

# Whosoever Wills of the Bible

by Rolfe Barnard

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*Rolfe Barnard's sermon explores the biblical concept of 'whosoever wills' as those who thirst for and actively seek God's grace.*

**Duration:** 49:25

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:28, John 7:37, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 11:6, Revelation 22:1, Revelation 22:17

**Topics:** "Free Will"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on his time spent with the congregation and expresses gratitude for their friendship and the opportunity to preach the gospel. He mentions a controversial movie and plans to discuss it in the future. The sermon then focuses on the last chapter of the Bible, discussing the tree of life and the water of life that brings healing to the nations. The preacher emphasizes the richness of God's mercy and the importance of faith as a vital act of the soul in accepting Jesus Christ. He encourages the congregation to reach out and take hold of Christ, acknowledging that while faith is a gift from God, it is also an individual's responsibility to exercise it.

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## Transcript

Now, tomorrow night, we are divided tonight, it couldn't be helped, we understand that, but I hope that these messages, teaching messages, have been at least worthwhile. We've enjoyed staying out in the sticks, and it's been good. We're almost getting to where we think of you, dear people, as another home, and as our dear friends of the Lord.

About the first of this next month will be three years since we came to meet Brother Ernest Riesinger, and then through him, through you. And it's been our joy to know you, and to be your guest, and to hope that some have been brought into the liberty of the gospel, in these days just a few days apart. I thought maybe tonight we would dissect a movie of something that has led to a lot of controversy, and I'm going to speak tonight from the last chapter of the Bible.

Tomorrow night, we want to deal with the most pessimistic and the most optimistic text in the New Testament. John 540, you will not come unto me that you might have life. To me, that is a pessimistic, that's a terrible statement, because it's so.

But John 644, no man can come unto me except to follow the drawing that has hope in it. That's a very optimistic verse. I go at it that way because we've been told that that's a terrible verse, but I want to show

you tomorrow night how to deal with people, if I can, and trust that the last service shall be worthwhile.

I announced that tonight I would teach you some from the 17th verse of the Revelation, 22nd chapter of Revelation, and I would speak on the whosoever wills of the Bible. The whosoever wills of the Bible. Somebody came to me after service last evening, and they didn't get my subject right.

They thought I was going to preach on the fact that the scriptures teach that whosoever will may come to the Lord Jesus Christ. I said no, no, I'm not going to do that, for the scriptures do not talk in that kind of language. No, I want to say three things from the scripture here tonight, three things that describe the whosoever wills of the word of God.

Did you get what I said a minute ago? I think it is terribly important that we not make the Bible say what it does not say. That's just as bad as making it say less than it says, isn't it? Add to the Bible. For instance, last night after doing my best to confine ourselves to what the scripture actually teaches about what they call predestination, it still wasn't clear, and somebody wanted to know if the Bible actually taught that God predestined some to be damned even though they wanted to be saved.

It is amazing how Satan has clouded our thinking and how we need to be a little scrupulous, almost to the point of just being too scrupulous to see to it that we stick closely to what the Bible actually says, not what somebody says it says, but what the Bible actually says. For instance, have you heard it said that the Bible says that whosoever will may come to Christ? Have you ever heard that? You have, haven't you? But the Bible don't say that. Now, that is the truth.

That's so, but the Bible don't say it. That's so, whosoever will may come to Christ, but the Bible don't use that kind of language. Do you get it? It just don't do it.

I've had people say, Brother Barnum, the Bible says whosoever will may come. I say, no it don't. Well, they say, Brother Barnum, you're straining the gnat and swallowing the camel.

No, I'm insisting these days that with so much controversy and much difference of opinion, and we're all trying to find out the truth, that we just confine ourselves to Bible language. If the Bible says a thing, let's say it and be able to quote it, but let's not accord an expression of ourselves, a form, a pattern, a theology of ourselves in dealing with our own hearts to somebody else, and make the Bible say what it does not say. Now, what does the Bible say? Verse 17, this is what the Bible says.

