

There Is a War Going On

by Rolfe Barnard

Rolfe Barnard's sermon calls Christians to recognize the spiritual war they are in and to actively engage in their faith and community.

Duration: 43:23

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:1

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sovereignty Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of surrendering to the Lord Jesus Christ. He mentions that he had to preach for a longer time in the past, but now he believes that the profound statement is that Jesus is both Lord and Messiah. The preacher talks about the need for a demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power in order to strengthen our faith. He refers to the apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians, where Paul mentions the determination and demonstration of the Spirit in his preaching. The preacher also highlights the current challenges to the sovereignty and power of Christ in the world.

Transcript

It is an honor to be the evangelist of this church. I have been for many years. Can't just think that much emphasis is being placed these days on what a church is.

And one characteristic of a New Testament church would be that it would have an evangelist. But most of us don't. And so I'm glad that every month I get a check from this church, the Black Lives Missionary in Africa or somewhere.

And it helps me, and it helps them, and it would help your church if you would just quit being, picking your tricks that you like and begin to pay a little attention to the book. We've had a Bible with us quite a while, but we don't pay greatly attention to it. It's always a joy to be in this pulpit.

We sit a lot of Bibles here back in the old days. We've seen lots of water run under the bridges. This is the 14th or 15th session of the first church, I guess, in America, at an annual conference basically around the initial and foundational truth that Christ is a life-giving spirit.

When you turn to the book of 1 Corinthians, chapter 2, and I am not the teacher this morning, but I am one of the most profound teachers on the God's earth, or on the God's side, is Brother E. W. Johnson. What I do is he puts in that little paper. I get a lot of that stuff and work it over and fix it up so it's right.

But I can get one of his papers and place a year upon it and what he places in one message. And I don't know, I thank God for him. And what that little one-eyed Jew over in Jerusalem done this last week made a statement on Aaron out of him.

I told him I was going to stand guard and hope that that little Jew didn't come over and conquer America before he got through this morning. But we've seen history in the last few days. I was a little bothered when Brother Johnson announced his fix 1 Corinthians.

Down in Texas there were Jackson troops and these brethren there. Last February we had a conference and had a fool preacher down there named McDonnell. He preached there last year.

And he had three messages in the morning and three at night. I never got to religious in all of my life. I'll tell you a fact, anybody who hasn't got more sense than that ought to be shocked.

And I was the last speaker the last time and a certain preacher named Mahan got up and announced my sermon. I came with my message all prepared. I was going to preach on why Christ died.

And of course I had an Orthodox sermon. It's just three points. That's all you can have if you want to be Orthodox.

And this fool Mahan got up and preached. Four points. One of them found not to be so.

And I had picked out while he was popping off, you know, and get me another message. And I called him a thief publicly and I think I can call you one day, Brother Johnson, except the fact that I had come just for a word of faith. Let me read the first three or four verses of the second chapter of the first book of Corinthians.

And I sat there and said, maybe this will be accomplished. I don't know whether we've had any like it or not, where only one thing is said. And the first speaker has certainly hit it right where it has in the faith.

And if we could get one thing said and believed in our hearts and can't leave from public profession to practical practice, that'd be a conference that God Almighty would be greatly pleased with. So I want to go a little bit with this tremendous Bible message as a background or a foundation to stand on. And I read verse 1 through 5 of 1 Corinthians, chapter 2. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellent procedure of wisdom, declaring, not explaining, but declaring, not debating, but declaring unto you the testimony of God.

For I discerned not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and the power.

In order that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of the best or the poorest of any kind, in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. This is a day, perhaps signally a day, when our Lord Christ is challenged concerning his sovereignty and power. Three-fourths of this world has stepped in, and humanity is dead sure on the march today.

This lawless period is challenging this Christ of whom we heard from Brother Johnson. His being fell and taken out, and you can't cover it up anymore in every realm of life, social. The bottoms fall out of all decency, social-wise now, political, religious.

