

What Is the Gospel?

by Rolfe Barnard

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the gospel of God concerning his Son, and how God whittles down a proud sinner to receive salvation.

Duration: 44:48

Scripture: Matthew 7:13, Luke 19:10, Romans 3:20

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching the gospel and understanding the purpose of Jesus' coming. He urges pastors and church members to saturate themselves in the gospel and to share it with others. The preacher also highlights the need to start over and truly understand what it means to be saved. He references the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19, where salvation came to his house. The sermon ends with a reminder to continue studying the Bible and a promise to preach on the topic of salvation in the future.

Transcript

As I grow older, I'm dead certain that something's got to happen to God's people, and it's got to start with God's preachers, God's public preachers. We can't just keep on forever in the deadness and the isolation from the problems and nobody getting involved, and the churches sitting on the seat of spectatorship, watching the world tear itself to pieces. Something's got to happen.

And so I'm interested in young preachers. We had a conference over in Burlington, maybe, where we got acquainted with this fine young preacher, and we were anxious to bring him here. Your pastor was, and I'm so glad you got to hear him.

I don't know whether I'd come or not, but I was in a red-hot time when sinners are seeking the Lord. I don't believe I'd have showed up, but he took out for two nights, and we're privileged to have him. Aren't you glad he came? And I'm glad you preachers got to hear it.

The two biggest things we can do now is to encourage young preachers, in spite of what they've been taught, to buy them a Bible and start shutting sinners up to God's salvation. And good books will help do that. The Banner of Truth Trust of England has been putting out blessed books for many years.

Now a group of friends of mine up in Pennsylvania have become the exclusive agents for this book-publishing company, and on the desk out yonder, in the vestibule, whatever that thing is out there, there are samples of some of the books. Now, we cannot sell these books, but I want you to look them over and pick up three pieces of literature. This white sheet that's on the desk is instructions, what it'll cost you and how to order it, and the blue sheet and this sheet here, these include all of the books that the Banner of Truth Trust now have available.

We're anxious to get churches to start libraries and take advantage of this 40 percent discount, or anybody will buy 12 at a time. Get good books. Brother Wilson and I were in a church in Texas.

I'd been there many times before, but he was there for the first time, so glad he got out to see those men out there with their warm hearts. And that church is a pretty good-sized church now, and started six years ago with five families. And after the pastor had been preaching to that group three years, he changed his doctrine.

He found out that men were not saved by decision, they were saved by God. And now that's something that hadn't been found out in the average Baptist church, because there are very few Baptist churches now that have a right to call themselves Baptist because they don't believe a thing on God's earth that Baptists believe. But Baptists used to believe that it took God to save a sinner, and this fellow found it out.

God crossed his path, this young pastor with an old Scotchman who was brought over to this country many years ago with jock troops. Jock troops now dead, and the Scotchman stayed, and he crossed the path of this brilliant young preacher, and this young preacher has changed this church. He has completely changed the message and the method.

And he lost only two families, and he got six, seven hundred members. And he did it by getting his people to read the Bible and good books that helped them understand the Bible so they'd understand what he was preaching about. That's what we're trying to do.

This generation, the average church member has never heard the gospel, never has heard it, and we can get us a stick, knock him in the head, or we can pray for him and preach to him and pray the wind to blow upon him. But God helped us to face the fact that we need to saturate ourselves and our souls in the gospel. I want you to get this information, especially you pastors.

I hope other pastors will be in. We'll have day services tomorrow at 10-11. Brother Elmer Cates will be our speaker tomorrow, and myself couldn't get him at night.

Then tomorrow night again I'll be with Brother Barber and myself, and we'll close Wednesday. Now I want to say thank you to Brother Wilson for opening this church. It's a blessing for Brother Flynn, Brother Parks, who is friendly and cooperative.

God bless them, and I appreciate them so much, and you other dear men, Brother Wilson, I know him. Now, I'm going to try to say what the young preacher was going to say in the third pint that he didn't get to. That will be all right.

I'm going to let you out on time. It rained a little bit. We just started.

