

Salvation Is Revelation

by Paris Reidhead

Salvation is not just knowledge of God's love, but a revelation of our sinfulness and need for God's mercy.

Duration: 37:19

Scripture: Matthew 16:16

Topics: "Salvation", "Conviction of Sin", "Revelation"

Description

Paris Reidhead emphasizes that salvation is fundamentally a revelation from God, not merely an intellectual acknowledgment of sin or a superficial acceptance of Christ. He recounts experiences in Africa and America that illustrate how many people can recognize their sinfulness yet remain untransformed, highlighting the necessity of true conviction and revelation of God's holiness and justice. Reidhead argues that genuine salvation involves a deep understanding of one's guilt before a holy God, leading to true repentance and faith in Christ. He stresses that the work of the Holy Spirit is essential in awakening individuals to their need for salvation and that this revelation must be communicated effectively to lead to true conversion.

Transcript

I suppose it was as many as 14 years ago, in a time of fellowship with a group of brethren, one of them said, you know that salvation is revelation. It made an impression on me at the time, but through the years this has gained in its hold upon my mind and heart. I think it's been accentuated, this grip with the theme, by some experiences, always this is the case.

Years ago in Africa, I went into a village that had not seen a missionary, or had any contact with the gospel. I had an excellent interpreter, and was able to get as near as we could to the minds of the people, asking them about sin, which they knew they had, and had committed, fear of death, which certainly they had. And then I asked them, would you like to go to heaven when you die? You say you're sinners, they told me what, in their view, sin was, and you would agree with them.

Would you like to go to heaven? They raised their hand. So I taught them the sinner's prayer, and some degree of sincerity, they prayed it, and I went right back home as soon as I could and wrote my prayer letter, and told the folk at home, and I went right back home as soon as I could and wrote my prayer letter, and told the folk at home about this marvelous work of God, at the first visit to a village, and they'd been converts. However, when we went back there a short time later, we found that they were still going to the witch doctor, and the demon dance, and the beer pots, and all of the superstition, but they still said they

were Jesus boys.

And I had to come face to face with the fact that at home, in America, apparently things were different. Or else we were doing something wrong here, and it took an experience in Africa to show me quite how wrong it was. You see, these people had an intelligence regarding sin.

That is, they knew that God is holy, and they were wicked, and that God is angry with them because they're wicked, and that they're going to be punished when they die. But I made the mistake of assuming that this knowledge of sin is conviction of sin. And so I had to do a great deal of searching, and study, and thinking.

Actually, it wasn't until some years later that I began to see how light and superficial must have been my ministry for so many years, and the ministry of others. It took that experience in Africa, however, to throw it in bold relief and to bring light upon it. Then some years ago, I suppose the year would have been 1955, I was in Atlanta, Georgia, ministering in a church, and in the congregation was Aunt Harriet Williams, Mrs. J.D. Williams.

She and her husband had been instrumental in founding the St. Paul Bible College and the Simpson Bible College for the Christian Missionary Alliance. And in the course of speaking to the group, at which Aunt Harriet was a member, she, she, her eyes lightened. She was fragile, sort of a Dresden china doll.

80-some, but alert and keen. But something I said caused her eyes to lighten, and she awakened. Afterwards, she said, Oh, I was so grateful for what you said.

Would you come and have tea with me this afternoon? Well, of course, it was a delight. And when I got there, she said, Now, brother, there are two words that you used this morning, and I've been using them for years. And wherever you go, would you use them? And so she gave them to me, and very proudly in the past I've given them to you.

But nevertheless, I've not forgotten. She said, The first word is meditation. People don't think anymore, said Aunt Harriet.

They just listen. And if they've heard it before, they agree with it. If they haven't heard it before, they say, Well, isn't that interesting? And they don't apply it to themselves.

She said, There never can be a real conversion unless you can get people to meditate. And she said, The second word is revelation. Revelation.

Unveiling. Uncovering. Disclosing.

She said, People ought to meditate until God reveals. Well, those two experiences, one in Africa, one in Georgia, brought together this truth into the place of paramount importance in my thinking. Salvation is revelation.

Now, I referred to the scripture of the morning in Matthew 16, Whom say ye that I am? Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven hath revealed it unto thee. Now, I suppose anyone can say that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, if he's read it.