This is the time, if we shall speak for our day. If we shall not seek to prove doctrine for doctrine's sake. If our doctrine shall be borne out of the issues that affect me to dethrone Christ in a given day.

If the bone of our bone and blood of our blood are not something to be argued or proved. This is the time to reoccur and to proclaim the sole authority and the absolute sufficiency of the Son of God. I am not altogether happy that the most prophetic voices on the face of the earth today are coming from Catholic bishops and priests.

It seems that the only people professing the name of Christ, that God is able to get in on a word in their drive. If you think I'm crazy, it's because you do not read what's being written today. If you think I'm crazy, it's because you do not visit the hospitals in the back alleys of our cities.

While we are putting a little more pepper on our pet doctrine, and see the priests and millionaire laymen of Catholicism today, putting the gospel into practice and meeting the questions that people are asking today, further upon tomorrow. Bishop King, you do well to listen to him sometimes. God sometimes speaks through him, speaks through Balaam's jackass while he might speak to a Catholic priest.

Bishop King has made the prophetic statement that Antichrist is here. And I must believe that Antichrist will be personified. But brother, his presence and power, it sure arrives on the scene.

I want to go a little while this morning on a question that raises so many questions that I'll not have time to answer because I can't answer them. I speak as an evangelist. I recognize that a man's gifts shall make room for him.

I recognize the tremendous need for all of the gifted ministries of the risen Lord. And so I'm not going to be able to answer much of what I suggest this morning. God help us.

I am so deftly afraid that we're fighting battles that have already been fought, that we're raising questions that nobody is interested in, that especially we of the grace persuasion as reversed in the preceding message are terribly in danger of being cultists, meeting together to congratulate ourselves on how sound our doctrine is and how terrible the other fellows' is. Of course, you know, we'll meet on Sunday morning and congratulate ourselves on our marvelous beliefs. I teach history and I'm always interested in history.

I have made it my business to try to find out if this statement I'm going to make is not so. It was suggested, of course, by Jonathan Edwards, I don't know who he got it from, that the task of every generation of God's people is to determine the direction in which the sovereign redeemer is going in tears days. Not children's days, not the day of maturity, but in tears days.

And then go in that direction. I believe that every man in every movement that God has ever used, he has been able to use this because he got them to focus their attention on those issues and relate their gospel and their doctrine to the enemies that were crossing the path of the gospel in their days. I think I've made every mistake that can be made doctrinally and methodically in trying to get to this foundation he just talked about.

It hasn't been an easy bet. I don't want to be asleep in this awful day. I want to be a witness.

I want to challenge God first to a quintessential witness empowered by the Holy Ghost. For this, Lord of life, I believe that we must engage in bloody battle. Every enemy that is tearing down that foundation almost got thrown down.

Every enemy that crosses the path of the gospel in our days, not those enemies that were pertinent yesterday, but the ones today. A preacher from San Antonio said in Miami the other day, and I got a little hope, he said if the taxes and shares and \$15,000 go home, it could be a mama's little baby boy. And with the voice of the thundering prophet of God, all this generation of non-involved so-called Christians get their hands dirty in the battle of revival.

Of course, I understand that in public hasn't such as this, with preachers able and have nerve enough to preach in our own churches, that's who's ours at the convention. But I like to hear that. This preacher said that one of his big businessmen members came to him not long ago and said, Pastor, I'm so tired of being inspired.

I'd like to get my hands dirty in the war that's going on. How in the name of God could we get involved in this hour? I've already been to the kitchen and told two or three of the women that last year they had too much sauce on the beans. And if they had it this year, I'm going to start a protest to picket line.

I'm going to get involved in something. I'm just tired. I'm going to protest something.

I read where the editor of one of the Southern Baptist papers, writing in the paper, said the other day that Southern Baptist preachers and churches were guilty of sleeping through the revolution of our hour. And they were refusing to get involved in the issues of this day because they were afraid it would hurt our cooperative program. But you say amen to that, and we bow to you.

