

Paul's Meeting With the Lord

by Rolfe Barnard

Rolfe Barnard emphasizes the necessity of a personal encounter with the risen Christ as the foundation of true Christian faith.

Duration: 35:01

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 2:5, Acts 9:3-4, Romans 2:16, 1 Corinthians 2:9, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Ephesians 4:11

Topics: "Meeting God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of personally encountering the risen Christ. He believes that being a Christian means having a genuine experience of seeing and hearing from the Lord. The preacher acknowledges that it can be challenging to put into words the wonder of meeting with the crucified and resurrected Son of God. He also expresses his reluctance towards the commercialized nature of Easter, but acknowledges that every Lord's Day is essentially Easter for believers.

Transcript

It's not quite as snowy as it was. I was here the last Lord's Day in December. And we nearly had to dig out to get into the, into the sanctuary.

And I'm so glad to be here this beautiful, beautiful day. Is this thing just for show or does it carry the voice? Wonderful. Someday I'm going to build a church building four miles long, from the pulpit to the back seat.

I'm anxious to see if the people will sit on the back, if it's that far. She came with me, but she backslid. She's not here for this service.

She'll be here at the eleven o'clock service. And I don't know, when I come up north to do missionary work with you Yankees, I'm a little bit, we have a good deal of humor down our way, would it tear down the sanctuary if I told a joke on Sunday? Would it? How many people promised to laugh if I told a joke? Very good. Down in Winston-Salem, they were out canvassing the community trying to get somebody to come hear me preach.

And they knocked on somebody's door and gave him some literature and told him I was in meetings and gave him a cordial invitation to be among those present. And he very cryptically said, I'll not be there, I've heard him. My wife said she'd heard me.

And see who I'm going to sit through to this morning. In the second chapter of the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul refers to his gospel several times in his writings. He talks about my gospel.

In the sixteenth verse of the second chapter of Romans, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel. They phoned, the re-singer phoned me Thursday night. I had a rest, I closed the meeting last Sunday evening and I've been loafing this week.

And he phoned to say that they would appreciate it if I'd speak at this hour as I did when I was here before. Now, I may offend you when I say that I dread Easter, Lord's Day, because there's so much of the spirit of carnival in the air that it's awfully hard for the Lord to give in a word edgewise on Easter Sunday. Having said that, I'm of course well aware of the fact that every Lord's Day is Easter Sunday for God's people.

And yet I thought I would speak today, having somewhat deprecated all of the hullabaloo that goes on. The motive may be right, I'm not big enough to question that. But I wish to speak right now for a little while on Paul's description of his meeting the risen Lord.

And then at the 11 o'clock hour, I want to bring the rest of the message a little different on three things that took place just like that. When the greatest Christian that Christ has yet produced saw the Tarsus who became Paul, when he met the living Lord, the Apostle Paul describes his meeting the Lord in Acts chapter 22, and I believe in Acts chapter 27, or the 26th, which is one of those chapters. The account that Brother St. Germain read this morning, was that St. Germain? I'd swap that name off if I were you.

That's a crazy name. The account that our brother read is Luke's description, I believe, on the direction of the Holy Ghost. This isn't Paul's own description, but it's Luke's description as the Holy Spirit led him of the time when a sinner actually saw and heard, saw the living Christ and heard him speak to him.

Now that's what Easter Sunday is all about. We've had our radio on since about 6 o'clock this morning. We got in last evening early and we were tired.

We went to bed pretty early and woke up 6 o'clock this morning, refreshed, and we turned on the music. Everybody's talking about heroes this morning. Everything on the radio, nationwide, Canada-wide, some places in Europe, all around the world, they're talking about a risen Christ.

I make my home in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. That's one of the two headquarters or centers of the Moravian people. I don't know whether you've got any of those animals up here or not.

They're lovely people. That's an old settlement from which Salem, Winston-Salem, the old Moravian, settled old Salem. For many years they had a nationwide broadcast about 6 o'clock.

Brother Easinger and his wife were through our place some months since, and we took them over to the Moravian cemetery that draws people from everywhere. Every tombstone is just a life, and the men are buried together, the women are buried together, the husbands and wives are not buried together, but the sexes are divided. It's beautiful.

And this morning, after having spent all last night in marching through the streets of Winston-Salem, singing the songs of Easter at 6 o'clock, or about sunrise this morning, over a giant hookup that reaches at least all over the South, the bishop reads the words, He is risen, and the Easter sunrise service of the Moravians takes place. So that certainly ought to be in our thoughts, and I'm not going to sin against it. And this morning I want to meditate with you a little bit about a man describing the time when he said, and

God has seen fit to give the record of it in what we call the Holy Bible, I want to let him describe his meeting with this risen Christ, for that's the nub of it, all of the celebration of it, and the singing about it is no good unless it is so that he is alive, that he is available, that he still can be seen with eyes of faith, and that men still can hear his voice as he speaks the words of eternal life to them.