You could even give it to a tape recorder and have it faithfully returned to you. But the fact that one says it does not mean that they comprehend it or that they understand it. But what Peter has had happen to him is he's received an insight into the person of Christ, the nature of Christ, the work of Christ.

And it's this insight that we refer to as revelation. Now, when God begins to work with a man or a woman, the first thing he has to do is to awaken them. To get their attention.

To cause them to break the train of thought that they've erected. You know, before a person is born, a child is born, everything depends on heredity. But after they're born, everything seems to depend on the environment and on influence and teaching.

Thus it is when you meet the average pagan American. And incidentally, fifty percent of Americans are now pagan, something more than that. That is, they're affiliated with no church, Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish, or any of the cults or systems.

Simply have absolutely no contact with religion. We've passed that waymark now, so we're told. The fact remains that when you meet such a person as that, he has a plan of salvation.

It may be absolutely improper and inadequate and unscriptural, but it satisfies him at the time. Maybe it's he doesn't get drunk on Sundays, or he only beats his wife when she needs it very badly, or he pays most of his bills, or something else. But he has erected some structure of consolation and comfort and assurance.

A man came into the tabernacle in New York while I was there, and he said, I would like to join your church. Well, I'm suspicious of that at the very outset. I talked with him a little bit.

I said, by the way, what is your job? He says, I'm a mechanic. Well, that sounded honorable enough, didn't it? I said, well, for what company do you work? He said, you work in the neighborhood, yes. I said, well, I didn't know there was too much manufacturing here.

Oh, he said, you don't know that term, mechanic? I run a crooked dice game for some of the gangsters down the street. I said, and you want to join our church? He said, yes, but I'm a very good man. I said, I take good care of my wife and children.

I don't run around. I've been faithful. My wife and daughter don't know what my work is, and I just feel that if I could join your church, it would help me to, or maybe in the time to come, to work my way out of my profession and into something else that I could share with them.

And perfectly consoled and comforted by the fact that he had erected this relationship to his wife and his daughter and his community that protected them and allowed him to make his living in this way. Now, the first thing that God does when he would save a fellow like that, or a person like you or me, whatever our background. And sometimes, you know, we're just as smug having been raised in a Christian home and reared in an evangelical church as someone raised in part of the pagan community.

First thing we have to see is that the God of the Bible is a just and a holy, and hear me, and hear me tenderly, and an angry God. Down in Orlando, Florida years ago, I preached from Psalm 11, Psalm 7, 11 to 13. Now, I'd been there for about two weeks, and this was one message out of the, what would it be, 15 or so? And when I finished the message, two dear ladies converged on me, one from the right, one from the left, and caught me in the middle.

There was no escape. And they said, oh brother, that was a dreadful message. I quite agreed with them, but I don't think for the same reason.

Because the truth was a terrifying truth, an awesome truth. God judges the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turned out, he will wet his sword, he has bent his bow, and made it ready.

He has also prepared for him the instruments of death. Now, that is a terrible subject. But here I had dwelt several days, several evenings, on the love of God, and the grace of God, and the mercy and compassion of God.

But when I spoke of his anger against sin and sinners, and I used the text, God is angry, angry, angry with the wicked, every day. Why, these dear sisters that had been so, drunk so deeply at the cup of God's love, felt this was a blemish in his character. It was true, but you shouldn't dwell on it.

A blot on the Ascotian, so to speak, and something that shouldn't be mentioned. It's there, but we shouldn't dwell on it. And they said, you should have, before you closed that message, you should have told them that God loved them.

Oh, I said, but you see, God is angry with the wicked every day, and if they, he has bent his bow and wet his sword, and if they turn out, he will destroy them. Now, I said, that's the message God gave me to give. I couldn't mitigate it or change it.

There it is. Oh, it's so difficult for us to understand that the love of God is the answer to the broken, contrite, repentant sinners' cry for mercy. But it's the justice of God, the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, that becomes the yardstick by which men see that they've come short of the glory of God.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and I believe that it's not his righteousness he preached, but it was the righteousness of God and the righteous expectations that God makes upon men, made morally in his image and capable of responding to that which he expects and demands of them. Some years ago, up in northern Minnesota, there was a young fellow reared in a fine home. That is, his mother is a very earnest, earnest Christian.

