

Purified by Faith

Galatians 5:17-20

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Sometimes it's good to break from the Romans' series and I try to do that whenever God's Spirit seems to be guiding me to. So this morning I'd like to mention to you that some of us here this morning are what we call "Christians" and some of us aren't Christians. I know that word means a lot of different things, but broadly speaking some of us here this morning have, at some time in our lives, confessed our sins and repented of them and received Jesus' Spirit into us. Then again some of us here have heard about it, but we have never done that either privately or publically.

While many here who have done that, and who are Christians share one thing in common with those of us who aren't Christians; they have a dirty heart. As one man said; "I don't know that you can help the swallows flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair." In the same way, you can't prevent all kinds of thoughts coming into your mind from the world that is around us, you can't. For example you see a nice girl, or see a nice guy, or some thought occurs to your mind, or some moment of worry about the car, or some moment of greed or covetousness about something you saw in a window on the way to church this morning; you can't help those half second thoughts occurring. But many of us find that our hearts rise to those and our hearts act like blotting paper; they absorb those things and they not only absorb them but they rise to them and they carry on with them.

So we can't help the half second thought that Satan or the powers of the world send into our minds, but many of us here this morning that have received Jesus as our Savior find that our hearts are still unclean in that when that half second temptation comes in we embrace it. There's something in our heart that is not really clean and we see it when the thought gets that iron grip on us, in the way for instance that worry can. We don't normally think of worry as a sin, but it is because God said repeatedly, "Have no anxiety about anything. Do not be anxious for anything, what you'll eat or what you'll put on." Yet many of us find ourselves thinking, "Now what am I going to do about the money? What am I going to do about the car? What am I going to do about the job? What am I going to do about my children?"

Worry gets an iron grip on you and you know what I mean; it just grips you and keeps gripping you. You try to break away from it but you can't and that's because your heart is not yet clean. You worry because you don't fully trust God and you don't fully trust God because you still partially trust yourself, and you still partially trust yourself because you still partially want your way. So, many of us find that an unclean heart shows itself in worry and anxiety that grips us and will not let go. Others of us find it in resentments; we have carnal fits at times; we either go all cold and run a cold war with our husband, or our wife, or run a cold war with our friend, or our colleague at work, or we just sink into ourselves in self-pity and cry ourselves to sleep. Those are some of the ways that many of us find our unclean heart shows itself in the resentment that is within us; resentment at what people are doing to us, at what the world is doing to us, at what God is doing to us.

Many of us find it in covetousness and greed. It's okay to look at a motor bike, its okay to look at a car, it's alright to look at a house, or a coat, but many of us not only look at those things but we think about them and keep on thinking about them. Even when we're trying not to think about

them, the heart is going back to coveting and being greedy for them.

Now loved ones, that's what I mean by an unclean heart. It may not show itself outwardly at all, you see. I think I could stand up here and look very holy and still have a very unclean heart inside and that's the case with many who have received Jesus as their Savior. They've turned away from the outward things; for some of us it was smoking, for some it was drinking or swearing, stealing or lying. We turned away from the outward things in our life; from the sins that had been talked about that Jesus died for, and we received his Spirit into us, but we still find within us an attitude that does not look like our outward lives at all.

In other words, we find we have a heart that keeps on sending up all kinds of dirt. Now, that's what Jesus said in Matthew 15:19. I suppose somebody was asking him, "Is it eating the right food, or drinking the right liquids that make you holy?" And he said, "No, that isn't what makes you holy or unholy at all, those are outward things." Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man." Many of us who have received Jesus into our hearts find that those things still exist within us and that's what this book [the Bible] teaches. This book teaches that that's the situation.

Then in Galatians 5:17, "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would." And many of us who call ourselves Christians found that; we found that the Spirit of Jesus is within us and he makes us want to come to church, he makes us want to read the Bible, he makes us want to pray and he gives us a lot of good desires. But alongside his Spirit there seems another spirit that is working against that Spirit within us and that is the spirit that seems to pull at our hearts.

Now most of us have taken the attitude, "Well, that's life; it's an eternal struggle between good and evil. That's what life is about and that's the best that God can offer us. That's what most Christians do, they have received the Spirit of Jesus into them and then that Spirit has to fight against the spirit of carnality or the spirit of self that is within them and that's the battle, that's the battle of faith." So most children of God have settled down to an eternal struggle to overcome those things.

