

Freedom from Bondage to the Will 1

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

What I'd like to do tonight and next Sunday night is share some teachings with you about the victorious life, because we'll spend all of October listening to the reports from Amsterdam, France, Germany, London, and Puerto Rico and we'll be seeing slides and hearing the testimonies of the brothers and sisters about the work that God was doing through them during the summer. So these will be the two teachings that we'll have before November so I think its better not to have a question time during these two evenings, but to begin the question times during November.

What I'd like to share is the truth that you find in John 8:32. It is a freeing statement that God gives us in this verse as he says through his son, "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Now there's no reason at all for you at any time in your Christian life to be anything but totally free, really. There is no reason for you to ever be anything but free and the truth always will make you free. It is only the deception of Satan and the lies of Satan that will ever bring you into bondage and yet why I share this tonight is because a number of us, at different stages in our Christian lives, come into bondage and we don't need to brothers and sisters.

It is true that the truth makes you free. And if you look down a few verses to verse 36 you see where the truth is and how it does make you free. Verse 36 runs, "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." And every time you deal with the truth that is in Jesus you live free and every time you miss that truth you come into bondage.

There are four great stages in our Christian life where you can come into bondage and they correspond to four parts of Jesus' life. The first one is that whole element of conscience; many of us can come into tremendous bondage over conscience. The second one is our wills, our independent selfish wills; many of us come into bondage over our wills. The third one is the psychological part of us, our mind and emotions and many of us can come into bondage about our mind and emotions. And then the fourth one refers to the inner part of us, our spirits, and many of us can come into bondage in regard to our spirits.

Now there is a truth that is in Jesus that delivers us from bondage in each area of our lives and it corresponds to the birth of Jesus, to the death of Jesus, to the resurrection of Jesus, and to the ascension of Jesus. It is God's will that we would experience the birth, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus completely in regard to each of those areas of our lives, and if we don't we come into bondage.

Now loved ones, there is only one way to experience the birth and death and resurrection and the ascension of Jesus in reality in our own lives and that is through faith. And faith is very simple; it consists of believing and obeying. Each time in regard to this area of our lives, all we have to do is to believe certain things about Jesus and to obey certain things in Jesus and we come into freedom.

Let's take the first one, the whole business of conscience. Most of us start our Christian lives by coming into a real sense of bondage over a verse like Matthew 5:22. We read a verse like this and immediately come into a tremendous bondage, "But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire." Many of us come into great bondage

in our consciences when we begin to realize that we are doing things that God has told us deserve the penalty of eternal death and separation from him, so we come into a great bondage of guilt.

We know that the wages of sin is death, and we know that we have sin in our own lives and the way out of that bondage is very clearly stated in the Bible and it refers to the whole business of the new birth in the spirit. We are asked to believe a certain thing about Jesus and that certain thing is in Romans 4:24-25 where it's stated plainly by God, "It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification." And it's stated plainly there that if you believe that Jesus has died for that sin in your life, then that faith of yours will be reckoned as righteousness and you're asked to believe.

The second thing you're asked to do is stated in Matthew 3:2 and you remember it's that plain statement of Jesus that you're to believe, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And dear ones, that's all we're called to do to be free from the bondage of guilt, but many of us mess the whole thing up. We begin to realize we have to repent, and we begin to come under bondage about repentance. We have an incredible ability to turn God's freedom into salvation by works, and some of us will do that. We'll look at the believing, and we'll look at the obeying and the repenting and we'll say, "Well the repenting means I have to repent thoroughly." And we get down to bringing about a thorough repentance and many of us begin to feel, "Unless we feel a desperate sorrow for our sins we have not truly repented." And I know there's a dear sister among us in these days who feels she doesn't repent enough, she feels, "I don't feel repentance. I have to feel it."

Loved ones, do you see that repentance is just what it says; you turn from your sin and if you keep sinning, you keep turning from your sin. But repentance is "metanoia"; it's a change of mind. You turn from what you're doing and you turn to Jesus, it is not a matter of feeling repentance. But many of us have turned from the truth that sets us free and have turned to the error of Satan and we've begun to think we must feel this repentance. We think, "I don't feel it enough. God can't forgive me because I don't feel it enough." Do you see where that's taking you? That's taking you into works. You're saying, "If I don't do this work thoroughly enough God cannot forgive me."