Sleeping through a revolution. I say that we need to shift our stance to face the issues of this hour. In the 16th century, Martin Luther and Calvin and those men, and their beginnings, those beginnings were made within a corrupted Christian society called Christendom.

And for more than a century, Protestants, pastors, Calvin and those men, and the Puritans, were forced to be on the defensive, preserving the purity of their faith and worship against relentless adversaries. Just the Puritans and their predecessors focused attention on the Word and what they called the sacraments. But you do not get the missionary note in the Puritans.

We honor them for their defense of the gospel. But today we are in a missionary situation. I don't care where you live, for there is no such thing as Christendom anymore.

There is no culture, there is no sophomore anywhere that can belabor as Christian either corrupt or good. Everywhere in the world today, Christians find themselves in the middle of secular and pagan cultures, and Christians are called upon to rebel those in the schools and church and place a business with people who are utterly indifferent to or downright hostile to every claim of Jesus Christ. Every ethic of Christianity is under fire now, and they are not using slingshots.

This is the day of revival, the revival of every ism that has ever spewed out of here. Communism, paganism, hatred between the Arabs and the Jews and the Russians and the United States. You could taste it and cut it with a knife in the last few days.

Every great section of the world's geographic territory has now been called to the gospel of the Lord of Life. Every ism, institutionalism, nationalism, materialism, every ism is on the march today. There are no absolutes, no law that Johnson talked about.

That's a wreck of an absent monarch that we could do without. No Bible and no living law. And God puts us very little involved.

Arthur Compton, the Nobel Prize winner in physics, has coined this phrase, Science has created the world in which Christianity is imperative. Science has created the world in which Christianity is imperative. But a look at us in America would reveal that we are a very religious people, but that our religious life is largely a matter of gratification, seldom a sacrifice.

And that is said religion in America is an umbrella to protect us from the rain and that the safest place to hide from God now is within the membership of any of our churches. People turn to religion today as a remedy for sleeplessness, for worry, for ineffectiveness, to be free from frustrations and tensions, to become resourceful and successful. And the presumption is that God exists to serve us, whereas our chief end in life is to serve him.

And once we think of God as existing to serve us, our religion becomes very comforting and comfortable. Passivity is the word that best describes us. It is amazing how well we think of ourselves because we've learned a little doctrine, how cleverness is apparent in our apathy, our complacency.

You know, it takes a whole lot to rouse us, and then we're not roused for very long. We'd much rather meditate on the psalm than get our hands dirty in the front trenches. Who'd ever charge this generation of traveling with anybody else of turning the world upside down? We are not noted for crusading or for performing zeal.

Bad men don't fear us and evil can go on untouched. We shoulder no cross, carry no banners, shun commitments and causes, conform to the world. Professor Mills of one of our universities makes this indicative statement, neither preachers nor laity matter.

What they do and what they say can be readily agreed to and safely ignored. I want you to indulge me as I read a parody that they use out in the First Presbyterian Church in San Rafael, California. The parody, this afternoon you'll read the 149th and 150th psalms, great psalms of psalms praised.

And this parody of these two psalms was put in the bulletin of this church, and it's to be chanted after the solemn reading of the budget. And it speaks of our non-involvement. Here's how it reads.

