

The New Testament Church
The Pilgrim Story, Part 1 – Reform without Tarrying for Any
November 23, 2025 - Pastor Paul Jehle

I Reform (repent) without Tarrying for any – Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2:36-39

A. These Scriptures make it clear than when God moves on a heart, we are to respond

1. The Lord convicts, and we are to repent of our sin and believe the gospel
2. We are not to tarry until we get permission to repent from anyone
3. It is evident that what God begins, he will continue – a seed bearing fruit
4. The story that we tell today is one we have all benefited from in New England

B. We begin around 1560 – 465 years ago in the nation of England (William Bradford)

When as by the travail and diligence of some godly and zealous preachers, and God's blessing on their labors, as in other places of the land, so in the North parts, many became enlightened by the Word of God and had their ignorance and sins discovered unto them, and began by His grace to reform their lives and make conscience of their ways; the work of God was no sooner manifest in them but presently they were both scoffed and scorned by the profane multitude; and the ministers urged with subscription, or else must be silenced.

II The Pilgrim Story, part 1 – from their Conversion to the “first” Thanksgiving

A. After their **conversion**, these poor farmers began to grow studying the Word of God

And the poor people were so vexed with apparitors and pursuivants (church officers) and the commissary courts, as truly their afflictions were not small. Which, notwithstanding, they bore sundry years with much patience, till they were occasioned by the continuance and increase of these troubles, and other means which the Lord raised up in those days, to see further into things by the light of the Word of God.

B. They **grew** by their study of the Word of God, and they saw that...

...these base and beggerly ceremonies were unlawful... that the lordly and tyrannous power of the prelates ought not to be submitted unto; which thus, contrary to the freedom of the gospel, would load and burden men's consciences and by their compulsive power make a profane mixture of persons and things in the worship of God. And that their offices and callings, courts and canons, etc., were unlawful and antichristian; being such as have no warrant in the Word of God...

C. In 1606 they formed a **church covenant** without permission of the king, bishop or any other officer – the church is formed by voluntary consent of believers

So many, therefore, of these professors as saw the evil of these things in these parts, and whose hearts the Lord had touched with heavenly zeal for His truth, they shook off this yoke of antichristian bondage, and as the Lord's free people joined themselves (by a covenant with the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the gospel, to walk in all His ways made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavors,

whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them. And that it cost them something this ensuing history will declare.

D. They formed two churches, both of which were **persecuted** for their faith
But after these things they could not long continue in any peaceable condition, but were hunted and persecuted on every side, so as their former afflictions were but as flea-bitings in comparison of these which now came upon them. For some were taken and clapped in prison, others had their houses beset and watched night and day, and hardly escaped their hands; and the most were fain to flee and leave their houses and habitations, and the means of their livelihood.

E. They decide to **flee** to the Low Countires (Holland) in 1608
Yet seeing themselves thus molested, and that there was no hope of their continuance there, by a joint consent they resolved to go into the Low Countries, where they heard was freedom of religion for all men; as also how sundry from London and other parts of the land had been exiled and persecuted for the same cause, and were gone hither, and lived at Amsterdam and in other places of the land.

F. Scrooby Manor in England

1. William Brewster – postmaster for the Queen of England
 - a. Once converted, he knew his time might be short to work for the government
 - b. It was a multi-room Manor House, so the “underground church” met there
 - c. The youth may have become spies so they could meet and not be arrested
2. William Bradford, who had been converted at 12, was taken in by Brewster...
 - a. Had been “disowned” when he began attending the Church in Babworth
 - b. He walked several miles both ways – and by 14 made this **speech**...

“Were I like to endanger my life, or consume my estate by any ungodly courses, your counsels to me were very seasonable; but you know that I have been diligent and provident in my calling, and not only desirous to augment what I have, but also to enjoy it in your company, to part from which will be as great a cross as can befall me. Nevertheless, to keep a good conscience, and walk in such a way as God has prescribed in his Word, is a thing which I must prefer before you all, and above life itself. Wherefore, since ‘tis for a good cause that I am like to suffer the disasters which you lay before me, you have no cause to be either angry with me; yea, I am not only willing to part with everything that is dear to me in this world for this cause, but I am also thankful that God has given me an heart to do, and will accept me so to suffer for him.”

G. Attempts to **leave England** and immigrate to Holland

Being thus constrained to leave their native soil and country, their lands and livings, and all their friends and familiar acquaintance, it was much; and thought marvelous by many. But to go into a country they knew not but by hearsay, where they must learn a new

language and get their livings they knew not how... it was by many thought to an adventure almost desperate; a case intolerable and a misery worse than death...

