

Sin, It's Nature and History - Part 5

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the nature of sin and responsibility, and the need for conviction of sin and repentance in evangelism.

Duration: 37:03

Scripture: Matthew 5:14

Topics: "Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of effectively communicating the message of God to others. He uses the analogy of submerging someone in salt to illustrate the need for our speech to be seasoned with wisdom and knowledge. The speaker encourages listeners to focus on answering the questions people have rather than overwhelming them with unnecessary information. He also highlights the significance of sharing the gospel with those around us, both locally and globally. The sermon concludes with a prayer of gratitude for the opportunity to gather and learn from God's word.

Transcript

...to an island out in the Atlantic, an island called England. That's where my forefathers were. I'm a British Isles mongrel.

Scotch, Irish, English, little Welsh. I don't like to talk about anything but the Scotch, really. You know, we Scottish have a lot of racial pride that we have to overcome.

I don't know why about that either. At any rate, tradition tells us, with some pretty good regrounds, that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and perhaps others went to England while Rome was still there before they had left it and gone back and withdrawn their forces. But the church was established in England.

That's the thing you've got to understand. The church was established. And the Romans in persecution didn't like it, so they persecuted it.

And the people that were there weren't happy with it, so they persecuted it. But you know, the seed of the church is the blood of the martyrs, isn't it? And so it grew and it grew and it went underground and it went underground. It hid in the marshes, hid in the forest, hid wherever.

And in 1100, the Roman Catholic prelates or priests or officials in Westchester had a trial for the thirty bakers, men in the bakery business that loved the Lord, and expelled them and beat them and drove them out and said, now stop beating this way. Because these were heretics. They didn't worship the saints and the idols.

They didn't offer incense. They didn't burn candles. They didn't attend holy days.

All they did was worship Jesus Christ rather than the word that they'd memorized and passed on from one generation to another. And thirty years later, it must not have been too successful in that first go-round, because thirty years later, a hundred and fifty of the descendants of the thirty bakers were punished and the stocks had beaten and scourged and driven out of the city because they refused. Now, what am I talking about? But when the Puritans came to their own in England, another group emerged from underground called the Pilgrims.

But do you know that the worst persecution the Pilgrims got was from the Puritans? Because the Pilgrims did not believe in true theology. What had God done? He had taken the Church of Jesus Christ, planted it in the marshes of England so that it could develop for a thousand years without any of the influences of many. Or of Augustine.

That it was the Pilgrims who, when they left for England and were told by the dear godly man that laid me state behind, have no commerce with the Puritans at Salem, for they will but persecute you, and it's from persecution that we are seeking a haven. Why? Because the Puritans hated the Pilgrims. Why? Because the Pilgrims were the custodians of New Testament theology that had never been polluted by the dualism of Plato.

And it was a Pilgrim, John Locke, who associated with that movement and Edmund Burke and some of the others who wrote the essays that gave to us the theological and philosophical foundation on which our Constitution was written. It did not come from the Puritans. If it had, we would have had the church in New York City that governed it as we had the church in Cambridge that was trying to run the civil life of the community.

A totally different concept than that which the Puritans brought with them from England was the concept that we had from the Pilgrims. Now we're going to take a break. We're going to come back and we're going to see afterwards some of the implications of what this has for us in our days of evangelism and our days of responsibility for the Lord.

Harry, would you lead us in a word of prayer before we break? Fifteen minutes from now, Dick, is that all right? Fine. Okay. Our Father and our God, we pray.

Harry made allusion the other day, or alluded to the fact that years ago as a student of the University of Minnesota, I was seated reading my New Testament. Another fellow student was seated close by and he saw what I was reading and he said, why, what's that you're reading? And I told him the New Testament. And he, he went, why in the world would you read that? That's outmoded.

There's nothing to that. Well, I said, I don't think it's outmoded. I think it's for today.

It's for me. We got to talking and in the course of time he said, well, what do you mean saved? What am I going to be saved from? And I told him. And then he said, yeah, I've sinned.