We started a little late. We're running a little bit long schedule, but I'm going to do what my little girl used to try to get me to do. I'm going to preach a short sermon.

Let's turn to the book of Luke, the 19th of Luke, and just a phrase from one verse of Luke chapter 19. Verse 10 starts with the word for, and thus he's going to explain what has taken place in the verses immediately ahead. It's the story of a man by the name of Zacchaeus, and the greatest thing that can be said about any human being is what is said about him.

This day salvation has come to his house. I sometimes believe that we need to start all over again. I know I do.

I'm under the deepest sort of conviction about this, that we need to start all over again and open the Bible and try to find out what it means to be saved. I think we know less about that than probably anything in the Bible. I'm going to try to preach on that creek that's going to rise tomorrow night.

What does it mean to be saved? We used to be talking about saved by grace, unless we know something of the implications of salvation. When 95 percent of our Baptist Church members never lift their hand to be God's instrument to deliver sinners, it's desperately time we found out that something is bound to be wrong with what we've been preaching. A man asked me not long ago about a meeting I held.

It was almost a revival like he had. I don't have them like I used to, and it's encouraging to hear about this one. I believe I'll go home with you.

That's what our souls hunger for. But he said, Brother Barton, anybody saved? I said, That's a good question. Is anybody being saved now? We have additions and professions and no more warriors.

I don't know. Don't get mad at him. I don't know whether people are getting saved now or not, because you pick up the Bible and understand what it meant to be called of the Lord and to be able to respond to him and to enter in with him in his mission.

That's what salvation really means, that the Lord has another warrior to help him do what he said he came to this earth to do. In the 10th verse of this chapter, 19th of Luke, for the Son of Man is come to seek and save, not to try to seek, but to seek, not to make salvation possible, but to save, not to try to save, but to save, not to work out a plan of salvation, there ain't no such animal, but to save. The Bible doesn't talk about the Lord attempting to do anything.

Oh, my soul, the little defeated Jesus of Winston-Salem pulpits, poor little defeated Jesus, he needs us to help him out. He's so helpless. God help us.

That's blasphemy. No, no, the Son of Man came on purpose to do something and come hell or high water. He'll do it.

For the Son of Man has come on purpose to do something, to find out, to seek out, to get him up. And when he got him hemmed up and found, to save that which was lost, blind, depraved sinners, that's so, the work of Jesus Christ. But don't get me wrong, Christ's work on Calvary saves nobody.

It's the Holy Spirit of God who must take the merits of the blood of Christ and make them efficacious to a sinner's heart. That isn't heresy. That's so.

It takes all of God to save. And the Lord came for the purpose of doing the work of the Son in the threefold ministry of the Godhead in getting people saved. This dear young preacher touched on the work of God the Father.

He loved those he was going to save from all eternity. For there isn't anybody lost, my friends, in the New Testament sense of the word, except those people that God the Father gave his Son in the counsels of eternity. The average unsaved man isn't lost, he's exactly where he ought to be and where it looks like he's going to stay.

But whether we believe it or not, you cannot preach the gospel of God concerning your Son unless you understand that the Son came down here to seek out and save the people that the Father gave him from all eternity. Now, they say all over this town, I know my name's mud here, but that's all right. Listen to me.

They say all over this town, you mustn't mention this, it will discourage people. Just preach the gospel. But you can't preach the gospel of God unless you preach it about his Son, for the gospel of God's about Christ the Lord, God's Son.

And you can't preach the gospel of God concerning his Son unless you understand why God sent his Son and why the Son came. And he didn't come down here to make an effort, he came down here to do what God sent him to do, to seek out and to save that which was lost. Is that right? These doctrines, then, are essential to the proclamation of the gospel of God concerning his Son.

If all hell freezes over and decree rises, that church or that preacher that is to be true to God's mission in sending his Son is not to scout at the foundational doctrines that make Christ not a defeated little fellow, but a triumphant Lord on mission bent who is going to accomplish what he is determined to do. Now the gospel of grace is hated, it always has been. When I started out as a young preacher, I couldn't understand that.

