

6 Things We Face in Preaching the Gospel

by Rolfe Barnard

Rolfe Barnard discusses six critical issues in preaching the gospel, emphasizing the sovereignty of God and the necessity of the Holy Spirit in salvation.

Duration: 41:30

Scripture: Hebrews 6:4

Topics: "Evangelism", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher expresses his joy and excitement about the current state of evangelism in America. He emphasizes the need for true evangelism that relies on the Holy Spirit to bring people to Christ. The preacher also discusses the importance of repentance and the call to depart from iniquity. He encourages believers to put on the whole armor of God and to be conformed to the image of Christ. The sermon concludes with a reminder that salvation is a gift from God and that believers should have a tender heart and gratitude for receiving this gift.

Transcript

In the month of July in 1950, on a Sunday evening, I began a series of meetings with Brother E. W. Johnson down in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. I brought a message that night and ten years later I was through Pine Bluff and Brother Johnson told me that that message split his church wide open. Just one message.

He said the people went out of the service that evening about evenly divided. They didn't have a vote. They didn't come to a vote for eight years.

But he said his church was already split, of course, but that one message was the meat axe and it took eight years under his quiet way for it to come to its climax and then the people demanded the right to vote on it. He said the first time they extended him a call, they needed a new building and he had led a congregation to build a nice place somewhere else and so they called him because they wanted him to build a new building. Ten years later they voted whether they wanted support and say amen to and help propagate what he had to preach.

And he said that the thing came to a climax in just one service. I remember asking him, I said, Brother Johnson, was I in the flesh? I get that way a lot of times. Was I wrong? He said, no, I believe one time you were in the spirit.

But he said the people went away believing in two different gods. Half of them believed in a god whose god we preachers call it a sovereign god. That simply means very god.

And the others went away with the god of 20th century and 19th century Christianity. A god who would like to do well, but is unable to do so. Well, that's pretty well the message tonight.

In 1954, while I was listening to Brother Farrell Griswold over in the Pollard Baptist building at a Bible conference, I think it was the first one, I scribbled down on an envelope six issues that seemed to be worth facing and seemed to carry within them what all of this controversy is about. And tonight, I don't guess I'm letting the cat out of the bag. The only time I have got an invitation in my life to come hold a meeting and the preacher dictated my sermons is this one.

And I'm glad to come. How many folks were in the Park meeting in 1952? How many of you were in the Park meeting? Well, thank you. Well, he's asked me to bring some of the messages, but he wanted me to bring this one.

And those of you who remember it, I dead sure don't. I haven't touched this since 1954. But when he wrote me the letter and outlined my sermons, I began to dig.

And I came up on that old envelope. I still had it. And here goes.

Now, of course, no man ever repeated sermons. No man ever preached from the same text the same way. The scripture's too big for that.

But I appreciate this privilege and the confidence and the honor that their pastors paid me as life coming home. And I want to just talk tonight, this prayer meeting night, on six issues that still face us and will have to take sides as individuals, as congregations, as public preachers. Anybody names the name of Jesus Christ living in this day, you've been living in a day when these six issues have about wrapped up the controversy in what Christianity's all about in your day and mine.

And I remember I got these points. I don't know what's said about them. I know if I don't remember them, you dead sure don't.

But this prayer meeting night, I want to leave them out. I appreciate the all-out effort your pastor and I trust you are going to make for these days. We are facing the most tremendous opportunity I've ever seen.

I bring you good tidings of great joy. Hell's just a-popping everywhere. Doors are opening.

Preachers are seeking the truth of God's grace as I've never seen it. And I rejoice, and especially with you people who've been in the battle and have stood by me and made my little ministry possible. There are six basic issues that I bring you again tonight that we have to take sides upon.

And these issues will determine our gospel. And the other day, I heard a godly man, Brother James Stewart, down in Houston, Texas, speaking to about 60 Baptist pastors. And he said that he longed in his heart that true evangelism would make its appearance once again in America.