And the spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is a thirst come.

And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Now, of course, this is the verse from which we get, what we hear down our way a lot, the wonderful whosoever will gospel. But this isn't what this passage teaches.

That isn't what the Bible teaches. Tomorrow night we're going to try to show you. The most pessimistic text in the Bible is, he will not come unto me.

If it's left up to men, who will come? Nobody. In that verse, John 5, 40, slams the door and damns every human being that's out of heaven or hell. Because if that's all there is to it, nobody will come.

Nobody. If I left home most of these 39 years, and lived in a suitcase, slept on different beds, and ate different kinds of food all these years, if I had nothing else to preach than the little emptiness of going up and down the line with some confidence in people, that there were nice folks, and if handled the right way, they'd respond in the right way, I'd be a fool. But what keeps you keeping on is that you do not go preaching the whosoever will gospel, but you go preaching the gospel of God concerning his Son, the hearing of which men and women, some of them, are given faith to believe.

And our confidence, then, is in God. We go each place we go, remembering that the Spirit of God will have to tell even a man as sound in truth and as sound in the warfare. As the Apostle Paul, he said, now don't be afraid, Paul, going over there, I have much people in that city.

Isn't that a wonderful expression? I have much people over there. Your labor will not be in vain. There's some people over there that are going to hear the gospel and actually be able to hear it and close with it and savingly believe in the one of whom the gospel speaks.

Now that's our encouragement. Now that'll do when you're not getting results, and it'll do when you are. And that I wouldn't take a million dollars for.

Now having labored the point that I'm not talking about the whosoever will gospel tonight, I want us to notice three things that this verse of scripture says about the whosoever will. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life free. In the first place, the whosoever wills of the word of God are men and women who thirst for sovereign divine grace from God.

Whoso is athirst, let him come. Whoso is athirst, that's the first thing about a whosoever will. I'll tell you who will take of the water of life freely, the fellow that's thirsty for the work of God's divine grace in his heart and in his soul.

The invitation is to thirsty people. The instruction to thirsty people is to take. But the invitation to thirsty people is to come to the Lord Jesus, come to the fountain of sovereign grace.

Now this grace that I'm talking about now, this water that men are to take freely, we are not left up to our own conjecture as to what it is. The first two verses of this last chapter of the Bible tell us that this thirst for sovereign grace, for the water of life, that this water of life is defined in verses 1 and 2, that it flows from the throne of God. He showed me verse 1, a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.

Where does it come from? Proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. That's where God's grace comes from, from his wonderful throne. The throne of God and the one who hung on a cross.

Here is a river full of water and the water is full of life and it flows from the throne of God. You're thirsty for a drink and then a drink and a keep on drinking of this water that flows in a river out of the very throne of God. Whosoever thirsts, let him come.

Here is the water of life. It's flowing. It's deep as the heart of God.

It's wide as the arms of the cross. There's plenty of it to spare. The Scriptures will say, but God who is our, I see, rich in mercy.

You probably wouldn't exhaust it if you drank of it every day. There's plenty to spare. It's for the healing of the nations.

This water of life, that's what the grace of God is pictured as being here. Here it is. It's proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In the midst of the street of it, on either side of the river, there is a tree of life which bears twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. This water of life then that people are bidden to take if they're willing and who's willing? People who are thirsty. This river, thank God, not just a stream.

I've tried to exhaust some of the meaning of Paul's expression, but God who is rich in mercy. But God who is rich in mercy. When our wealthy is plenty and to spare.

He's this rich as this one verse of scripture that this little preacher knows about to kind of define how rich God is. I'll tell you one thing the Bible says. He's this rich.

He's rich unto all who call on him. If every human being in the world from Adam down to right now would call on God and thirst for this water that flows from the throne, he'd still have plenty of water to spare. It wouldn't exhaust.

He's rich unto all who call on him. God's throne from which sovereign grace flows. Now, we need to camp here just a little while.

You thirsty? All right. You thirsty enough to be willing? You still want to argue? Or if the water was offered to you, you ready to take it? Huh? That's the whosoever will. They thirsty.