You can preach on chewing tobacco and going to picture shows, and the fellows that don't go, they'll say, Amen, and the fellow that does, he won't get very mad at you. But he'll just say it's that fellow's opinion. But the grace of God, what does it mean? It means it's so unpopular in our day because all the days of your life and mine have been experiencing do-it-yourself religion.

We are full of pride, and all of our education and our preaching and our television and our radio and our newspapers and our entertainment world, the whole atmosphere of this order of things is to magnify what wonderful people we are and how little we need to be dependent on a power greater than we are. But the grace of God, we are saved by grace, simply means that we are saved by God taking the initiative and doing the starting work and the middle work and the keeping work and the preserving work, so that's all of God and all of grace. Sovereign grace simply means that God saves sinners.

God saves sinners. If you read the Bible much, in spite of the preaching of this 20th century that has spawned churches on every corner full of men and women that wouldn't know Christ if they met him in the road and care less, they got religion, but they never had a vital experience of being actually joined in saving obedient faith to a living Lord. I tell you what.

If you understand what grace means, it simply means that everything that matters in time or eternity to a human being has to start and come from God. Faith has to be a gift. Repentance must be given.

Prayer must be given. It's as silly to talk after the fashion of the gospel preachers of the day so-called about getting sinners to decide to accept Jesus as it is for you to decide that you're going to pray. You can't do it.

There's no person in this room that can pray a lick unless God Almighty moves you. Everything that's worth having starts with God. The three vital things about what we call religion or faith, repentance and prayer in every one of them, are gifts of God.

They are three attitudes that we would naturally claim for ourselves. Yes, I accepted Christ and I repented and I prayed, but actually they have to come from God, for the passion and hunger for God comes from God. God answers it with Christ.

What does grace mean? It means that men and women are absolutely dependent on God Almighty to start in them and continue in them everything that means the difference between hell on earth and heaven in the life to come. It means that God's God and we're down here and there's no cooperation or partnership that if the sinner is to have bliss instead of torment, God help us, it all depends on God. There's a young preacher in this town, used to go to school, come see me right often.

He said, Brother Barton, go a thousand miles here, preach for a second, can't let you preach in my church. I said, why? He said, the first time my people heard you tell lost men that unless God worked a miracle in their lives they were going to split hell wide open, it would scare them to death. I said, well, isn't that so? He said, yes.

I said, how come it would scare your people? He said, they've never heard it. I said, what do you preach? Well, he preaches what they call the gospel, dear friends, today, that God does part and you do part and you stir that well and get some ink in your mind and pull over it and eat it and go on to hell. Everything that's worthwhile comes from God.

Every good and perfect gift comes from above, not some but every. A man who's too proud to be absolutely, indefinitely, altogether in debt to Almighty, God will never be saved. And so what I want to talk to you about here is my subject now, how on earth can God get a wiggling, proud sinner, especially in our day, when if he goes to church twice on Sunday he'll hear how it's all up to him, how can he get that sinner to be still and listen and quit trying to do it himself or to cooperate with God, and just like a beggar, just receive Jesus Christ, the gift of God, to give us life.

Every sinner that God can get to the place that he'll quit trying to bargain with God or help God or make a decision himself and he gets into the place where he got nowhere to go, he can't make it himself and he just gets quiet long enough to hear God speak peace to his soul. Every last one of those people, that's the kind of folks Jesus Christ came to seek and to save, lost people, lost people. Now let me talk briefly tonight about how God goes about the business of whittling down a fellow like Ralph Barnett or Herbert Wilson or King Brown, this dear brother Barbara, this fine young preacher.

How on earth you ever got saved, the mystery to me, as young as you are. I don't see how anybody gets saved hardly now in this day. Where can you go here? Salvation by grace.

Just a few places. That's the reason I said thank you, Brother Wilson. Opening the doors of your church, you do.

Brother Barnett, are you crazy? No. You can't mix it. If it's grace, it's grace.

If God has to save, he has to save. If the sinner is shut up to God doing for him and in him what he cannot do himself, he's shut up there. And without apology, there's no way to if and and and but about that, that's so.

