

Controlled Surrender

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

For those of you who are here maybe for the first time and have been put off by previous experiences of an emotional and irrational presentation of Christianity because really we don't present the intellectual basis this morning for the Christianity that we believe in and I can only point you to the house of Dunamis and the bookshop in the House of Dunamis we have maybe a library of 50 cassettes which deal with the intellectual basis of Christianity and we in past Sundays have talked about this. I point you to the Fish bookshop which has a good selection of Christian books on those subjects, and point you to the seminars, and just ask you to be patient and realize that we're following out a study that we have been considering together for several months, and so you in a way come in in the middle of it.

It's not because we don't deal with the intellectual basis but we believe we need to get beyond that also. We, since Christmas have been talking about what the real Christian is. We've done that because people have so many varied concepts of what a Christian is. Some of them think that we're a Christian nation because we put, "In God we trust," on our coins. And so a lot of people say, "Oh, that's what you mean by being a Christian." And a lot of people say, "Oh well a Christian man is a very moral man or a very virtuous man," or, "A Christian person is a church goer or someone who believes the truths of Christianity."

Now dear ones, it's because of those varied concepts that we have been talking about what a real Christian is on these Sundays. You remember, we said that a real Christian was one who had experienced the two effects of Christ's death. He had experienced a spiritual birth whereby God's Holy Spirit came into his spirit and brought new life and sensitivity to God into him and that came through real repentance. And the second effect of Jesus' death is a real spiritual death to that old self life caused by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in displacing that self and made possible by the fact that we were really crucified with Christ 1900 years ago.

Now both of those probably sound wild to anybody who has never considered Christianity seriously before, but what it really means is first a miraculous implanting of a God centered set of motivations and sensitivities inside us. And secondly, a miraculous displacing of the old self-centered set of sensitivities and motivations within us. And a real Christian is one how has experienced both of those - a spiritual birth and a real spiritual death to self.

Now is it possible for a person to enter into just one of those? Yes, last Sunday we talked, you remember, about a person who is half alive spiritually. A person who has allowed the Holy Spirit to make the new birth real in them so that they want to do God's will, and they want to do things that please Jesus, but the self inside them and the miserable self-centered desires that they have, prevent them from obeying God's will. That's a person who is half alive spiritually. A person who has entered into the new birth but has not entered into a real experience of their death to self with Christ and so they are in a sense like the man described, you remember, in Romans 7:19. And we did look at it before but if you want to check it there are a couple of references there in Romans that it would be good to look at. And Romans 7:19, describes the state of a person who is half alive spiritually.

Romans 7:19, "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." And many people have entered into

half a Christian experience and are in that position. They know what they ought to do but they have not the power to do it and they live constantly defeated experiences failing to do what they know they should do. Now really, their position is much like a Jew. You could say almost that they are living under the old covenant. They're living under the old covenant which enabled people to have their sins forgiven but did not give them power to live in obedience.

They're living a bit like the person, you remember, that Paul describes there in 7:24, he says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" And some people would say that isn't a defeated Christian talking, that's Paul talking as a Jew under the law, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" What was a body of death? Well, you remember, they had several methods of execution in the first century, one was crucifixion. Another was putting a stake right through the heart of the person. Another was taking the victim that the criminal had murdered and hanging that victim's dead body around the criminal and making that criminal walk for months and months with that dead body decomposing around him and the stench constantly destroying any freshness of the air, and eventually overcoming the man.

Now, that is what Paul means, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death, this dead body hanging around me that prevents me living the full life that I could live if it wasn't there, and it's continually hindering me when I get into situations that require extra effort?" Now loved ones, you see, that's what many of us find ourselves in. We find that there's a kind of body of death that hangs around us and we want to love the person, we want to love them wholly and completely but there is within us a self-righteous desire to judge them and that body of death hangs around us. And we want to love the person but that self-righteous desire to judge them comes up and we say, "No, we can't love them because they're like this."