Whosoever thirst. Now, we must be planted beside this river of life in this life. Here's where the rub comes.

Our roots must be put down into that stream like trees in an arid land thirsty for water. And that must happen in the here and the now. I tried to show you last night that the reason the doctrine, the teaching of predestination, is so false and so hated and so caricatured is not that men are ignorant of the heart of it, but they actually know.

They won't admit that they understand what it means. They hate it. They try to get rid of it because it's the heart of the gospel.

And it means that salvation is a thing of holiness. And that man's being saved in proportion as the character of Christ is being reproduced in him. Now, with the present temper in the churches in our north and south, we can't possibly have a gospel that leads to men's holiness.

That just won't square with what we want today. And so these truths are so hated. I have come to believe they're hated because men do understand them.

They'd say all manner of foolish things about them, but they've been exposed to them. They understand that salvation is the making of a man holy. That's exactly what it is.

You can't have this Sunday morning stuff we call Christian America and keep these doctrines so we got to throw them out. You can't have what we have down south, and you know better up here, called Christianity, giving things up lip service to a doctrine that talks about what salvation is, is making men and women to be conformed to the image of God's dear son. And what I'm talking about tonight, this thirst.

Thirst for sovereign grace. What does that mean? Thirst. Intense need.

There isn't anything on earth, doctors will tell us, as intense as a man's desire for water when he's thirsty. It's the most intense of all of the needs of the human body. You can do without food and a thousand other things, but you've got to have water.

You've got to have water. And I've never experienced it, and I doubt you have. Only one time, I had too many poisons, and they wouldn't give me any water for a day or two.

And I convince you about safe now, I would have sold my soul for a drink of water. I would have. If I'd have had a chance, I'd have bought a glass of water with my eternal soul.

That's how intense it was. Now you get intense about this business of wanting divine grace to flow from God into your soul. Of wanting those things that can only come to you as a gift from the hand of him who does so utterly in grace.

Forgiveness of sin. You've either got to work it out, or it must be given to you to become intense. And desire in this life the forgiveness of sins and the planting of the germ of holiness within you.

Whosoever thirsts, whosoever thirsts, let him come. Let him come. Now all men are not whosoever wills of this type of, you see.

For all men are thirsty for God's grace to do for them. And nobody would want God's grace to do anything for them. Until they were acutely sensitive of their ill-deserved and their ability to work out their own salvation.

All men are not whosoever wills. Now the indication, of course, whosoever thirsts, it's just as wide as you want to make it. Are you thirsty? Well, it's big enough to take you in.

You're not thirsty? It leaves you out, but by your choice. By your choice. Is that fair? Whosoever thirsts, I will not widen it any more than that.

I challenge you, there isn't an invitation in the Bible that's any wider than that. You hungry? There's bread for hungry people. You're not hungry? No bread offered you, but you make the decision yourself.

You say, I don't need forgiveness. I don't want to be holy. I don't desire the work of God's grace.

And a sinner dead sure do that. And a sinner dead sure does do it. And you invite yourself out.

You say, excuse me, please. You're not talking to me. But if by God's grace you say that's talking to me, I'm thirsty.

I have a keen sense of my need. I'd love to be planted to the side of this river with the privilege of drinking it. Come unto me, says the Lord, if you're thirsty.

And do what? Drink. Just keep on drinking. And just keep on drinking.

And just keep on drinking. Now, if men were invited to money or the love of sin or the enticements of the world, that'd be a different story. But not all are whosoever wills when invited to partake of God's grace.

And so we insist that before men will thirst for God's divine work in their soul, two things have to happen. First, they have to have a desire. It's got to come from somewhere.

I invite you to work it up yourself if you think you can. If you think you can, I invite you to prostrate yourself before God's truths and cry to God to open your heart and the eyes of your understanding, give to your ear a hearing after the gospel that you might attend on the things of eternity in your soul. Either a man can do it himself or he needs somebody to give him that which he cannot do.

