

Awakening to My Need

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon explores the nature of sin, the character of God, and the importance of witnessing to those in darkness.

Duration: 37:10

Scripture: Psalm 7:11, Proverbs 29:1, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Awakening"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a man named Victor who had been living a sinful life. One night, Victor was sitting outside a church, hoping to get money from his mother's purse. However, the preacher felt prompted by God to quote Proverbs 29:1, warning that those who are often reproofed and hardened will be suddenly destroyed. This verse deeply impacted Victor, leading him to repent and accept Jesus as his Savior. The preacher emphasizes the importance of living as a witness for Christ, interceding for sinners, and sharing the gospel with them.

Transcript

Let us bow in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, we lift our hearts to Thee, now asking that as we have prayed in song, and pray now in direct petition, we'll be sensitive to the Spirit of God, taking the things of Christ and making them real to us. We thank Thee for Thy presence.

We are met in the name of the Lord Jesus. In Thee we live and move and have our being. And therefore, our Father, we ask that everything that is said and thought and done will bring honor, glory, and praise to the land that was slain, our Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray.

Amen. I wish you'd turn, please, to the eighth chapter of Romans. Romans chapter 8, verse 15, perhaps verses 14 and 15, but it's the 15th I want you to note particularly.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Implicit in this verse is the fact that at one point in our pilgrimage, the Holy Spirit is to us the spirit of bondage.

It raises several questions, all of which we have to answer if we're to be effective in our witness for Christ. For instance, we have to understand, our state as sinners and the state of our family and neighbors and

friends outside of Christ. We pointed out last week that so frequently in our intercessory prayer times, we will be praying for God to save, which is a very excellent thing to do, but it's a very big thing to do.

Save, to save. Well, it's a very big word. We pointed out that it goes from eternity past to eternity to come.

Let's think for just a few moments as to the nature of sin and the state of mind of the sinner. What is sin? We've tried to point out to you in the past that there was a time when sin had potential existence but didn't have real existence. God had made a creature called Lucifer and had made other creatures we know as cherubim and seraphim, or angels, and he had given, apparently to Lucifer, superior intelligence and knowledge and beauty.

Now it's the ability to think, to feel, and to will that turns us into, gives us personhood. God thinks and feels and wills. Lucifer thought and felt and chose.

We are made in the image and likeness of God in not certainly quantitative sense. He is infinite. We're finite.

We're working models, but still models, and we have, on a finite level, certain abilities that God has on an infinite level. We think, we feel, we will. We're individuals, we're persons.

So was Lucifer. The ability to think is the ability to imagine. To imagine is to see what isn't as though it were.

To imagine is to take the facts that are and to extrapolate from those facts to another arrangement of the facts. As an intelligent being, Lucifer knew who God was. He also knew that God's strength lay in his character.

Now there are many things we could say about the character of God, but I select just four, in order that we might have four that we can carry through with us in our thinking. The scripture says God is light. God is light.

And it says that God is love. The Lord Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and he is God. God is truth.

And the life. Let's select those four attributes. Light, and love, and life, and truth.

Now assume that this is where God's strength lies, in his character. Infinite love, infinite life, infinite love, infinite life, infinite truth. And here's an intelligent being that has a soliloquy going on in his mind.

If I were God, I would do things the way he does them. Now if I were God, but how could I be God? I can't be more light than infinite light, and more love than infinite love, and more life than infinite life, and more truth than infinite truth. Oh.

But every thesis has an antithesis. Every positive has a negative. Every front has a back.

So if God is light, the opposite is darkness. If God is love, the opposite is hate. If God is life, there has to be an opposite death.

And if God is truth, then there has to be the opposite of a lie. So now here's an intelligent being who says, I will set my throne above the throne of the most high. And what are his weapons that he's going to destroy God so he can rule? The very opposite aspects of the character of God.

So he takes darkness, hatred, death, and the lie. And there's a battle. Because God cannot say, I hate hate.

For if love says it hates hate, it has ceased to be love. And so God has to let, light has to overcome darkness, and love has to overcome hate, and life has to overcome death, and truth has to overcome the lie. And the Lord Jesus said, I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven.

Where did he fall? Well, my metaphysics, and you don't have to accept this for us to have sweet and warm fellowship in the Lord. My personal metaphysics is that that occurred between verse 1, Genesis 1.1, and 1.2. In Genesis 1.1 it says, In the beginning God created out of nothing the heaven and the earth. And in Genesis 1.2 it says, And the earth became without form and void.

What's void? Death. And darkness covered the face of the deep. Why? Because this God aspirer and rebel is cast out of heaven, down to earth, and he now creates an atmosphere consistent with his character.

Death. Darkness. That's all he has.