All those things you've talked about, I've done. What I want to know is, why did I do them? Well, now the proper answer I should have given to him at that time was, you did them because you wanted to do them. But you know what I did? I got into a long explanation of how Adam and Eve had sinned, and how the race had fallen, and how through coitus a fallen nature had been passed on, and that he was born with a sinful nature, and that he had sinned because of that sinful nature.

And then he said, do you mean to tell me, oh, thank you, that the God you're talking about sends people to hell for doing what they couldn't help doing? You mean to say, and I said, let me get this straight. I want to see your thinking. You've told me now, the reason I sinned was because I inherited a fallen sinful nature.

And that I had to sin. And that God has sentenced me to hell because I sinned. Or God is going to damn me for doing what I couldn't help doing.

Yeah, that's what I mean. Well, he said, friend, you can worship that kind of a God if you want to. But in my mind, he's the biggest monster in the universe.

Anybody who would damn people for doing what they couldn't help doing couldn't possibly be called a good God. He said, I know I've sinned, but up until talking to you, I always figured the reason I sinned was because I want to. I've never done anything against my will that I know of.

Sure, I get drunk, but I only get drunk when I want to. I commit adultery, but I only commit adultery on my terms and my time. And if I can choose when I do it, I can choose not to do it.

And don't try to tell me I have to do it. Because I don't believe you. In fact, he said, I can even remember a period of three weeks I went when I didn't commit adultery once.

And he left, and I sat there, shrunk, shaken, perplexed, disturbed, and loyal. And all I could say was, well, that's the cross we have to bear. That's what it is.

Now, I have to be loyal to the truth. It doesn't make any sense anymore to me than it does to him, but that's what I was taught it is. So that's what it's got to be.

Now, friend, I don't know the answer to the question why all men have sinned. All I know is the Bible says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. I've asked the question over and over again, why did everyone born of man sin and come short of the glory of God? And I have searched the Bible through from end to end, cover to cover, and I do not find any biblical explanation as to why they do.

I only find the statement that they do. You see, what Augustine did that was wrong was he answered a question he never should have asked. Or if he asked it and found the Bible didn't answer it, he never should have tried to develop an answer.

What he did was to delve into metaphysics to try to answer the question. Now, there's going to be lots of questions that people ask you. And the only honest thing for you to do is to say, I don't know.

There's nothing wrong with saying I don't know. I don't know why all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. I know that they have.

And I don't have to know why. I do know that. I don't know why all men chose to be rebels against God and traitors and enemies and anarchists.

But they did. Look at the trouble we got into because Augustine tried to answer it by concocting an answer when the Scripture doesn't give us an answer. Doesn't tell us why.

Tells us that. But as far as I know, the only reason why is because the choice has been made. But why everyone chose except the Lord Jesus Christ is a question I cannot answer.

Any others can, and I'm delighted to find it out. But as of this afternoon when I came to the pulpit, I didn't know the answer. Why? All do.

But the Scripture is absolutely clear that all do. So in our witness and in our testimony to others, in our bringing the gospel to others, doesn't it seem the course of wisdom for us to simply stand on what the Scripture states and not try to invent our own metaphysics? Not try to invent our own systems of rationalization and explanation? Just lay it out before them. Why did I sin, said the fellow? Because I wanted to.

That's what happened to him. He chose to do it. That's what happened to me.

I think many of you or more of you would say that's what you did. You chose to sin. And that's enough.

It's a crime. Sin is a crime. Nowhere in the Scripture does God treat it as a disease.

He always treats it as a crime. So let sin is and shall die. Now we're living in a world that is dominated, at least this American part of the world, by the philosophy of Augustine.

You say, well what about the Methodists? What about that tradition? If you read, as I have tried to do, the works of Arminius, Jacob Arminius, you will discover that Jacob Arminius, who by the way was a student under Theodore of Besa, who was a successor to Calvin in Geneva. Arminius studied under Theodore of Besa. And he rejected, he accepted all of Tulip theology.

