

Sin and Death (Romans 5:14)

by Ernest O'Neill

Sin is any resistance to God's will for us at that moment, and it leads to death, but we can avoid experiencing death by responding to the Holy Spirit and obeying God's will.

Duration: 34:04

Scripture: Genesis 4:26, Genesis 6:8, Genesis 12:1-2, Romans 2:14-15, Romans 5:14

Topics: "Original Sin", "Eternal Death"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of death and how it is passed on from generation to generation. He explains that there are three types of death: physical death, eternal separation from God, and the second death of being cast into the lake of fire. The preacher emphasizes that the death we experience today can be inherited from our parents, but this is not unfair of God. He uses the example of Adam and Cain to illustrate how a father's sinful example can lead to death being passed on to the next generation. The preacher encourages the audience to reject Satan's temptations and listen to the Spirit of God within them to move towards life.

Transcript

Have you ever found your mental capacities or your emotional capacities or your physical capacities just suddenly failing you, you know? So you're just in an exam and the old mind just fails completely and you can't remember the fact and it's vital to get it if you're going to write anything. Or you're at a time when you really need absolute calmness and quietness and concentration and the old emotions, you know, become ragged and on edge and you can't do anything with them. Or you get up some morning and you've had eight hours sleep and you ought to feel great but the old body feels weary and worn and you just feel you can't make it.

Now, why is that? Were you and I made like that? Were we made with bodies that got weary without any reason or with minds that couldn't remember the fact at the right moment or with emotions that just got ragged at any time without our knowing it or being able to control it? And obviously we weren't, you know. It says in Genesis at the beginning of the creation of the world that God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good. And so brothers and sisters, God didn't make us like that.

God didn't make us with ragged emotions. He didn't make us with minds that couldn't remember facts when we wanted them to remember them. He didn't make us with bodies that were worn and weak physically.

God made us with beautiful, whole, complete bodies and with good minds that were sharp and alert and with emotions that were balanced absolutely. And really what we found last Sunday, I remember, was that the reason all this deterioration took place was that the first man and the first woman refused the one essential factor that would make the mind and the emotions and the body work perfectly. And that one factor was God's own uncreated life, the life of the Holy Spirit.

And immediately the first man and the first woman rejected that life and rejected God's will for them at that time and decided to go it on their own. Immediately there took place a great deterioration throughout every part of their personality. You remember we saw that the old mind became impaired and the emotions became unbalanced and ragged and on edge.

And the old body became weak and worn. And without the Holy Spirit the whole world began to be infested with evil spirits that worked all kinds of lack of harmony in the universe itself. Earthquakes and volcanoes and brought about all kinds of strange dreams and nightmares into us men and us women.

And then that even as that took place we began to live more and more for ourselves and we found ourselves living in a pro-self world, an anti-God world. And really that kind of death spread throughout the universe and that's why many of us experience this kind of death in our minds and emotions today. I had an electric razor when I was in Ireland that ran on 220 volt current and all the current in Britain is 220 volts.

But if you go to Europe as I did one summer on a motorbike, youth hustling, you come to all kinds of 110 volt outlets. And I had my old 220 volt razor and I didn't know anything about the 110 volt and I didn't think that anybody, a whole nation would be stupid enough to run on 110 volt. I went to the, I think the first youth hostel was in France.

Stopped in the morning, got up, plugged the old Remington in and you should have heard it. It was miserable, you know, just a little bit of a burr, you know, but nothing else. So I grew a beard that summer.

Now that's what it's like. Without the Holy Spirit everything just runs, you know, at half or a third speed. The blood doesn't flow the way God meant it to flow.

The mind doesn't work the way He meant it to work. The emotions aren't peaceful and at ease the way He meant them to be. And that's what we mean by death coming into us, you see.

And that's really what it means when it says, you remember, well maybe you'd like to look at it in Romans 5 and 12. It was the verse we studied last day. Romans 5 and 12.

Yeah, that was the Sunday before. Therefore as, it's 980, the one's page 980. And Romans 5 and 12.

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin and through death spread to all men because all men sinned. And it's that death that spread, you see. And it spreads because of sin.

And many of us, of course, we saw last Sunday tend to think of sin as just disobedience to the Ten Commandments. What we began to realize last day was that sin is any resistance to God's will for us at that time. Because you remember Romans 5 and 13 says, sin indeed was in the law before the law was given.

Sin was in the world before the law was given. In other words, sin existed there whether the Ten Commandments were there or not. And so sin is not just immorality.