These were his weapons. Now, in the fullness of time, God, who is Father, who from eternity past knew that the completion of all that was right included children. For Father implies children.

God the eternal elder brother yearned for brethren. God the eternal bridegroom yearned for a bride. You see, God is love.

And love is incomplete without an object. But the object of love has to be like the lover. You've heard people say, have you not, we love our new house, love our new car, love southern fried chicken, love that shade of blue.

Well, all of these are misuses of the word love. Because we can only love that which is like us. Which has our nature, that understands us, that needs our love, and in turn can love so as to satisfy the lover's need.

So the only two directions that love can properly go is up toward God and out toward others in whose image we are made and share. So, in order that there might be an object for his love, God is going to make someone of whom it will be said, let us make man in our image and in our likeness. Why? So that he can be the object of God's love.

Now, I suppose you could say, why didn't God go to some distant planet in the universe, far away from the penitentiary where his ancient foe had been? And set up a whole new start. He didn't do that, did he? He came down to the very place to which he had exiled his ancient foe. For darkness covered the face of the deep.

And he brooded, is the word, the spirit of God, over the face of the deep. God brooded as a dove broods over a nest. God brooded over this world in darkness and boy.

And the first thing he said was, Light, be! Light was. Lightbearers were placed. But you notice what he did? He set a light by day, darkness by night, so there'd be a 24-hour reminder of the conflict between darkness and light.

But he put in the night that which would reflect the source of the light of the day, so the man would not be without a reminder that light is even in darkness. Now into that recreated world, which he had now taken

from the one to whom he had been ruling over it, he recreated it, putting into it everything that was necessary for the survival and the happiness of this one whom he'd made in his image and likeness. And when he looked at this man, and later the woman whom he'd made, he said, It is good.

What did man have, as God called him good? Well, first, he had a mind with which to think. And secondly, he had emotions with which to feel. And thirdly, he had volition with which to will.

He could think, feel, will. Was that all he had? No. He also had drives, urges, appetites, or propensities, call them what you will.

First, he had to have an appetite for food, because the way he was going to be sustained was by repeated intakes of nourishment. Had an appetite for status, because he was to rule over God's creation. He had an appetite for pleasure, had an appetite for security, had an appetite for sex, because this was how his race was to be increased.

So with this being, made in God's image and likeness, with all these appetites, God said it is good. In other words, there's absolutely nothing wrong with the appetites. So what happens? Into this idyllic, happy, beautiful situation comes God's ancient foe, into Mother Eve, and tempts her.

Now what is temptation? It's the proposition presented to the intellect, to the mind, to the imagination, to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way. Is there anything wrong with the appetites? No. Did God make provision to supply them? Yes.

Where's the problem? God prescribed how to satisfy them. What's the proposition presented to Mother Eve? She decides how to satisfy her appetites, not God. She becomes God.

She chooses. She rules. She governs.

That's the issue. What was it back there with Lucifer? I'll set my throne above the throne of the most high. What's the proposition to Mother Eve? To set her throne above the throne of the most high.

By way of temptation. Did he say, set your throne? No. He said, look at the fruit.

Isn't it lovely to look at? Pleasure. The eyes. And it's good to eat.

Food. And it'll make you wise. You'll be like God.

Status. Appealing to the appetites, the urges. And what did Mother Eve do? She knew the issue.

God had said she shouldn't. God was God. And God was ruling.

And she'd submitted to His rule. But now, the choice is, she's going to be God. She's going to decide.

She's going to set her throne above the throne of the most high. She's going to turn to her own way. And so, she does it.

Say, are you sure all these things were clear? In her mind, no, I'm not. But they should have been, because they're implicit in it. And she was an intelligent being.

And I'm inclined to think she did know what it was. At least she did. There is there.

That's what it was. Whether, I have no degree of her state of consciousness. I only know what the act was.

It was an act of revolt. Does she sin? She was tempted. That's the proposition presented to the intellect to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way.

And she decided. She chose. That's the sin.

Sin is a choice. Lucifer chose to set his throne above the throne of the most high. I said, sin had potential existence from eternity past, because the potentially, the negative always exists.

But it waited until an intelligent being made a choice. And then it became actually a reality in existence. Now with Mother Eve, it was a choice.

She went to Father Adam and she presented to him her decision. This is what I have done. And to him the choice was this.

Either you'll see God in a little while in the afternoon or you'll see woman 24 hours a day. Which will it be? And he made a choice. How many other aspects were in it? I don't know.

But it was a choice. And he chose to please himself. Now let's examine for a moment what sin is by just this far in our understanding.

First, sin is treason. A sinner is a traitor. Has betrayed just and proper governance.

Secondly, sin is rebellion. A sinner is a rebel. It's not only an act of treason, but it is a lifetime of revolt against just and proper governance.