Oh, sing unto the Lord an old song, one that he hears over and over again, the song of the mighty with power and wealth, who live in fatness in the abundance of possessions, whose tents have thick carpets and hosts of electronic servants, and who say, for whom we cannot give more, we must feed our overfed children and buy over-powered cars and maintain our fantastic standards, though we don't care to reason why. Oh, give praise unto a God who lets us get away with it, who answers our cries of empty self-pity, not with thunderings and lightnings of a God of wrath, judging his own, whose saints they can love in a world of suffering and loneliness and lostness and hostility and horrible, devastating war, and not care enough to love and give ourselves, who give thanks unto him whose only rebuke, Oh, give thanks unto him whose only rebuke is the silence and our own conscience, great and mighty as our God, and greatly to be praised, for he watches us decrease our giving, withdraw our involvement, lessen our pain, crawl into our beautiful stone shell, through the wide tearful eyes of a hundred thousand hundred children, through the narrow hostile faces of the craftsmen of international conspiracies, through the nodding sarcasm of disillusioned youths, and he says, our God says nothing. Praise ye the Lord, praise him upon the high sounding instruments, for even as we lust after the enchantments of much goods, of possessions and

pledge no excellence to our faith, even so does he permit us.

But though he be silent, yet that he follow after us, and an old scene is repeated, there is the sound of nails in the flesh and the fire in the dark, and grace, non-involvement. The Apostle Paul goes to write a letter of correction, reestablishment, reaffirmation, where he labored in the city of Corinth. He says three things that I mentioned very quickly.

There is the little word, know, that I want to look at. I determine not from know, there is the word determine, and there is the word demonstration. Forces come from every direction.

And this preacher stands here. I'm older, I guess, than any preacher here. And under God I don't know.

There are so many forces today. But when you get a little older, I'm not old yet, but I'm older than I used to be. Time flies so fast.

And especially like myself, you wonder under God if there's ever been the least bit of fruit. And I'm not being pious now. I've seen so much of what I looked like was of God, and the devil tore it up in 15 minutes.

So I just don't know. Oh God, for these shooting in the right direction today. I want that for myself, and for every young preacher that's had the guts to cross swords with the blasphemous stuff called the gospel, got us in the mess we're in.

And I have a word of criticism for young preachers. They make ten million mistakes. But God bless your heart if they're heading in the right direction.

Amen. Tell them! Let the apostle Paul come to Ashland, Kentucky, or Birmingham, or wherever it is, and try to cross swords with those enemies that are using it to their advantage over everything that's worthwhile in time and vanity. But almost like half the faith of the earth and evangelical consciousnesses, until nobody feels the need of being seized upon by a power greater than themselves that can do in them and power them that they cannot do for them.

And when all of us sometime want to show up by our hands and say, let this old world go to hell, and the Lord take care, it feels no need. How to get involved? I think, first of all, in the word know. Paul said, When I dine and caren, I just know one thing.

And that refers to a stance. Forty years ago, I read from G. Carmel Morgan, a statement I've never got over. And he showed how even the emphasis in the days of Puritanism could have been improved upon.

And however young people listen to me now, better listen to me. We'd better take a man like Paul as a sample and a guide. And the apostle Paul thought that the issues were so vital that to waste time on anything else than standing and proclaiming a living Lord, not starting with the virgin birth and working up to where when everybody's gone home, we mention the resurrection, that the apostle Paul started there and worked backwards.

I get so sick of fundamentalism, I want to vomit. He's arguing about the virgin birth. The apostle Paul never paid any attention to it.

He didn't have to. Because if you believe in a living Lord, the rest of it's easy. And the rest of it's impossible.

A man's a fool to believe that they'd be born without a human father, if that's all there is to it. Paul didn't know anything except Jesus Christ, the person who, he's the same one who's reigning from us on. He got there by way of a bloody cross, but no doctrine and no belief for a person is the only answer for the condition in Corinth and the condition today.

Samuel Rutherford wrote a friend from prison. He said, Jesus Christ came into my cell last night and that was stone-fresh rock-a-ruby. He knew a living Lord.

Sixty-two years old. This has become the quest of my soul. So when I've got to know a living Lord, he comes with grace to set our hearts on fire, to love us and to be loved by us forever.

When the church quits debating its doctrine of the resurrection, can we learn to believe and see and experience the risen living Lord? Maybe the fires and deer will come back. We can't do it the first with each other. We already know so much about the birth.

