

## Original Sin and Death

Romans 5:12

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

It's may be unfair to tempt you with this question, but have you ever been to the Caribbean? That's where some of us were this past summer in Puerto Rico. The islands are just beautiful. I remember being there three or four years ago and going to an island called Buck Island. It was just a little kind of desert island and I spent the whole day snorkeling. It really is just like the ads say, it's beautiful.

The blue sky, deep blue clear water, long white beaches, the hot sun and the sea breezes are all so beautiful. All this is for a point. I am not just trying to make you feel uncomfortable and discontented. It is a magnificent place and yet this last summer, eight people were playing golf when several blacks came, shot them dead and ran away.

You wonder what has turned what is really a heaven into what is a hell. "Time" magazine had something on it this past week. One of the residents says this, "This place has become like New York or worse. I won't even drive home alone at night. I can't leave the island without someone backing a truck up to my house and filling it up. We've all been robbed several times. That's standard."

Now what has made the islanders there hate the wealthy Americans so much? It ties up with the reason we want to go down to the Caribbean and into Latin America. One of the reasons is that we wealthy Americans move in and buy up all the luxurious houses and build beautiful houses on the hill and the islanders live in tarpaper shacks. It's as "Time" magazine says, "They have begun to feel that we want a piece of the action." They see what look to them like greedy Americans taking their land and using it for themselves. Yet it's that same greed among us today that is driving even the Republican administration into price-controls.

I mean it's incredible to think that Richard Nixon or any Republican administration would move towards price-controls. But it's the same greed that is running through us that is doing it. We will not control ourselves. We will not regulate our own salaries. We want more and more and more until eventually in a democratic society, the only way to keep any kind of balance in it is to take away some freedom of some kind. It's the old greed that is at the bottom of it.

It's the greed and violence in our streets that is turning what is really a paradise from a natural point of view into a hell of slums and ghettos. You wonder, where does it all end? Then you jump over to the Olympic Games – a great picture of international friendship and international peace. But it was the scene for that shoot out where 11 athletes were killed and murdered. The same Black September group had promised 10 or 11 more operations in the Middle East and Europe, similar to that one. It's come to the point where we are afraid -- afraid to get on certain planes, afraid to walk out in certain streets.

When you think of Ireland, it's ironic now to think that one of the titles of Ireland used to be, "The land of saints and scholars". Now, we don't think of it as that at all. We think of it as just another heaven that has been turned into hell. Brothers and sisters, why the mess? Why all this mess? Why has it all come about? How have we men and women taken what every astronomer admits to be the most beautiful planet in the universe and polluted it, dirtied it, destroyed it and brought it

to this point? We wonder if we'll see out this decade.

1900 years ago, a man called Jesus explained why we got into this mess. He did it so authoritatively and realistically so that many of us here in this theater believed him. And when we believed him, we began to experience a new kind of life in ourselves that not only was able to face the mess but was able to bring it into order and harmony. All of us had part of this mess in our own families and in our own schools. But as we have begun to deal with this man Jesus, and deal with his answer to the reason for the mess, we've begun to find that the mess came into order and harmony under this man's life in us.

Now this man explained it very clearly. He wrote the thing down through disciples of his. For almost six years now some of us have been studying the letter one of these disciples of Jesus wrote to the Christians in Rome in 57 A.D. This disciple elaborated Jesus' explanation of how we got into this mess. He made it very clear. We have managed over these six years to reach chapter five of that letter. Maybe you'd look at it.

The incredible thing is that as we've been plowing through it, the mess has been gradually clearing in our own lives and that's a miracle. But if you look, brothers and sisters, at chapter five of that book "The letter to the Romans" and look at verse 12, it describes and summarizes the reason Jesus gave for the mess we're in today.

Romans 5:12, "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned." I think a lot of us have tried to laugh each other out of the only realistic account that we have of the beginning of the world through making jokes about it. "Oh the first original sin, that was eating an apple." It has nothing to do with eating an apple. That isn't the first original sin. So some of us say, "Oh no, it was intercourse, sexual intercourse."