Now loved ones, that's not the way or the answer and I think I can explain why to you. It's in Romans 7:15 that the problem is stated and for most of us even, who have received Jesus, this is what we say. "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." In other words, the Spirit of Jesus within me wants to do certain things but I end up doing the very thing that I hate. Verse 16, "Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good," so there is a part of me that's saying that is good, "So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me."

And loved ones, that's the problem, its sin, now let me explain sin. Sin is living as if there's no God and its living depending on the world and on your ability with your mind to get from the world what you need. So instead of depending on God and depending on faith in him, you depend on the world and on your ability to manipulate the world to get what you want. That's what sin is and all the church statements of doctrine agree on this one fact. They disagree on all kinds of things, but they all agree on this one fact; that even in the regenerate man or woman, that is, in the man or woman who is born of God, there continues within them the power of sin in the form of the carnal

nature. They all differ about what you can do about it, but they all do agree about that; that even in a person who is converted, who is born of God's Spirit, who has received Jesus as their Savior, they still find within them a heart that is unclean and that is dirty; a heart that is governed by sin, which is an attitude of independence of God and dependence on the world.

In other words, here's what it's like; do you remember ever reading Gulliver's Travels? He found himself in a country of dwarfs in Lilliput. I remember a picture in that book where Gulliver had lain down to sleep and the Lilliputians had tied all kinds of ropes to him. Do you remember that? They tied ropes to his hair, and his ears, and all these little little people put stakes in the ground so he couldn't get up and when he wakened he was tied completely to the earth. That's what it's like to have the power of sin governing your life. That's it. It's like being tied to the earth. "I want to be generous but I am so dependent on money for my security that I can't bear to give it away." Or, "I want to be free and easy whether I buy that car or not, whether I get that house or not, but I'm so dependent on owning that car or that house for what other people will think of me that I just must have it."

We're tied through our dependence to the world and to people so that we can't do what we know is right. And you know it; if you have the power of sin in your life even though you're Christian, you're probably experiencing that. You're thinking, "The good that I would I can't do because I'm tied in all kinds of ways. I try to move this way, I can't. I try to move that way, I can't. I can't get clear." A man freed from the power of sin is Gulliver standing up free; no ties at all, no ropes to him, they're all broken and he's able to move as he wants; he's not tied to the earth at all and he's free to depend on God alone.

How do you get from here to there? What so many of us believe is, "Well, I get out my little knife and I go to work one rope at a time. I cut this one and deal with greed then have a rest for a couple of years. Then I move on to anger and I saw through the rope of anger. Then I need three years rest because I sawed through greed and anger and got them under control. Then I work on pride." By this time we're about sixty-seven years of age! And yet that is the attitude that most of us who are children of God have and we call it growing in grace, but it's not growing in grace at all, we can't even begin to grow in grace because we're not free from the power of sin, but we're manfully trying to saw through these things. So that's the way most of us go about it.

Loved ones, there is a "you" that has all those strings broken; that has had the power of sin broken, and that can be made real in you in a moment by faith. That's it. Actually, you can't do it by working at it, you can't and that's the tragedy; we're told so often to pray more, to read the Bible more. You can't get rid of those things by working at it. Maybe after 50 years you'll only have 2,500 strings tying you to the earth instead of 2,600 but you'll still be tied. The only way to be free of them is by faith.

You remember Moses in the desert with the Israelites complaining, as always, about what they didn't have, what God hadn't provided for them. They said he hadn't provided water and you remember what God said? He said to Moses, "Go to this rock that I'll show you and strike it and water will gush forth." Now that's what faith achieves. Faith believes what God has said and then does what he tells you to do. That's what faith is; it's believing what he says and then doing what he tells you to do whether it makes sense to you or not.

Many of us who are suffering as children of God under the power of sin would say, "Strike the rock? That is dumb. No, I'll screw a faucet into this rock and then maybe we'll get some water and I'll

lead some pipe from this spring.” Loved ones, that isn’t faith; that’s trying to use your own ingenuity to bring about something, the same as those of us who are trying to cut through the ropes all the while claiming we are growing in grace. We say, “I’m trying to overcome this power of sin within me by my will power and by reading books on positive thinking and by trying harder.” You might as well screw a faucet into the rock and start leading pipes to it. This is experienced by faith not by works.