You'll never repent deeply enough to justify God forgiving you. God forgives you because you are justified by the blood of Jesus and that is the truth that sets you free and that's found in Romans 5:9. It isn't the thoroughness of repentance, though certainly God asks you to repent. He says, "If you repent and believe then the blood of my Son will justify you in my eyes." But do you see it's the blood of Jesus that justifies you in God's eyes because you've repented and believed, not because of the thoroughness of your sorrow at your sin.

Now it's very important to see it, otherwise you can begin to punish yourself and many of us have come into that. We've sinned and we've committed a sin that we committed ten weeks before and we know it's wrong and we begin to sense inside ourselves, "I deserve to have a period of real contrition before God can possibly accept me into his family again." Therefore we impose upon ourselves a certain time limit and we say, "Unless we go through this period of contrition, God cannot possibly forgive us."

Now loved ones, can you see that's the doctrine of penance that brought so many in the Catholic Church into bondage? That's what penance is. It's saying, "Unless I punish myself enough, unless I sorrow enough, God will not forgive me." Repentance is turning from your sin and believing that the blood of Jesus alone will make you right with God, not the thoroughness of your repentance.

Nevertheless you have to be thorough and go through all the sins that you have and repent of them. But you don't have to squeeze yourself dry to get yourself sorrowful enough.

Many of us have come into the same problem over confession, which is part of repentance. Many of us fall into the bondage of a sensitivity group. We wonder, "Have I confessed everything? I must confess again. I didn't make that right with that other brother so I must make it right again." And many of us come into a place where we think, "Have I confessed everything? Have I confessed enough?"

Dear ones have come to me and said week after week, after week, "I have something else to confess." Now loved ones, do you see that is bondage? You confess all that you know is wrong in your life, you make it straight before God, you make it straight with other people, you turn from it and that's your confession and repentance.

Many of us come into bondage even over the believing. The believing is to believe that the blood of Jesus justifies us before God –to believe simply that Jesus has died for our sins. But many of us come into the old heresy of a corner on truth. We say, "We believe in the substitutionary death of Jesus in a subtly different way than all other churches and that's what saves us." That just brings you into bondage. It brings you into a preoccupation with the peccadillos of the atonement. Do you see that God expects you to believe that Jesus has died for you -- just to believe that – and that it's the death of Jesus that makes you right with God? It's not your exact precise statement of the atonement or of the way Jesus' death saved you, it's simply you believing that Jesus has died for you.

There's such a freedom comes into your life when you reduce it all to simply repenting and believing. Just repenting of your sins and believing that Jesus' death satisfies your Father. Just that, and suddenly there comes into your heart a clear assurance of God's acceptance of you. But do you see that the truth makes you free? It's the errors and lies of Satan that bring you into bondage about that.

Now maybe we won't get through the four parts tonight, maybe we'll get as far as the second part. But many of us, after we're born of the Spirit, come into this problem of the will that will not obey Jesus and that's what I shared with you this morning. We come into this area where we find that our wills do not want to submit to God's law. Indeed, they cannot submit. They just keep acting against God in rebellion; we try to bend them in God's direction and we cannot do anything about them.

God has made provision for that too, you see. It is madness for us to come into that hypocritical double life and almost go insane thinking that God has not made provision for it. Loved ones, God has made clear provision for it and again here, the truth makes you free. The truth is very simple and it's stated in the Bible and just as Romans 5:9 is the truth that sets you free in the first instance, the truth that sets you free here is Romans 6:6, "That our old self was crucified with Christ." God has said that that is made real in our lives just as the first one is made real in our lives; if again we believe and obey.

This time we believe Romans 6:11, you reckon that you have been crucified with Christ and you submit, in Romans 6:13, you submit your members to the Spirit of God. But again, it's belief and obey and it's very simple, but many of us break away from the freedom that is in those words and we come into bondage. We find this will that we can do nothing about and we start to rationalize it

and say, "Masturbation isn't too bad. It's kind of a human trait that many of us have to face through the early part of our lives and marriage will clear it all up." Or if we criticize people a bit we say, "Well, you need to use the old critical faculty, otherwise where would you be? You have to judge people to know who to agree with and who not to agree with."

