

Broken Vows

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

There is a miracle that God wrought in each one of us in Calvary in time and space in 29 A.D. but most of all, in eternity because Jesus through one of his disciples John, explained that he was the lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world. Even though it just boggles our little minds how God was able to foresee our lives and was able to foresee how they would go and was able actually to destroy us and remake us in his own Son in the center of his heart before he even created the world, just bewilders our finite minds, but that's what happened and all of us were destroyed and remade in Jesus and the amazing thing is that can be made real in us by faith. Now you may say, "Well, how on earth can it?"

Well, Jesus said by the Holy Spirit, "The Holy Spirit is able to take of the things that are mine and impart them to you", and that's how it happens loved ones. Your old self that gives such trouble with jealousy and anger, the envy and pride, that old self has been crucified with Jesus and the Holy Spirit is able to make that real in you tonight by a miracle and he is able to raise you up from the grave as a new person tonight and all that has happened up to this moment in your life is able to be effectively neutralized and rendered inoperative by the power of the Holy Spirit, if you will submit to the Holy Spirit, that's it.

Brothers and sisters, you or I cannot make that real in us by dint of will power or by dint of positive thinking or even by dint of our believing, but it is by our believing that that has happened and by our submission and cooperation with the Holy Spirit that he is able to make that real tonight and I would share with you that I have experienced what many of you have experienced when there has been dryness in my life or when this victory in Calvary has not seemed real in my actual behavior or whenever I have wondered, "How on earth do I get through to this, how can I be delivered from my anger, how can I be delivered from my jealousy? I've thought and thought about this. How can I? I seem to be more embroiled in it than ever before."

The answer has always been the same as the answer to Mary when she asked the angel, "How can this be that there's going to be a baby born in my womb who is going to be the Savior of Israel?" and God answered, "The Holy Spirit. That's how it will be." Loved ones, that's always the answer. If your life is dry tonight or if you have trouble having this all made real to you, it's because in some way you've grieved the dear Holy Spirit, that's it. That's always the answer, loved ones.

I thought it would be good tonight to share one way that we have been talking about in our family groups over the past few weeks. One way in which the Holy Spirit was grieved in the first century and one way in which we may be grieving him in our own lives. Maybe we're not but we may be. So maybe you'd turn to Acts 5, and it's a well known event that many of us have really even wondered about because of course it took place in those unusual days following the gift of the Holy Spirit to the apostles and those were days of extreme grace and yet very strong judgment as you see in this story here of Ananias and Sapphira.

"But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in

your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.' When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him."

Some of the things that we have shared are these: that Ananias and Sapphira decided to sell the land themselves as an active consecration to God. Nobody demanded that they sell it. They just saw others doing this kind of thing and they thought they would do it and perhaps with a little less sacrifice, get the same benefit but nobody asked them to do it. Nobody asks us to pray at such and such a time each morning. Nobody says to us unless you read your Bible such and such a length of time everyday, you will not get to heaven. Nobody says to us unless you tithe, you will not be able to receive Jesus as your Savior.

Loved ones, many of the vows that you and I make are the same as the vows that Ananias and Sapphira made. They are the act of our free will. They are an act of consecration that we choose to make out of love for Jesus. So maybe that's important thing to see. The vows that we make are not dragged from us they are usually prompted by our conscience and the Holy Spirit as we hear a sermon or as we read a book. Many of us here have made certain vows. We have said, "Lord, we are going to do this." It was the act of our own free will.

Secondly, Ananias and Sapphira thought that it was just up to them whether they kept that vow or not. They felt, "Well, we just sold the land so what if we give some of it to God and keep some of it?" They never realized for a moment, what Peter said to them, "You have lied not to men but to God." They never got together and said, "We're going to lie to the Holy Spirit," indeed they probably thought to themselves, "No, this is just a vow that we have made between ourselves. Let's sell this land and we'll give it and maybe it can be used to do some good for the poor," but they never realized for a moment that they had lied to the Holy Spirit.

I think we do the same thing. I don't know about you but as this truth came home to me, I was able to think of vows that I had made to God and I'll tell you I believed that I had just made them privately. And so none of you knew about them, nobody else knew about them. I wasn't lying to man. It was no big deal if I changed the vow or if I stepped back on it and now I can trace a lot of the coldness in my own heart at times to broken vows.

Vows that were broken by me because I shrugged them off, I just thought to myself, "Oh I didn't make it to anybody. I didn't make it particular. It's just God", and then that sticks in your throat, you know. "It's just God. That's the only one that heard me say this." Loved ones, the Holy Spirit hears our vows. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead by the Holy Spirit to show us that in their physical death we are often experiencing the same thing spiritually.

The Holy Spirit often has to bring death to us in relationship to these things that we share tonight because we have not kept faith with the Holy Spirit. We have not kept vows that we have made and it's just been good for those of us in family groups to see that yeah, this is one of the causes of coldness in our relationship with God, broken vows. Vows that have been broken casually because we felt, "Well, look it's no big deal. We are not offending anybody except the most important person in the universe." There's a piece if you like to look at it in Ecclesiastes 5 that states it just very plainly.

Ecclesiastes 5:4, "When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay."

Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake; why should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands?"

That's just pretty plainly put you know. "When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay." I don't know if you have done what I have done in the past but I think all of us have vowed, we will get up at 6:00 and pray everyday. We will get up at 4:00. We will get up at 5:00. We will get up at 7:00 and read the Bible. We will pay our tithe even if we are in trouble financially. We will give ourselves to bear witness at work. We will be straight about our profession of Jesus. We will be honest whatever the cost.

I think that many of us have coldness in our hearts tonight because we are standing on top of shattered vows that God does not regard lightly. So loved ones, really I am saying this to help us. I am not saying this to bring guilt to our hearts but I am saying it to help us, those of us who may be experiencing deadness or coldness in our lives and want to know, "Look, what do I do? What do I do? Do I get mystical about this Last Supper here?" No, no, no, just obey the Holy Spirit who is showing you things.

What we do at this time normally is we have what we call an open microphone and really it's not a time for us all to humble ourselves in front of each other, it's primarily a time to share light that the Holy Spirit has given us about ways in which we have either broken a vow that we made or ways in which we have been living independent of God. It may be completely different and separate from what I shared tonight.

Ways in which we have been living independent of God, ways in which we've been keeping ourselves out of a whole life that now He has shown us and the purpose is of course, that God often uses the light that he has given to you as you share it to give light to some of the rest of us here, and I think we all agree that the killer about sin is it does blind and it's dreadful but it does. It blinds you so that you can't see what's wrong and loved ones our purpose here tonight is to help each other.

It may involve humbling ourselves before God and before each other but that's not the purpose of it, the purpose of it is that we'll be able to share light that has come to us. I would just share that one that I have already shared in the presentation that God did show me and I don't think we need to go into the details and outline everything but God certainly showed me things that I had vowed and that I had shrugged off and taken that attitude, "Well", and I mean, it sticks in your throat, "it's just God." Well, who is more important than God? And it was good that I saw plainly, "Boy, there'll be no light or life until I get that sorted out", and so I am keeping those vows.

So the microphone is open loved ones and all I would ask you is that it would be good if you could be brief, so that maybe as many of us could share as possible and especially it helps those of us who are very shy and very nervous -- and I think that's most of us -- to see that we don't need to give a long speech, we just need to say the thing.