And up till now, nobody's ever been able to change his spots and change his nature. And unless God works the work of divine grace in your soul, you'll never be thirsty for God's grace to come your way. And that's the reason I say that salvation is in the way of seeking, seeking him until he does for you what only God can do.

A desire must be worked in you. You can't do it yourself. You can cry to God to do it in you.

And a trust in that grace. Men do not thirst for God's power in their life long as they trust in their own. And you will never, now hear me, you will never turn yourself over to Christ until you've got confidence in him, in his power.

You haven't got any, but that's still just half of it. Faith is a confidence. Faith is confidence.

Faith is confidence. Faith is what? Confidence. If I turned myself over to Christ, would everything be all right? Faith says yes.

Faith is confidence. Yes, sir. I don't have any power.

He has. He has. I can't do it.

He can. Faith is confidence. Who are the whosoever will? Number one, they're the ones who thirst.

They're the ones who thirst. They're the ones who thirst. Who are the whosoever wills? In the second place, they're the ones who take.

They're the ones who take. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Thirsty people, when offered water, what will they do? They'll take it.

They'll take it. All alibis are gone. They'll take it.

They're thirsty. Here's water. They take it.

They don't sit and watch the stream go by. They take it. Let him take.

He's invited to take. He's commanded to take. And the whosoever wills do, brother.

Thirsty people take water. And when it says for the taking, the second thing then the Bible says about the whosoever wills, they are the folks that take of the grace of God. You know, there's an active principle in that faith which lines us up or unites us with or relates us to the throne of God from which this grace flows.

What is it? Yes, it's a calling upon the name of the Lord. It's a calling upon the name of the Lord. That's what is the active part of saving faith.

The whosoever wills of the Bible are not the folks who end their strength, you know. They do part of it and God does the other like we've heard. But they're the thirsty ones and they're thirsty enough to take.

They lay hold. They lay hold. Now, I've been preaching 39 years and I still don't know how to handle the great paradoxes of the Bible so I don't try to.

I know this, that faith is the great vital act of the soul and actually in all of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know that it's a gift of God but I also know that it's your act and there comes a time if you keep out of hell and if you gain some assurance of hell when as a great vital act of your very own you reach out and do what this text states. You take.

You take. You explain that? No, I can't explain it. I can't explain it.

But I will tell you this, that God's not going to act for you. He enables you but he will not save for you. You're going to have to reach out and lay hold of Christ.

Is that alright? Yes. Yes. Yes.

That whosoever wills of the Bible they reach out and begin that thing that I call the active principle of saving faith. What is it? It's a calling upon the name of the Lord. Now I'm not talking so much about what we call a mourner's bench.

I have no particular objection. I don't want to get in a straight jacket. The only thing with me is I go to a place and it's different everywhere you go.

I go to different sections of the country. I go to different atmospheres. Here's the way we do things here.

And that's perfectly alright with me. As long as you don't tell me I got to do it that way. In other words, I can see how God will bless you in your dumbness.

He does me some. Just so you don't say that's the only way he'll work. See what I mean? Huh? That's the only way he'll work.

Somebody says, well you can't get saved unless you do it this way. Now we just manage. We just manage.

I'm not talking about the mourner's bench as such. Although it's a lot better than nothing. It's better than nothing.

I tell you what, I'm talking about a mourner's bench in your heart. I'm talking about an expression that describes the child of God in his birth and in his daily growth and walk. It's a calling on the name of the Lord.

It's not a once for all proposition. I'm as certain as I'm alive that I'm going to speak the truth now. Everything in relation to your response to and commitment to Jesus Christ needs to be done over again tomorrow.

Every commitment, you need to do it again tomorrow. Every act of the Christian life must be daily. The Bible knows nothing about a repentance for yesterday without today or believing yesterday, not believing today.

Clinging to Christ yesterday but not clinging to him today. Every expression in the New Testament where people are said to have eternal life or everlasting life is in connection with a verb that's in the present

participle case. It's he that believeth, he that continueth, he that abideth, he that obeyeth, and so forth and so on.