It is not disobedience to the Ten Commandments. It is a refusal of that spirit of life. And brothers and sisters, every time we refuse that spirit of life today in our lives, we experience death.

You remember we saw that last day that you don't have to be disobeying one of the Ten Commandments, thou shalt not steal or thou shalt not kill in order to experience death. Sin is not just immorality. It is not just disobedience to the Ten Commandments.

Sin is any resistance to the movement of God's Holy Spirit inside us. And do you see that in a thousand ways this morning in the theater, the Holy Spirit is trying to bring life to each one of you. See, the Holy Spirit is alive in the world today.

God made it available to us again because of the death of Jesus. And so the Holy Spirit of God is moving in you in a thousand different ways. And when you resist it, you experience more and more of the death that sin brings.

So really this morning, we are either responding to life and we are developing the inner spiritual body that will at the last day break through this physical body and transform it and take us up to the Father's right hand. Or today we are responding to death inside us and we are accelerating the death that is already taking place in our mind and emotions and our bodies. So brothers and sisters, that's really where we got to last day.

That sin is resisting God's will for you at this moment. Sin is resisting the moving of God's Holy Spirit inside you at this moment. An example of it is this.

You get up in the morning. The Holy Spirit comes to you and applies the truth that you know is written in the Bible. Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on those things.

And the Holy Spirit is in all of us reinforcing that will of God for us. That first moment when we reach out, hit the alarm, it falls down to the floor and we're away. At that moment, the Holy Spirit in all of us is saying whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, think on those things.

Now brothers and sisters, at that moment, you can resist the Holy Spirit, in which case you move into death. Or you can respond to the Holy Spirit, in which case you move into life. And you know that.

You can either accept His prompting at that moment, or you can go on and think the day ahead, three assignments not done, and I have to get them done before 10 o'clock. And what am I going to do tonight? I'm not ready for tonight. And what about tomorrow? Because Satan never leaves them one by one.

He throws the whole lot at you. And before you know it, you're thinking about a month hence and two months hence, and who will I marry? But dear ones, do you see the Holy Spirit does not prompt you that way. The Holy Spirit is prompting you whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, think on these things.

This is the day that the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is a good day. This is your Father's world.

He knows what you're going to do today, and He has His arms right under you now. Bless Him and praise Him and thank Him. But do you see, you can go either way.

Or you know it, so many of us know it. You can go into the depths of self and of degradation, and before you know it, the emotions are unbalanced, the body is being abused, everything is going apart. Now dear ones, do you see that's what we mean by sin being in the before even the law was given.

Sin is resistance to God's will for us at this moment, whether it's written in the Ten Commandments or not. Whether it actually says it or not, if you're resisting God's Spirit within you, then that's sin, and sin brings death more into your personality. Now that's one way in which many of us fall into death.

Many of us fall into death because we have too narrow a view of sin. We think that sin is just immorality, or sin is just disobeying the Ten Commandments, but we can disobey that secret voice within without incurring any death. Now you can't.

So many of us fall into death because we have too narrow a view of sin. Now here's the strange thing. The opposite is true.

Many of us fall into death because we have too broad a view of sin. That's true. Many of us fall into death because we have too broad a view of sin.

Many of us define sin like this. Sin is any lack of conformity to absolute perfection. Many of us have that definition of sin.

Sin is any lack of conformity to absolute perfection. Sin is any deviation at all from the absolute mental and emotional and spiritual perfection of the one God of the whole universe. And so, dear ones, many of us move in continual sense of condemnation by God because of that definition.

Because we all know we're imperfect in many ways. There are many ways in which our mind makes mistakes. There are many ways in which our emotions are an edge.

There are thousands of ways in which we're not like God. And so we know we're imperfect, so we come into this terrible bondage where we say, oh well, I sin and act inward and thought every day in life because I'm imperfect in many ways. And the result of all this is twofold.

One, there comes a dreadful lack of any motivation to be like God. All motivation to be like Jesus is drained from us because we reckon to ourselves, I'm imperfect, I'm not sin, so I'm sinning every day, so I can't do anything about it. If God holds me responsible even for instances when I fall short of him that I don't know about, if he holds me responsible for those things that I don't know about, then I have no hope.

