

A Simple Gospel

by Ernest O'Neill

The gospel is not just about forgiveness, but about being freed from the power of sin in our lives through identification with Jesus.

Duration: 28:49

Scripture: Psalm 32:5, Matthew 1:21, Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:30

Topics: "Atonement Theology", "Sin Redemption"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that the message of the good news has not been properly delivered. He argues against the belief that death is the punishment for sin, stating that it is actually the means by which sin is destroyed. The preacher rejects the idea that God is angry with humanity and killed his own son to show his anger. Instead, he emphasizes that Jesus came to save people from their sins, not in their sins. The preacher encourages the audience to live in conformity with what they know to be true and right, and to have a genuine relationship with Jesus that frees them from sin.

Transcript

To Joseph, telling him about the coming birth of his son. And it's page 835 and Matthew 1 and 21. She will bear a son, the angel said, Mary.

Mary will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. Now would you just look at your translation there and would you notice the preposition. The preposition before the phrase their sins.

The preposition is from. He will save his people from their sins. That's what God has promised to do for us in Jesus.

And could I push you again by pointing out to you that there's a great difference between the word for from in Greek and in. Just in case you think Matthew could have fumbled over the spelling. The word from is apa in Greek or it looks like that in English transliteration.

A-P-O. And the word for an in is n or it looks like that in English letters. So this is the word for from and that's the word in Matthew 1 and 21.

It's from their sins. And this is the word for in and it isn't there. It isn't there at all.

Now loved ones just to startle you into reflection for a moment. The great bulk of fundamentalist evangelical Christianity believes that that is the word in. Now really truly in practice and often even in the way we preach and share with each other.

The greater number of us translate the gospel as if the Greek word was *hōs* and not *ōs*. In other words we translate that verse not as it is. You'll call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.

We translate it as if it was you will call his name Jesus because he will save his people in their sins. Now loved ones that isn't the gospel and yet brothers and sisters that is what the great majority of us who think of ourselves vaguely even as evangelicals teach. Now really if you're honest with me I think you'll have to admit that the great majority of us believe that A may sin and B may sin but A is a Christian so he knows that Jesus died for him and therefore Jesus blood covers his sins so he may be sinning like mad and beating his wife every night but yet he's a Christian and so his sins are forgiven and so he's saved in his sins or despite his sins whereas B is a miserable old wretched pagan a non-Christian and he beats his wife every night but he doesn't believe that Jesus died for him and he is going to hell and that's normally the way we all interpret the gospel.

We really in other words say that the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is one can sin with immunity or with impunity without being punished and the other can sin but is punished. Now loved ones that is not the gospel. The gospel is not Jesus will save you in your sins.

The gospel is that Jesus will save you from your sins. I don't think there's one person here that won't see what the outcome of that has been. The outcome of that truncated version of the gospel has been a name for Christianity which is pitiful in secular society because secular society will say the same thing about Christians again and again if they practice what they preached.

They talk big but they don't do big. They talk about what they should do for God but they don't do it. Indeed I put it to you what has put you and me off ordinary church life and ordinary Christianity? Is it not seeing often mums and dads, often friends, often older people believing, believing, preaching, preaching, arguing over doctrine, arguing over church denomination but not living like Jesus.

And loved ones it's really because we've perverted the gospel. We've made it mean Jesus will save us in our sins not from our sins. That's why we get the bumper sticker Christians are not perfect only forgiven.

Now it's nice, it's nice in a way except that I know as a person who was not a Christian I would look at a bumper sticker like that and say yeah that's their excuse. And I would think to myself yeah yeah big talk yeah mercy mercy but I have to live with them in all their misery. And loved ones do you see that the gospel is that Jesus will save us from our sins not in our sins.

I don't think there's one of us here that doesn't have tremendous respect for all C.S. Lewis. You know I think probably almost all of us whatever our background is have great respect for the man's clarity of thought and for his own integrity. When he says things you can see the reason behind it and you can go with him in it.

I remember even before I would have stood with him spiritually I respected what he said because he seemed an honest intelligent man. Now you may not know it but old C.S. Lewis I mentioned this one other Sunday morning old C.S. Lewis came to Jesus primarily through the writings of one man. And that one man was an old 19th century Scottish preacher called George Macdonald whom some of you may have

met through his novels.

And George Macdonald saw to the heart of what we're talking about this morning just very clearly he almost put it in the same words as we've been using. He says about that verse Matthew 1 and 21. Jesus will save us from our sins.