He said the evangelism that depends upon the sovereign Holy Spirit to bring men to Christ. And there such prayer meeting as you wouldn't think would be possible today is that dear man who has long lifted up his voice against the shallowness of what we've called evangelism in America. And those preachers got on their faces and sobbed out their sins and their confessions to God.

They were all Southern Baptists, but they didn't fight the man's message. Fifteen years ago they would have. But they are coming up to the lick log now, and the message and message that looked like was getting such wonderful results, they are not getting the results now.

And this generation of people in our churches and in our pulpits is open now to hear from God like I've never seen. And I rejoice. For if I had a text tonight, I would take that text in John chapter 3 verse 8, which reads like this.

The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. So is everyone, everyone that is born of the Spirit. When the last words been said, evangelism that can get people saved without the blowing of the Spirit who blows when he wills and nobody can explain it, or the evangelism that is absolutely helpless unless the wind bloweth.

That pretty well sums up the whole shoot. I was reading of one of the old Puritans the other day. God shut him up in a little old village about 200 people for about 37 years.

He wrote great books. He preached for 33 years and never had a convert. And then the wind began to blow.

I felt sorry for the brother when it'd been wonderful if he'd have lived in our day when we can get people converted without the Holy Ghost. But he couldn't. The poor old man didn't know that there's any way on earth for men to be born into the kingdom of God except as the Holy Wind opened their hearts and applied the truth.

And all he knew to do was just keep on plowing and breathing a prayer. Oh, thou sovereign Spirit, we cannot command you, but we can't for thy presence and we long for your blessing. The six issues that I bring again tonight are first.

We have to take sides, not in our heads but in our hearts, over this proposition that man was utterly ruined in the Garden of Eden or that he was somewhat injured. Those of you who've heard me preach a great deal know that whether it's being backslidden or not, I try and as I grow older to shy away from man's terminology. I do not know whether this will strike you right or not, but I've quit using the adjectives on what they call the five points.

I no longer use the term total depravity because it takes three hours and a half to explain what we do not mean by the word total. But that does not mean that I do not take sides. And this is the starting point, that we deal with men and women who hadn't been injured, they were ruined.

When in the loins of Adam they willfully reached out and sought to put God off the throne and sit there themselves. And the penalty was death, not injury but death. And that's where the whole thing starts.

I remember 1950 in July, after I'd been here in April I think it was, I came to the parting away with a brother and I'd had much fellowship in the ministry. He took the position by way of rebuking me that man was somewhat injured in the fall. Of course he has to take that position in order to preach what he believes is so, that God has done his part toward the salvation of men.

Now it's up to men. If man has some ability, alright. If he has no ability, alright.

But I've learned long since that what we call the doctrines of election and predestination and those terms, that isn't what offends people. What offends people is to rob them of that thing they've been using to get multitudes of people thinking they're saved. That appealing to the big wills of men and women who have nothing but perverted wills.

I heard a radio preacher who used to believe the gospel and try to preach it, but the pressure of the hours got him. I heard him in Winston-Salem the other day preach for 15 minutes to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that God's done everything he can do. Now it's up to the sinner.

Now it's up to the sinner. Now the so-called gospel upon which modern-day churches in America was built has been built on a gospel that teaches that men got a pretty bad blow, but they weren't ruined, and that therefore salvation is God taking the first step and men taking the rest. We have to make up our minds there.

When I brought this message in 1954, we hadn't heard about the fact that the first 11 chapters of Genesis ain't so. Of course we had to find that out in your day and mine. But if it ain't so, then there's no salvation.

For if we were not ruined in Adam, Christ can't do a thing on God's earth for us if it did die. And so to further notice, we'll still take the position and stay with it and fight for it if we must, that we belong to a race that was utterly ruined. Not in need of a shove, but oh God, in need of a savior.

Utterly lost and utterly ruined and utterly unable to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps. We'll stay by that. I watched this thing grow.

