

What Is the Issue?

by Rolfe Barnard

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's right to be God and exercising that right, and the need for a true martyr to disturb the status quo and challenge the world to take action for God.

Duration: 59:14

Scripture: Genesis 2:15, Isaiah 9:6-7, Matthew 6:33, Luke 9:23, Acts 2:42, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "True Conversion", "Spreading Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher expresses his frustration with preaching to people who are not truly seeking salvation and are only interested in convenient and comfortable faith. He longs for individuals who are willing to make mistakes and yet still pursue the will of God. The preacher emphasizes the transformation that occurs when someone truly converts to a life dedicated to God, comparing it to a face lighting up like an abandoned cathedral. He also highlights the need for Christians to not be passive observers of the world's problems but to actively engage in spreading the gospel and standing against the darkness.

Transcript

I wish to speak tonight so that I can ask two questions. I don't have a subject. I wish to talk about 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 a great supply of harvest.

At that particular time, somebody invited somebody to come to the meetings here. He preached, and he said, No use to go, he says the same thing every time he preaches. I met a young Methodist preacher, gotten well acquainted with him, swapping teeth, he's less than 40 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. I asked him how on earth he had come to the clearness and the oneness of his message, while 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 wind of time comes. But that's quite a purpose, isn't it? That's quite a message.

The issue is stated in chapter 3 of Genesis, the Lord God, in chapter 2, I beg your pardon, chapter 2 of Genesis, at verse 15, chapter 2, verse 15, And the Lord God put the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, Say, 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 ninth chapter of the gospel of the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah, two verses, verses 6 and 7 of Isaiah chapter 9, Isaiah chapter 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. For 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 forever, the zeal of the Lord of Hosts 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 every bat out of hell, but we, like the people in New York City, are watching women raggish, 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. And he cried out against the same thing that John Wesley cried out in his day and that our brother Griswold 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. And I wanted to begin the message today so that some of you will be familiar. You bear with me.

The subject of this parable, the tame geese. And Mr. Kierkegaard, I never can pronounce that name, it's a Danish name, writes on the tame geese, and here's what he says. Suppose it was so that the geese could talk.

Then they 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 the Creator, and every time this word was mentioned, the geese heard it and the ganders bowed their heads. What a high goal the Creator had set before the geese. By the aid of wings, they were told, they could fly away to distant regions, blessed climes, where properly they were at home.

For here they were only strangers. And so it was every Sunday. Timely 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 froze and were well-liked, became plump and delicate, and then were eaten on Martin Matthew, and

that was the end of that.

That was the end of that. Although the discourse sounded so lofty on Sunday, the geese on Monday were ready to recount to one another what befell a certain goose that took seriously the preaching and who wanted to make serious use of the wings the Creator had given him, the wings 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 which seemed suffering and grew thin. About them it was currently said among the geese, there 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.

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 to come, or at least endeavors with all his might, to become plump and delicate and fat. But on Sunday morning the parson preachifies and he listens just like the geese.

This world is going to go to hell because we've reduced that for which God hung his son 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 is being butchered from every direction. The geese listen to the parson preachify, and that's the end of that. There are two testimonies that speak to my heart, one of them by 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. And 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 passion, the bitter passion to kill him. World superiority always works in two ways.

It produces the force which brings about its own fall. Thus, when a disturber of conscience says he is to be put to death, it is not the age which does it in its own strength and leads him to the gallows, but it is he himself who by dealing his salutary blows gives to the age the passionate desire to kill him. And if the age is sought in the worst kind of laxity, such a brave man has only to appear to disturb such an age to its core.

And I haven't 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 unto God, God Almighty would build a tower on earth until we took the one issue of this hour and made this generation forever to take their way with him, kill him, get rid of him. We're the nicest little bunch of in-orthodox, grace-in-for-hell great people this world ever had to put up with. We couldn't disturb a convention of fleas, the whole shootin' that job.

We couldn't. A great French preacher makes another statement that I practice my remarks with, Mr. E. Matthew M-A-T-H-I-O-T. He says, after 25 years of preaching this for us preachers, he said, I'm still

appalled by all the fine words I've uttered from the pulpit Sunday by Sunday for 25 years.

Anyone of which lived up to this yield would have been enough to send me to prison. 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.

We're the best snorers you ever saw. God's blessing seeks a truly adventuring life. God gives to us only by hand, because we trust him by hand.

With that preface, I want to prepare to ask my heart one more time in 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 his authority and power may be recognized.

