

The One Issue

by Rolfe Barnard

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and submitting to God's authority, which is the central issue of the hour.

Duration: 54:51

Scripture: Genesis 2:15, Isaiah 9:6-7, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Social Responsibility", "Surrender To God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the issue of people attending church on Sunday morning but not getting involved in the world around them. He compares this attitude to the people in New York City who are focused on their own lives and not paying attention to the problems happening around them. The preacher emphasizes the importance of not reducing the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to just attending church services. He calls for believers to become captives of Christ and find freedom in surrendering to His authority. The sermon also references the need for individuals to find the right answer to the question of where supreme law comes from and to submit to someone beyond themselves. The preacher highlights the importance of being actively engaged in the world and not being indifferent to the challenges and evils present.

Transcript

The one issue, and having laid some groundwork for it, I hope to ask two very simple and yet solemn questions of all of us who are gathered here, hungry, hungry for fellowship, but in great need, in great need. What is the issue? And I have two passages of scripture. The first is found in the book of Genesis, at chapter 3, where the issue was stated, and from that hour to this, every other issue has grown out of this one, and this issue, that was the issue in the Garden of Eden, remains the issue to date.

I was up in Binghamton, New York, many years since, and God was giving us great, but light harvest. That took a while. Somebody invited somebody to come to the meeting to hear me preach, and he said, no use to go.

He says the same thing all the time he preaches. I met a young Methodist preacher, he's got a well-painted ribbon and sharpened teeth. He's less than forty years old.

He's taught at the Duke University, and yet he's one of the powerful preachers of this hour. He started a church among the Methodists with nine families, and is making that city sit up and take notice as he is

seeking to create a fellowship of men and women who live in the power of the resurrection life of the risen Lord. And I asked him how on earth he had come to the clearness and the oneness of this message.

Well, he said, Brother Barnard, there isn't but one message to be preached, and that's God's eternal purpose in Jesus Christ, that on the basis of his life laid down, he proposes to set up his totalitarian rule in hearts, in institutions, and in this world before the round of time comes. But that's quite a purpose, isn't it? That's quite a message. The issue is stated in Genesis 2, verse 15, and the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. In the 9th chapter of the Gospel of the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah, two verses, verses 6 and 7 of Isaiah 9. Isaiah 9, verses 6 and 7. For under us a child is born, under us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

And of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. And upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord, of course, will perform this.

A hundred years ago, the controversial voice of his age, a man who was not an ordained public preacher, a man who wasn't perfect like we are, but he was crying aloud against exactly what we are facing today, where we live in America, where almost unanimously the people have agreed that we ought to go to church on Sunday morning and then go home. But we must not get involved in what's going on. This world is being torn to pieces by everybody out of hell, but we, like the people in New York City, are watching women ravish, husbands beaten up for trying to protect their wives because this generation of people wants to go to church on Sunday morning, listen to the preacher preach a fire, and go home.

He cried out against the same thing that John Wesley cried out in his day and that our brother Blissfield talked about this morning. This man wrote a parable a hundred years ago about the conventional faith characteristic of his fellow church members in Denmark. I wanted to begin the message tonight so some of you will be familiar, you'll bear with me.

The subject of this parable is the tame geese. Mr. Kierkegaard writes on the tame geese, and here's what he says. Suppose it was so that the geese could talk, and they'd so arranged it that they also could have their religious worship, their divine service.

Every Sunday they came together and one of the ganders preached. The essential content of the sermon was, I think this was a conference on the grace of God, I'm not certain, what a lofty destiny the geese had, what a high goal it created for them. And every time this word was mentioned, the geese curtsied and the ganders bowed their heads.

What a high goal the Creator had set before the geese. By the ring of rings, they were told, they could fly away to distant regions, blessed climes, where properly they were adorned. But here they were only strangers.

And so it was every Sunday. They broke up, each waddled home to his own affairs. And then the next Sunday again to divine worship and then again home.

And that was the end of that. They flew and they were likey, became plump and delicious, and then were eaten on Martin Mass Eve, and that was the end of that. That was the end of that.