But he made another invention. He accepted and he wrote to the bishops who were examining him for heresy, because he was charged with being a heretic in Holland, in his home. But he said, I give absolute loyalty and unswerving allegiance to the doctrine of total moral inability.

But, said he, I seem to see in the scripture and feel in the spirit of the word, that because of Calvary, God has released into the affairs of men something I choose to call prevenient grace. And he explained prevenient grace as being that grace that God gave because of the work of Christ at the cross, whereby any sinner could choose to repent and would be enabled to repent, because God had before the call to the sinner released this, because prevenient means before the call, had released this prevenient grace that made sinners responsible to repent and enabled them to repent. But Arminius was, by his own testimony, totally dedicated to and unswervingly loyal to Augustine's invention of total moral inability.

So, both camps, both from the Methodist camp on the one hand, and from the Calvinist, Puritan, Baptist camp on the other, the same adherence to this doctrine has permeated American Christianity. The only group that ever took root on American soil that did not hold to this was that First Baptist Church of Roger Williams in Rhode Island and in parts of Connecticut, which was really an outgrowth of a successor to the work at Plymouth in Massachusetts. But they did not hold to Calvin's or to Augustine's total moral inability.

So every place you go in America, wherever anyone has been exposed to any kind of Christian religious teaching, you're going to find that this is one of the basic tenets. Now, if you become in to such people, if

they have any smattering of teaching, and you hit head on and refute total moral inability at the outset, you're going to be ringing one of those bells that's going to make them get angry. I have discovered in my own personal witness that I can state to a person, as I should have stated to the young men at the campus of the University of Minnesota, the reason you sinned is because you chose to sin.

And nine times out of ten, they never argue. They admit to that's true, even though theologically they may have another explanation as to why they did it. Still common sense tells them that the reason they did it is because they wanted to.

Now, all of our law in America, all civil law and all criminal law, is based upon the proposition that men are responsible. We're responsible for our acts. We choose to break the law.

It's not done out of, because of some, well, now we have that group of psychologists that are endeavoring to get criminals off because they were insane at the time they did it on the assumption that to break the law and expose oneself to the death penalty certainly is insane. They must have been insane to do it. But the law otherwise states that they're responsible.

You're responsible to know the law. You're responsible to obey the law. And therefore, our court's system, our legal system, is based upon responsibility.

If you say to someone that the reason you drove 75 miles an hour in a 55-mile zone was because you inherited a fallen sinful nature from your mother and your parents, I have news for you. Though you're the one that's going to pay the fine, the police is not going to look your parents up and hold them responsible. You chose how fast your car goes.

They didn't predispose you to do it. The policeman that drives up alongside with a little cereal and cherry on top, he knows why you did it. You did it because you wanted to do it.

That's why you did it. And he's holding you responsible. It's not nice.

I think anybody who drives 75 in a 55-mile zone surely ought to be willing to admit that they were breaking the law. I got a little upset the other day. I moved from one county to the other.

In the county where I lived, it was legal to drive when you had a yellow line at 35 miles an hour and maybe a couple of miles over. But in this county where I was, any place there was a house that you could see from where you were, on either side of the street, you automatically had to drive 25 miles an hour. And I was driving 38 miles an hour, and I got a ticket.

But I wouldn't have gotten a ticket in my home county. And I said, I didn't know. He said, too bad.

Too bad. But he said, if it weren't for some fellas like you who had come from that county, he said, I wouldn't get my Portland tickets. I'm going to drive to Seneca.

I was responsible. To know the law, I was responsible. Well, right where I was stopped, there was a 25-mile school zone sign, and it wasn't flashing.

Now, why in the world would they put a 25-mile school zone sign on a 25-mile zone street? Why would they do that? He said, well, we fool a lot of people that way. He said, they think that it's 35 miles because we got a 25, but it's just to reinforce it. I knew what the reinforcement was, getting poor guys like me.

Point being, there was a law, and I had to go home, and I had to write a check. And I didn't even send a letter saying, I'm a preacher, and I'm so sorry. Because he didn't say, you're a sorry preacher.

