

Freedom From Bondage

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Have you ever noticed how an alcoholic stops drinking? He stops drinking. Have you ever noticed how a chain smoker stops smoking? He stops smoking. Have you ever noticed how a drug addict kicks the habit? He stops shooting heroin. Have you ever noticed how a homosexual stops being promiscuous? He stops being promiscuous. Have you ever noticed how an over-eater stops over-eating? He stops over-eating.

If you say to me, "Didn't Alcoholics Anonymous help?" Yes, it did. Did Drug Treatment Centers help? Yes they did. Did love help? Yes, but anyone here in this room who has escaped from any of these addicting habits would testify to the same truth: that even though other people were a help to them and it was encouraging when other people were patient with them, yet finally, no one could exercise their will for them except one person only, and it was when they finally did that, that success came.

And if you say, but what about the chemical changes that had taken place in their bodies that had prevented them responding like ordinary people? What about the alcohol level in the blood that prevented them exercising their will like ordinary people? What about the way their nervous system had become accustomed to the sedation of the nicotine so that they could not exercise their will like ordinary people? What about the way their emotions had become so used to over-eating as a comfort for them in their anxiety and their worry?

Do you know that millions of people down through the years would testify to the fact that none of those things mattered? That none of that pre-programming of their personality or that addiction of their body or their emotions mattered, once they had decided that they were willing to face the consequences of stopping that particular sin. They would all testify to that, that none of those things mattered once they had determined that they would set their will against this thing and it was finished.

You may say, "Well, do you mean that just their will, the naked exercise of their will, in a fraction of a second, changed the whole make-up of their personality that had been developing in conjunction with these structures for years and years and years?" No, the will tried to do that for years but the will couldn't change the whole personality make-up. The will simply signaled to our Creator that the person wanted to be rid of the perverted personality that had been crucified with Christ and was willing to step into the new personality that had been made available for them in His resurrection and the moment that happened, all the perfect personality of Jesus became available to them and they were able immediately to be free from the things that had dogged them for years.

Loved ones, that's what this is all about here this morning. Once a person has decided that they are willing to do without the blurring of reality that nicotine creates for them, once a person has decided that they are willing to do without the cushioning and the false comfort that alcohol brings to them, once a person is willing to do without the self-love that they get from promiscuity, once a person is willing for that, then the whole perverted personality that has developed in conjunction with that selfish desire to be self-sufficient, that whole personality is rendered inoperative.

That's interesting, that's the very meaning of the Greek phrase in Romans 6:6. It's translated in

our Bible, "The body of sin may be destroyed", but the Greek means the body or the personality that has been used for years by this sinful desire to be self-sufficient, that whole thing is rendered inoperative. That's what Jesus achieved for us on the Cross, and the moment you decide you're willing for that to be made real in you, that moment you're able to be free.

If you say to me, "Could you prove it by life itself?" Yes, there are many, many people who have broken absolutely addicting sins and the hold that it has on their life, in the most unfavorable environments. There are drug addicts that have come out of the center of drug holds and they have broken that sin. There are countless other people that have persisted in much less-addicting sins in much more favorable conditions and they have persisted in them even though on the surface it would be much easier for them to break them.

Yes, if you ever think to yourself, "Oh no, it's the unfavorable effect of these sins in my body that make it impossible for me to break from them" I say to you, do you know of anyone that has faced the beginnings of cancer in their own lungs and then have stopped smoking? If you don't know of any, I can mention several television personalities that smoked and smoked for years and years until they saw death staring them in the face and then they were willing to face whatever consequences they had to, in order to be free -- which seems to suggest, doesn't it, that the will is the key.

Once the will determines, there is a miracle that has been wrought on Calvary, which enables the personality to follow the will. Oh, I just point out an instance that all of us have experienced. How many of you here, have found a whole day becoming miserable because you set your will towards a miserable day? How many of you have found a day becoming beautiful because you have set your will for a beautiful day? How many of you have experienced vast changes in not only your own personality but in the personality of your dear partner at home, because you have set your will to love instead of hate? And how many of us who aren't married and maybe live alone have experienced a total change in our financial situation because we set our will towards victory and optimism.