The power that is holding you is sin; that’s what prevents you doing what you know you ought. Sin is the power and there’s only one kind of person who is freed from sin and you find out who that is Romans 6:7. “For he who has died is freed from sin.” The person who has died no longer has the pull of the things in the world or the things in the earth. They no longer experience the pull to be liked by everybody because it doesn’t matter whether anybody likes them or not. A person who is dead is freed from the power of sin. But there is a way to die without dying. Look at 2 Corinthians 5:14. “For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all,” and that’s what so many of us who are children of God know, but we don’t know the next clause, “therefore all have died.” When Christ died all of us died too. How does that become real in your own life? Romans 6:11 loved ones. “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

That’s what faith is; faith is believing that when Jesus died you died also. When he was crucified to the world and the world was crucified to him, so were you, and then it’s doing what his Spirit tells you to do and you’re freed in a moment from the power of sin. In other words, freedom from the power of sin comes by the same means by which freedom from the guilt of sin came; it comes by faith, not by trying, but by faith. In other words, holiness comes not by self-discipline and by will power, though those all follow holiness, but holiness itself comes by faith. It comes by faith in your death with Christ and your resurrection with him and then in your being filled with his Holy Spirit. But it comes by faith loved ones.

I think a lot of us here in this room are still trying to bring it about ourselves and you can’t. It comes by faith in a moment. Just as Moses heard God saying to him, “Water will come from this rock.” So you hear God saying to you, “You’re unclean, impure heart was crucified with my son. I destroyed it and there’s a clean heart for you, I have it here, on a shelf in the heavens and you can have it now.” Faith is believing that. And then you remember, God said to Moses, “Strike the rock,” and Moses didn’t say, “What has that to do with getting water?” He struck the rock.

God is saying to you all kinds of things that don’t seem to you connected with the reality of your freedom from the power of sin. Do it. Whatever it is do it; it’s the Holy Spirit telling you; he’s telling you to take certain attitudes, or he’s telling you to take certain views of things, do it. Follow the Holy Spirit, do what he tells you, strike whatever rock he tells you and you’ll find water coming forth that will wash you clean.

Now loved ones, it’s a miracle, and it doesn’t matter what man you look at whether it’s Moody, or Wesley, or whether it’s Finney, or whether it’s Nee; all the men and women of God who have been used powerfully by him have found that their inner impurity could only be dealt with by faith, not by human effort. That’s the miracle of it and that’s the only way you’ll ever have a completely clean heart. When you have don’t a clean heart then the opposite is happening to what Jesus said, “For out of the heart comes anger, and strife, and guilt.” Now from out of the heart comes love, joy, peace, and long suffering and then the Christian life becomes natural and not a heavy burden to carry.

So will you think about it loved ones; that just as you entered into freedom from the guilt of your sins by faith that Jesus had died for you, so you enter into freedom from the power of sin by faith that you have died with Jesus. And if you say, "What are the conditions?" Just to be willing to have a clean heart, that's it. Would you be willing to renounce all sin in your life? Would you be willing never to sin again? Would you?

See, I think a lot of us sigh and say, "Ah, thank goodness I don't have to be willing for that, you can never be free from sin." Well actually, you can be free from sin and that's what God wants. But the real issue is -- would you be willing to be free from sin? Would you? Would you be willing never to cry yourself to sleep at night, to pity yourself, to be filled with resentment, to be filled with greed, to get your own way whatever it cost, would you? Well that's what's entailed in coming to a place where faith springs up in your heart to grasp Jesus.

Now, is there any way I can make that plainer? It's so true and its life and I want you to know it and I want you to have no excuse that will prevent you from entering into it, and the first step is to believe it's possible. That's the first step, first believe it's possible.

Does anybody want to ask anything? Don't think that it will spoil the atmosphere if you ask. It's better to be sensible and this is practical and God wants us to be free from unclean hearts.

How do you get the faith?