He says the Lord never came to deliver men from the consequences of their sins while yet those sins remained. The Lord never came to deliver us from the consequences of our sins you see which is usually in our mind hell you see while yet those sins remained. And then I'll read it slowly because the logic is a little tricky.

That would be to cast out of the window the medicine of cure. And he regards you see the punishment as a medicine of cure. While yet the man lay sick to go dead against the very laws of being.

And then he says yet men have constantly taken this verse Matthew 1 and 21 to mean that Jesus came to save them from the punishment of their sins. This idea this miserable fancy has terribly corrupted the preaching of the gospel. The message of the good news has not been truly delivered.

And loved ones you see what what really he and countless others are saying. That death is the wages of sin in order to destroy sin. Death is not the wages of sin that somehow you have to try to get somebody else to pay for you.

Death is the wages of sin in that it destroys sin. God is not sitting up in heaven saying how will I show these miserable creatures that I made that I'm real mad. I'm just real mad with them.

And I just am real mad with their sins. I know I'll roar and I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll kill my own son. It's not so loved ones.

The very picture of it seems ridiculous to us. The father hates and detests sin and has to destroy it and has to burn it out of existence. That's why he said the wages of sin is death.

That's why the Bible says he who has died is freed from sin. Not from the consequences of sin. The consequences of sin is death and death is there to destroy sin.

That's the very purpose of death. And the purpose of Jesus' death is to free us from our sins. To destroy sin in us.

To free our lives from sinning. It isn't so that we'll be able to go on sinning in this life and yet have the feeling yeah yeah but that neighbor of mine or that colleague in the office he sins and I sin except that he'll have to face the consequences of sin but lucky old me I'm not going to have to do that. Loved ones that's not true.

God's desire in Jesus and in Jesus' death is to free our lives from our sins. And you know please don't sit there and say oh you've destroyed my peace you've destroyed my peace. Loved ones if you really want God with all your heart you'll respond you'll say oh that's what he wants that's what he wants.

Well I know he's a merciful father. I know he's going to continue to forgive my sins until he can get a hold of them but Lord I know you want rid of them now. I know that's the purpose of Jesus' death.

I know you want rid of them. I know you're not going to kill me this moment just because I have something in my life that's not right but Lord as long as I side with you and say that's why Jesus died okay Lord I want rid of the sin in my life. But loved ones if you're sitting there with that complacent lackadaisical attitude that says oh well I may not have all the sins out of my life but I know that I believe Jesus died for me so I believe I'm okay anyway.

I'll do my best. Loved ones that's a perversion of the gospel. The gospel is not believe that Jesus is going to die instead of you and do your best to please God.

No it's not believe and try. The gospel is be willing to die with Jesus to running your own life and come alive in the power of his spirit to living like him. The gospel is not an auto suggestion.

Now loved ones I would point out to you that if you believe the other way all you are is a Jew. That's all you are. If you believe the other way that you can sin with impunity because Jesus died for you you're a Jew because the Jews knew that their sins could be covered.

That's all they could be. Now I point that out to you in Psalm 32 loved ones it is Psalm 32 and verse 1 and that's a Jew speaking Psalm 32 and verse 1. It's page 480. The Jews knew that they could have their sins forgiven.

They knew that their sins could be covered. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven whose sin is covered. That's all that could happen.

Jesus was the lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world. He was slain in the heart of God before the creation ever took place. In virtue of that God refused to flood the world out with another flood.

So in that sense he gave men respite. He forgave them for the rebellion against him giving them a chance to deal with him during this life. So he could forgive sins even in the times of the Jews.

But Jesus had not died on the cross and it was virtually impossible for anyone but the outstanding prophets and priests and kings who had drawn very close to the spirit of Christ to experience that deliverance from self that can take place in us because of Jesus' death. But they did know that their sin could be covered. Look at verse 5. I acknowledge my sin to thee and I did not hide my iniquity I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.

Now loved ones Jews could have the guilt of their sins forgiven. They could have the guilt of their sins forgiven. And God was satisfied with that in those days.

And you'll find that remember when Paul was preaching to a group of people in Acts 17 and verse 30. That's part of what that verse means Acts 17 and verse 30. It's page 965 Acts 17 and verse 30.