Or we rationalize not getting up in the morning by saying, "We just happen to be people who work better late at night than we do early in the morning and no doubt we'll be able to work into deep prayer later on in the evenings." Or we say to ourselves, "Well, witnessing – yeah, but I'm just a different kind of person. I'm not one of these people who can run up with the four spiritual laws and witness like that. I have to go more slowly and subtly about it. I believe in friendship evangelism." And you know, we believe in friendship evangelism, but it never gets to evangelism it just gets to friendship.

Many of us forget the truth that is in these verses and instead we set about delivering ourselves from this problem here again by works, you see. We fall into a salvation by works and the only way we can get rid of it is to rationalize the failings of this will. And many brothers and sisters walk in bondage to that will because they keep on rationalizing and rationalizing. Or many of us just repress it, we just keep repressing it. The anger is coming up inside us and we repress it, we just press it down and try to love people on the outside despite the anger. Or the irritability comes up and we try to repress it and we keep repressing these things and repressing them.

Do you see that the truth sets you free? The truth doesn't bring you into bondage like that. It is not God's will that you should walk in continual repression that shows like that great defeat in the back of your eyes. It is God's will that you should walk free of this, not in rationalizing and not in repression but in a real deliverance. Some of us say, "I believe that but I have to see it for myself." And we start introspecting and looking inside, and we get all worked up with looking inside and working out our motives and our attitudes and our reactions, and our desires, and again we come into tremendous bondage.

Now brothers and sisters you know that many of us who have come into an awareness of the problem of our selfish independent will have not walked the way of freedom at all. We have walked, rather, the way of bondage. We have walked either in continual introspection, or in continual repression, or in continual rationalizing. Many of us, for instance, just disagree with God and we come into total despair.

Do you see that total despair is a frank rejection of what God has said is true about us in the Bible? You'll see it in Romans 7:18, "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh." "For I know that nothing good dwells within me." Coming into despair is a rejection of that truth. Do you see that you come into despair because you're still hoping for something good from inside you?

There's a great peace that comes in your heart when you accept, "That's right -- there is nothing good inside me and God sees that clearly and he expects me to accept that. But we come into bondage of despair when we're still hoping for something good inside us. Or the other reason we come into despair is because we don't really believe Romans 5:9 which says, "You're justified by the blood of Jesus." We come into despair because deep down we really believe that we're going to be justified by our victorious life or by our good works or by our victory over sin and that's why we come into despair.

But again, do you see it's the lie of Satan that brings us into bondage? The truth that is in the Son sets us free, and the truth that is in the Son is that there is no good in you at all. The reason you're having such trouble with yourself is you're still expecting some good from inside you. Actually, what God wants you to see is that there is no good in you and in fact, to believe and to reckon yourself dead indeed with Jesus on the cross. And the word "reckon" in Greek means to treat yourself as really dead.

But many of us keep on rationalizing and repressing so when we come into a situation where somebody attacks us or criticizes us in the office we don't act as a corpse -- no. We are very much alive, we whip right back. The old corpse is lying flat on the ground; suddenly the arm lifts up and strikes the fella back. Now do you see that's where we're going astray? We're rationalizing, we're repressing, we're introspecting, we're coming into despair but we're not reckoning ourselves into Jesus; dead indeed unto self and alive to Jesus.

Do you see that believing is an active thing? Loved ones, a number of us are coming into bondage because we're thinking this is a game that you play in your thoughts. It isn't, believing is a very active thing. Believe in Anglo-Saxon means you be in accordance with what the truth is. The truth is you were crucified with Christ so okay, let him tear you apart. What's he tearing apart -- an old dead corpse? What does that matter?

But do you see you "be in accordance" with what is the truth in Jesus. Belief is not a juggling with thoughts loved ones. It's not introspection, it's not repression, it's not rationalization, it's not despair, it's simply acting as if you've been crucified with Christ and there's no "you" to respond. Obedience in the same thing: a lot of us are coming into this place where we say, "I believe I'm crucified with Christ but I still don't feel crucified." It doesn't matter whether you feel it or not. It doesn't matter whether other people see it or not. You believe that you've been crucified with Christ and you submit yourself to the Holy Spirit at each moment as he tells you things. But brothers and sisters, do you see that the truth is in a way a very external thing. I think a number of us come into bondage because we make it an internal juggling with thought life. No, it isn't. It's believing that you've been crucified with Christ and acting as if that is true, and it's submitting to the Holy Spirit the first time he tells you to do something.