Either God saves sinners or God does part of it, man does part of it. You can't have them both. How can God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, get a proud sinner who doesn't want to be under obligation to man or God, who was born saying, I'll have my way if hell freezes over.

How can you whittle me down? Well, like a pauper, I'll reach out for offered bread. Or like a thirsty man, I'll just reach out and drink. Or like a terribly, terribly desperate man, I'll look up and call on the Savior, for whosoever shall call shall be saved.

That's what God has to do. Now, he uses means. Nobody ever won a soul to Christ.

You almost said it. Nobody ever delivered anybody, but maybe God used this little messenger boy or something to shed a tear, to speak a word in season, to do something that God used to whittle that soul down. The way he didn't have anything to say, so his mouth was stopped and his wiggling was gone.

And then for the first time, he'd hear how sinners are saved. One hundred and sixty-seven times in the New Testament, sinners are said to be saved, as God calls them. The day they're said to be saved, as they make up their minds they're going to do something, but the Bible says they're saved as they hear, Amen? Lazarus, come forth.

That's how people are saved. But God has to get them quiet, get the wiggle out of them, get them L-O-S-T lost. It's the work of the Spirit.

I want to mention three things tonight, and I'm not going to preach them, I'm just going to mention them, that occurred in the experience of David Brainerd. If you don't have his diary in the journals of David Brainerd by Johns and Edwards, please get them. Read them some every day.

Next to the Bible, bless it, bless it. He's the father of modern missions, you know that. Every great missionary movement, missionary leader of the modern age got the thought of something in him that made him boil over to get the gospel out.

The reading of this boy who left his blood up yonder in New York and Pennsylvania, praying for those old dirty Indians. This man, David Brainerd, wanted to be right with God. He wanted to be able to say, I've got an interest in the shed blood of Christ, a saving interest.

And in his struggles with God, for he did struggle, this day to switch the gun from one jaw to the other, come down, cry a little bit, and go on to hell. But this fellow, he studied the Bible trying to find out how he could get right with God. Faith cometh by hearing, still does.

His almost-daddy-in-law, Jonathan Edwards, said that any system of the gospel that would give to the Christ Church in any 100 years of David Brainerd ought to be studied. That's the reason we have these grace conferences. We need somebody that this generation would listen to to light the fire under us or something, God, to help us.

David Brainerd got awful mad at God as he's seeking the Lord. He said, I found in me great struggles, heart risings, and horrid enmity against God. He said, I often quarrel with God for laying the guilt of Adam's sin to me, whereas I never so much as consented to the commission of it.

He said, I wish God had let me alone to stand for myself and not abuse me at that rate, to punish me for what another man had done, which was impossible. I should have helped so long after I charged God with

cruelty and injustice, and thought he delighted to oppress and crush poor mortals. That sounds strange.

My early days here in Winston-Salem, I had knockdowns and dragouts. Everybody said, ought not to have done this, ought not to have done that. But the power of God was here.

I wish we could have a fuss or something. I wish we'd get somebody mad at God or in a good humor with him or something. Everybody's so nice now.

I really do. This man got mad at God. The reason he did is because by searching the scriptures, he got a little glimpse of who God was and what salvation meant.

He said, I long to pull the eternal God off his throne and stack him under my feet. He was enraged at the idea of God's sovereignty and the injustice of God's making a creature and then sending that creature to hell. He got mad at God.

He wrestled with God, and he'd pray, and he'd argue with God. I made a study of his diary, and my time's already up. I'm just going to give you an outline.

If you'll study how this man wrestled with God, you'll find the three ways that God whittles sinners down to where they'll quit trying to help God and quit listening to the preachers telling them to do something themselves and to where they're ready for God to do something for them. And God can do something for a man that'll fix him up, but you can't improve yourself any more than a leopard can change his spots. Salvation is what God brings to pass in a man, not what we and God working out, him doing part, us part, do.