Many of us want to have a pure relationship with our dear ones. We want to have a pure love relationship but there is a self-pleasing lustful desire to satisfy ourselves that is constantly creeping up inside and this old body of death seems to swing around us at times when we want to have a pure experience with the dear one. Now, that's what it means to be half alive.

There are many of us who really want to live for God totally and we really do want to follow Jesus and make any sacrifice that is necessary but inside us there is this self glorifying desire that wants to live our lives for our own sakes and for our own benefits. Now that's the body of death dear ones. It's not this flesh body, there's nothing evil about the body itself. It's the body of death, the body of sin inside us that is constantly trying to pull us back into self. Now that's what a half alive Christian is, you see.

Now what you need to decide this morning is where you stand in regard to that, really. The first time the gospel was ever preached was the day of Pentecost and both these experiences, a real birth and a real death, are implied in the instruction that is given to those converts or to those non-Christians before they were converted. Maybe you'd look at it, it's Acts 2:38, and you remember it was the first time that any man ever presented in the world that God was willing to accept men as his own children because of Jesus and was able to restore his image in their own lives. And then you remember, some people came up to Peter and they said, "In the light of this what shall we do?" And Acts 2:38, Peter answered like this, "And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

And there were three steps dear ones. The first step was repent, and you had to stop doing the

things that were wrong, and ask Jesus' Spirit to come into your life. And that's the first step in becoming a Christian. And then you see you had to be baptized in the name of Jesus. And you know, they were wiser than us, they didn't spend hours arguing about whether they ought to go right under the water, or whether it was enough to sprinkle, or whether it was enough to pour on, and all that. They really got to the basis of what baptism was. And you remember how Paul explained it in Romans he explained what baptism was before the people ever went under the water in Romans 6:3-4, you remember. And this was the second necessary step, you see, to be a totally alive Christian.

Romans 6:3, "Do you not know," and you see probably Paul would do this, the dear ones would be waiting there on the side of the river or the lake and he would explain to them, "Now, I'm going to explain to you what baptism means," and bless our hearts we think, "Well, if we haven't been baptized in the right way, this won't take place in us." Dear ones, it will. You're only baptized again if Jesus tells you to be baptized.

Do you see how silly we are brothers and sisters? We love to see the visible things, you know. If somebody tells us by being baptized upside down you can be converted, you know, we'll go for that. Now loved ones, do you see, and I share this with you because I'm willing to baptize anyone believers baptism that believes Jesus is really guiding them. But do you see there's a difference between that and the fad of being baptized because you think it's an easy way into the death of Christ? There is no easy way. You're baptized into what you are already. Do you see that?

The New Testament always baptizes you into something that you're in already. The baptism does not cause the thing. The baptism is an outward sacramental proclamation that the thing has taken place. Now, that does not mean that we should not follow the New Testament directions as clearly as possible we should do that, but we should steer away from any faddish preoccupation with second baptisms. If Jesus guides you to a second baptism then that's good but be sure that it's that. Be sure that it's not going for some visible mechanical thing that you think will create the experience because it won't.

But probably you see, as the dear ones came to the lake or river Paul explained to them, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Now many of us do not walk in newness of life because we have never been identified with Christ in his death and his resurrection. And you see, even on the first day that the gospel was ever preached it was shared that that was necessary.

You repented, you were born of the spirit and then you were baptized into the death of Jesus. You were identified with him in his death and resurrection. Loved ones, sharing with you the application of it to physical lust, you are baptized into Jesus' lack of having a woman and you agree with the Holy Spirit, "I agree Holy Spirit, I am willing only to experience what you want me to experience in that area of my life. I am willing to be baptized into Jesus completely. If he had no wife, if he had no girlfriend, if he had no woman I am willing for that. If you want to give me a wife, a girlfriend, then I am willing for that." But do you see that it is an identification with Jesus in every aspect of his life, in every way in which he died to self you are willing to die to self. And then as you're baptized into that the Holy Spirit is completely filling your life and taking your life over and that is the full Christian experience.