For though the discourse sounded so lofty on Sunday, the geese on Monday were ready to recount to one another. But before a certain goose that took serious levitation and who wanted to make serious use of the rings that were designed for the high goal that was proposed to him. And the geese were wont to tell about what a terrible tragedy and what a terrible death this one encountered.

Also among the geese, there were some individuals that seemed suffering and grieved hearing. About hearing, it is currently said among the geese, you see what it leads to when you take this flying seriously. For because their hearts are occupied with the thought of wanting to fly, therefore they become thin.

Do not fly, do not have the grace of God as we have, who therefore become plump and delicate. And then Mr. Kierkegaard says, and then when someone reads this, he says, it's very pretty. And that's the end of that.

Then he waddles home to his affairs, becomes, or at least endeavors with all his might to become, plump and delicate and fat. But on Sunday morning the parson preacher cries, and he listens just like the geese. This world don't go to hell, because we've reduced that for which God hung his tongue on the cross to a matter of attending divine worship on Sunday morning, waddling home, and refusing to get involved in what's going on as this world's being butchered from every direction.

The geese listen to the parson preacher cry, and that's the end of that. I have two testimonies that speak to my heart. One of them is for this same gentleman.

I wish you'd listen to this testimony of all the nonsense uttered in these miserable times. Perhaps the most nonsensical is the sentence written with a pretense of wisdom, which I've often enough met up with in the course of my reading, and whose excellence I've heard some people praise. The nonsensical sentence is this.

Nowadays, no man can be a martyr anymore, for ours is an age incapable of making a martyr of anyone. Then Mr. Kierkegaard says, What a misconception! We are not to think it is the age which has the power to put a man to death or to make him a martyr. But it is the martyr, the genuine martyr, which must give to the age the punishment, the bitter punishment it can.

Real superiority always works in two ways. It produces the force which brings about its own fall. Thus, when a disturber of conscience fails to put to death, it is not the age which puts it in its own strength and leads him to the palace, but it is he himself who, by dealing his salutary blows, gives to me the passionate desire to kill me.

And if the age is stopped in the worst kind of laxity, such a brave man has only to appear to disturb such an age to its core. I know I've got much time, but so help me, God, I'm getting so sick and tired of being nice. I'm about to explode.

I wish I let God, God Almighty, with great power and force, grace and to help great people in this world I've had to put up with. We couldn't disturb a convention that pleased the whole shooting match-up. A great French preacher makes another statement that I preface my remarks with.

Mr. E. Matthew M. A. P. H. R. O. T. He says, after twenty-five years of preaching this first preachers, he said, I'm still appalled by all the fine words I've uttered from the pulpit, thunder by thunder, for twenty-five years. Anyone of which lived up to the hilt would have been enough to send me to church. If Christianity is not persecuted in the West, it owes its security to its unfaithfulness.

God's blessing is withdrawn and cannot be experienced in the midst of our verbal sonorities. Be the best snorer you ever saw. God's blessing seeks a truly adventuring life.

God gives to us only by halves because we trust him by halves. With that preface, I want to prepare to ask my heart one more time and yours two questions. It is said, or it is true, that when a queen or a king, a sovereign, is crowned in Great Britain, that one part of the traditional service is as follows.

They take a golden orb, surmount it on a cross, and this golden orb on a cross is presented to the sovereign. And then the words are spoken. When you see the orb set under the cross, remember that the whole world is subject to the power and to the empire of Jesus Christ.

This will serve to focus our attention tonight on the one issue of this hour, of every hour, past, present, and future, in whom is authority and how may it be recognized. In the Garden of Eden, there's just one issue. On Golgotha's Hill, there's just one issue.

In the Garden of Eden, just one issue. Does God have a right to be God, and does he exercise that right? There's just one issue at Calvary. We will not have this man reign over us.

Does God have a right to sit on the throne? The Bible says he does. Does God have a right to exercise that right? The Bible says he does. When the issue was first joined, there was peace in Abraham's tent as long as it snowed.