Used to do over the radio. I'd get more mail. Yeah, I was on the radio here for years and get more mail from preachers cussing me out because I'd try to say that the gospel doesn't talk about God doing his part.

Now he's waiting for us to see what we'll do. But that's what's called the gospel. God's God, and for 2,000 years, he's been fishing, helpless, waiting to see what we'll do, what man can do.

No, Jesus didn't come down here to do anything. If man would do anything, he came down here to do the job the Father sent him to do. That's to seek out.

That's what I'm preaching about tonight. And when he gets you sought out and hemmed up and whittled down, he'll save you. In the life of David Reynard, as he struggled, you'll find the way that God whittled sinners down.

And I haven't given up the grace of God spreading all over the world. Young preachers are being raised up all over the country. This crowd looks small tonight.

We can lay it on the rain. No, no. But it's coming, folks.

The movement of the Spirit of God. These desperate days raising up young preachers. Oh, my, you don't know how thrilled at that boy.

He didn't learn that in school, brother. You learn that on your knees, brother. And the young preachers are learning it today in spite of what they're being taught.

And it just can't be stopped. And I rejoice and say hallelujah, praise God. Listen to me.

It's got to come. It's got to start in our pulpits. Not paring a passion for tatters or getting something and going off on a tangent.

Or not trying to be well-rounded. God help us not to be well-rounded. We need some barbed wire.

And get on fire with something. And believe something all over, whether it's right or wrong. But oh, God, for some more preaching.

That'll hymn sinners up. So they won't keep on going to hell from our churches trusting in something they've done. Salvation is what God does.

Both for in Christ and in Christ the Spirit in a sinner. There's no decision you ever made in your life that's worth trusting. It's the work of the Holy Spirit.

Making Christ real inside of a man. That's salvation. And only God can do that.

This young fellow preached ten years in one place. Before the spell broke, I can tell you. One of those books back there of an old Puritan preached 47 years in one place.

And never had a convert and then revival broke. And from the time of Jonathan Edwards' first revival. Then when it died until the next one broke.

Seven years. Not a single profession of faith. Those old folks couldn't save people.

They just preached and prayed and wept. And waited for God Almighty to do what only God Almighty can do. Ain't nobody got a chance to be saved now.

We won't let God save them. We get them saved before he does. Now, I'm going to quit.

Listen. David Brainerd found out three things that made him fight mad. This generation got to hear it again from Sunday school classes.

From the folks preaching down by the post office. From the radio preachers. From the pulpiteers.

From personal work in the factories and everywhere. This is how God whittled sinners down. Dead sinners, blind sinners, defrayed sinners, empowered sinners.

On the basis of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and his ascension and glory. Now the Holy Spirit whittled sinners down. But facing them with the strictness of God Almighty's holy law.

How's that dead sinner going to find out he's in a mess? By the law is the knowledge of sin. Wish I could preach on, but a fool around got quit. The strictness.

David Brainerd got so mad. He said, God Almighty's got no right to expect me to be perfect. But he does, Brother Wilson.

Did I born in sin? He laid a lot on old Adam. And he said, I can't be perfect. And God Almighty demands perfection.

Not in my outward deeds only, but in my motives. And there's where the rub comes, Brother. That's hard preaching.

But God Almighty absolutely demands that thou shalt love the Lord thy God with A-double-L-O. Not just a part. And that's rough.

The reason this generation ain't mad at God. They've abolished God's law. This generation's got to be brought up short once again.

With this thing everybody's making fun of. Standards. Absolute standards.

They've done away with it now. And now everybody does as he pleases. And you read today in today's paper.

They tried to arrest a boy up in Philadelphia for having marijuana on him. And it caused a riot of 1,500 students. What's the matter with this generation? Been listening to the teaching and preaching of 40 years.

The law's been done away with. But David Brainerd had to face the fact that whether he approved of it or not. God's holy character expressed in the law demands and will settle for nothing less than 100% perfection.

And then he kept on reading. And he found out that God requires faith. And that he couldn't produce it.

There's no way on earth I can have faith in Herbert Wilson without getting acquainted with him. I can't decide to have faith in you. You can't decide to have faith in Jesus Christ.