The puritanical Bible writers thought intercourse was wrong. Intercourse was the first original sin. Brother and sisters, it wasn't. Jesus said neither of those things started the whole mess. But, he does tell us and you can see what the beginning of the world was like if you look back to Genesis 2:16-17. The purpose of the trees is that mankind was in its childhood thousands of years ago and God presented the complex choice to him in terms of trees. Maybe he would do it differently with us today – us sophisticates. He might present it in some other way, but to them he presented it in terms of trees. The trees have meanings.

Maybe it's good to look at what God did at the very beginning, Genesis 2:16-17: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden.'" In other words, God obviously made full provision for men and women at the very beginning when he made the world. He said, "Look, you can eat up all these trees. I'll give you whatever you need." He just made one command. He said, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat." But God made provision complete provision for us.

He even made us like himself. A lot of us wonder why we're really here in the world at all. The reason is given in 1 John 1:3. It might be good just to look at that because some of us are very superficial in trying to find out why we ended up in this mess. And we really don't see why we're here on the earth in the first place. This is the real reason God made full provision for us in every way when he put us on the earth. In fact, this is why he put us on the earth.

1 John 1:3, "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Now the reason God put us here was so that he'd enjoy our company forever. That's really it. He didn't put you here just to make money or to be successful but so that you could live with him forever, love him and be part of his family. Now because of that, God made full provision for us and made us in his own image. He made us like himself.

That's why it says, "Let us make man in our own image." God made us like himself and if you would like to look at the details you can see them there in Genesis 2:7. There you get where he gave us psychological and spiritual capacities like his own and physical capacities. Genesis 2:7: "Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground." That is, he made our physical, material bodies; "And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." He gave us spiritual capacity so that we would understand the kind of thing he understood. Man, as a result of that, became a living being. You remember the Hebrew word is the word for soul, "nephesh". It means man became a "living soul". "Soul" in the Greek is "pseuche" which is the psychological part of man.

God breathed into this physical body his Spirit, so that we had a spiritual and physical capacity. The result of those two joining together, was that we ended up with minds, emotions and a will like God himself. So in every way, we were made with capacities that would enable us to really fellowship with the Creator of the universe.

The one other thing God gave us is there in Genesis 2:16-17. It's important for those of us who tend towards determinism and gallop polls to see it. Genesis 2:16-17, "And the Lord God commanded the man saying, 'You may freely' — freely -- well, we haven't free will. Well, 'you may freely', well, we haven't free will, 'Well, you may freely'." Sooner or later you have to admit that God knows how to put the things so that we understand it.

"You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." God wanted to make us utterly like himself. He gave us free will and he said, "Look, it's up to you. I have given you everything you need. I have given you a body as I have a spiritual body. I have given you a physical body. I have given you a spiritual capacity to communicate with me. I have given you a mind, emotions and a will. Now, you can do whatever you want with all that. The key to it all is in a certain tree that I have put in this garden."

No doubt God would have put it differently to us but the tree is mentioned in Genesis 2:9 there, "And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life also in the midst of the garden." And God said, "Really, all you need to do to make the whole thing work beautifully is to eat of the tree of life. The tree of life is the tree of my own life. It's the thing that makes Me God. It's the thing that makes me loving and kind and gentle and forgiving."

"It's the thing that enables the Trinity family to enjoy such peace. This Spirit of life that I have made available to you will make you absolutely like me. It will make you like the Trinity family but I want you to opt into it freely. I am not making you part of the Trinity family. I don't want robots that are with us just because you can't be anything else. I make you free. You can choose to come into us and to receive the Spirit of my life into you or just to ignore it."

Brothers and sisters that was the setup. If the first men or women had just been prepared to receive

the one thing that was needed and to hunger after their Creator until they received the Spirit of his life into them, that Spirit of life would have molded their minds, emotions and their wills so that they would have had lives with direction in them and with purpose.