It was only the sun. And there were wars when Isaac came. So he was out fighting in the Second World War, and he kept getting letters from his wife.

He was in bed. She was the daughter of a husband. She was nagging him to death, worrying him to death about problems.

He finally sat down and wrote her a letter and said, For God's sake, quit worrying me with your troubles. Leave me alone to enjoy this war in peace. Figure out peace, and all do it all together.

If God Almighty had the key, if he'd step down off the throne and quit bringing his commands, quit pressing his toes, quit murdering, quit interfering, then the Garden of Eden, Tuesday, happened. God's friendship was threatened. If Adam had a wand, God would have been out of business.

And manhood, his wholeness, was lost. It was so lost that now the scriptures speak of the natural man to describe the unnatural man, the fellow that craves it, who's beside himself and has to devote to himself, or he'll act like he's got sense enough to come in out of the rain. Oh, things ought to kill him.

Now, the issue of the same scripture of God Almighty has got to be set. God Almighty will never listen to you on any other matter until this issue's set. We have the privilege.

I used to look in the back of the algebra book to cheat a little bit and find out the answer, and I've gone to all trouble working it out. Praise God. And I've looked in the back of the book, and I read in the 15th chapter, 1 Corinthians, this thing's going to be settled.

Praise God. He must reign. He must.

Until that thing's settled. Until this world is bought. Into subjection to Almighty God in Christ.

Man's wholeness was lost. Man was made to be governed. There's never been any government placed on anybody's shoulders but Jesus Christ.

The government was on his shoulders. The whole house fell and turned over to him. Nobody got any right to make any decisions there.

The government shall be on his shoulder, not yours. I can't quote it. But John Calvin dedicated his institute to the reigning monarch of his day, and in the climate of boldness in his heart, was pleased to remind that monarch that he'd sit where he was as long as it pleased.

The only one that's ever been given any rule or any government, Jesus Christ. Man was made to be governed. The ungoverned man is not a real man.

Only so will he be a whole man. Otherwise he's just a fish out of water. He was created to serve God.

His human personality was designed for something more than self-centered animal existence. Made this man not to stand alone but to be lost in a great purpose. That strange expression is still true.

In whose service is perfect freedom? Sin is personal slavery instead of obedient freedom. To be free, a man must be under him upon whose shoulders the government of everything that riles and wriggles from time to eternity has been placed. What a Savior.

Salvation, then. We heard about somebody seeing God's salvation this morning. Salvation, then, if it's God's salvation, is the restoration of the throne-ship of God and making a man a man one more time.

It follows, therefore, that three things are true. The gospel of God's salvation is the proclamation of Him, in Him, through Him, and in Him, for Him. God put the system of all things, and in and through Him, we gain God's throne-ship in all of the earth and restore man to where he's a whole man.

You don't buy any of the other books back there that your wife lets you buy. Mr. Warfield's The Plan of Salvation. Ah, when you get the blues, go read it.

This world's going to be redeemed. God bless your heart. This world's going to be brought back as the creature with God on the throne.

The gospel is the story of how God has put all of His eternal purposes, all of His eggs in one basket. The gospel is God, is as God as Christ and as power as Christ. The gospel is shutting the door to hoping that all else except Him cries, and open it to Him back.

The gospel of God's salvation is the proclamation, not the explaining, of a person in Him and through Him. God's purpose is to do everything that'll ever be done for kingdoms or nations or systems or worlds or individuals. That is, we can understand all threefold description of the credentials of gospel preaching.

I hope Brother Mayhem can stay on the radio, but I warn him right now. If we ever find out what to preach, and he ain't going to stay on, imagine what would happen if the Jewish people in America ever got wise to what's happening on the radio. That's an insult to a Jew.

The stuff you preach is that illegitimate son of a fallen woman! That man, if they hadn't killed him, he'd have done irreparable damage to the Godhead of God and the religion of the Fathers. My soul, we can understand that the reason we're pretty comfortable yet in America and go to church on Sunday morning and gobble home is that we don't have the power of God on us. So to indulge in gospel, this is what we preach.

