor here, I think maybe the first or second in the name of Depp.

Yes, since I was holding meetings for his daddy in Salisbury, Maryland. And after I'd been preaching about a week, his daddy asked me if I knew Brother So-and-So. I said yes.

And he began fishing me, and I bragged on the man. You know, you say something wrong, bad about somebody, the devil will do that. And I said everything good I could think about.

And I could tell after a while the pastor was fishing, trying to get me to say something, and I wouldn't do it. Wouldn't any. And directly he said, I don't understand you bragging on this man.

I said, why not? He got in his car and he drove 200 miles down here to see me. He said, bash me on his knees. He used those expressions.

Not to have you hold a meeting for him. I said, he did? He said, yeah. He said he went 200 miles out of his way and then 200 miles back to warn me not to have you preach for him.

I said, what was his charge? I thought maybe he found out I robbed a bank or something. And he could have found out a lot, you know. And you know what the charge was? That preacher said, Brother Barnes believes in predestination.

That's all the charge he had against me. I do. I thank God that if you have any hope of salvation in you right now, that salvation is to be made like Christ.

That's what it is. I do believe in that. That's what the Holy Gospel believes.

It starts it. That's what Christ died for. That's why we were chosen, that we should be made holy and without blame.

I do believe in that. You don't see much of it in my life or yours, but that's what salvation is. The taking of an old corrupt sinner and making him like Christ.

And come hell or high water. God's determined that everybody in the language we use that he saves by his grace, he's going to stay with them until they're clumsy and they're just exactly like the Lord Jesus Christ. That's your opinion of it? No.

You've read that in Romans 8. Look at it. In Romans 8, verse 29, for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate what? To be conformed to the image of his Son. Amen? He marked it out.

He fixed it. He determined it. This is what salvation is.

Isn't that wonderful? What is predestination? It's the marking out. It's the determination of Almighty God that the people he saves shall experience what kind of a salvation? They shall have the character of Christ

100% when he's through. See? Reproduced in them.

He'll not be finished, the Bible tells us, until we shall see him as he is. And the scriptures say that look, when we see him with undimmed view, we shall be like him. Why? John chapter 3, 1 John chapter 3. Because we shall be like him or we shall what? Shall see him as he is.

And every man that hath this hope of seeing him and thus being made like him purifies himself even as he is pure. I guess I've had a thousand Baptist pulpits closed to me. I can't preach in them because it's got out on me that I believe in predestination.

But if 10,000 closed, I'd have to believe. I won't apologize for the word. God uses it five times.

If it's good enough for him, I'll not be ashamed of it. And if it's not, that salvation is the reproduction of Christ in human beings. Now brother, you'd make fun of it, not me, not me.

It's precious to me. Because I have some hope now and then that I might be one of those people when God gets through with me, I'll be like him. Amen.

That's all right. That's all right. I was down in Virginia City and one night the young pastor said, Brother Barnard, after the service tonight, could you come by? And we'd have some refreshments that I want to talk to you a little while.

And he asked me, after we enjoyed ourselves a little while in his home, he said, Brother Barnard, this is how silly and the ignorance we had to put up with, but I don't want you to be ignorant. I know you're not. I don't want you to let these ungodly preachers making fun of truth scare you from the very heart of what salvation is.

He said, Brother Barnard, what do you believe about predestination? And I told him, it's just like a tire being hauled aground. I just saw it. At that time he said, Is that what you believe? I said, Yes.

Yes, of course that's what I believe, what I told you tonight. Well, he said, Brother so-and-so was down here speaking to the preachers from all over this section. We're meeting in conference and he learned that you were coming down here to hold meetings and publicly he warned all us pastors not to hear you.

He said, Brother Barnard believes in predestination. Isn't that all? But that's the ignorance we've got today. And that's the reason I plead with you.

Just let people fuss against the Bible. For instance, I've been with folks and they say, Well, if it is predestined that that car run over, but that isn't predestination at all. Predestination has to do with persons.

Persons who are going to be made exactly like Christ. We ought not to joke and use Bible terms to make a joke of. But I know I'm right.

Just five times this blessed word appears. I thank God it just appeared once. If it said the same thing, that'd be all right.

If it said, this chance that old brother Ralph Barnard, for God went through with me, going to be conformed to the image of Christ, I'd say hallelujah. Hallelujah. But all of these things about he fixed it so that's going to happen, whether it happens or not, that's not the teaching of the Bible.

And that's not the reason to make fun of it either. The reason to make fun of it and say they don't believe it and put up all sorts of straw men and knock it into a cocked hat and branch and everything else because they know deep down in their hearts that salvation isn't this Sunday morning a carnival stuff they call Christianity, but salvation is taking a human being and beginning the work of reproducing Jesus Christ in that human being until one day that man shall awake in the very likeness of the Son of God. That's the reason the Christians are happy.