1950, as far as this section, east of the Mississippi River, what happened? The Apollo Baptist Church had ramifications all over the South. Out of it came your blessed young preacher. I've watched them as they stumble.

I've prayed for them when I thought this was going wrong, rejoiced when God was blessing. It's been a struggle. And we're not out of the woods yet.

But anybody, anybody that's had a better time than I have, I couldn't imagine it. I've seen it as it's just started, and now it's breaking out all over the world. And I'm almost persuaded I may live to see the time when the gospel will be returned to the churches of America.

Wouldn't that be wonderful? The second issue that we have to take sides on is simply this, that salvation is utterly of the Lord or only partially. Utterly of the Lord or only partially. I remember your young pastor many years ago went down to Panama City to hold a meeting.

Had a little trouble with the pastor. I forget all the details. In the connection with prayer, Brother Mahan told me that he said to the young preacher, let's pray to sinners.

According to your theology we ought not to bother God. If salvation's up to man, we needn't bother God. We just get out on our knees and say, Bill, save yourself.

Susie, save yourself. This has been a battleground. Men have taken it and become what we call hardshells.

There's always that danger. There is a sin between truth and error. And there's nothing so dangerous as something that's got a lot of truth in it and a lot of error.

But the battleground is still being fought. And with all of the conflict and all of the mistakes and all the boneheaded mean things we've done, it's still been a pleasure to insist in spite of everything that salvation is God's work first, last, and all the time. And that no man, if he lived a billion years, would ever have whereof the glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation is either altogether of the Lord, or it's just part of the Lord and part of man. Now the popular gospel is still that salvation, God had something to do with it, and man cast a deciding vote, but not so. Not so.

Wouldn't it be wonderful? Wouldn't it be wonderful? This is worth praying for. This is what we're sweating for. This is what we're groaning for.

This is what none of us know the meaning of the word, sacrificing if we knew how to do it for. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the gospel be returned to our churches and a sinner couldn't run from one church and have his wounds healed slightly somewhere else by preaching this damnable doctrine, that God's done part of it, and now he's hoping that man will do the rest. No, that takes sides.

Salvation is either all of the Lord, or it's just part of him. And that's an issue. I don't want to stay here till midnight, so I'll just mention these tonight.

167 times in the New Testament, the word K-A-L-E-O, or its equivalent, it means call. 167 times in the New Testament. I've been going up and down the line a while, subject to pastors.

You're looking at a miracle. I'm in the name of heaven. I've stayed in the ministry.

Beats me. Beats me. And I've tried to preach that men are saved when God calls them and they're able to hear it.

I've tried to preach that to a church world that is still absolutely ignoring the fact that salvation, 167 times in the New Testament, is at the end of God's call. How on earth we could have built all our mission program and our big churches and all our denomination and leave out the fact that men are dead in their spiritual graves and there's only one voice that's got authority to speak and give dead men life. But the whole outfit is built on it.

God didn't put one word in the New Testament 167 times to be written off. Men are still saved virtually by hearing in the gospel as the Holy Ghost makes it effective. A voice that has in it authority to give life to dead men.

That's the only way anybody ever did get saved. The other day down in Houston a young lady broke up the service and she came running down the front and said I heard it. Why sure she heard it.

She heard it through my voice. She heard His voice. And Christ was made alive by the Holy Ghost and she heard Him speak.

Not with these ears but with an ear of faith just as plainly as He said Lazarus come forth. That girl heard it. That's the way people say it.

Salvation is God saving dead men and He saves men by the Word as He does everything else and men hear and are saved. The third issue that we face is that salvation is a gift not an offer. The old Puritans used to use the expression Christ is freely offered in the gospel which is so.

But it's meaningless. It's the same proposition as the scripture whosoever will may come. The scripture does not say that.

But it is so that whosoever will may come. But that's meaningless because nobody will. Nobody will.

Somebody says well I believe whosoever will may come. I do too. But nobody will.