And Victor was just one of the lads of the community, worldly and godless. One evening, over the protest of his mother and remonstrance of her love, he decided he was going out and probably get drunk or just do whatever he wanted to do. But he ran out of money.

He knew his mother was at the church where she'd asked him to go that night, and he knew that she had five dollars of his wager, and he wanted it to finish the night. And the only way he could get it was to go, and the soonest he could get it was to go and to be at the church when she came out. And so he went and got out of the car.

It was a warm evening, and he sat on the steps. Inside was the preacher whom he'd not met or seen or bothered to visit in any way. But he heard this preacher repeat over and over again, he that being often reproved, hardness his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, that without remedy.

Again and again these words came. Before the service was over, Victor had gotten in his car and quietly driven away, driven to his home. He didn't go out and finish the night with the gang.

He stayed in his room, because this was the sword of the Spirit that had divided between soul and spirit. This word, that God is angry with the wicked every day, he that being often reprov'd, hardness his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, that without remedy. This was a revelation to Victor.

It was a revelation of God's just anger against sinners, because sin is treason against just and proper government. Sin is open defiant revolt against the one sovereign worthy to rule. Sin is transgression of the law that's been established for the protection of all, including the sinner.

And sin is that anarchy that says there's only one principle of government I regard, my pleasure. Oh, if we can see and understand that it's this truth concerning the justice of God, the holiness, the wrath of God, the anger of God with sinners, that has to pierce the sinner's heart. The spirit of bondage again to fear, the Holy Ghost, using those aspects of divine character that cause a sinner to realize he stands in mortal jeopardy, as it were, under the sword of Democles, suspended by the horsehair of God's patience, is the sword of God's justice.

And at any moment, Jonathan Edwards, it was, who drove this home to his Massachusetts congregation, and I've stood in the church where strong men took hold of the posts such as are in this auditorium, lest the flames that were eating at the roof of hell should have caused the roof to crumble, and they should plummet down into a Christless eternity. And they cried out for mercy, and God heard them, but it was the justice of God. We don't--our generation doesn't like to learn of sinners in the hands of an angry God, because somehow or other we've passed the point that this is part of our communication to a godless generation.

But the consequence of this, silencing those attributes of God which are as much a part of his character as his love, has meant that there has developed a generation, perhaps even under our preaching, that has had total absence of the fear of God. There is no fear of God before their eyes. There has to be a revelation of the holiness of God, of the justice of God, and the anger and the wrath of God before sinners are awakened.

But we discover that awakening is a sovereign and a supernatural and a gracious work of God. But it isn't enough. Too many there are, with this revelation, that have fallen into the hands of unskillful leaders and teachers and workers, who, basing it on that awakening, have them turned around and led them into a superficial assumption that the promises of mercy apply to them.

We do well to read David Brainerd's diary from time to time. I mean the one Jonathan Edwards wrote, the lengthy one, so difficult to get. A condensation has been printed by one of the large book houses, but almost impossible to get the full-length one.

But in that he tells of going into a village of Indians and their preaching. They'd been under great duress. They were hungry and pressed and persecuted by their neighbors.

And somehow, out of compassion, he began to speak to them about the consoling, comforting truths of the word of God. And God loves them. And to his amazement, when he finished, there were fourteen that professed peace with God and faith in Christ.

That night, as he went to bed there in the little hut where he slept, he said, as I thanked God for those whom he had given that day, I seemed to hear his voice say, but are you sure that they had come to good faith in me and rest in the finished work of my son? Or are they mistaking the comforts of the Christian as

applying to them still in their unconverted state? So said he the next day, though spitting blood throughout the hours of the day, I visited the home of each of those that had professed faith. And alas, alack to my grief, of the fourteen, I found that eleven did not have ground for hope in Christ. Ah, said he, think what it would have been in that day, when rising up in the lake of fire, these eleven would have condemned me before God and saints and angels as an unskilled workman that deceived them in the most important issue of their life.

That was a man who cared and who understood. Awakening is revelation, but awakening is but the preparation. We find that salvation is awakening, but it's not only awakening.