Boy, this is rough, isn't it? Isn't it mad? Isn't it terrible that God Almighty won't save a fellow except by grace through faith. And a fellow can't produce faith. Now, this has been left out of modern day preaching.

I know what I'm talking about. Yes, we're getting down to the nub of the issue, the hatred of the grace of God. That God, who can do as he pleases, has pleased not to save people by trading with them.

By striking bargains with them. By charging for it. But he saves men and women only through the channel of faith.

And he has to give that faith. That's the most offensive thing next to the thing I'm going to mention in close. There is in gospel preaching.

But God help us if we want to see some more revivals breaking out. We're going to have to shut this generation up if they split hell wide open trying to kill us. By demanding that this generation hear at least one time that faith isn't something a man can manufacture.

But it strips him. Oh, God. You save people through faith.

I got a little money. And I got a few good deeds. And I got some good resolution.

But I have not any saving faith. Oh, God. Grant me the gift of faith.

But to cap the climax, David Brainerd's anger increased to the boiling pot. When he found out not only that God demanded absolute perfection. The utter severity and strictness of the law.

That he saved people by requiring that they reach out as beggars for bread. Nobody take any credit for reaching out for offered water if you're thirsty. That's no cooperation.

That's receiving. That's what faith is. That God required faith.

And he could not produce it. He said it's not right for God to demand of me what I cannot produce. But that's the reason the fellow's lost.

If there's anything on God's earth you can contribute to it, you ain't lost. You're in a bad shape, but you're not lost. But Christ came to save lost people.

Not folks that had been hurt a little bit, but folks who were lost. If you could produce faith, you'd be in pretty bad shape. But if you could produce it yourself, you could get out.

But that's the reason you're lost. And you're not lost in this generation. It's lost because it thinks it.

Some of these days they'll fix it up themselves. But David Brainerd's anger boiled when he found out not only God requires perfection, not only God requires faith and he couldn't produce it, but that God can give faith or withhold it. And that he exercises that right.

Now, if you young preachers, you say, well, they get mad if you preach on the doctrines. Not very mad. But, brother, if you preach on this, all hell's going to bust over.

I know what I'm talking about. This generation, for the most part, will start a riot within our churches if we dare to say that the Bible's so, and that Christ plainly said that he gives life to whom he will. But he does.

You can't make him give you faith. You can beg him, but you can't make him. Now, I don't understand what I'm preaching, but it's in the Bible.

The spirit blows where it will. And John 5, 21 is the Father raises whom he will, even so the Son quickness whom he will. Now, brother, if you ever get a sinner, so hemmed up that he don't think he can turn a little key and make God act, then he's lost.

All of them, God doth pull, send it and do it. Oh, God have mercy. If thou wilt, thou canst make me whole.

As I go up and down the land, it's getting worse. Everywhere we go, nobody is under conviction that they need to be seized upon by a power greater than themselves. That's God in Christ.

No conviction. Who needs a Savior? Well, if the law doesn't demand perfection, I don't know but what I'd make it about as good as you can without it. I'm about as good as you are.

Of course, I ain't perfect, but none of us are. And if the law just doesn't demand perfection, I think I'd make pretty good, don't you? Well, that's just generic. And if I can produce faith, why, of course, I might be in pretty bad shape, but I can just turn on the crank and get out of it.

And if I've got me a recipe, according to modern-day preaching, where I'd make God get on the job, but we haven't, beloved. We won't see conviction come to this country. God knows how I'd love to see it again.

I'm so tired of empty church buildings on Sunday night, empty buildings on Wednesday night. I'm so tired of the deadness, aren't you? I'm so tired of the deadness in my own heart. It ain't going to come apart.

It never has, apart from the preaching of the God of all grace, shutting men up to the place of absolute dependence on him. And when he can get a center the way he doesn't trust in anything he can do or get God to do, cause he turned on the screws, and there he is. All he can do is throw up his hands and say, I

surrender, have mercy on me.

That's the gospel of God's grace. Let us stand.

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