No, I, you see, law is law. You're responsible to keep it. And if you talk to people, remember we talked yesterday about the law written on the heart? Sinners know why they did it.

Those people I talked to in Africa, they know why they broke the law. Why did you do it? Because I wanted to. So, let's not even get maneuvered into an argument about why.

Let's just hit the person right smack between the eyes. Well, you know very well the reason you broke God's law is because you wanted to. Isn't that right? 99 out of 100 say, yeah, that's right.

No excuse. So, if they're not going to make an excuse, why make one for them? Why get involved in a philosophical argument with them? Why get taken back? They don't have to know all the church history in order to come to Christ. All they got to do is repent, and believe, and receive the Lord.

But they got to repent of sin, and sin is a crime. And they've got to understand that the things they did, by choice, were proof that they're criminals at heart, that they've sinned against God, and that they must repent. I'm telling you, I'm explaining you to those people.

You'll know the kind of a claimant. But I'm not suggesting to you that you take what I've been giving you, and you go out, and you have to give them everything, and get them to understand about Plato, and about Manny, and about Augustine, in order for them to get under conviction of sin. No way.

You don't have to do that. But you have to understand. As a laborer for Christ, and a witness for Christ, you've got to understand what the opposition thinks.

And so you come in, and you just hit them right smack flat in the heart with the fact, the reason you did what you did, because you wanted to do it. And they won't argue with you. You know it's true.

Don't get involved. Look what I did. I lost that university student.

I poisoned his mind. Can you imagine what's happening to this generation of sinners as they tune in on the television, and they hear some preacher telling them about the fact that they had a fallen, sinful nature, and that they aren't responsible, and all God wants them to do is to accept Jesus? Have you ever thought what we're doing to people that have brains to think? Convincing them that the God of the Bible is either a moron or a monster? To expect people to take seriously something of this sort, where they're damned for doing what they couldn't help doing? We're expecting people to get under conviction of sin, and cry out for forgiveness, when all they have... can feel sorry for themselves, but they can't feel conviction. They got a disease.

They haven't committed a crime. You can feel sorry for yourself that you have an inherited disease, but you can realize the nature of your crime if you acquired it through your own stupidity and your own rebellion and your disobedience. You can't make people feel conviction for an inherited illness.

They may feel sorry for themselves, but they won't feel conviction. And that's why we have such precious little conviction today. We have to reduce the gospel down to just tipping your hat to Jesus, and saying, uh-huh, at four places, and signing your card, and walking a little distance, and then assuming from what you've done, that in so doing, you have been born again.

Salvation becomes an assumption. No, no, no. What we're seeking to see is conviction of sin.

We're seeking to see people discover the enormity of their crime, and repent of their sin, and savingly embrace the Son of God. And, of course, you understand, do you not, that no one in the universe has the right to tell another human being that they're born again. You know that, don't you? That the Holy Ghost is the spirit of adoption, and He has never, never abdicated from that sovereign responsibility, and He's never given it to nice folks like us.

He reserves it for Himself. He is the spirit of adoption, and since we have, what did He say? He said, God, in the fullness of time, sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And since we are sons, He has sent forth the spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

I say it again in another way, the only person in the universe that has the right to tell another human being they've been born of God is God the Holy Ghost. You tell them how! You tell them how holy God is, and how sinful they are. You tell them what God did and what they must do, and then you say, and when you have done what you must do, God will do what He promised to do, and when He has done it, you will know, and when you know, you tell me.

It may take a little longer, but I'll tell you, you won't be giving birth to a lot of stillborn, aborted things that are nothing but statistics, names without faces. You won't do that. It isn't hard to make dolls.

They say the cabbage patch dolls would roll off that assembly line, but it's hard to have babies. Nine months to have a living child. And I submit to you that we don't need to have any more of these porcelain figures that are coming out as the products of our evangelism.

No, no. Tell them how holy God is, and tell them how sinful they are. And tell them what God did, and tell them what they must do, and then tell them that when they've done what they must do, God will do what He promised to do, and when He's done it, they'll know it, and when they know it, come and tell us.