So why fuss about it. Why fuss about it. They tell me well I believe Christ is freely offered in the gospel.

I do too. But nobody is interested. So why fuss about it.

But oh it's a little deeper than that. Salvation is not an offer for men to decide what they will do about. Salvation is a gift.

And you better listen to me. You don't turn down a gift because nobody ever offers a gift to anybody until their debt is sure to be appreciated. You better get that.

That's right. This is back on this same issue. Sure.

My Lord Jesus was dealing with a woman of Samaritan and he said unto her if thou knewest the what? The gift of God. That brings us back to the same thing. The heart has to be prepared or the gift will not be offered.

My Lord he didn't put himself up for barter. The most damnable thing that's perverted the gospel of Christ all the days of our years has been this stuff about you dear people you make up your mind what you will do with Christ. It's not given you to make that disposition of Christ.

You're commanded to repent toward God. You're commanded to believe the gospel but you're never given a choice. You're just faced with a duty.

Isn't that right? Listen to me. Listen to me. I've had a little burden in my heart for my heart for yours and people that go to all over America.

If there's anybody on God's top side of God's earth that ought to have tender hearts ought to be able to weep in here. It's men and women who received the gift. You've received the gift.

If God Almighty would give you Christ surely no sinner on God's earth could be as bad as you. I wish I could wrap up everybody in America that's lost joy. That still isn't an amazement for the unspeakable gift.

He gives it to prepared hearts, to prepared hearts, to prepared hearts. Will the load of guilt, burden clear up to the hill? But he touched me. Oh, he touched me.

And oh, the joy that filled my soul. He touched me and made me whole. Salvation is an offer to be considered.

Salvation is God's gift. Thanks be unto God, would the apostle Paul say, for the unspeakable gift. A Bible scholar told me that that Greek word was never, if translated, thanks be unto God for his own praise.

You just can't figure it out. It just, thanks be unto God. Not that he fixed it so we could consider the matter and use our little brains and our will, but in it all, conquering grace, he gives eternal life to men and women.

Salvation is a gift. It's not an offer. And then of course the fourth issue is that salvation comes by revelation, not by decision.

Boy, we've had some scripture. Mr. Spurgeon used to say, surely you must decide for Jesus Christ, but for a revealed Christ. A revealed Christ.

A young preacher in Winston-Salem came to see me last fall, the time I was home. He and his wife liked to come over and talk with me. He said, Brother Monash, I wish I could have you in my church.

First time you told my crowd that unless God worked a miracle in their lives, they're going to split hill wide open. He said, that would scare my people to death. I said, isn't that so? He said, yeah.

But he said, my people never heard it. Of course, I knew what he preached. He preached that a man gets saved when he decides to believe on Jesus.

And a man's a fool to trust a hole in the wall. Oh, yes, salvation comes not by offering and making up his mind, but by the work of the spirit of God making Jesus Christ, who's alive, real to him. So that if everybody in the world got shot before sunrise and you was the only one left, somebody asked you if Christ is alive, you'd say, yes, sir.

Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I met him.

I walk with him. He's real to me. Salvation comes by God working a miracle.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if in our day, I didn't have to jump out of my skin, if the gospel that preaches that faith is Christ made real inside would be returned to America. I claim to be a Christian. I believe God saved me.

I've got five brothers and sisters still living. They're all prominent church workers. Only one of them would be comfortable if he talked about Christ.

They're Sunday school teachers and deacons and this, that, and the other. They don't know a thing on God's earth about a living God. I never get to see them.

They are prophets of this generation. They've made their decisions and they're doing their best to keep out of jail and get to heaven when they die. And I long for them to be shot up in their Sunday schools and in their pulpits and over the radio.

They'll never be shot up to the fact that you can't get saved without getting in touch by faith with a living Lord who died. Salvation comes by revelation and not by decision. The fifth issue that we still face, and put in words like this, salvation is made effective in a man's life by God bringing a man to repentance and faith, or if men themselves will repent and believe.