That Spirit would have told them what to do -- what God wanted them to do. That Spirit would have given them enjoyment so that they didn't need to get a faster boat or a faster car to get some kind of thrill. That Spirit would have created exhilaration in them that was beyond anything that they have ever experienced sexually or any other way.

That was God's plan: that we'd receive this Spirit, this Holy Spirit into us that would make the whole thing go like clockwork. It would be like premium gas. In a 289-V8 engine it would make it go beautifully. And that was God's plan. All we had to do was receive that Spirit. If we did that, then we'd receive God's approval on our lives. God meanwhile would enable us to meet all our physical needs as we began to bring his world into submission to his will. That was God's plan.

We wouldn't have been straining and scrabbling in the dirt to get our needs fulfilled. That was man's choice. God warned man. He said, "Listen, I want you to take it my way and receive my life into you. Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Don't start trying to decide what is good and evil for yourself. Don't start trying to find out what is good and evil by trial and error and by hard experience. Trust my life. Receive my life and let my life do in you what I want to do." The thing that got us into the mess was that man didn't do that. He decided, "No, I am going to live it my own way, with my own resources. All this beautiful world of nature that you have given me, I am going to use it myself. I want to be independent of you. I want to ignore you. I don't want to live depending on the little bit of life that you have prepared to give me every day."

Now dear ones, that's the sin. It isn't sexual intercourse. It isn't eating an apple. It isn't getting drunk. It isn't shooting drugs. It isn't. The basic sin is saying, "I am going to live independent of you, God. I do not need your Spirit." And do you see loved ones -- we apparently don't need his Spirit. Apparently we can walk with the power that is resident in our own bodies. It seems that when we tackle the Pythagorean's theorem we can manage it with the power resident in our own mind.

It seems when we want to decide whether light contains particles or rays, we can think about that on our own without depending on this Person's Spirit in us. Do you see that's the kind of thing that we've been doing for years and years -- and that's sin? That's what God means when he says, "Sin came into the world, and people started to live independent of me."

Now you see along with sin, death came in as well. Sin came into the world and through sin, death. You can see the kind of death, if you look at it there. First it's in Genesis 3:22, "Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.'" The first death was physical death. We were made to live forever.

We were really made to live forever. The first thing God did when he saw men going their own way was to decide, "I can't give them infinity so that they can spread the poison and the destruction throughout my infinite universe. I have to withdraw infinity from them." And so God withdrew the Holy Spirit that enabled them to live forever. We began to live just for 70 or 80 years at the most.

So the first thing we entered into was physical death. That's where a lot of the sadness comes from,

isn't it? A lot of our sadness comes from the feeling that our dad will not be always there or, our mom will not be always there or, we will not always be here. Yet that was a death that came in because we wouldn't go God's way and he withdrew that Spirit of eternal life from us. There were other deaths I think that in some ways are more serious.

Genesis 3:24, "He drove out the man and at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the Cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life." In other words, God withdrew the Holy Spirit from the world. He withdrew the Holy Spirit from our accessibility and so that dynamic, pulsating eternal spiritual life that makes the whole thing go like a 289-V8 engine on premium gas, that whole power was withdrawn from us. It was spiritual death. We really came into spiritual death. We no longer had communication with the Creator of the universe. We have always felt that we were made for something better because we are, and yet we couldn't reach it.

We feel we were made to fly high, that's why we go onto drugs. Do you see it? That's why many of us go into sexual intercourse outside marriage --because we want eternity. We want that feeling of soaring high and flying high. That's why at times we go for any emotional kind of experience with the rock singer that will take us beyond the world. We are made to fly higher than these petty little pedestrian lives that we have on earth.

Do you see that it was God's plan that we go that way with the Spirit of life. He withdrew that once we refused to go his way, once we declared ourselves independent. That had certain effects on us. It resulted really in the beginning of psychological death. You see that in Genesis 3:19. Everything up to this point is good. God saw everything and it was very good. There was plenty of everything for us.