It's a proposition of today. I made this statement. I think I'm right.

You can have no assurance that you're a child of God if you have to go back to yesterday for evidence. If you don't have evidence today, you don't have assurance today. Is that all right? Is that all right? Do you believe in it now? Boy, I did yesterday.

How about now? How about now? You obeyed yesterday. How about today? It's a present proposition. It's a present tense proposition.

You must be up to date in it. Every commitment needs to be recommitted. Every vow needs to be renewed.

Repentance needs to be repeated. Prayers need to be repeated. Faith needs to be continued.

What am I talking about? One of the three things the Scripture says about the whosoever wills of the Bible is they take. They take. They take.

Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life. Praise God. What's taking? I don't know what the best Bible language for it is.

It's a calling on the name of the Lord. Now, this continuous calling. Now, hear me as I make a hard statement.

This continuous calling characterized those who really believed in sovereign grace. The secret, unceasing calling out of the recesses of one's heart is the mark of a child of God. Did you get it? This unceasing, this continuous inside, in the secrets of your heart, calling on, calling on, calling on the name of the Lord.

That's the mark of a child of God, and the lack of it is the mark of a man who believes, but his faith is the same kind that James spoke of. It's a dead faith. It produces no work, for the believing child of God begins his work by a calling unceasingly on the name of the Lord.

Now, down our way, I've thought it all my life, we take the expression Romans 10, 13, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And so they say, Brother Barnes, that means this. You get folks to come down in the aisle and get down on their knees and get them to say, Lord forgive me for Jesus' sake, amen, and they guarantee your salvation.

That isn't what this scripture's talking about. This is an incessant, this is a lifelong, this is an unceasing, this is continual calling upon, reaching out to, leaning upon, confidence in, surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. I know what I'm doing.

Whosoever shall call, whosoever shall call. That marks him. He's a caller.

That's the mark of a child of God. Hell's gonna be full of people that got down on their knees, said a little prayer. Somebody said, you're saved.

Now, let's get it. You're not saved by prayer, but you're not saved apart from it. For blessed God, this sovereign grace I'm talking about, will bring you prostrate before the Lord on your face, calling on the

name of the Lord.

Let me repeat it. You're not saved by prayer, you're saved by faith, but you're not saved apart from prayer. Well, this thing will get serious.

There's a call on the name of the Lord. What does it mean, get down on your knees? Mr. Spurgeon rarely ever prayed on his knees. Rarely.

He never prayed with his eyes closed. Maybe sometimes he could, but he didn't do that. He lived a life, as far as we can find out, it was just sort of a state of prayer.

He was always calling on the name of the Lord. Now, while you're working and you're not conscious for the deep thing to go on in your life or in your subconscious, the child of God is what's calling on the name of the Lord all the time. Washing dishes, not conscious of it, calling on the name of the Lord.

Buying corn, calling on the name of the Lord. Whosoever shall call, that is the active principle of a faith that takes of the Lord. Day by day.

The whosoever will is a fellow that takes. And then the last place, the third thing about the whosoever will is the Bible. Not only are they thirsty, not only do they take.

I want to press that just a little more before I get off of it. Oh, they don't wait on anything. They don't wait for deeper conviction or deeper this or deeper that.

They're thirsty enough and watered off the tap. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. A mourning that doesn't lead to being comforted of Christ is not Holy Spirit repentance.

There's a comfort that follows New Testament Bible mourning, grieving over sin, and seeking of the Lord. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. In the day thou shalt seek me with all thine heart I shall surely be found with thee, is the Bible anchor.

But in the last place, the third thing about the whosoever wills of the Bible, they take the grace of God freely. Freely. I think maybe that could mean two things abundantly.

Not just a sip, not a Sunday morning proposition, not a thing apart from life, not a thing as a convenience. Every church, every town ought to have a chamber of commerce and a Quranic quote and a school and a church. That's the atmosphere that's Americanism now.