And so we just fall into a pattern of well doing our best. The second result is that we fall into such hypocritical lives that the only difference between Christians and non-Christians is that Christians think they can continue to sin with impunity because of Jesus' death, whereas non-Christians think every time they sin they feel real guilt. Now loved ones, you see, those two results come about if you ever fall into the unscriptural trap of defining sin as any deviation from absolute perfection or any lack of conformity to the absolute perfection of God.

Now loved ones, that is not sin, that is just creatureliness. There are many ways. You can't fly up to that roof, God can.

You can't go to Mars this second, God can. You can't do a mathematical complicated sum with being sure that you won't make a mistake, God can. You can't judge everybody in this theater perfectly, God can.

You and I will make a thousand different mistakes. We will again and again fall short of God in many ways that we don't know about, but that is not sin. Sin is knowingly, consciously disobeying God's will for you at that moment.

Now that's why it's important to look at the second half of that verse from last day. See verse 13, Romans 5 and 13. Sin indeed was in the world before the law was given.

So Paul says that. Sin, resistance to God's will and refusal of his spirit existed in the world before the Ten Commandments were given. But sin is not counted where there is no law.

Now do you see that? Unless a person knows they have disobeyed God, God does not count that as sin. Now that's what that means, you see. Sin is not counted where there is no law.

In other words, if you don't know that you have disobeyed God, then God does not count that as sin for you. Now you remember that's stated very plainly and maybe it would be good to look at it because I think a lot of us have labored under this false condemnation in our lives. If you look at it, it's very plainly put in James 4, you remember, in verse 17.

James 4 and 17. The fact that alright, sin is resistance to God's spirit, but it is knowing resistance to a spirit. It is conscious resisting to a spirit.

James 4 and 17. It's page 1056. James 4 and 17.

Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. Now do you see that? Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. But God will never witness guilt to your heart through the Holy Spirit, unless you know that he has willed something for you and you have resisted that will.

The only one that will witness guilt to you in that situation is Satan, who will impart to you all vague senses of guilt. And you'll get up and you'll feel, ah, I have a vague sense of guilt. I don't know what I've done wrong, but I know I'm wrong.

I know I'm wrong. I know I'm wrong. Now brothers and sisters, that is of Satan.

It is not of God. When God witnesses a sense of conviction to your conscience, it is definite and plain. He says, that is wrong, or that is wrong.

And the guilt brought by the Holy Spirit always leads us to life. The guilt brought by false condemnation on Satan always brings more death. Now do you see that many of us experience death in our own Christian lives, because many of us have too narrow a view of sin, in that we think sin is just disobedience to the Ten Commandments, that it is not also resistance to God's Spirit inside us.

But many of us also live in death because we think God has condemned us when he hasn't, because we have too broad a view of sin. And we think, oh, I have a false, I have a vague sense of guilt, so God must have condemned me. Now brothers and sisters, there are all kinds of false guilt that will come upon you.

But the guilt that the Holy Spirit brings is always about something definite. It is always a conscious disobedience to God that the Holy Spirit brings to your mind. Now, you'll find that, you know, clearly if you look at just a couple of instances in the New Testament there, in Acts 5 and verse 3. You remember we read it last Sunday.

Acts 5 and verse 3. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? Now that's pretty definite. It's 951, the page. Acts 5 and verse 3. Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? Now loved ones, that is sin.

Sin is knowing conscious resistance to God's will. It's something you know you've done, you see. It's not that the Holy Spirit comes and says, no, you've done something wrong.

I want you to try to guess. I'll give you three guesses what it was. I used to teach in a kind of a goodbye Mr. Chips school, you know, kind of public school in Ireland.

We wore robes and gowns and it was a boarding school, you know, and all we members of the faculty sat at a big dining table in front of a massive dining hall, that kind of place. And we used to have one master who had great trouble with discipline with the boys because he never tied them down. He would catch them running in the corridor and that was a heinous sin in that school to run in the corridor.

And he would catch them running the corridor and he said, you did something wrong. What did you do? And of course they would never confess what they did. So we never got anywhere with discipline.

Now brothers and sisters, God's Spirit does not feel that way with us. Do you see that? The Holy Spirit doesn't play games. When you have a vague sense of guilt, what you need to do is say, Holy Spirit, is there some way in which I've resisted you and I haven't known about it? If there is, will you show me? And he will show you and expect you to apologize or to repent or to make restitution and to receive him again to command your life.

But sin, real sin, is resistance to God's will inside you and it is a knowing resistance. Now loved ones, would you look with me at an empirical fact that is stated in the verse that we're studying today that brings up a problem in the light of what we've shared. Now the empirical fact is this one stated in Romans 5 and 14.