Sin is anarchy. Anarchy means everyone does it right in his own eyes. Ye shall be as God.

You decide how to make you happy. So it's treason, it's rebellion, and it's anarchy. Sin is transgression.

The law of God says the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die. And she ate, and she died. Died legally, died spiritually, began to die physically, came under the sentence of eternal.

Death is always separation. Always law carries with it sanction. The day thou eatest thou shalt die.

Sin is transgression. So we have four factors to the point. We have treason, and rebellion, anarchy, and transgression.

But there's one other, and that's enmity. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, and indeed it can't be.

So the sinner is an enemy. He's a traitor, but instead of there being remorse, he's an enemy. It doesn't say God is his enemy.

It says the sinner is God's enemy. The sinner is a rebel, and instead of remorse over his rebellion, he's an enemy. The sinner is an anarchist.

Instead of remorse, he's an enemy. The sinner is a transgressor. Instead of a remorse, he's an enemy.

So the carnal mind is enmity against God. That's the state of our loved ones and our friends and our neighbors. Because at the age of accountability, every one of us have repeated the choice made by

Mother Eve and Father Adam.

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Every one of us at the age of accountability made a choice to govern and control and rule our own lives. All we, like sheep, have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to his own way. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Now I'm not dealing with the issue now.

I'm not even asking the question why all have done it. All of them did it in the garden. 100% of all the people in the garden became traitors and rebels and anarchists and transgressors and enemies.

And 100% of all people since the garden have done the same thing. The only thing I'm saying is the Scripture says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. What is sin? Sin is treason.

Sin is rebellion. Sin is anarchy. Sin is transgression.

And sin is enmity. Now, understanding that, then we understand two other things. For instance, if you turn to Psalm 29, I mean Proverbs 29 in verse 1, you'll find a very interesting verse.

You've often heard it said God loves the thief and hates the thievery. I think it's very important for us to understand that, perhaps let's turn first to Psalm, hold your finger there in Proverbs 29. Turn first to Psalm 7, verse 11.

The reason I'm asking you to turn, I want you to see this so that you will understand a little bit of God's attitude toward sinners. In Psalm 7, 11, it says, God judges the righteous and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will wet his sword, he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

The idea has been promulgated so frequently, God loves the sinner and hates the sin. The fact is that you can never separate the sin from the sinner. It's because it's the person who gives the act its moral character.

The act has no meaning apart from the choice that preceded it. And so, we've got to understand that sin is indeed a crime. It's not a disease.

It's a crime. Oh, there are many things we haven't time to talk about that we could talk about in it, but I want you to get this point because it's extremely important for you to understand this matter of awakening. Now, in Proverbs 29, and verse 1, the text states, He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. There's a class of scriptures that are designed to have the effect of awakening sinners. Now think for a moment with me.

A traitor, and a rebel, and an anarchist, and a transgressor, and an enemy. But the scripture was read for us, Paul's letter to Corinthians, to the effect that the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. Why? Because they are, sinners are, by choice, subject to the government of the prince of this world, of the God of this world.

Many times in talking with people about the Lord, I've had them say to me something like this, but I can't see it. I'm sorry I hear the words you're saying, but they have no meaning to me. I just don't see it.

At one time I thought that was just stubbornness on their part, until I realized that that is exactly the case. The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. And I've found it necessary many times to take authority in the name of the Lord Jesus, Father, in the name of Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who led captivity captive, and who defeated this ancient foe, and opened conflict at the cross.

I resist every effort of the God of this world to continue to hold this heart in blindness. Release them, I ask you, in the name of your Son. And I've had them say to me, Oh, that's what it is.

Just as though a sword had cut through the vines that had been growing, so the sun that had been shining all the time would reveal what was under the leaves. So what is Dr. Tozer talking about in the portion that we have for us? It's this. He is saying that God seeks sinners.

Indeed He does. Prevenient grace hath gone out into all the world. The light hath gone out into all the world.

The light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Do you know why sinners don't repent and believe? It's not because they can't repent. It's not because they lack some essential ability in their personalities.

The reason why sinners don't repent is because they won't repent. Not because they can't repent, but they won't repent. It's stubbornness.

What are we doing? We're going back to where we were. Treason, rebellion, anarchy, transgression, enmity. So it is God.

It is God who lights. It is God who moves. It is God who seeks.

Now, not only is there a light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. My wife and I have gone in among tribes that said they'd never seen a white man heard the name of Jesus until we've come. And yet we have found that there is a certain light that they have and some have been strangely and wonderfully prepared for the gospel.

There is a light. But there are certain things that we must do. My own personal feeling is that failure on these three points accounts for the fact that so few are coming out of death into life.