People think you pump it up and so a lot of people say, "I'm dead, I'm dead, I'm dead, I'm dead," and they try auto suggestion and it's not that, brother, you're right. The first thing is to go to the Holy Spirit and say, "Holy Spirit, I believe that this is possible and I believe that you can do this for me. Will you show me if there's any sin in my life that I'm really not willing to let go of? Will you show me if there's any way in which I'm not ready to be wholly purified in Jesus on the cross? Will you show me any way in which I'm not ready to be completely recreated?" And then brother, the Holy Spirit goes to work and at least with me, it was over a period of months that he showed me more and more clearly my pride and ambition, and then it eventually gets to the self. That's what holds all the strings attached, it's the self. And he eventually shows you how retched and grotesque and monstrous that self is and how it appears in God's eyes, how hateful it is and how it sets itself up as God. Then when you come to the place where you say, "Lord, I'm willing, I'm willing, there's nothing to do with that but wipe it out, I'm willing for anything whatever it costs." Then it's amazing, faith is the gift of God and faith springs up in your heart. That's the beauty of it.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit comes easily; faith springs up in the heart that is fully consecrated. It's not a matter of, "I must make myself believe." We have been crucified with Christ. The moment we say, "Lord, I accept that," that moment faith comes down from God, the Holy Spirit comes down in answer to faith. That's it brother. I know it's amazing but it does -- faith springs up in a fully consecrated heart. And if you loved ones says, "Oh, I have real trouble with faith." You don't have trouble with faith, you have trouble with sin; you have trouble with unconfessed sin. Unconfessed sin holds faith down. Faith is the gift of God to any man or woman who is willing to enter into what God has done for us in Jesus.

One last thing, "Dear Jesus thou has bled and died for me." Think about it, your old nature, your carnal nature, your perverted personality, do you see if that had been the only perverted personality in the whole world, do you see that the only way God could destroy it was by destroying

his Son? There's a real way in which each of us has to say, "Dear Jesus, thou has bled and died for me and me only." And loved ones, Jesus has taken the dirtiest worst there is in you and me, taken it into himself and allowed his Father to wipe it out there forever.

What right has any of us to continue to live under sin? What right have we? You wouldn't treat a dog like that, would you? You wouldn't kick his bleeding body under the chair and say, "I'm going to live this way anyway, whatever you've done for me. I don't know what you've done that for. I don't know why you died. I don't know what you bore all that for, but I'm going to live my own way anyway." Well, you wouldn't treat a dog like that.

So there's a deep way in which every one of us here has to say, "Dear Jesus, thou has bled and died for me and me only and now what am I going to do with you?" Loved ones, there's no need for any of us tomorrow to have one unclean thought or feeling in our hearts, really.

What do you do because work is so different? The atmosphere in the workshop or in the office is so different from home or church and it seems to influence you.

Loved ones, do you see it influences us, brother, because there's something still of that self inside us.

[Question inaudible 31:18]

What you find when you receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit is he gives you words to say that are right. But the problem with so many of us is we've got Jesus' Spirit inside us, but we also still have this spirit of self, so Jesus gives us words but we can't hear them for all the nose of the spirit of self. But brother, when you get rid of that once and for all, then you find yourself with Jesus' Spirit and you find he has an immediate answer for everything. That's so why so many of us live powerless lives; because we're not wholly dependent on Jesus. We're partly dependent on self so we become tongue tied when the opportunity comes to say something.

I think the first thing is that we have the courage not to laugh at dirty jokes. The second step is we have the courage to say what Jesus is telling us to say, whatever the cost, even you see, if it means crucifixion. That's the beauty about dying; they can't do anything worse to you than death, and after you've gone through that it doesn't matter and that's what enables us to begin to obey.

But brother, it can't be without the power of the Spirit within us, and that power of the fullness of the Spirit loved ones, comes through you personally dealing with Jesus, "Lord Jesus, have you really taken this power within me that keeps making me unable to obey and have you destroyed it? Then Lord, that's what I want." And if you ever say, "Oh, did it really happen" look at Acts 15:9 "[God] cleansed their hearts by faith." It's written in the Bible, Acts 15:9, "Cleansed their hearts by faith," not by endless effort but by faith.

Let us pray.

Dear Father, I thank you for my dear friends listening so long. Lord, we would pray for each other. Father, we do know that this is exactly where many of us are living and we don't want to live here any longer; we do want to have clean hearts so Lord, we believe this is possible. Your word says, "You shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind," and Lord we don't believe you give us commandments that are impossible to fulfill. So Lord, we come to you

saying that we believe it is possible to have a clean heart and we ask you, Holy Spirit, to begin to reveal to us any darkness there is in our own lives. Lord, we would hunt down sin wherever we can find it and we would renounce it all until we can come to you Lord Jesus and say, "Lord, what you did for me I'm willing to accept and receive." And then Lord, we know faith will spring up in our hearts to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, we commit ourselves to you to do this as long as it takes us in these coming weeks and months.

And now the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with each one of us now and evermore. Amen.