No wonder Paul said, preaching of the cross, the word of the cross, is a scandalous agonizing insult to a Baptist or a Methodist or a Presbyterian or a Roman Catholic or a Jew or anybody else that's got religion but don't know Christ. A little child can understand it and everybody go to hell believing it. But if it's the gospel, the word of the cross, it's scandalous, scandalous.

And it's downright foolish to anybody that's got right good sense. It's foolishness to the Greek. I said many times, only a fool or a Christian believes that Jesus, the born of God, is the Son of God.

There's not enough brain power in this world to figure that out. If you're an idiot, I don't understand how you can believe Jesus is the Son of God. Otherwise you can't, apart from the miracle of the new birth.

No wonder the simple gospel, where the preachers of the day said, just give them the simple plan of salvation. Well, if you do, they'll take it. They'll never know when to swallow it, never miss it when to lose it, never regret it in hell.

It's not simple. It's not simple. We can understand why it's the power of God and the wisdom of God to them who are called.

If the issue of the hour is the threat to the throne-ship of God, man's rebellion, the restoration of the total manhood of believers, then the gospel of God's salvation is a proclamation of this one, of whom who is scandalous to religious people, downright silly to educators, wonderful to those who are here. In the second place, to be saved, if what I've said is so, to be saved means to be converted to the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is Christ. The New Testament identifies, to be saved means to be converted to the rule of God in Jesus Christ.

To be saved means that one's heart's concern is fully given to God sitting on the throne. Yes, holy. We must keep preaching, some with an open hand, but under God we must preach as we've never preached.

While your hand's open, let your knee be bent. We must preach that man must become captives of Christ and thus may free. We must preach that man is made to be governed and any salvation, don't take care of that, is not that which God hung his son on a cross to pay for.

We must preach that we're most free when we're most fierce, that we never stand so straight as when we're bowed to him. We must preach that under his authority and nowhere else is a man free. We must preach that the greatest need of a man is to find the right answer to the question, where shall supreme loyalty be given? How may I surrender to someone beyond myself? How may I resign as a general manager of the universe? How may I render up my sword because that's a symbol of authority and God will have your sword and send you to hell? How shall I come to be able to swear allegiance willingly to him? No wonder the New Testament speaks, and the Lord added, under the church daily, such is what being saved.

Oh, my soul, and understand these people that never have to pray and never have to confess and never have to repent and never have to apologize and never have to walk the floor at night and cry when they

haven't seen to the grass. They never have to face for one second the claims of Jesus Christ. Oh, my soul, I confide myself to you and I get along fairly well but the claims of Christ's Lordship, save it! Save it! Not to God, I look far after that time when with undimmed eyes I shall get a undimmed look at the Lord Jesus Christ and how they like him.

If you heard this morning and I can understand how a Christian is the most memorable happy person beside a hill and he'll never be satisfied until he awaits in the likeness of Christ. Yes! Yes! Nobody's got a right to make a single decision except Christ. If in a mood of formidation one had each fall apart, my God, we'd have, as D.W. Johnson said, mourned beaches in our hearts and in our churches once again and the icicles might fall apart, and Mr. Wet Eyes and Miss Damien might come back to me.

Oh, my soul, conversion means a change of mastery, converted to the kingdom, the rule of God Almighty. And thus the saved man's found freedom. He's just whistling by the graveyard, hoping the ghost won't get him.

He's found freedom by becoming a slave to one greater than himself, the self-centered man that comes to church on Sunday morning, wanders home, and that's the end of that, refuses to recognize the claims of God on his life. The only kingdom he'll recognize, one he's built. Thus he attempts to become the rule of his own life, and his will becomes his God, for his will is just exactly in the place God said he'll not share with another.

And thus he's not free, but he's a slave. This is sin, the setting up of our own little kingdom in opposition to God. This is sin, to build a tower of Babylon, reach up to God and bring him down to do our bidding.

This is sin, its intention to be the creator, not willing to be the creature. This is sin, the subject trying to be the sovereign. This is sin, open rebellion, and by God you'd light a match tonight, this building would explode.