I think a man's thrice a fool to call himself a Christian unless he himself has seen the Lord, and unless he himself has heard the Lord speak the words of grace and forgiveness and peace and salvation to him. Now it's all a bunch of poppycock about this risen Lord, unless it is true, and if it is true, then he's available, and you can get in touch with him, and power from him can come to you, and you can see him with eyes that see a lot better than these, and you can hear him, and he still speaks to men and says, Go thy way in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee. Now if Pastor Paul couldn't preach anything that hadn't been given to him and that hadn't passed through his own soul, you can't either.

The day God saved you, if he ever did, he calls you to be a preacher. In his high time, Baptists could let in the Roman Catholics dictate our theology and our church life. Well, we've got the preacher and the people.

The Bible does teach that there are offices. He gave some to be apostles and some prophets and some evangelists, and some pastors and some teachers, but that's an office. But he called all of his people to be proclaimers of, and heralds of, and witnesses of, what they'd seen and heard.

If you hadn't seen the Lord, shut up brother, the world's in bad milkshake without you butchering it some more. But if you've seen him with eyes of faith, you're called to be a proclaimer of that blessed thing, aren't you? Now, if you haven't heard from him, if you just took Mama's word for it or the preacher's word for it, it'd be nice if you'd keep quiet because the world's been butchered up bad enough. But if you heard from God, well, you're called to be a witness of that which you've seen and heard.

And here's a man who said he saw the Lord, and here's a man who said he heard him, and all hell couldn't stop him from telling people, if he didn't stand still long enough, what he'd seen and heard. The business of being a Christian isn't going around explaining theology or promoting a church creed. It's just men and women who've seen somebody never got over it and heard somebody, and that somebody's God in Christ never got over it.

And they're just bubbling with him. That's what it means to be a Christian. And so the apostle Paul couldn't preach anything except what he'd experienced, neither can I and neither can you.

But here's a man that we have to deal with. And he said, and the record of it's given us in the Bible, that he himself actually had a personal encounter with the living Christ. And to him it was real, it wasn't a hallucination, it wasn't a pit of epilepsy, it wasn't a dream, it wasn't a vision.

It is something that actually took place. And if this man isn't lying, then Jesus Christ is alive because if one person has ever seen him with eyes of faith and heard him with unwaxed ears and gone away, changed. For you'll be changed if you ever meet Christ.

If one person has ever done that, then certainly he's alive. If he'll reveal himself to one person, if he'll speak to one person, then the Bible testimony is the God's truth. He is risen today.

And he is alive forevermore. Now here's a man by the name of Saul of Tarsus who became Paul the Apostle, said, I saw him and I heard him. And he never doubted in all through his writings, thirteen books

of what we call the word of God came from his heart and brain.

He never doubted the necessity, and I stress that to you, dear people. Don't you be satisfied with church membership? Don't you be satisfied with a profession? Under God, you value your soul. Don't be satisfied with some decision you've made, as valuable and important as they may be.

Under God, don't you be satisfied with anything less than a seeing of Jesus Christ and a hearing him speak the words of peace and forgiveness and salvation to you. That's what it means to be a Christian. My friends, the question of experience of an encounter with the living Christ is really the question of the existence of the living God.

If he's alive, then I'd meet him, amen? If he's dead, if he's a mummy, if he's a philosophy, if he's a relic of the past, I don't know. But if there is a living God, then the real question is, can I meet him? And if there is a living God who both can and does reveal himself and speak to man, that is the big question which I'd come down and sit down by you and ask you. Nobody on God's earth can answer it but you.

Nobody on God's earth can take care of this except you. Have you met and experienced his power, the crucified Christ who ain't dead now, but he's risen and he's alive. Don't go to hell trusting the creed.

Don't go to hell promoting a doctrine. Life is in the living Christ, amen? And he can be met and he can be seen and he can be heard and thanks be unto God he can be experienced, amen? If I want to know something real, I'm not going to some college professor, some seminary professor, and I do not defecate learning. But if I wanted to find out something so about the Lord, I think I'd go way up the mountains of Kentucky, about thirty miles from the nearest dirt road, find some old Kentucky mammy with just one book in the house, and that's the book.

Lived out there with nature's God and the word of God. If I want to find out something real, brother, I'd rather take a chance on her than somebody else, wouldn't you? Knows no book but the book, but she knows God. Not a hearsay knowledge, brothers and sisters, she knows him.

She's met God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul set out going down the road to Damascus one day. Had some letters from the powers that be, the most religious people the world ever saw.

They were determined to be true to the religion and tradition of their fathers. They commissioned me as a leading member of the Sanhedrin to stamp out the people of B-W-A-Y-A-Y-W. There were some little people sort of touched in the head that had gone all over the country claiming that that illegitimate son of a poor fallen woman by the name of Mary that had got brothers coming to her on a Roman tree outside the whole city of Jerusalem and had been buried near Sephora, had to be buried in another man's tomb and wrapped in somebody else's garment.