Not just as an appendage on life and things that are really important, but they take it with a great grasp. Now, they don't spare. They take it freely.

They take it freely. They take the grace of God abundantly, more than our necessary food. We thirst and take a sovereign grace, calling on the name of the Lord.

Then I think it could mean without price. Let him that's a thirst come and whosoever will. Who are those that will? Well, the thirsty ones.

What do they do? They take. They take freely. They take without price.

You know, this water of life costs in two different senses. It costs the Son of God. I always hesitate.

I don't know how to talk about this. I wouldn't be a sentimentalist or be maudlin. I've never been able to talk about the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross for one time in my ministry.

I've never been able to appeal. I don't know. You're in mystery.

And I would not appeal to our senses. I could get people to cry if I told them about how the little girl sobbed her heart out because her little dolly got run over by the car or the little dog got his leg broken. And I would not approach the sufferings of Christ from that standpoint.

I don't know how. One time in my whole ministry, I was able to talk about the sufferings of Christ on the cross in a God-honoring way. One time in 39 years.

But although I'm not able to talk about it, I make a mess when I try. It costs the Son of God the agony of separation from God. No man can even hope rightly, much less enter in, to the terrible, terrible agony of that crime.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? It costs the Son of God. This river of water of life flowed from the throne of God. It was opened up out of the wounded side of the Lord God.

And there is a sense in which it costs the person who receives it, not as a price to purchase it, for it's without money or without price, but in another sense, it costs you all that you have and all you are to receive. You do not buy a wife, and yet, sometimes you forsake all to gain one. You cannot purchase a drink of this life-giving water as a price to be paid.

But I'm very badly fooled if the New Testament don't teach that in the obtaining of this water, you have to lose your own life. And from here on out, you're not your own. You've been bought with a price.

Everything you are and everything you have is not yours. It's His. In that sense, with all the warnings the Lord faithfully gave to men and women of something of what was involved, setting out to walk with the Lord, it can be said that while you cannot buy with a price, the obtaining of it will cost you everything you have.

These are the three things that the Bible says about the whosoever will. Of this day or any other day, there's thirsty people. Men and women by God's grace have been brought to see the truth a little bit about themselves and their need for God's grace to do for them what they cannot do for themselves.

They come and take, and they take freely at the cost of the life laid down of the Son of God and at the cost, in that sense, of all they have and are. Are you one of the whosoever will, deeply, deeply sensitive of your need of divine grace? Take. Take.

Lay hold. Lay hold. Freely, largely, abundantly, at the cost of everything.

And if you've not already done so, find out how this congregation does. I do not know their method, but request permission to walk an aisle or meet with somebody or do something. When that has been accomplished, say, I wish this church to baptize me.

Why you want me baptized? Because it's the seal, the sign of my faith. Thirsty. I came and took.

Freely. Freely. And the work's done.

And I want the world to have my confession of what God's done for me. The New Testament says the way we make our public profession of faith is in the act of baptism. There ought to be people searching our churches out, any way you have.

God help us not to be happy. If a Lord's Day passes and somebody doesn't come, say, I want this church to baptize me. What you want me baptized for? Well, bless God.

I owe it all to him, but he made me thirsty. I got to where I wasn't so happy, to be in rebellion. I got to where some sense of the fact I'm dying, and now John to the other side of death does judgment.

I became somewhat sensible of the fact I couldn't remedy the situation myself. Being thirsty, I've heeded the invitation, whose soul's the thirst? Let him come. Come where? To this great river of life.

That's Christ, of course. A toll from the throne of God that I took. Praise God, I took to him.

Be the glory I took freely. Now I can sing hallelujah. It is done.

I've believed on the Son. I'm saved by the blood of the crucified one. And I want to put on his uniform and wear the sign and seal of that covenant and tell the world here's a trophy of the sovereign grace of God almighty through the blood of Jesus Christ.

You do that for the glory of God and the safety of your soul. May the Lord do that for somebody every night. If that needs to be done, let us stand.

If you have a word, go to Pastor.

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