Genesis 3:19, "In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread." Sweat symbolizes all the worry that set upon us. The Holy Spirit was withdrawn from us and it was like trying to run that 289-V8 engine on just regular, low octane gas. You began to hear the knock in the engine and the car wouldn't go fast enough. So too the mind began to be inefficient. Our minds became impaired. You can see that because in the early days, you know you only have to study the Aztec Indians or the Egyptian pyramids to see the amazing things that we were able to do at the beginning of the world. Gradually the mind became more and more impaired as we lacked this power of the Holy Spirit flowing through us. Until now our minds make mistakes, all kinds of misjudgments. It is passive at times, and at times we can't control it.

Then we fell into emotional death too. The Holy Spirit was no longer present to give our emotions joy and peace. Our emotions became frustrated, irritable and unbalanced. We began to enter into emotional death. Then our bodies began to feel the effects of the worry and the ulcers and the hypertension. The bodies of men gradually became weaker and weaker as they lacked this Holy Spirit in them to bring them the life of God. Because we were all made to work with his life pulsing through us, when it was withdrawn everything began to fall into deterioration. That's part of what we mean when we say, "Death came into the world."

Men began to find their minds impaired, their emotions unbalanced, their bodies weakened and it was this weak, sick group of people that began to try to tackle the superhuman task that their Creator had given them. Then the world itself experienced the same thing when the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the world. There was a death took place in nature. You can see it in Genesis 3:18. That helps those of us who have had trouble with things like earthquakes, and floods.

Genesis 3:18, "Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you." The world of nature, when the Holy Spirit was withdrawn, fell into disorder and strain. Trauma developed in the earth's crust so that earthquakes and volcanoes resulted. The whole earth just shared the same degradation that we ourselves shared. Now that's what we mean when we say that death came into the world.

When the Holy Spirit was withdrawn, the elemental spirits of the universe were released and they began to have power to dominate men and to bring men dreams -- evil dreams and nightmares-- and to insert demons into people's lives. It was into that world that you and I have been born. That's why the thing has ended up in the mess it's in. It all stemmed from us declaring our independence of God and that's the kind of world we've been born into.

Now brothers and sisters, here is what's important. It's important to see why you and I still experience death today. A lot of people would try to persuade us by saying, "You were all in Adam when he sinned, so you're all facing the effects of his sin. You're all paying for that man's first sin. You're paying for the original sin that that man sinned." Brothers and sisters, the Bible does not say that.

The Bible emphasizes again and again by the 8th century B.C. prophet that every man is responsible for his own sin and no longer will it be said, the father eats grapes and the son's teeth are set on edge. No longer is that true. The Bible says, God says that we are responsible for our own sins. We don't experience death today because Adam sinned back then. God says plainly why we experienced it.

It's that verse that we're studying today, Romans 5:12. It's there very plainly in black and white. You should really be honest about it and not try to lay this off on Adam and Eve or put the blame on someone else.

Romans 5:12, "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin and so death spread to all men." Why? Because all men sinned. In other words, you and I experience death today in so far as we ourselves sin today. Is your memory poor? Is the old mind weak and passive at times? Do you find your emotions doing things that you don't really want them to do?

You get mad when you don't really want to get mad. You lose your temper when you don't really want to lose your temper. You get all depressed when there's no reason in the world why you should be depressed. You find the old body as it gets into the winter believing the lie that winter works a toll on every physical body in Minnesota. And so as you get into the winter, the old body believes the lie, falls down and just can't quite make it.

Brothers and sisters, do you see that that is all death and we experience that death in so far as we ourselves sin and live independent of God's life. That's really why many of us meet together here every Sunday. We've found that this man Jesus didn't only give us the explanation of the reason for the mess we're in, but he actually Himself has brought the solution. In Jesus, the tree of life has been replaced in the world. The Holy Spirit is again accessible to us. And many of us have begun to receive this Holy Spirit.

Now, dear ones, if you're sitting there thinking, "Oh that sounds good but I don't know the first thing about how to receive the Holy Spirit." All you can do is to begin to set out on the pilgrimage, isn't it? All you can do is to read some of the books and come to some of the fellowships and begin to share. But loved ones, it is possible to turn that clock back. It is possible to stop the death working in yourself.