It's the most miserable person on earth. He's happy in the Lord and he's miserable but his growth seems to be awful. Awful.

That's right. That's the reason the Scriptures say we shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness. But the child of God one day will.

Glory. Hallelujah. And so I say to men and women, you want to be saved? Well, that means you want to be made like Christ, don't it? That's what salvation is.

You say, oh no, I don't want to be made like Christ. That's right. You don't.

And so they hide behind everything on earth but this is the bone they gnaw on. Why haven't you got to Christ? You don't want to be holy. You don't want to be conformed to his image.

The old-time gospel preachers said the true gospel faith is to come to the Lord Jesus with a thirsty appetite to be done with sinning and a true desire for practical deliverance. And to come to him that way is to come to him rightly. They said that the person is in the way of salvation when he desires a place in that company God proposes to make like the Lord Jesus Christ.

I like to turn to Ephesians chapter 1 and read 3, 4, 5 verses here from God's standpoint and then read them from ours. God looks at things one way we have to look at them from another.

If you want to understand what we're talking about tonight in the first chapter of Ephesians where the word predestinate occurs two of the four times of the five times it occurs in all the word of God one in verse 5 and one in verse 11 you begin reading from the way God looks at things and if you can I can't read backward but you read beginning with verse 11 and read backward and you start with God's purpose his counsel verse 11 according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will and then you read backward and the way God looks at it working according to his eternal counsel his eternal purpose one thing God did and I sure am glad he did he predestinated he marked out four times that he's going to have people and make them like his son I'm glad he did

I'm glad he did and then in line with that keep reading backward and you run into his redemption verse 7 and keep reading backward and you run into the matter of his predestinating us to the adoption of children verse 5 and keep reading backward starting with God's eternal purpose as God looks at it you run into his elective grace choosing us in him before the foundation of the world verse 4 that we should behold him without blame before him and then running on down as God looks at it through his purpose through his predestination through his redemption through his adoption of children through his elective grace why that's how we get all our blessings verse 3 says that this one has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ that's how God looks at it well I can't

look at it that way the only way I can look at it is start with verse 3 how do I get all these blessings I ain't going to fuss about them brother I'm going to rejoice whatever, whichever way that brook flows I'll say

amen praise the Lord how come I had all these blessings how come blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places according then you have his election and then his redemption and then his predestination and then his eternal counsel that's the only way I can look at it I just have to start with the blessings I've got and try to trace them God doesn't do that way he starts with his purpose here they come the rain falls on poor sinner down there I sure am glad God is going to have his people conformed to

the image of his Son and by the said God got up early one morning for breakfast took another look at his only begotten Son determined to have a whole multitude of people just exactly like the Lord that's this hated malign made fun of teaching of the word of God it's the very heart of the gospel the very heart of the gospel I was preaching in Huntington, West Virginia a year since and one afternoon telephoned the hotelist that's keeping me in the rain a neighboring pastor some miles away was on the phone among other things said Brother Barnard said what you when I was in a Bible conference they want me to come and teach some of the doctrines of the word sometimes I do it, very seldom and he said what are you teaching tonight? and I said I guess I'll be teaching on predestination tonight he

said uh-oh he said I got a man down here in my town I've been witnessing to him praying for him and I believe the Lord's dealing with him and I was going to bring him up to listen to you tonight but I'm afraid that if you talked on that subject you'd scare him off and I understood what he meant they make fun of this oh it's a shame and they malign it and everything else but uh that's so us southern people can be saved and live like we want to you know just do as we please so we got to cuss this doctrine that predestination means the making of Christ-like character we got to get rid of that you know so we can be Christians and do as we please and uh so I said well maybe the Lord let me change I don't know I won't make any promises but anyhow he brought the man and I I stuck with my subject

and I handled it somewhat like I did tonight I think I'm right it's not a question of you going to something that's going to come to pass whether it comes to pass or not you know we believe in the things going to happen whether it'll happen or not on all those jokes it's it sticks to God's purpose for those he saves we'll make them like Christ and after the service the passengers headed back to their town and the unsaved man was driving and the pastor told me later he said finally the man tears in his eyes he couldn't see and he pulled off to the side sat down and sobbed a little while brother preacher that fellow told the truth tonight and the pastor I believe he did he said I wish I could be holy wish I could be holy he said I've quit this and I've quit that and I've quit that and I've

done this and I've done that nothing does any good I wish I could be made like Christ he said brother pastor you reckon God would save a man like me pastor I sure believe he would nobody wants to be made like Christ that's what Christ came down here to do I think maybe the fellow got saved there in the car that's it that's it to be apprehended of him laid hold of him surrendered to him in whom the eternal purpose of God cannot be defeated is that men and women shall be made like the Lord Jesus Christ he can make you holy he can make you without blame you can't do it yourself he can like a little child come to him with that desire and he'll not turn you away let us stand

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