That's the order. That's the way it ought to be. So I'm submitting to you that I don't think that in your personal work with the people you're going to be meeting and talking to, it's quite necessary for you to take them through the whole long pilgrimage of histories in which you've come with me this afternoon.

But I think it's important that you know it, and you know why you do certain things. Why you do certain things, and why you say certain things, and why you don't say other things, and why some things that some people say are wrong, they're not correct, they're going to mislead people. But you have to understand, that when you're dealing with the people who need Christ, you don't need to give them that, all of that.

You know, the scripture says, let your speech be seasoned with salt. But sometimes when we get to talk to a sinner, we forget about that, and we drive our big Mack ten-ton truck up with a whole dump truck load of salt. And we get over that sinner, and he said, well, tell me more.

And so we just pull on the little button there and put it in the grind, and then we push the lever down, and that big ten-ton truck goes up, and salt just pours out. And an hour later, when we've totally submerged him in salt, he wakes his way up through it, shakes his head, brushes it out of his hair, out of his ears, and said, my, you do know a lot of theology. And thank you, but I'll never hear you again.

You just do what you've ever sold. Let your speech be seasoned with salt. Always give answers.

Look, don't answer questions people haven't asked yet. Why bother with that? Just because you've got more answers than they've got questions, don't show how smart they are. Just tell them what they need to know to get where you want them to go.

That's all. So you've got to understand what happened, and I believe the time is going to come when we're going to see some efforts put forth to deal with some of these issues. I believe those things are in the air now, and they're going to come in the future.

But we're going to have some head-on encounters with Augustinism and with Manicheism. I don't think it's necessary to have that encounter with the person you're going to be working by tomorrow at the factory or in the office or in the shop. You've got to live two lives.

You've got to be able to talk to the person that's here that needs to know Christ. And then you've got to have another whole life, an intellectual life, a mental life, a spiritual life, where you understand the major issues that we have in our day, in our time. Issues that have to be fought.

Something's going to have to be done. We're going to have to get these things, but they're going to have to be fought out on another battlefield than that man that lives next door to you, and to whom you're the best Christian he's ever met. If he ever comes to Christ, it's going to be because he's living next door to you.

You don't need to take him into all this. But you need to know something about it, so you know how to talk to him. But I think all of this should issue him your being a better witness for Jesus Christ, where you live and where you work and where you study.

And if it doesn't have that effect, then there's been something amiss. We're to become more effective. He gave evangelists and pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the body of Christ.

And the net result of all that you've heard from the speakers here this weekend ought to be to give you a greater zeal for the lost, a greater love for the Lord, a greater hunger for God, a greater burden to see lost men come to Christ. If it hasn't had that issue, we've been deficient in some form. Because that is, after all, the primary concern of the heart of our Lord, that those for whom he died might learn of his death.

You have some people that live in the same place you live that are just as lost as people in Asia and Africa and South America, and just as far removed from the gospel. And if you have a heart that's burdened for Africa and South America that isn't burdened for the people right near you, there's something wrong. The light that shines the farthest shall always shine the brightest at its base.

And I'm trusting and praying that this seminar, this conference, this time together is going to be that all of us have a greater zeal in our witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, right where we are. Let us fall in prayer. Father in heaven, we lift our hearts to thee with thanksgiving for the high and the holy and the glorious privilege that we've had of being together, sitting together, fellowship together, one with another.

And truly, as those two disciples on the road to Emmaus would say, did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us by the way? So, Father, with us our hearts have burned with joy and rejoicing as we've considered thy word, thy truth, and saw again our Lord Jesus and all his loveliness and all of his authority

and power. Father, we would not have thee our God, Father, Holy, Holy Spirit, eternal Son, other than thou art, not to change in any particular. We adore thee, we worship thee, we love thee.

And all we are and have is thine, and our one desire is to glorify thee. And so we ask thee that by thy grace and continue moving in our hearts, each of us may have the joy in the days and weeks to come of bringing someone else to meet and know the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we love and whom we serve, and in whose name we pray. Amen.

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