But both of those are very external things. In fact, faith in the New Testament is a very external thing. It's believing, treating yourself as if this is true, and as if this is true, and it's obeying, obeying God when he tells you to repent and obeying his Spirit when he tells you to do things. And loved ones, those truths set you free.

I'm sure a number of you are sitting there saying, "Ah, but how does it all become real?" That's up to the Holy Spirit. It's up to the Holy Spirit to make the truth of these two facts real in you. It's not up to you to look in and see, "Is my crucifixion with Christ real? Is my new birth real?" It's up to the Holy Spirit to make those things real in you as you take care of these things that you can take care of. But brothers and sisters that is the way of freedom. Truth will always set you free. It will never bring you into bondage.

When you find a brother or sister coming into bondage over their crucifixion with Christ, it's not because they're coming into the truth, it's because they're coming into one of these subtle lies or errors of Satan. But the truth itself will always set you free. Now loved ones, do you see tonight that all I can do is present those truths briefly to you and give you the scripture verses? You, yourself, need to go to the Holy Spirit and ask, "Holy Spirit, am I coming into bondage to some

deception of Satan in these areas of my life? Is it because I've accepted some of Satan's lies that I'm in bondage about my forgiveness of my sins or about my victory over sin? Am I really dwelling in the truth?" And loved ones, the truth is a joyful thing to live in. And the truth is those two things -- actually entering into those in actuality and that sets you free, it really does.

Next Sunday evening I'd like to talk a little about these areas that we've talked of before at times, the mind and emotions, and how they're connected with the resurrection of Jesus, and the Spirit and how it's connected with the ascension of Jesus. Some of you may find that you've come as far as the first two and you are having victory there and yet you're coming into bondage here in these areas. But loved ones, do you see that it's really a very simple thing, and we should see it as that. It's an active thing you see, it's not a feeling thing, it's not an internal juggling of thoughts thing, it's an active believing and obeying.

So will you go to the Holy Spirit and ask him, "Holy Spirit, have I come into unnecessary bondage in these areas" and really get clear and walk free, walk free each day. It is the Father's will. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we thank you that your way is a way of freedom. Savior, we know that Satan is in among us trying to internalize this whole business until it's all a psychological game. But Lord Jesus, we know it's a very sure appropriation of what has happened to us in you on Calvary. Lord Jesus, we know that it is the Holy Spirit that makes these things real in us, it isn't us by all our emotions, and all our introspection, it is the Holy Spirit. We thank you that if we do our part you will do yours and we thank you that our part is so clear and so obvious.

In order to come into a real forgiveness of our sins, and a real freedom from guilt in our consciences, we've simply to repent, turn from our sins and believe that you have died for us. And in regard to that old selfish independent will inside us that is making a mess of our Christian lives, we've simply to accept that we were crucified with you and to live as if that is really true by submitting to your Holy Spirit each time he speaks.

Lord Jesus, we thank you that it is such a joyous way. We thank you that it is such a way of freedom and liberty. Now I trust you Savior, by your Holy Spirit, to apply these to each brother and sister here tonight so that if there is anyone here walking in bondage in regard to their conscience or their wills, they will come into real freedom in you. Lord, we thank you that you have told us that we are to rejoice and again you said to us to rejoice. We thank you that we can walk in continual joy because all of this has been done already in you and we've simply to accept it into our own lives.

We commit ourselves to you for this purpose. Now Lord Jesus, in the coming week we trust you to find it easy to live freely in us and we commit ourselves to living for you, to put you first. We commit ourselves to turning from our own selves and all our self-concern -- wondering what people are thinking of us, wondering how we're doing, and we commit ourselves to looking to you and being concerned about you this week, not us. Savior, we trust you to give us a Christ centered life as we do this so that you will, in every way, be able to live your life again through us wherever we go these next days. Now we commit ourselves to you and trust you to fill us with your Spirit for this purpose.

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 ever more. Amen.