Loved ones, doesn't it suggest that that are two versions of our life available to us? There is a version that is addicted to all kinds of habits, that is tied by all kinds of circumstances. And there is another version that has been raised up in Jesus that is free of those things. And that we can determine which version we live simply by setting our wills in that direction.

And really that's what communion is about. It's really an opportunity for us to lay hold on the version of life that God has recreated in Jesus. The version of victory and purity in your life that God has made available to you in His son and it's possible for you at this very moment to enter into it. It's possible for you to set your will this morning towards the beautiful person that God has made you in His Son and at that very moment, Jesus' pure, unstained, untouched body becomes yours. Jesus' balanced emotions become available to you. Jesus' uncluttered, unconfused mind becomes available to you if you will just set your will in that direction.

If you say to me, "Do you mean then that it is blasphemy to say, I can't do it?" Oh yes, yes, that's what God is showing us here in Jesus, sure it is. There is no one can't do it. There is no set, our Dads and Moms were right though they didn't maybe know how deeply right they were. There is no such word as "can't" in God's world. There is only won't, there is only won't. Oh yes, if you sit there or I stand here and I say, "I want to be free, but I can't", I may as well take a hammer and a nail and put them through those Dear Hands all over again. I may as well laugh at that dear blood that is pouring from His side because what I am saying is, "You did nothing for me, I was not crucified with

You, my old perverted self was not destroyed with You and I'll prove it by living in the middle of this perverted self and in all of its own inadequacies and all its failures." Loved ones, that's it, really.

Our God is a good God and He does not tell us to do anything that He has not enabled us to do by the miracle of the Cross. Our God is not an unjust God. Our God does not say to you "be clean", and you find you have a mind that is filled with such wandering thoughts that you cannot be clean. No, our God has a new clean mind that He has made available in His Son Jesus and it becomes yours the moment you truly want it. The moment you truly want it and are willing to face the consequences of living in a clean mind. That's true, and it's the same for all of us.

It doesn't matter whether it is masturbation or evil thoughts or gossip or criticism or whether it's drug addiction, it doesn't matter what it is. Loved ones, none of us here in this room -- and I think we're all been involved in this in some way -- None of us are so holy that we don't know what we're talking about here. We've all been involved in this kind of thing, none of us here is in a position to stand up before God in the presence of this dear table that sets forth to us our crucifixion with Christ and our resurrection anew with Him, none of us can stand up and say, "I can't obey you, I cannot abandon this sin." Loved ones, God will say to you on the last day, "You could, if you would. You can, if you really want to. You are able, if you set your will", and loved ones that's it.

Ask those of us who have been freed, we'll tell you the same thing. At last we got honest with God and honest with ourselves and we counted up what it would cost us and what consequences we would face if we would depend only on His love and not on the adulation of other people and we determined we were prepared to face that. And then heaven broke upon us, that's what happened. Heaven broke out in our personalities and we found ourselves new people, because we'd set our wills to what God has done for us in Jesus.

I mean this with all my heart. I pray that some of you this morning will step into life and will forget that business that "you can't" -- because that's a blasphemy against God and an insult to Jesus -- and see that you can, because of Jesus and his miracle. Loved ones, you don't need to be a member of this church to have communion, you don't even need to have been a Christian. All I ask you is that you take seriously with all your heart what I have shared now, so that during the communion service you are able to deal with God about the sins in your life and you're able to set your will against them. That's it.

It doesn't matter if you say, "I've been drinking whisky for years. I cannot stop." You can, I know, I stopped. You can stop today. You can stop today because God has created a new personality for you in Jesus that is available to you. So, go through your own life, that's what I do in communion. Go through, while the other loved ones are giving out the bread and wine. I go through my own life and I deal with those things that God has been troubling my conscience about and I don't cry over them, I don't say I am sorry, I say I am stopping today. That's what God wants from each of us this morning and that's the greatest gift we could offer to our Savior at this table.

So, loved ones if you are ready to do that, will you stand now and receive the invitation to communion?

You that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins and are in love and charity with your neighbors and intend to lead a new life following the commandments of God and walking from henceforth in His

Holy ways, draw near with faith and take this holy sacrament to your comfort and make your humble confession unto Almighty God.

Let's be seated as we pray.