Awakening then will lead by the proper use of the word of God applied to the consciences of men to another state, called that of conviction. In John the sixteenth chapter, our Lord describes this as the sovereign operation of the Holy Ghost. Only he is able to do this work because of its nature.

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it's expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. This is the work of the Spirit of God, to convict of sin.

He it is that causes the sinner to see that he has been an open, defiant, willful rebel against God. Too much of my preaching in the past, and I would ascribe the same thing to my generation of preachers, has been to treat sin as a disease, rather than God, as God ever always treats it, as a crime, a crime of the human spirit. You can be convinced of danger if you're told that your parents had venereal disease and it was congenitally transmitted to you.

And you can regret having made such an unfortunate choice of parents, and you can feel yourself hard done by, and you can feel yourself in jeopardy and in danger, but you cannot feel yourself guilty. And so it is. I'm afraid that we have failed to emphasize the fact that God deals with men as criminals, as rebels, as traitors, as anarchists, as transgressors, and sin is a crime.

And it is the sovereign work of the Spirit of God, through the right and proper and skillful use of the Word of God, to cause a sinner to understand that he is justly deserving of the judgment that God has pronounced upon him. Years ago, I asked a congregation of about a hundred people, how many of you have ever been lost, really lost, aware of the fact that you were lost? If you died as you were, you certainly would have gone to hell. How many of you have been unconscious of a state of lostness? Four hands went up.

I said, how many of you are saved? And all the hands went up. Isn't that amazing? He came to seek and to save that which was lost. The only kind of people he can save are lost people.

You know why more aren't being saved these days? Because our inadequate, improper use of the Word of God perhaps is disarming the Spirit of God from the only tool with which he has provided himself to bring men to an awareness of their guilt and a conviction of their sin. It is the law of God that's the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. It's the truth of the holiness of God, applied, as Finney said so wisely and well, the inner revelation and the outer revelation.

In that masterful sermon he says, God has built, as it were, a nether millstone into every human breast. But that millstone of the knowledge of himself and of his truth and of his character and what he expects of men made in his image soon is covered by incidents of conduct and attitude until its cutting edge is dulled.

And though it turns, it does not affect the conscience of the man in whom it rests.

But, said he, let a skillful preacher come and then bring the truth of God the law of God that revelation of the nature and character of God as an upper millstone upon the human intellect. Then it will be as though the nether millstone of the conscience rises to meet the upper millstone of the truth. And the human spirit will be caught between and as grain crowned exceeding small.

This is the work of the Spirit of God. Your work is so to apply the word of God to the consciences of men that that upper millstone comes to rest upon the lower millstone. But conviction is the sovereign work, the supernatural work, the gracious work of God the Holy Ghost.

You can't awaken a sinner and you can't convict a sinner. Again, salvation is revelation, and it includes the revelation that the sinner is justly condemned, guilty before God, as that thief that did that night go to paradise with our Lord. Say, we deserve our pain.

He was convicted. The other had been convicted before the court of Rome, but in his own mind he was innocent. But one man had been convicted by God, I would believe, to that point where he saw himself a sinner and deserving of his faith.

This is the work of the Spirit of God, to convince the sinner of his guilt so that there's no longer protest. Oh, you know full well that analogy in the Old Testament in Leviticus where you have presented the law of the leper, and there, as the leper would appear before Moses, one would come perhaps with disease on his hand, thinking that just such a little spot would surely allow him to go, and he'd be accepted, and another would come with a little spot on eye or ear or head or half back or somewhere, and such a little spot. But these little spots meant that they had to stay in the place of death.

You know the one that was taken out for the ceremony of cleansing? It was the one that from the top of the head to the sole of the foot was wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. When Moses could not find a place to place his son on clean flesh, he would turn to such a one and say, you're clean. Come with me.

Then to the brook where the running water of the running stream was caught in the basin, and the little white dove, wings tied, would have its throat cut. The heart of the dying bird would force the last drop of blood into the water until it became pink and crimson. And then the living dove, still with wings tied and feet tied, would be plunged three times into the water.