The times of ignorance God overlooked. Now not only the ignorance of the pagans who didn't know anything about God but even the ignorance of the Jews who did not know the truth of the lamb being sent from the foundation of the world and all of us being destroyed with him with all our self-centeredness and our self-will. The times of ignorance God overlooked but now he commands all men everywhere to repent.

That's why loved ones you're under a different situation now and dispensation than the Jews. You can't sit there and hear me preach this stuff Sunday after Sunday and say well well I don't want to go that far I just

want to be a good Jew. Because the times of ignorance God overlooked and he would overlook that kind of thing in those days when they knew no better.

Now you know and I know that we with all our right to ourselves and our right to our own way because these are all the things that bring sin in our lives and all our pride and all our preoccupation with people treating us the right way and resenting people who criticize us wrongly or treat us unjustly. All that was crucified with Jesus and if we're willing to die with him and identify ourselves completely with him we know we can be freed from that and from all the sin that stems from it. Now loved ones that's the light that you and I are responsible to respond to and that's the difference between a Jew and a Christian.

A Jew is one all he knows is his sins forgiven the guilt taken away. A Christian knows not only the guilt taken away but the power of sin in his life destroyed by the power of Jesus death. Would you like to see what the life of a good Jew was like? Now don't faint Romans 7. Really loved ones you know we think of ourselves better than we ought because I know you're all fighting this and saying oh you got this one wrong brother.

But loved ones this is it you know Romans 7 and 15 this is a Jew speaking. I know there's argument over is this a defeated Christian. Loved ones I'll show you why it's a Jew in a moment.

Romans 7 and 15 they had no power in their lives. I do not understand my own actions for I do not do what I want but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want I agree that the law is good so then it is no longer I that do it but sin which dwells within me for I know that nothing good dwells within me that is in my flesh.

I can will what is right but I cannot do it for I do not do the good I want but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now loved ones you may say to me brother do you not think that's a defeated Christian? Loved ones no. No that's a Jew because even a baby Christian has the power that is stated clearly in 1st John 3 and 9. Maybe you'd look at it 1st John 3 and 9. Even a little one who has just begun to know his position with Jesus or her position with Jesus on the cross is in the same situation as that described in 1st John 3 and 9 it's 1066 page 1066 1st John 3 and 9 1st John 3 and 9. No one born of God commits sin.

In other words when Paul says I do what I do not want he's saying I'm not a Christian because a Christian never does what he doesn't want to do because that's the word it's poio. Those of you who know Greek and it's p-o-i-e-o in in English letters and that's the word used in 1st John 3 and 9. It means to do it becomes poet you know in in English poetry you make something you do something poio is to do and that's what that verse says no one born of God does sin. That is even a little child Christian even a little one who has just begun to know Jesus has enough power of Jesus spirit in his life to hold down what is wrong.

At least he can rise to the level of the noble noble pagans. That's it that's what that verse says. I know loved ones all of us have been taught oh brother you can't say that that sinless perfection is nowhere near it's nowhere near perfection at all.

It's just that outwardly you're able to conform your life to what you know is true and right that Plato could do that Socrates could do that Confucius could do. You read their lives their lives that are flawless outwardly. The loved ones even a little baby Christian who has really dealt with Jesus and seen that God's purpose in including him in Jesus death on Calvary was to destroy his life to destroy his right to his life his right to his own way as right to plan his future.

Those are all the rights that we defend that actually produce sin in us eventually loved ones. Those are what make us gods of our own lives. I know we all like to think oh that's what a good red blooded American has a right to you know the right to his own decision right to his own future.

No that's only the right of a person who is running his own life who is trying to be his own God. But on Calvary and Jesus you and I were included in his death and those rights were destroyed and the moment we agree to that and that's what it means to become a Christian. The moment we agree to that that moment we're freed from all the resentments that come from not getting our own way from having other people treat us unfairly.

Now loved ones that's what it means to be a Christian. You don't do sin you may feel sin within and that I'd like to deal with in some future Sundays. You may feel anger within you may feel resentment within you may feel jealousy within but you have enough power in Jesus spirit to hold that all down and to be outwardly a person that's pleasant to live with.

Loved ones do you see what I'm getting at? I think a lot of us have taken the current thinking of our society and we've used it as an excuse to say well you know what I'm not through to the fullness of the spirit or some other phrase that we use as an excuse and that's why Tom I'm so hard to live with. That's why Gene I lose my temper every week. Oh you know I'm not through to those heights of Christian sanctity that we're meant to get to.