Now you may say, "Well, pastor is it possible for people to enter into half an experience?" Well

dear ones, let's look to Acts 8 and see it there. In Acts 8:4-6, "Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to a city of Samaria, and proclaimed to them the Christ." Now you see in Verse 6, "And the multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs which he did." Now that means they heard his word there in Samaria. Now they took another step in Verse 12-13, "But when they believed Philip," they not only heard it but they believed him, "As he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ".

So they knew what they were believing, they were believing the name of Jesus. "They were baptized, both men and women." So these people really became Christians, they were really born of the Spirit. "Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed." So there was in every sense a new birth experience in the city there in Samaria.

Now, do you see how the story goes on in Verse 14, "Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God," you would think they would have immediately said, "Send them out, give them the four laws and send them out and get them out witnessing, and get them out serving God, and get them out playing the organ in church and have them sing in church, and have them run Sunday school classes," and all that kind of thing. Now do you see that immediately they heard what had happened in Samaria, Peter and John new that only half an experience had taken place? Presumably Philip had told them some of what he had done and do you see what they had did in Verse 14? They sent to them their two best men, Peter and John, "Who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit."

Now it is important dear ones, to see that when you're baptized in the name of Jesus what often takes place is a new birth experience. You're born of the Spirit, you receive the Spirit, but you are not filled with the Spirit and you need to go into the full experience of Christ's death. Now if you say to me, "Do you not think pastor that some people experience both the New Testament times?" Maybe they did dear ones, I'm sure they experienced it almost the next day. I'm sure there was no difficulty in them realizing what a full surrender was in those days.

I've shared with you before, I'm sure they heard the word one day and then Peter or Paul would explain to them what baptism into Christ the next day, they would realize that Peter and Paul were as good as dead men, and that baptism for them meant dying to any future that they might have. Dying to their own wishes, dying to their own concerns, and they were baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. But brothers and sisters you know it's different today. We are born of the Spirit, then we look around and instead of seeing examples everywhere of men sacrificing their financial accounts, sacrificing their bank balances, sacrificing their plans for marriage, their homes, their two car garages, sacrificing everything for Jesus, instead of that we see many dear ones who are children of God but they are living lives of controlled surrender. And so we ourselves, you see, we wander into that controlled surrender and that's why many of us have little experience of the filling with the Holy Spirit.

Now it would be good, because I see some older brothers and sisters among us in these mornings, it would be good to say, dear ones, I'm not saying that we all ought to become missionaries, or we all ought to leave the States, but we ought to be full time servants for Jesus. Do you see what I mean? Not full time paid servants, but living for Him first and foremost, everything else subordinate.

And when we begin to get a new group of Christians entering into both parts of Christ's death then we'll begin to have less defeated Christians around us, and we'll have less people entering into half an experience.

So I think it is important to see it dear ones. Now you may say, "Oh but brother how could you enter into half an experience?" Well, I'll show you why. There's a principle explained in Matthew 9 if you'd look at it, and I think it will help you to see why many people do enter into only half of what Christ has done for them on the cross. Matthew 9 and it's the story of a healing you remember, Matthew 9:27-30, "And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David.' When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then he touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith be it done to you.' And their eyes were opened."

Now do you see the principle is according to your faith be it done unto you, or be it unto you according to your faith? Brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit can only do in you what you believe him to do. If you believe the Holy Spirit to take your sins and lay them on Jesus, and to bring to you the witness of God's Spirit that you're forgiven and that you're a child of God, if you believe the Holy Spirit to come into the door of your heart, and dwell in your life, he will do that. But he cannot do more than you believe him to do. If you do not believe that you were crucified with Christ and are willing to be crucified with Christ, and believe the Holy Spirit to fill every part of that miserable inward self that has envy, and jealous, and pride, and anger in it, then the Holy Spirit cannot do it.

The Holy Spirit you see can apply to you all that God has done for you in Christ, but only if you have faith that he will do it. And you can see therefore among many of us, it's a sheer lack of light. In our generation we have preached a soft gospel haven't we? We've preached if you come to God he will forgive you your sins and it doesn't matter what you do. You can keep on doing what you want but God will continually forgive you.