In the Garden of Eden there is just one issue. On Golgotha's hill there is 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? I have just one issue at Calvary. We will not have this man reign over us. Does God have a right to sit on 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 Ishmael was the only son. And there was war when Isaac came.

So he was all fighting in the Second World War, and he kept getting letters from his wife. He was hen-pecked. She was the daughter of a husband.

She was nagging 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.

We could have peace and all go to hell together if God Almighty would have it be. If he would step down off the throne and quit bringing his commands, quit pressing his slaves, quit meddling with interfering. There in the Garden of Eden, two things happened.

God's wholeness was threatened. If Adam had a war, 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 be brought to himself or he'll act like he's got sense enough to come in out of the rain. The old man's out of hell. Now the issue of the throneship 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, and I used to look in the back of the book to cheat a little bit and find out the answer without going to all the trouble of working it out. Praise God.

I looked in the back of the book and I read in the 15th chapter, 1st Corinthians, this thing's going to be settled. Praise God. He must reign.

He must. Until that thing settles, until this world is brought 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 will be on his shoulders.

The whole outfit has been turned over to him. Nobody's got any right to make any decisions there except Christ. The government shall be on his shoulders, not yours.

I can't quote it. 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 is 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 a fish out of water. He is created to serve God.

His human personality was designed for something more than self-centered animal existence. Made was 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, man must be under him upon whose shoulders the government of everything that thrives and wriggles from time to eternity has been placed. What a thing.

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, the three things of truth.

The gospel of God's salvation is the proclamation of him in him, through him, and in him, for him. God's purpose is to sum up all things and in and through him regain God's throne-ship in all of the world and restore man the way of the whole man. If you don't buy any of the other books back there, get your wife and let her 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 as broad as Christ and as narrow as Christ.

The gospel is shutting the door to hope anywhere else except in Christ. Open it to him there. The gospel of God's salvation is the proclaiming of the expansion of his person in and through him of God's purposes to do everything that'll ever be done for kingdoms or nations or systems or worlds or individuals.

Therein we can understand Paul's threefold description of the credentials of gospel preaching. I hope Brother Radio, Brother Mahan can stay on the radio, but I'll warn him right now. If the world ever finds out

what the preaching, 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. Why, it's an insult to a Jew. The stuff you preach, preaching that illegitimate son of a fallen woman, that man who, 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 is that we don't have the power of God on us. It's no wonder Paul said, preaching of the cross, the word of the cross is a scandal. It's a damn high insult to a Baptist or a Methodist or a Presbyterian or a Roman Catholic or a Jew or anybody else that don't know Christ.

The idea of telling me that God, we're preaching the gospel now that's so simple a little child can understand it and everybody will 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 then, but it'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 Son 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. I heard the preachers the other 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 the 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 the saved, if what I've said is so, to the saved means to be converted to the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is Christ. The New Testament identifies to the saved means to be converted to the rule of God in Jesus Christ.

To the saved means that one's heart's consent is freely given to God sitting on the throne. Yes, holy. We must keep preaching.

Come with an open heart. But under God we must preach as we've never preached. Tie your hands open, let your knee be bent.

We must preach that man must become captives of Christ and thus be 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 cared, that we'll never stand so straight as when we bow 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 the general manager of the universe? How may I render up my sword because that's the symbol of authority and God will have your sword or 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 as were being saved. O 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 on the heaven's scene to the grass.

They never have to face for one second the claims of Jesus Christ. O my soul, I confide myself to you and I get along fairly well with the claims of Christ's Lordship. Slay me! Slay me! And I too God I look forward to that time when with undimmed eyes I shall get a undimmed look at the Lord Jesus Christ and how to like him.

As we heard this morning and I can understand how a Christian is the most marvelous, so has this person beside a hill and he'll never be satisfied until he awakes in the likeness of Christ. Yes! If nobody's got a right to make a single mistake in any move upon a date one had before, apart from his leadership as I understand, my God, we'd have this. B.W. Johnson says, early morning moonlit beaches in our hearts and in our churches once again and the eye tickles back all apart and Mr. Wet Eyes and Mr. Amen might come back to me.

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

He found freedom by becoming a slave to one greater than himself. The self-centered man that comes to church on Sunday morning and wobbles home and that's the end of that, refuses to recognize the claims of God on his life. The only kingdom he'll recognize is the 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 says 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 Babel, reach up to God and bring him down to do our bidding. This is sin It's attempting 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 my God if you'd light a match tonight this building would explode. Rebellion! Boy, 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 bring them apart. This is sin, it's rebellion against the will and the authority and the sovereignty of God and spiritual deafness to his voice and sin's a lot more than an action.