1. They first attempt to leave Boston secretly, hiring a ship to take them to Holland
 - a. The captain betrayed them once they were aboard
 - b. The officers searched them, took money, and the Council (marched them through town), put them in ward, and after a month, 7 of the leaders put in jail.
2. The second attempt to leave was the next Spring (after having to find homes to live in during the winter), and they hired a Dutchman that had his own ship
 - a. The men had gotten into the ship, and the women were stuck in the tide
 - b. Officers arrested the women and children, the men had to leave with the ship!
 - c. The men were caught in a fourteen day storm and were nearly shipwrecked
 - d. They finally got to Amsterdam, and the wives and children came weeks later
 - e. But through these persecutions God moved in an interesting way:

Yet I may not omit the fruit that came hereby, for by these so public troubles in so many eminent places their cause became famous and occasioned many to look into the same, and their godly carriage and Christian behavior was such as left a deep impression in the minds of many.

3. **Immigrating** to Holland:

- a. They learned the language of the Dutch, promised not to take welfare
- b. They promised not to take any native jobs, ended up in 57 occupations
- c. Their work ethic was so complimentary they were hired based on character
- d. They grew to a congregation of 350 by 1620... with this testimony:

They continued many years in a comfortable condition, enjoying much sweet and delightful society and spiritual comfort together in the ways of God, under the able ministry and prudent government of Mr. John Robinson and Mr. William Brewster who was an assistant unto him in the place of an Elder, unto which he was now called and chosen by the church.

So as they grew in knowledge and other gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, and lived together in peace and love and holiness and many came unto them from divers parts of England, so as they grew a great congregation. And if at any time any differences arose or offenses broke jout (as it cannot be bute some time there will, even amongst the best of men) they were every so met with and nipped in the head betimes, or otherwise so well composed as still love, peace and communion was continued. Or else the church purged off those that were incurable an incorrigible when, after much patience used, no other means would serve, which seldom came to pass.

H. **Why the Pilgrims Came** to New England

1. After living in Amsterdam for one year, and Leyden for 11 more years, about 75 members of their church decided to plant a church here in America in 1620
2. The reasons they did so were as follows:
 - a. The “hardness of the place and country” – not many would continue to come

- b. “Old age began to steal on many of them” – hastening it before its time
- c. “Necessity was a taskmaster... to their dearest children” – *so that they saw their posterity would be in danger to degenerate and be corrupted.*
Lastly (and which was not least), a great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for the propagating and advancing the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world; yea, though they should be but stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work.

I. Preparing for the voyage

1. They needed a Patent (royal permission), and their initial one had to be re-done
3. A financial contract - Thomas Weston, a 43 year old businessman, thought the pilgrims a wise investment (because they were a church knit together in covenant)
4. The pilgrims began selling their homes to finance their shares (family advantage)
5. They prayed and fasted for God’s direction and help...
6. The conditions of the contract were changed – harder to make a profit, requiring them to implement the “common field” concept to curb selfish profit
7. They purchased the *Speedwell* and hired out the *Mayflower* for their voyage

J. Pastor John Robinson’s Farewell Sermon – July 21, 1620

1. They had a day of solemn prayer and humiliation to send off their missionaries
So being ready to depart, they had a day of humiliation, their pastor taking his text from Ezra 8:21: ‘Amnd there at the river, by Ahava, I proclaimed a fast, that we might humble ourselves before our God, and seek of him a right way for us, and for our children, and for all our substance.’ Upon which he spent a good part of the day very profitably and suitable to their present occasion; the rest of the time was spent in pouring out prayers to the Lord with great fervency, mixed with abundance of tears...
2. Some of the most significant points made by Robinson in his sermon were these:
 - *He charge us before God and his blessed angels, to **follow him no further than he followed Christ**; and if God should reveal anything to us by any other instrument of his, to be as ready to receive it, as ever we were to receive any truth by his ministry; for he was very confident the Lord had more truth and light to break forth out of his holy word.*
 - *He took occasion also miserably to bewail the state and condition of the Reformed churches who **were come to a period in religion, and would go no further than the instruments of their reformation.***
 - *He put us in mind of our church covenant... whereby we promise and covenant with God and one another to receive whatsoever light or truth shall be made known to us from his written Word... **take heed what we received for truth... examine and compare it... with other Scriptures of truth before we recived it.***