Somebody says, well, I believe that God save anybody if a man repents toward God and believe in Jesus Christ. So do I. But ain't nobody going to do it, so why fuss about it? If that's all there is to it, the whole outfit will go to hell. But thank God the scriptures teach much more than that.

They teach that God Almighty has set a man, the man Christ Jesus, with the print of the nails in his hands and the print of the crown of thorns on his head. And he's sitting on a throne. He's put him there and given him one task, among others, to grant repentance and forgiveness of sin.

Oh, bless God. That's a white horse of a different color. I shut men up the best I know how all over the country.

And I say, sinner, why don't you repent? The best way for you to find out is you can't start trying. Just start trying to abhor yourself. You can quit chewing tobacco or cussing out the mule, but you can't do a great deal about what's inside.

Go on, sinner, believe these preachers and make up your mind what you're going to do, and you'll find out it won't work. It won't work. But thank God we've got good news.

On the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ bought the right to give repentance and faith, and he's in that business, praise God. We've got hope there. We've got hope there.

The sixth issue. Moffat translates Romans 11.29, God never goes back on his call. The King James says, The gifts and callings of God are without repentance.

That's pretty good. I like Moffat's translation. God never goes back on his call.

He never does ever want to swap back. That good evil has several things wrapped up in this, and I just mention it, and I'll quit. Believers are going to persevere in holiness, because that's what they were chosen for.

They were chosen in him, but they must persevere in holiness. Believers are going to be conformed to the image of Christ, but listen to me, they must be conformed to the image of Christ. I've studied the Puritans, and I've studied John and Calvin.

I've studied everybody I could find money to buy books or borrow from. I differ with the Puritans. I differ with Brother Calvin.

I believe the warnings in the book of Hebrews are not the people who almost got saved, but did. I wish I could believe that when he talks about people who've tasted and been illuminated, tasted the power, folks who almost got saved, but I believe they got saved. You want to throw me out? I believe that New Testament salvation calls for you to spit on your hands and roll up your sleeves and see to it that these terrible warnings never take place in your life.

That's what I believe. Now you can ask me some questions about that, I can't answer. You say, well Brother Barnett, you going to tear up our whole Baptist doctrine about the eternal security of the believer? I don't know what to do about it.

But I'm going to look you in the face and tell you now that the scriptures talk about crucifying afresh the Son of God, and it's talking to God's people. It talks about putting Him to open shame, and it's talking to save people. And I used an expression one time, the light shot me.

I believe that hell is hot on your trail tonight. I believe the devil will get you if he can. I believe that God's people better quit getting the doctrine out of books, and they'd better face the fact that salvation isn't something you can put in a tin can.

It's a daily relationship. And if there ever was a generation of church people this side of hell, it needs to be shocked out of this damnable, carnal idea that this conservative believer lived like hell and go to heaven when you die. No, no.

Our forefathers thought they needed what they called the means of grace. There is a cocksureness today that's going to fill hell full of church members if we don't watch out. I don't know how to handle those passages that just scare the living daylights out of me.

If we sin willfully, that's talking to Christian people, folks. How shall we escape if we treat like this so great salvation? That's talking to Christian people. You say, Brother Barnard, you're trying to scare us into doing right.

The book of Hebrews will if you read it. It dead sure will. Oh, it's impossible to renew them to repentance.

That scares me. That scares me. But the gifts and callings of God are without repentance.

God never goes back on his call. Therefore, brethren, beloved, we're persuaded better things for you and things that accompany salvation. And I close with this description of the God-man-with-side of salvation.

The Lord knoweth them who put their trust in him and let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity. Run from it. Run from it.

The child of God will be conformed to the image of Christ, but he must be put upon the whole arm of God. Dig in. Dig in.

These choruses made me homesick. I love them. I love you people.

Do your best. Let's practice auditorium. Let's have a good time in the Lord, will you? Go after peace.

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