Now it's a condition. God tempered with verity. 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 and people. I'm so tired of preaching to drive.

I'm about to shoot somebody. I'm so tired of preaching to high sickles and all the dumb people. My whole one inch to go I put a \$25 bounty on a lot of folks who make me so much.

I'm so tired, aren't you? Of this nice little convenience that we call being saved. I long for somebody to make about 1,700 mistakes a day but bless God he's headed toward the will of God. Yes sir.

Yeah boy. That's right. That's right.

A fella tellin' me about this. This fella yes sir just sighed ahead in my head. Said after he got converted his face lit up like an old abandoned cathedral when darkness came when it lit up again.

He said his face just lit up again. I told him the great Lord he had to sit down here and scratch for me. Oh boy and he gets happy.

He's liable to ruin us around here. We could do with it. Oh my friend.

My soul. To be converted. To be converted.

To be hungering and thirsting after righteousness instead of tellin' about that fella he's strayed on the doctrines of grace. If I ever meet one of these grace fellas again I'm gonna kill him, blow him to hell. Cause I can't see any grace in him.

So I won't charge him 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 but glory.

Oh, that will be glory. It's comin' somewhere down the road. What'll it simply be? It'll be when men see Christ sittin' on the throne and they say praise the Lord.

Sure I'm glad he's there. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. It sure ain't gonna be when we get some more church members we got then.

It ain't gonna be when we get more people what's called saved. We done saved America about three times and we're fixin' to go to hell I assure you foot and a half high. I'll tell you what it would be.

It would be when all right with the world got on the throne and men are sayin' amen. Amen. Amen.

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

Can a given local assembly the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ and the given assembly represented several ways here tonight can it be brought to rejoice that Christ is enthroned? My God how much longer is God gonna stand the rebellion inside of the churches of Jesus Christ?

I say to you not as a plea for pity I've been preaching 37 years most of the hitchhiking evangelists gettin' smaller every year most of the preachers have already thrown up the white flag they're through trying to win in the body of Christ they say it ain't no use we've gone about as far as we know some of you pastors have gone about as far as you know you know I know unless God's voice begins to be heard in the church one more time 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 hoot and holler about we're not saved for words we're saved for grace

we're elected and all that till we're blue in the face and they're

precious but they're not the issues of this hour the issue of this hour is who falls lawless church members for dragging the gospel under that dirty feet men who profess loyalty to a far off risen Lord but will not be subject to him as he speaks through the church over which he's head I say to you my pastor friend we swept 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 slip up on the blind side of this situation without plead out on all of them about the only hope I see now is the revelation of Christ sitting right in the center of these churches 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 taken captive to the Lord Jesus Christ I said I get this old man Ross Barnard if somebody got converted in our churches boy wouldn't he make a change I mean converted we've had him, we get him to profess faith we're doing the best we know how I'm a member of the church they ask him about John every Sunday ain't no more people in family 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 bless God he's turned up the trail

in that direction did you know that the reformation was born in the heart of Lutheran Calvin we mustn't camp on first base we must speak to our day learn all we can but they accused the church of wrong 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 we'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 first do you believe that by your own 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 we met it in the road 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 profession Christianity today there's the faith that centers on me what I can do and what I can get 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 think a right relationship with him would benefit you then the real important person in that outfit 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 you know Luther's battle there boy he rolled up his sleeves and spat on his hand said I'm going to get

right with God that's good you quit this and you did this and then finally he came to see that he was worshipping 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 needs he 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 Christian should be willing to the dam for the glory of God he said we must affirm God without demanding that he

affirm us he said the 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've done that answer deep I don't know how to handle it but we're back to our subject which comes first the glory of God on his throne the will of God or what we can get out of him 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 rather this age of this age that's got no use for God except as a milk cow to get something out of him warm Sunday morning gives a little lift service to a far off God oh to this bedeviled and bedazzled and religiously cocaineed generation of people in for hill just one issue that's that's the glory and the will of almighty God whether

we spend eternity in heaven or hell to God be the glory we come back to our fullness it's a mighty dull business to defend the doctrine God bless your heart I wish we could be set on fire to soul press this issue this generation to 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 gonna tear up our Sabbath worship and our offerings and our sacrifices oh God give us a baptism of fire and passion and tears to press this claim of almighty God on men until some shall gnash their teeth and others shall see it is impossible that he's anybody except the son of God will you bow your head

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