And when it came out, the wings would be cut, and over the head of this leper from the top of his head to the sole of the feet, not a place where the finger of Moses could rest, the blood in the water from the fluttering wings of the bird would fall to cleanse. And then the little bird would be released and make its way up and up and up and up and out of sight, testifying that cleansing comes to those who've seen the utter, utter violence. He came to seek and to say that which was lost.

As long as a person has a part of as big as the lobe of his ear that he thinks has not been contaminated with sin, he'll stand there and point his polluted finger at it and argue with God that he's not as bad as others are. The work of the Spirit of God to cause that publican to cry out, God be merciful to me, a sinner! I've seen myself stripped, broken, hopeless, helpless. This is revelation.

You can't do it. Telling savages about hell won't do it, or about heaven. Somehow, God, the wind bloweth where it listeth.

Thou canst hear the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is everyone convicted of the Spirit. Again, we come to this. Repentance results from a revelation.

It's in Acts, the second chapter, in the twenty-ninth verse, that we find that the revelation that Jesus Christ has been exalted, this one who came and died and rose again. Oh, a man can be awakened and not convicted. He can be awakened and convicted and not yet repentant.

And it's your task to discern this as you would deal with men. And skillfully, when you find one awakened, sensitive, aware of his need, instead of leading him to a presumptuous piece, you'd lead him on into an insight into the nature of God, that he might see the nature of his own sin. And then, when you've discovered that he, like that publican, is broken and crushed, if you're skillful, again you're going to lead him further to Christ.

But you're going to present to him Christ as Peter presented him on that day, there in the twenty-ninth verse of Acts, the second chapter. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he's both dead and buried in his sepulchre with us unto this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, he, seeing this before speak of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption, this Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses, therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.

Therefore let all the house of David, the house of Israel, know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom he hath crucified, both Lord and Christ. This is the testimony. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest, men and brethren, what shall we do? It was the revelation that this man Jesus, that had died a shameful death and been buried, had been raised from the dead and enthroned and exalted and given all authority and heaven and earth, this revelation that caused that day those who had called out, crucify him, to plead for mercy in his name, that God had exalted his Son and enthroned his Son.

And thus, since Jesus is God, there's only one thing to do with Jesus, and that is to bow before him as God. And we see this so clearly in the apostle, in Paul, Saul of Tarsus that day, utterly convinced that Jesus is an imposter, satisfied that the greatest service he can render to Israel is to exterminate the memory of the knowledge of the name of Jesus from the minds of his people. He gives himself in devotion to this task.

There, outside the gate that bears the name of the first martyr, Saul of Tarsus stood holding the coats, encouraging the rioters to stone Stephen. And Stephen, standing up under the heel of stones, weak that he ought to have been, whimpering in fear and crying out in pain, with a loud voice, declares, I see Jesus standing on the right hand of the throne of God. With that word, the first break in the granite facade of Saul of Tarsus.

It's a hairline crack, but it's there. He's seen through the eyes of one whose life he's taken, for he was the senior citizen present. A few days later, on the road to Damascus, a gray light shines about him, and a voice speaks to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Who art thou, one to be worshipped and revered, Lord? I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest immediately.

Repentance, change of mind, change of intention, change of direction, change of purpose, change of goal, everything is changed, or right about faith. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? It's the revelation that Jesus Christ is God, that he sits upon a throne, that he's been exalted and empowered to rule. This revelation that moves the hearts of men to repent of their sin, to change their mind about to rule their life, they come to the place that they're willing to let the only worthy sovereign do that for which he alone is adequate.

They repent. But again, it isn't until the revelation of God's grace has caused one to be awakened and convicted and brought to repentance that there can be that further insight into the fact that the day that Jesus Christ died two thousand years ago, you died, he died for you, he carried your unworthiness, your guilt, your condemnation. It's on the basis of repentance that faith becomes a receiving experience, and thus it was that years later Paul said, I was with you night and day, from house to house, teaching repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

And faith becomes a receiving and transforming experience on the basis of repentance. But how do you know that your faith is that receiving, transforming experience that savingly unites you to God? How do you know that it's been effective in washing away the stain of your guilt and your uncleanness? How do you know that you've been accepted in the beloved? And there again, it's revelation. John Wesley came to his day in generations, a day in a generation thoroughly committed to orthodoxy.

You understand that.

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