Now you see that isn't the gospel in the New Testament. The New Testament gospel is you are crucified with Christ. God isn't just going to have a heaven full of people that he has to forgive, and forgive, and forgive again. He wants a heaven full of people who have allowed that miserable old rebellious self to be destroyed with Jesus on Calvary so that it is heaven. So that it is heaven. And many of us you see have not heard that or have not shared it.

Now there is another reason for us not entering it. Faith is belief plus obedience. Now, if you enter into an experience of forgiveness of sins without belief that Christ bore your sins, then you enter into legalism. That's why many conservative churches really have vied into legalism because their children and their brothers and sisters have not entered into a real belief that their sins were born by Jesus.

Now, if you enter into the forgiveness of sins without any real obedience then you'll enter into a life of doubts and many people you see, enter into an experience of forgiveness without any real obedience following, and before they know it they're beginning to doubt everything. They doubt whether there's a God, they doubt whether Jesus ever lived, they doubt everything that they ever knew before.

Now it's same with the experience of crucifixion with Christ. If you try to enter into an

experience of crucifixion with Christ without believing that you were crucified with Christ 1900 years ago, then you enter into suppression, a life of suppression where you try to suppress something that has not been dealt with by God. And it's the same if you enter into an experience of deliverance from sin or crucifixion with Christ without any real obedience. Then you enter into a life of auto suggestion where you keep saying, "I'm dead, I'm dead, I'm dead." But you're not really dead, you're alive and kicking and every time anybody criticizes you, you know it that great self rises up and reacts against them.

So do you see that in order to enter into the two great works that Christ achieves for us on the cross you need to enter into both by a complete faith. That is, a complete belief and complete obedience. Now how does this in fact work in our lives? Well, at the beginning of our Christian life Jesus comes to the front door of our house and knocks. And the porch there is a guilty conscious and Jesus explains to us, "Look, I was crucified for your sins. My Father has nothing against you, you should have died for your sins but I've died for them. My Father doesn't hate you, my Father doesn't dislike you. He has withdrawn his wrath from you. I tell you, you just look up and believe that my Father's face is smiling upon you and receive me into your spirit."

Now that's the experience of conversion and the Spirit of Jesus comes into us at conversion and then he begins to look around at the rest of our house, and he begins to look into the bedroom, and he begins to point out, "Now listen, there's laziness in your life." And the old self inside you rises up and says, "Yeah, but I have a right to lay in it if I want to. I have a right to laze around if I want to, it's my life." The Holy Spirit says, "No, I have come into your life, it is my life. Now are you willing to die to your right to be lazy?" And then he deals with other things in the bedroom of our house. He comes to self-indulgence and he says, "Now listen, you think you have the right to indulge yourself whenever you want but you are not your own, you were bought with a price. This body doesn't belong to you it belongs to me. Now, will you let me take it over?" And the Holy Spirit deals with us in that regard.

Or he deals with us so often in the bedroom of our lives. Really that's where worry resides. At night we worry and worry over what has happened during the day and what will happen the next day and the Holy Spirit says, "Now listen, if you don't hand that over to me you're beginning to control your life yourself. You worry because you think things aren't going to turn out the way you want them to. Now, will you die to your right to control things?" And the Holy Spirit goes through the rooms of our house and he cleans them out. And he comes to the study and he deals there with the pride and he says, "Now listen; you have pride in your grades. Now your grades were granted to you by my grace and my power. They're my grades they're not yours." And he begins to deal with us on pride. Or, he begins to deal with us on envy.

He says, "Now, why do you think you have a right to be envious of someone else? You have been crucified with Christ. You are nothing as far as Jesus is concerned, but the Father thinks the world of you so why be envious of other people?" And the Holy Spirit dear ones, begins to go around the other rooms of our house. Comes into the family room there where we get touchy with the family and we're touchy because they don't seem to understand all the things we understand and the Holy Spirit says, "You're setting yourself up as God. Because they don't understand things the way you do, you think they're wrong."