First, we live Christ before that sinner as a sample of God's grace. Secondly, we intercede for the sinner, legally represented before God, somewhat in the manner as I said, to cut away that shroud of death, that hood of blackness that blinds the minds of them which believe not. And that we witness to the sinner.

Three things we can do for the unsaved. Live Christ before them, intercede for them, and witness to them. But when we've done that, we've done all we can do.

Now it's that matter of witness. Let me close with this. Victor Ernest was the son of a devout godly pair up in Bemidji, Minnesota.

Victor had grown up in the church. He'd known the gospel. But when he reached high school, he went with the wrong crowd, did the wrong things, became an open defiant traitor and rebel, not only against God but

against his mother and against the church and even the community.

He had sense enough to bring his paycheck home after he'd earned it and give it to his mother. He'd keep enough so that he could entertain himself on the weekend with his cronies and with his buddies. This particular weekend, Victor had gone through the money that he kept out of his meager paycheck, gone through it quickly.

It was Saturday night. The night was young. The money was gone.

He wanted to get some more money. His mother had it in her purse, but she was at the church for an evangelistic meeting. He didn't want to go into the meeting and disturb her, but he wanted to be there when she came out.

So he went and he sat on the step in front of the church. The preacher, as soon as Victor got seated there in his back against the wall, said, For some strange reason, I feel prompted of the Lord to stop what I've been saying to you and to quote Proverbs 29, verse 1. He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed that without remedy. Now he said, But I must repeat it.

And he repeated it again. And he started, But I must repeat it. And he repeated it again.

Now, For some reason, God wants me to give you this again. He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed. At the fourth time, Victor got up, went out to his car, started it, and drove away up on a hillside overlooking a river.

Until finally, he knew that he had heard from God. That God was warning him. God was dealing with him.

God was awake. And there that night, beside the running board of his car, Victor and his knelt and repents. He knew the gospel.

He knew the plan of salvation. He knew about the Lord. And he received Jesus Christ as his sovereign and his savior.

What was it that God used to awaken him? That scripture verse. There was a sword in his hand. There's a class of scriptures, two of which I've given, others of which we should study and arm ourselves, so that surgical nurses standing beside the brave, divine physician, the Holy Ghost, we knew how to pick up the scalpel called for and put it into the hands of the surgeon that he might cut.

That preacher was sensitive to what the Spirit of God was doing. Didn't know why. Didn't know why.

I was speaking in a church in Berwyn, Illinois. In the middle of the message, I said, for some reason, I feel led of the Lord to stop and to start telling you about a Jewish friend of mine who had gotten into drunkenness and so on. And I went ahead and gave the testimony of Nate Scharf.

And when I had finished, a man shuffled along, came in, and sat down. A few minutes later, I gave an invitation, and he went in. I found that he was the brother of the mayor of Cicero, Illinois.

He had started way down on Straight Street, and he'd walked out Roosevelt Boulevard until he'd gotten under a little amplifier over the street, shuffling along, knowing not where he was going, and he heard someone say, I must stop and tell you about a Jewish alcoholic acquaintance and friend of mine. And he stood there and listened, and he came in and responded. I was simply trying to be obedient to the Holy

Spirit.

God used it to awaken that sinner to his need. God could do it for one. He could do it for another.

Oh, it may be a verse of warning. It may be a testimony. But God is continuing to say to the world of darkness of the human heart, like me.

So instead of praying for our unsaved friends, God saves them. Let us start praying, oh God, awaken them to their need. Awaken them.

Because until they're awakened, they're not even candidates for grace. First phase of the divine operation is for God to brood over that world of darkness in the human heart and say, like me. And he has the spirit to reveal bondage, shows that person how desperately they need God's grace.

It was grace that taught my heart to fear. And grace, my fears relieved. But you don't have relief until you have fear.

Father of Jesus, we lift our hearts to Thee now to thank Thee and praise Thee for the marvels of Thy love that Thou didst find us. We ask not, Lord, that we should go back and establish a time biography for ourselves. It's enough to know that we have seen ourselves as lost and desperately needing a Savior's dying love.

But we pray, Father, that we may become skilled in our intercession, in our witness to our unsaved family and friends. That we may be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, not hacking at them with verses of Scripture all day long, but simply speaking that apple of gold and a picture of silver, that word fitly spoken, as Thou didst move upon us, that word that Thou wilt honor. Oh, Father of Jesus, teach us how to intercede and how to witness, to see lost men awaken to their need of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And should there be those among us here today, Father, who know about Him but do not know Him, whom to know is life eternal, that by Thy grace they might, even in this time, have heard from Thee and know that awakening work of the Spirit of God. We do again, Lord, plead that we may become skilled workers, laboring effectively together with Thee, to the glory and honor and praise of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we ask it. Amen.

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