

# The Bible Meaning of Predestination

by Rolfe Barnard

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding predestination and salvation, highlighting that predestination refers to the salvation of individuals, not events or things, and that the purpose of predestination is to make people like Christ.*

**Duration:** 30:57

**Scripture:** Romans 8:29-30, 1 Corinthians 2:7, Ephesians 1:3-5, Ephesians 1:7

**Topics:** "Sanctification", "Predestination"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. He shares a personal story of a man who expressed a deep desire to be holy and made like Christ. The preacher assures him that God can save him and make him like Jesus. He emphasizes that salvation is not just about believing in doctrines, but about being transformed into the character of Christ. The preacher encourages the audience to seek this transformation and not settle for a superficial Christianity that allows them to do as they please.

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## Transcript

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 back 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 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 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 highest commands. And he's conquering them, and he's staying with people until that which he marks 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 Cantor loved righteousness just like Christ did, and Walter Cantor hated wickedness just like Christ did? Well, that's what it means to be a Savior, brother. That's exactly what this salvation is all about. Keep and stay with you until you're perfect in your love of righteousness, perfect in your love of hatred of wickedness.

For the most beautiful portrait, the most well-rounded, most full-bodied portrait of Jesus Christ in entire Old Testament, you couldn't say bigger, higher, nobler, grander things about even God's God. And what my text in Psalms says, Thou lovest righteousness, Thou hatest wickedness, and for that reason God anointed him with the oil of grace, even to the extent that the scripture will go as far as 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-skate Sunday morning stuff you have all over America, oh no, with men and women who have been conquered and humbled. 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 that five times in the New Testament, this purpose is denominated by the word predestiny.

One time, it's 1 Corinthians 2 and 7, there the gospel is said to be ordained. But the word ordained there is the same Greek word for predestinate. 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 it. I love to read what saintly, godly men of old have 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 from men. And I want to honor them where they suffered for the gospel's 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 had people fall out with what the Bible says, not what John Calvin or John Owen or Roth Barnard or somebody else said, I'd much rather 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 ask 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 he 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 not weathered our untied-ass shoelaces, 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 the election has to do with who's going to be saved. But predestination doesn't have anything 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 and make it mean, Brother Walt, it serves for the whole outfit. But in the Bible, only five times is the word used. And this 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 to somebody just to prove a doctrine. But involved in all the controversy and caricature of this great truth is what salvation really is. And salvation is the reproduction of the very character of the eternal Son of God, and eternity-bound men and women.

That's what salvation is. That's what it is. I repeat it to teach you.

And stay with you until it makes you like the Lord Jesus Christ. And I gloat in the fact that everybody that God serves, the salvation that he gives them is the beginning, the continuance, and the culmination of the reproduction of Jesus Christ in human life. To me, that's precious.

That's precious. I used to have a young pastor here, I think maybe the first or second, named Deb. 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 teaching 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.

I wouldn't in the end. 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 two hundred miles down here to Salisbury to beat 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 went two hundred miles out of his way and then two hundred miles back to warn me, not to have you preach for him. I said, what was his charge? I thought maybe he'd found out I'd robbed a bank or something. And he could have found out lots, you know.

And you know what the charge was? That preacher said, Brother Barnes believes in predestination. That's all the charge you have against him. 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 is believed. It starts it. That's what Christ died for.

That's why we were chosen, that we should be made whole in and without blame. I do believe in that. I don't see much of it in my life or yours, but that's what salvation is.

The taking of an old corrupt sin and making him like that. 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 plumb fade and they're just exactly like the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's your opinion of it? No, you've read that, haven't you? In Romans 8, verse 29, for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son. 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 percent, when he's through, reproduced in them. He'll not be finished, the Bible tells us, until we shall see him as he is. And the scripture says, that look, when we see him with undimmed view, we shall be like him.

Why 1 John 3? Because we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this hope of seeing him, thus being made like him, purifies himself, even as he is pure. I guess I've had a thousand Baptist quotas closed to me.

I can't preach in them, because it's got out on me that I believe in predestination. But at 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 will not be ashamed of it. And if it's not, that salvation is the reproduction of Christ in human beings.

So brother, you can make fun of it, 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 joined, I slept a little while in his home, he said, Brother Barnard, this is how silly and the ignorance we have 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 out of the air. He said, is that what you believe? I said, yes, yes, of course that's what I believe, what I told you tonight. He said, Brother, so and so was down here speaking to the preachers

from all over this section, were 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. 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 me, it will.

But that isn't predestination at all. Predestination has to do with persons, persons who are going to be made exactly like Christ. Well, not to joke, and use Bible terms to make a joke of, but I know I'm right.

Just five times this blessed word appeared. I thank God if it just appeared once, if it said the same thing, that would be all right. If it said the same thing as old Brother Rothbard, it's going to be confirmed to the end of your 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, knock it into a cocktail and branch and everything else because they know deep down in their hearts that salvation isn't this Sunday morning 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 Christ. That's reading the Christian's act, this most miserable person on earth, he's happy in the Lord and he's miserable, that his growth seems to be awful, awful.

That's right. That's reading the scripture saying we shall be satisfied with the 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 save, well that means you want to be made like Christ, don't you? That's what salvation is. You say, oh no, I don't want to be made like Christ. That's right.

People don't. They don't. And so they hide behind everything on earth.

But this is the bone they know 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 that true gospel faith is to come to the Lord Jesus Christ with a thirsty appetite, with a longing 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't, 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 a fourth time that he was going to have a 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 this 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, fusing us in him before the foundation of the world, 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 to 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.

Whichever way that brook flows, I'll say, 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. Of course! 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 the poor sinner down there. I sure am glad God is going to have his people conformed to the image of his Son.

Somebody 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 the hated, maligned, 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. One afternoon, the telephone in the hotel is keeping me in the rain.

A neighboring pastor some miles away was on the phone. Among other things, he said, Brother Barnard, watch you. 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. He said, why don't you teach them tonight? I said, I guess we'll be teaching on predestination tonight.

He said, uh-oh. He said, I've got a man down here in my town I've been witnessing to and praying for, and I believe the Lord is dealing with him. I was going to bring him up to listen to you tonight, but I'm afraid that if you talk on that subject, you'll scare him off.

I understood what he meant. Down our way, oh, boy, they make fun of this. Oh, it's a sight.

And they malign it and everything else. But that's so us Southern people can be saved and live like we want to, you know, just do as we please. So we've got to cuss this doctrine that predestination means the

making of Christ-like character.

We've got to get rid of that, you know, so we can be Christians and do as we please. And 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 stuck with my subject.

And I handled it somewhat like I did tonight. I think I'm right. It's not a question of this is going to come to pass, whether it comes to pass or not.

You know, we believe in the things that are going to happen, whether they ever happen or not, on all those jokes. It sticks to God's purpose for those he saves. We'll make them like Christ.

And as he served us, the pastor came up and introduced me to his unseemly friend, a little bit recklessly. I got in the car and headed back to their town. And the unseemly man was driving.

And the pastor told me later, he said, finally, the man had tears in his eyes. He couldn't see. And he pulled off to the side of the highway and stopped the car and turned the ignition off and sat down and sobbed a little while.

The pastor said recklessly, he said, Broke Preacher, that fellow told the truth tonight. And pastor, I believe he did. He said, I wish I could be holy.

Wish I could be holy. Said I've quit this and quit that and quit that and done this and 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? I said, I sure believe he would. If I want 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, him who, 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.

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