And he deals with our impatience and says, "You think you know the perfect time to get things done? Maybe their time is the perfect time. Impatience is a sign that you want everybody to do things the way you want them to do it." And you see the Holy Spirit moves through all the rooms of our house.

And he moves into the chapel there into the prayer room and he deals with the deadness and the coldness that we experience in there and he shows us, "Listen, you're in charge of your own spiritual life. You have it under control you don't feel I'm in control of it at all." And the Holy Spirit begins, you see, to search through all of the rooms of our house.

Now if we at any point resist him, that's what, causes deadness in the Christian life. That's what calls a sense of defeat. If in any room of our life we resist him, that's what causes the deadness. If we respond to him and say, "Yes Holy Spirit, clean up that room, clean up that room, clean up that room." Then eventually he takes us to the very back of the house. There there is a closet where we put all the stuff that we cleared out of the other rooms into and that closet is full to the ceiling of all the dirt, and all of the things that the Holy Spirit said we should move out of all the other areas of our lives.

Now dear ones, in that closet there exists three attitudes. One is I have really the right to this house whatever he thinks. I'll withdraw the bits of it that he tells me to when it's convenient for me, but I'm going to keep all this stuff back here and I'll move it back in whenever I want. Now, it's that right to self loved ones that the Holy Spirit eventually begins to deal with. The second thing is that desire for our own way and back there in that closet we want our own way, we don't actually want him to fill the whole house. We want to fill the whole house ourselves, that's why we're keeping all the stuff back here. We feel we have the right to have our own way in regard to our future, our finances, and okay we go along with him as long as it suits us.

But when we want to we'll pull it out of his hands. And the third attitude is the desire to assert ourselves, and defend ourselves. And you see we feel we have the right to assert ourselves over this house because this is our life. Now, when the Holy Spirit gets to that closet we've come to the question of whether we're willing to die with Christ or in fact, to live a half alive self-controlled half surrendered life and that's the closet that you need to deal with dear ones. And the Holy Spirit asks you "Are you willing to die to your right to yourself? Are you willing to die to your right to have your own way? Are you willing to die to the right to assert yourself and defend yourself?"

Dear ones, when you come to that place, you burn all your bridges behind you and you say, "Holy Spirit I am willing." And he knows whether you're really willing or not and as a result of that he fills you with himself and you enter into the fully surrendered victorious Christian life. Now brothers and sisters, that's a real moment, you can bluff all kinds of people that you're willing to die to that self, but the Holy Spirit knows if you're willing.

Now if you say to me, "What happens if I'm not willing?" Well loved ones, I suppose you are a child of God and you live that up and down Christian life in and out of defeat, in and out of victory. I suppose you remain a child of God as long as you're able to repent of your sins, but it's not the Father's will for you. The Father's will is that you enter into both parts of the cross of Christ and you enter in by belief and obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Now brothers and sisters, it's vital to come into that before you can know any ministry of the Holy Spirit. So will you begin to pray about that, and think about it, and I'll gladly talk with you or pray with you at any time, or if you want to stay behind today and pray you should do it. But really the way is to deal with the Holy Spirit. Let him into the rooms of your life until he takes you back to the closet and then deal openly and honestly with him about that. I pray that God will give you the grace to come into a full Christian experience. Now let us pray.

Holy Spirit, we know that only you can bring us there because this involves parts of our life over which we exercise unconscious control. So Holy Spirit we need your light, and we need your revelation to see where we need to come into a full experience of Christ's death, and to be identified with him in his death and then in his resurrection. So Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to you now and ask you whatever the cost, to come into every room in our life and to deal with that closet at the back, to deal with that old self, and to bring us into the resurrection victory life that is waiting for us.

We trust you to do that Holy Spirit, that Jesus may be glorified in us and not ourselves, that we may live not unto ourselves but unto Jesus. Amen.