Rebellion! Oh, it's a good thing Jesus ain't coming back in the flesh, we wouldn't let him get out inside the city limits. We'd wind him apart. This is sin, it's rebellion against the will and the authority and the sovereignty of God and spiritual deadness to his voice.

And sin's a lot more than an action now, it's a condition. Salvation must come where man is, and he must be converted to a lifelong pursuit of the will of Almighty God. I'm so hungry for my own heart to keep, I'm so tired of preaching to drive, I'm about to shoot somebody.

I'm so tired of preaching to high sickles and orthodox people. My soul, one inch below, I'd put a \$25 bounty on a lot of folks and make me some money. I'm so tired, aren't you, of this nice little convenient stuff we call being saved.

I long for somebody that makes about 1,700 mistakes a day, but bless God he's headed toward the will of God. That's it. Oh, boy.

That's right. That's right. A fellow told me about to sit there, and this fellow here saw this side of him, my heel.

Said as he got converted, his face lit up like an old abandoned cathedral when darkness came, when it was lit up with candles. Said his face just lit up with candles. I told him to read, let him sit down here and scratch for me.

Oh, boy, and he gets happy. He likes to ruin us around here. We could do with it.

Oh, my soul. To be converted. To be converted.

To be hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Instead of telling about that fellow, he ain't straight on the doctrines of grace. Oh, if I ever meet one of these graceful fellows again, I'm going to kill him and cut him to death.

Because they can't stand the grace in him. Well, I won't charge anything extra for that. But it follows that if God's eggs are in one basket in Christ, then that salvation means to be converted to the kingdom, the rule of Christ.

It follows, therefore, that revival, if you like the word, I don't. I use it for glory. Oh, that will be glory.

It's coming somewhere down the road. Well, it'll simply be, it'll be when men see Christ sitting on the throne, and they say praise the Lord. Sure I'm glad he's there.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. It sure ain't going to be when we get some more church members.

We've got ten. It ain't going to be when we get some more people. What's Paul say? We done saved America.

I don't know what it would be. It would be when Paul's right with the world. God's on the throne.

Now to this I wish to ask quite quickly two questions. I cannot answer the questions, but I live in the hope that be God's will, and that before he says it's enough for me, I'll experience something other. I want to ask you two questions first.

Can a given local assembly, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in a given assembly, represented several ways here tonight, can it be brought to rejoice that Christ, my God, how much longer is God going to stand the rebellion inside of the churches of Jesus? I say to you, not as a plea for pity, I've been preaching thirty-seven years, most out of the Hitchhiker Band, getting smaller every year, most of the preachers have already thrown up the white flag, they have proved time to win in above Christ. This ain't no use. We've gone about as far as we can go.

Some of you pastors have gone about as far as you can go. You know, and I know, unless God's voice begins to be heard in the church on your lap. As God is my judge, we just about shut up there.

The only way Christ may manifest himself is where his authority is recognized. On the day of Pentecost, we've seen it. It must take place again.

We haven't got any message. We can holler about, we're not saved, the works were saved, the grace, we're elected, and all that to reveal the peace. Isn't that precious? But they're not the issues of this hour.

The issue of this hour is who false, lawless church members are dragging the gospel under that dirty feet. Kneel and profess loyalty to a far-off risen Lord that will not be subject to him as he speaks through the territory which he's here. I say to you, my pastor friend, we sweat the dirt under the rug about as long as we can.

We've got to honestly face up. Nobody has the answer. Will we see in our day churches where Jesus Christ, sitting on the throne of that church on the day of Pentecost, pierces the hearts of 3,000 people? All of our efforts took up on the blind side of this situation and about played out on all of them.

About the only hope I see now is the revelation of Christ sitting right in the center of this church, speaking through lips of clay, speaking the message of God. I want to ask another question. I haven't the answer.

I just have a hope. Don't drop me my hope. Can we again see in our day men utterly conquered by and taken captive to the Lord Jesus Christ? I said, I guess it's old man Ralph Barnard, somebody got converted in our church.

Boy, wouldn't he make a change. I mean converted. We get them to profess faith.