And they were going all over the country telling the silliest things there was. They were telling that that fellow was God's son and that the proof of it was that God had raised him from the dead and given him authority over all flesh and placed the destiny of every human being in the hands of that person who by name was called Jesus of Nazareth and who had been crucified on God's office hill. And those people were just raising cane and going up and down the country and claiming that the fellow that was crucified was God's son and that he wasn't engraved that God had raised him and that they walked with him and talked with him and had communion with him.

And Paul said that's got to go. And he is raising havoc persecuting the church of God and on the road to Damascus. Thou might arrest some more of those silly people of the way.

Hallelujah! A sovereign redeeming saving God crossed his path blocked the road and Paul said when he pleased God to reveal his son in me Paul said suddenly as I was going down the road a great light shined and the brightness of it was above the brightness of the noonday sun and I heard a voice saying Saul Saul why persecutest thou me? And he said who art thou master? He said I'm Jesus I'm Jesus I'm Jesus Saul said that said of it for me he fell on his face and did whatever the human being always and ever will do gave himself lock stock and barrel to that one who had been revealed to him and he said Lord from now on you run in this show what wilt thou have me do?

All through his epistles Paul tries to describe that wonderful meeting I wish to speak in the latter hour of the three things that happened there but I pass on in the epistles he tries his dead little best to describe that time when he met the Lord he finds that he just doesn't have words to describe it can you? I like to hear a person tell about how he's saved he's telling the truth every time he tells it it gets a little gooder sort of adds to it a little bit gets sweeter you know well that's fine and Paul he sits to breathe his heart to find words to describe the wonder of the time when he had a real personal experience of a meeting with the crucified son of God who's now alive forevermore finally he just couldn't do it so he said thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift he said words just fail me his unspeakable gift the literal conclusion to which the failure of all attempts and words to describe the glorious experience thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift but one time in the 2nd book of Corinthians of chapter 4 and verse 6 and God willing I hope to speak from that passage tonight he gives his description of the time when he met the Lord I like Moffat's translation of it 2nd Corinthians 4 and 6 Paul's telling about what happened down on the road to Damascus he says here's what happened that God who commanded light to shine in darkness shined in my heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ the good things save man the lost man the lost man cannot see any glory in Christ and the saved man has seen the glory of God in the face of Christ and Paul said I was lost and then I met Christ and I saw the glory of God well did you see it?

I saw it in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ praise God he said God met me down there and God is the God who commanded light to shine in darkness and on the road to Damascus there when the sun when the light the glory of God was above the brightness of the noonday sun God showed me His glory where? in Jesus Christ it is like that time in the book of Genesis the record given Paul said it is like that time when the earth was without form and what?

God spoke Paul remembered how his own soul had known that chaos until God spoke to him Paul said the darkness was upon the face of the King in the creation morn that was certainly a picture of His dark days before He met the Lord Paul reminded himself of the time when the Spirit of God in creation morn was brooding and hovering over the waters and looking back Paul could see how true it was that from His very birth God had set Him apart and that through all His blindness and rebellion the Spirit of God had been brooding over Him guiding His destiny Paul went back to creation morn when God said let there be light and there was light there was light to me Paul said it was just like that it is a sheer miracle darkness now it is light that is what it means to pass from death unto life it was

a word proceeding out of the mouth of God it was the birth of light and order and purpose and beauty the ending of chaos and ancient night and when he said Paul was at that first creation the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy God who said let there be light shone within my heart He

scorched me with His splendor and remade me by His strength and I now walk forever in a marvelous light the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ladies and gentlemen you better listen to me if you don't know what I'm talking about this morning then you don't know the Lord you're not saved unless you beheld the glory of Christ He came the first time John's gospel tells us in the first chapter He came and tinkered and tabernacled amongst us in

the flesh and John says we beheld His glory that's the difference between the folks who got saved and the Lord here and the folks who didn't some folks laid wicked hands on them and crucified them they died and went to hell never did see the glory of God in Christ but John said we did, bless God we did we did Paul saw it and he heard it I won't have a lot to say about that no man's ever saved without a seeing of Christ the Jesus that's preached all over America couldn't save anybody cause the Jesus that's preached today is not the Jesus of the cross and the Jesus of the throne if you would get to Him today you got to come to the cross from the cross to the throne He was on the cross and He wasn't there for some school picnic He's doing business there He's now, praise God, exalted and He's

on the throne and when you come to a monarch on a throne you bow at His feet Paul saw the Lord and Paul heard from Him what shattered the flaming career of persecution what wrenched the stubborn Pharisee right around his tracks what killed the blasphemer and gave birth to the saint was nothing illusory it was the most real thing in life as real as the fact of God as real as the risen life of Christ it was an arrest God got hold of Him it was a revelation He saw somebody it was a let there be light and the words of Paul's great disciple Augustine describing his own redeeming experience of God in Christ might have come straight from Paul himself and I close by quoting these beautiful words from perhaps one of the four men four greatest servants Christ has ever known Augustine trying to put

into words what happened when he met the Lord with thy calling and shouting thou didst break my deafness with thy flashing and shining thou didst scatter my blindness at the scent of thee I drew in breath and I pant for thee I taste it and I hunger and thirst thou hast touched me and I long far for thy peace Lord Bless You

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