If you say to me, "Even so that you wouldn't experience physical death?" Yes. It can be so that physical death would present no fear for you or no threat at all. So that it would be what was usual. A "koimet" or cemetery is a "koimeterion" in Greek. It means "a sleeping chamber" so that it's just like sleeping and a going into the next room. Yes, it can be like that.

If you say to me, "So that we don't experience death in our body, this dying, this weakening, this sickening, this disease that I feel?" Yes, the Holy Spirit is able to come in and turn all that back and it is possible for us again to live in a Garden of Eden experience. Many of us are doing it today. It was Scott that prayed, and his mind was shot through with the drugs that he took. He'll excuse me just to say that, because I don't think we should give each other's testimony, but his mind was shot through with the drugs. For years the Holy Spirit has been working and transforming.

Don't you see that the clock can be turned back? We need not experience death -- psychological, emotional, physical, or spiritual death. It is possible to receive the Spirit of Jesus and to be transformed. The Americans in the Caribbean, why are they greedy? The poor souls don't enjoy life. They don't. Why? Because they lack the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the only one who will give you real exhilaration and satisfaction deep down. They keep on buying more things and building bigger houses and ignoring the tarpaper shacks more and more, hoping that they'll get something that will give them a thrill.

What about the tarpaper shacks? What about the islanders? They're in the same boat. They really are no more right than the wealthy Americans. They are grabbing what they need because they're not trusting. They're not depending on this God to work his will and to bring it about in them. It's the same if you work right through the Olympic debacle, if you work through Ireland, if you work through the mess that we have in our own society economically. Brothers and sisters, it gets back to this: the life of the Holy Spirit will enable us to work free from the death that has worked in our minds, emotions and our bodies and will bring about a society filled with life.

Now, loved ones, if you sit there and say it's theory, then begin to come to some of our church houses [Christian communities]. Come to the Fish Center [Christian businesses], or the offices. Come to some of the classes [Christian Corps training school]. If you're in London, go and visit the eight brothers and sisters who are there and you'll sense that there is a coming again of life among us and a banishing of death. So it is possible.

Why the mess? Because we run our lives independent of God, thinking that the Holy Spirit was something at Pentecost for other people who were emotional, but not for us. Loved ones, what we most need is God's Spirit. He can give you his Spirit and it's not just an emotional experience. It's a deep life of God that contains his own genes, that reproduces his character inside you, and it is for each of us.

So will you begin to think about it and talk about it and begin to come and ask about Him? I'll be glad to talk with you during the week if you just call the office or any of us. I think it would be really good here on Sunday mornings, if you want to talk, why not come down front and there'll be a number of us here. I'll be here, my wife, Scott and some others will be here and you can just talk. It might be a good idea because a lot of you I know can't get back to the offices or the classes during the week.

So if you really would like to talk about some of these things, I'd just come down and mill around.

Eventually the ones that want to talk will be here and we can discuss. We really need to help each other into this miracle. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we thank you that there is an answer. We thank you Father that we don't need to keep wandering in this world of relativism, hopeless, going down the hill more and more, always talking about the tragedies. Instead we thank you Father that we can see the basic reason why we got into this mess in the first place and that it is the lack of your Holy Spirit in our own lives. That this is what sin is, rejecting your offer of the life of your Holy Spirit.

Father, we would say to you today, we're tired of the bodies that are sick and weary; we're tired of the minds and emotions that are unbalanced and impaired. Father, we're tired of the loneliness. We're tired of getting irritable when we don't get our own way. Father, we tell you we want your Holy Spirit. We don't know every way how to get it. We ask you now to take this desire in our hearts and show us how to receive this life of the Holy Spirit from your Son Jesus.

Father we commit ourselves to this so that our lives will be transformed and the Garden of Eden will blossom again inside us and among the people with whom we're friends. We commit ourselves to you for this purpose in Jesus' name. Amen.