You remember that Paul has just said, sin existed in the world before the law was given, before the ten commandments were given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. So look at verse 14. Here's a problem.

Yet, death reigned from Adam to Moses. You see, that was the time during which there was no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

And so that you don't get lost in it all, I'd better try to make the point clearly so that we can all see it. Do you see that Paul has just said that okay, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. And yet he says, during that time when there was no law and when sin was not counted, death reigned from Adam to Moses.

Now how can that be? If God did not count their sin as sin in those days because there was no law, how then could death ever reign from Adam to Moses? You remember, death did reign, you know, increasingly as the years went by. Death spread throughout the world and it became more and more chaotic as we read in the lesson earlier on in the service. Now how does death reign from Adam to Moses if sin is not counted when there is no law and there was no law in those days? Well, there are two ways, brothers and sisters.

One is that death is passed on from father to son even if the son does not sin. There's a sense in which the effects of death are passed on to us even if we haven't sinned. Now you may say that's utterly unfair.

But let's take an instance of it. Old Adam, you remember, set simply a poor example to his son Cain. He lived a life independent of God.

Cain began to live the same kind of life and you remember you find the result there in Genesis chapter 4 and verses 8 through 9. You find that the death that existed in Adam was passed on to Cain just through the simple fact of a father's example. Genesis 4 and verses 8 and 9. It's page 3. Cain said to Abel, his brother, let us go out to the field and when they were in the field Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Now you get the same death being passed on in Genesis 6 and verse 5. It's a summary of the way the effects of the father's sin were passed on to the children even though they themselves had not sinned.

Genesis 6 and 5. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Now loved ones, do you see that there are three deaths? There is a physical death that we are even now experiencing today. There is an eternal death that is a forever separation from God and there is a second death that is being cast into that lake of fire where we burn in our own selfish lusts.

Now do you see that the death that we experience today can be passed on to us even by our parents? And the strange thing is that far from God being unfair in that, he is actually being fair. In other words, if one of us is promiscuous and we develop venereal disease, it is a very strong chance that the child that the mother bears will have deformities of some kind. Now the death is passed on.

The effects of the death are passed on and do you see that God cannot step in there without destroying our free will? Do you see that? That God cannot keep intervening every time one of us goes wrong in order to prevent the effects of that being passed on to our children or to our friends. If God did that, he would be a God a deus ex machina, you know, just a God who came down from the sky every now and again to deliver us from the consequences of our own free will. Now do you see that in a real way death has passed on even though the children haven't sinned? Now nevertheless it is true that the only way we can experience the second death or final death is by knowingly resisting God's will ourselves.

Now how did the people from Adam to Moses do that if there was no law? How did they knowingly resist God's spirit and his will if there was no law? Well the answer, dear ones, is in Romans and chapter 1 there. It's Romans, I'm sorry, Romans 2. Romans chapter 2, it's page 978 and verse 14. Romans 2 and verse 14.

When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves. Even though they do not have the law, they show that what the law requires is written on their hearts while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when according to my gospel God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. Really we're back to the first thing that Jesus taught us, you know, last Sunday.

That even though there are not the Ten Commandments available, men have within them the moral law of conscience that is continually prompting them to respond to God's spirit of life. And the men from Adam to Moses and the women from Adam to Moses had that law. They had a law written in their conscience, as dear ones have every primitive tribe that we have not even touched with our civilization.

They have a conscience inside them that is continually reinforcing in them the ancient racial memory that has been passed down through the years of God's judgment through the flood and his judgment through the catastrophe of the Tower of Babel and all the other judgments that he has brought about down through history. The conscience of every man is reinforcing that sense inside that he has that there's a Creator who wants him to go a certain way and that is ready to forgive him if he will turn to him and come to him. Now loved ones, the people from Adam to Moses had that kind of law inside them and it was in resistance to that that they brought death upon themselves.

And so even though there were no laws in those days, the conscience inside was a law that they could recognize. And if they don't respond to it, then death comes about. Now you may say, you know, oh could you prove that that law was there? Yes, there were people who followed it, you see.

Even though there were no laws, there were people who followed it. Genesis 4 and 26 outlines one of them. Genesis 4 and 26.

In other words, there was life. There was the life of the Holy Spirit available even in those chaotic savage days. And there were people that were responding to that voice within.

Genesis 4 and 26. To Seth also a son was born. That's Seth, remember, Adam's son.