We're doing the best we know how. I'm a member of the church. They ask them about joining every Sunday.

Ain't no more people in prime meeting the next night. The budget ain't no bigger. Nothing bigger.

I don't know what happens to them. They get converted and say, Goodbye, Jesus. Hope to see you in heaven if you make it.

Oh, I'd love to see somebody converted. Somebody that ain't perfect yet, but blessed God, he's turned up a trail in that direction. He's changed.

He's changed. If you know that the Reformation was born in the heart of Lutheran Calvin, we mustn't camp on first base. We must speak for our day, there and all we can.

But they accused the church of Rome of having a man-centered faith. They said that the church of that time was turning people out whose faith was centered in their own efforts to meet their own needs. And they said if they'd honestly answer two questions, we'd come to the heart of it.

First, do you seek God for what He'll do for you? Second, do you believe that by your efforts you can get from God what you need? Now that those two things were formed, the doctrine of justification, we wouldn't know if American or old. It suffered at the hands of its friends and enemies. But it meant then that the gift, that salvation was the gift of God, and that it was achieved by receiving, not doing.

As you know, there are two types of faith within professing Christianity today. There's the faith that centers on me, what I can do, and what I can get. And then there's the faith that centers on God and His glory.

Whatever faith is, it's basically a relationship between God and man. It's either God-centered or man-centered. I'm going to ask you this question, and I'm going to ask us preachers.

Dear one, do you seek God because you take a right relationship with Him that benefits you? Then the real important person that I'll pick you with, do you believe your own efforts will bring you those benefits? Man's need and man's efforts to have his need met. Boy, he rolled up his sleeve and spat on his hand and said, I'm going to get right with you. That's good.

You put this and you did this. And then finally, he came to see that he was worshiping himself in his own efforts. He saw that true faith was not a matter of his needs or the desire to have peace, but the true faith was a bowing to God, even if nothing resulted to Him.

And thus he came to define salvation as, I quote him, the realization of God's will and purpose, whatever that might be, rather than the satisfaction of human need. He even went so far as to say that those who truly love God freely offer themselves to all the will of God, even to hell and death eternally, should God so will, in order that His will may be fully done. Calvin came and echoed, he said the Christians should be willing to be damned for the glory of God.

He said we must affirm God without demanding that He affirm us. He said that true faith means having confidence in God regardless of profit or loss. He said only those go to heaven who are willing not to go.

I don't go down so deep, I don't know how to handle it, but we're back to our subject. Which comes first? Glory of God on His throne, the will of God, or what we can get out of it. I pray for myself and for every public preacher and for every child of God in this hour for a baptism of the voice of authority regardless of this age or this age.

It's got no use for God except as a milk cow to get something out of Him. He won't send the morning gives a little service to a far-off God. Oh, to this bedeviled and bedazzled and religiously cocaineed a generation of people in for hell is just one issue.

That's the glory and the will of Almighty God whether we spend eternity in Hygma Hill the glory must come back to our pulpits. It's a mighty dull business to defend the doctrine. God bless your heart.

I wish we could be set on fire. The soul quests this issue. This generation will pay us a compliment of thinking we're a little like him whom we profess to love.

Away with him. Away with him. Get rid of him.

If we don't get rid of him he's going to tear up our Sabbath worship and our offerings and our sacrifices. Oh, God, give us a baptism of fire and passion and tears that quests this claim of Almighty God on men until some shall gnash their teeth and others shall say it is impossible that he's anybody except. Bring it by your heads.

I'm going to ask us to softly sing a verse to cast me not, O gentle Savior. Dear, my humble cries will need a book while on others thou art calling. Do not pass me by.

And while we are bowed head, will you sing it? I want us to have a prayer and then a plea. Just sing it quietly and proudly. A church could sing this.

A preacher could sing this. An unsaved man can say, Oh, Lord, don't pass our congregation by. And a sinner could pray it.

In these desperate days when our hearts cry out for parts and tongues for manifestation of the power of the risen Lord. Make it to your private prayer while we sing it. Leave it to our Lord.

God bless you.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net