If we could believe in this Jesus Christ who came in a man's cell and the glory of God was there. So be it, Lord. Thy throne shall never like earth's proud empires pass away.

Thy throne, thy kingdom stands and goes forever till all thy creatures on thy sway. If we could just quit believing in the doctrine of the risen Lord and live in the glory of the Lord of the doctrines, oh, this is all the hope now is this. When I was a young preacher, like every young preacher, I thought I could make hopes and things.

I found out I can't. Oh, God help us. Who you know, Paul, I know a living Christ.

He's the one that is crucified. And the great, I think, stands there to see that there never was a time in the experience of God when there wasn't a cross and a man hanging on it and that that man is enough and on all things to love us and wash our feet. But we need, my dear brethren, all of our little improvements.

We don't need some improvements now. We need revitalization. Paul said, I'm not going to know anything but this person.

And then that word determined, I just mentioned this in past, the uniqueness. He said, just a matter of settled conviction. And he was through with anything else.

If we're going to get tossed out of here and camped here, it was the beginning of a war. No, nothing, nothing, nothing. I determined, I made up my mind.

I thought about this business to present this one. Without any addition or subtraction, without any substitutes, I determined to present God's answer for time and eternity. Listen through, Lord.

What you're doing around here, I said, Pilate, John 18, 2, this end was I born. Therefore, Peter will say that all the house that he's through knows a matter of fact that this same Jesus who you have, God has made, both Lord and Messiah, at the profoundest statement I ever read in my life. When I started to preach, I had to preach all around the Bible, 15 minutes and a half, 10 minutes, just to wonder.

Now I've got this profound proof as I get older. Hit me! As we've already heard this morning. The answer there, sir, must be the determined presentation of God's voice through men.

God demands that men not admire, but absolutely surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. My time's up. And I mentioned the word demonstration.

This is not paroxysm. This is not fatalism. This is not laziness.

This is the desperate need of my heart and yours, that we shall become desperate about the fact that only the Holy Ghost, using such means that shall please him or not, can press the person, secure it in power of the person, the absoluteness of the claims, and prosper the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. We honor the name of John Calvin as he's come. We can pick him to pieces as you can in a minute.

God knows the one contribution he made to this whole business was in the realm of the Holy Spirit. He added no doctrine. He collected no doctrine.

He himself wasn't half as clear on the atonement as Luther. But he did emphasize over and over again, and in that sense was used of God to recover what was altogether lost, the fact that spiritual things are spiritually designed, that the natural man receiveth not the things of God, that no man can say, Jesus is Lord, except he is spirit. Here's with the minister of the orphan, his sepulchre, of the word person of the Holy Ghost.

I'm so hungry for this latter-day glory that I'm biting at everything that smells like it might be of the Holy Ghost. Brethren, this world is being torn to pieces. I can't demonstrate the Lord's triple purpose.

I can't come and down the mouth of nations and churches or individuals. I can't turn this world into a study test, finding out, learning of me taking my look upon you, how to be related to the awful totalitarian claims that Christ being Lord entails. Oh, for the glory of the Holy Spirit.

I used to get tired and I can't get a corporal charge. You needn't test me after you've seen me either. Oh, God, we've lost this generation.

A little bit of sermon is not going to do us. I can't command the Holy Ghost if you look at one thing. I'm about to die, oh, God.

We can't deal with this situation. We can't even deal with the deadness of our own hearts and the hearts of the people we preach. Thou spirit of the living God, only through your presence, your words, shall we see things.

Not because we were smart using passing words. Only through your presence and works can men listen to with heeding ears the one thing, he's a life-giving spirit. They'll have to use the morning things for something, unless they have the Holy Ghost.

Don't rob me. I know it sounds theologically, don't rob me. But the one thing I've got left and that is that I can get up every morning and say maybe this is the day when the Lord of Glory is going to come to the rescue of this church and his gospel.

Men shall see once again the things of this God. God, give us some churches on their knees.

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