And he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of the Lord. So there were men, you see, even in those days who responded to that conscience within.

And chapter 6 and verse 8, you know, talks about another of those men. Genesis 6 and 8. But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations of Noah.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. So there was the life of the Holy Spirit available.

And you find it again in chapter 12 and verses 1 and 2. Now the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

So there were men in those days that were responding to the inward law in their hearts. Now, dear ones, do you see it gets back to the central point. That real sin is not, you know, disobeying all the don'ts of evangelical Christianity.

Real sin is not just murdering. It's not just killing. It's not just committing adultery.

Real sin, the very heart of sin, is resisting God's will for you at this moment today. And you see, it's because of the failure to see that, that our churches are filled with very respectable moral people who are very unlike Jesus. And really, loved ones, the only hope for you and me to avoid that kind of hypocrisy ourselves, you know, is to really treasure this little voice of the Holy Spirit within us.

And though we may ask us to do things that the Bible apparently does not ask us to do, but that is in line with the picture of Jesus that we get there, it's up to us to respond to that. If you don't respond to it, death begins to move and expand inside your own personality. If you do respond to it, life begins to glow and increase inside you.

So, brothers and sisters, it is really true that all of us in the theater this morning, we're moving one way or the other. You know, you really are. You're moving either into more of those old wrinkles, because it all shows up in your body.

God is so good, you know. He shows. He lets it show.

If the old worry, if you're not responding to the Holy Spirit, and you're really not trusting Jesus for the exams and for the future, the old worry begins to show up on the wrinkles in the forehead, you know. And the body begins to weaken, and the body begins to wear out. On the other hand, if you move in the other direction towards life, each time you sense the movement of God's Spirit within you to trust your dear Father in heaven, you'll move towards life.

And, loved ones, it's not chance that some of us can look young for many, many years. It isn't chance. It isn't chance that some of us appear to be always sick and always worn.

It isn't. If you're moving towards life, there is a life developing and growing inside you. If you're moving towards death, there's a death growing and developing inside you.

And a very down-to-earth one, you know. Not just the one of going to hell, but the old mind becoming more and more impaired, the emotions becoming more and more shattered, the body becoming weaker and weaker. Or is it the mind becoming renewed every day, and the emotions experiencing the peace of Christ ruling them, and the body being completely transformed into his image? Well, dear ones, I really trust Jesus will show you the truth of it.

I think a lot of us are tied up with cicatrice and the power of positive thinking when we should just listen to the voice inside, you know, and just listen to the Holy Spirit's promptings, and begin to respond to him. So, would you think about it this week? Especially at those crucial moments when you know there are two ways to go, and Satan gets in and says, well, there's nothing in the Bible that says, don't take five minutes more in the morning. Or there's nothing in the Bible that says, don't think another moment about that thing.

But reject that, and say, no, but the Spirit of God within me is telling me what to do. And let's begin to move towards life. If you have, you know, real problems with some area in your own life, and would like to talk, really do stay behind afterwards, you know.

A number of us gather at the front here. It's really very easy. You can talk to me, or there's some other brothers and sisters who have at last begun to move away from death, and move towards life.

And some of them could probably help you. So, you should, if you want to talk about, don't go out, you know, and struggle for another week. You should just stay around.

We'll be around the front, and just talk about it. Or if you want to come during the week and see me, or see some of us, that would be good. But it is God's will that we should move in life, in the midst of life, you know, and not in death.

Holy Spirit, we have often sensed the movements that you have prompted inside us. We have often sensed those little impressions that you're making on us. But we've grown so used to ignoring them as old-fashioned inhibitions, or as remnants of our past that we have had, that we have not responded.

Now, Holy Spirit, we tell you, we want to be people who walk sensitively with you. We want to be people who do not resist you, but respond to you. Holy Spirit, we want to move into life.

So, we trust you now for this coming week. We tell you now, Holy Spirit, whether we're Christians or not Christians, if you move inside us, we're going to move with you. We're going to respond to you.

Whatever it costs us, we're going to move in your direction. Now, Lord Jesus, we trust you that you'll be able to transform our lives with your life, that we will begin to be those radiant people that walk as princes and princesses on God's earth, and begin to have the dignity and the beauty and the royalty of the Son of God and the King of Kings. Dear Father, we know we weren't made to crawl and to scabble in the dust and the dirt with Satan.

We know we were made to fly, and we trust you to bring us into that experience during this week in every area of our lives. We ask this for your glory, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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