Loved ones there are no heights there. An ordinary little Christian will not commit sin. He has the power she has the power to live in conformity outwardly to what they know to be true and right.

But you know did you see the commercial last night on television? A little girl about to steal something from a store you know and isn't it lamentable that even it was put out by the businesses. It wasn't put out by Lutheran League or something like that or the Catholic church or something else. It was put out by retailers and it said shoplifting is wrong.

I mean it's there's something funny isn't there about it's the retailers that are trying to defend absolutes of course because they know we're going to destroy ourselves if we keep at it. But it's interesting that it's the business people that start coming off with commercials pointing out that is wrong. Why do they have to do it? Well you know why.

Because we've all encouraged each other to think you can't help doing wrong things. You can't. With these poor we weak wills that we have oh we can't you know.

If we feel temper oh we just have to let it rip. In fact if you let it rip maybe the more you express it the more you get rid of it. That's just silly you know.

The more you express it the stronger it grows. But we've been taught to believe that we're poor puny little human beings and after all human beings can't be perfect and that's the excuse we use to be absolute ogres you know. We can't be perfect but we don't realize that we're not talking about perfection we're talking about horror stories really.

But you know that we've brought ourselves up on that. We've been teaching ourselves you can't. You can't.

Your we weak will can't do it. Loved ones you have enough of Jesus spirit in you to obey outwardly all that he says is right. Now I agree with you we have to deal later with what can you be delivered from inward sins from feeling anger from the inclination to sin.

The truth is you can. But at least the first step in Christianity is not believing that Jesus died instead of you because the Bible doesn't say that anywhere. Bible says Jesus died for you but it means so that you could die with him to yourself and to you all the powers within you that makes you do what you don't want to do.

And if you're willing to identify yourself with Jesus he through his spirit can give you enough power and enough grace to live like him. Just finishing this. That's why when the people on the day of Pentecost asked Peter what do we do now after you have preached this to us.

He said be baptized as Acts 2 and 38 be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And in other places he talks about being baptized into Jesus and the word into in Greek is different from the word in. That's the word in there you see.

N means in. Into is E I S. It's a different word entirely. And in other verses you get that phrase used be baptized into Jesus.

It means if you want to be a Christian you identify yourself totally with Jesus. You say Lord Jesus I'm willing to die as you did to all the things that we human beings think we should have. To reputation, to position, to our friends and our peers praising us, to security and finances and material things, to fame, to being well known, to being looked up to, to getting our own way.

Lord Jesus if you had nowhere to lay your head I'm willing to identify with you. And loved ones that's what becoming a Christian is. It's identifying yourself completely with Jesus because as you do that the power of his miraculous death on Calvary begins to destroy sin in your life and begins to free you from your sins.

And I'm just anxious that on these Sunday mornings when we enjoy being, I think we do enjoy being with each other and in God's presence so much. I'm just anxious that you won't misunderstand what the simple gospel is. And the simple gospel is Jesus will save you from your sins, not in your sins.

Now I pray you know that nobody will meet, I watch Campus Church, watch Fish Enterprise, they'll all be gone and dust in a few years. But I would love to think that anybody who meets any of you in this family here will not have to mutter under their breath, I wish they'd practiced what they preached. I really pray that you won't be hypocrites you know and that none of us will be those intellectual believers who are just good Jews.

But that you'll really come into a relationship with Jesus that will free you from your sins. Now well it's so late I can't ask for questions but do come up after you know if you want to. Let us pray.

Dear Father, thank you for your words to us that if we walk in the light as you are in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanse of us from all sin. Thank you Father that if we set our hearts against all that is wrong in our lives and we move towards an identification with Jesus with all our hearts, you will be merciful to us. But Lord that you will not forgive those of us who camp on the sides of the river and try to get forgiveness without any deliverance in our own lives.

Lord, we know that you will not tolerate the Pharisees or the hypocrites. So Lord we would come to you now and Holy Spirit ask you is there any way in which we are not entering into Jesus' death and is there

any sin in our lives that we need to be freed from that you can free us from? Lord, we know you'll forgive us until you free us if we give our whole hearts and lives to you for that freedom and deliverance. Lord, we would do that this morning.

Trust you to make us people that live like your Son and that will be enjoyable to be with in heaven. We ask this in his name. Amen.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and evermore. Amen.

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