

The Original Keswick Message

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Partly we're getting ahead of London that I thought we need to hold a little on Ephesians sermons and partly too because I found this was one of the books that had water damage and was on its way to the garbage. It's "These 60 Years" and you may have heard people talk at Keswick, and most of us know it's a town in Lake District. But for years in England it stood for probably what we could call a victorious life, or entire sanctification. That's really what it stood for in England over the years.

Now, as the years have gone by it has suffered the same thing as everybody suffers, a tendency to dilute the message, or to make it just one part of other messages, and I don't know exactly what Keswick really teaches or preaches now at all. You might be interested to know I remember starting SCM, there was an Intervarsity fellowship in every university in Trinity College, but when I went to Trinity College there was no SCM. SCM was the Student Christian Movement and SCM, believe it or not, was the liberal Christian operation. You know, it was the one that tended to be concerned with social things and that sort of thing. And I think I felt that the Intervarsity stuff seemed to me such dead evangelicalism that I thought, people needed to think about Jesus.

But anyway, the SCM originally started from Keswick and obviously ended up rather the opposite of what it turned out to be. So Keswick, down through the years, I'm sure has faced that kind of dilution. But I thought it was valuable for us just to listen to the story of the very beginnings of Keswick, partly because the men and women that experienced the truth of deliverance from self, talk about it at times in slightly different terms to the ones we use, and yet many of them are the same.

But it might – through God's Holy Spirit give you some light. I don't know, really, I do not know where each of you stand in it. I don't know what your testimony is directly. I have some idea of where you are but I don't know exactly what each of you would testify to in regard to entire sanctification or having your heart cleansed by faith through the Holy Spirit. And I think it's been very important because of our close relationship in life, and in home, and in work, it's been very important to maintain the dignity of enough space for you each to walk your own journey.

But there's no doubt that God has one dream for each of us and one ideal for which Jesus died, and that is that we each one would live above known sin, would live free from known sin and that if we ever do evince as I evinced yesterday, if we ever do evince unkind words, I'll put it that way, then that would be a major crisis to us and we would sue for forgiveness and get back into the grace of sanctification and of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Now I don't know how you all treat yourselves in that way but it seems to me that the whole message of Watchman Nee's book is that the normal Christian life is a life that is free from sin, free from known disobedience to God's commands and God's will. And that if we do sin we have an advocate with the Father, but the implication is that that is an emergency, that that is not the norm. And certainly it seems to me obvious that if we are living in continual and habitual sin, that is if we have repeated and continual bouts of selfishness, or of depression, or of resentment, then it seems that we are not in the fullness of grace that God has for us and we need to seek that with all our hearts.

So anyway, it's to that end that I want to just share with you some of the beginnings which will surprise you because of some of the names that will crop up. But this was on Saturday, August 29, 1874 so obviously Keswick has been going now about 120 years or so. "It as on Saturday, August 29, 1874 that the convention commenced and during the 10 days," – I'm sorry I'm reading the second chapter.

"On May 1, 1873, a small company of some 16 people met in a room at Curzon Chapel, Mayfair, London. And two who were present that day were afterwards to become widely known as the channels of God's blessing to many of their fellow Christians. The Reverend Evan Hopkins and the Reverend E. W. Moore were deeply touched in heart at that meeting and in the following year in the large convention at Oxford - Mr. Moore spoke of that occasion as follows. 'I was pressed to go and hear and address on this subject,'" I presume the subject is sanctification or the fullness of the Spirit.

"I had disliked some papers in The Christian," which must have been a magazine that was popular in those days, "I had disliked some papers in The Christian and laid it aside and refused to take it in. However, I went expecting to hear some new doctrine. The speaker said great blessing had come into his life through deep searchings of heart and unreserved surrender and trust in Jesus." So it's quite interesting, that's just the simple way it was put.

"The speaker said great blessing had come into his life through deep searchings of heart and unreserved surrender and trust in Jesus." That's pretty good description of the victorious life, you know, of the crucified life of being filled with the Spirit. "Great blessing had come into his life through deep searchings of heart and unreserved surrender and trust in Jesus. I said, 'Search me - O God,' he showed me things I had never seen before and I yielded them and myself to Him. I ventured a fortnight after with bated breath to say that it did seem as if the Lord Jesus, had come and taken the throne of my heart."

What of course impresses you is the gentle mild humility in which they speak and of course there's a tendency for us to get the terminology right and the experience wrong. And it's interesting – it's touching I think the way they put it, "I ventured a fortnight after with bated breath," you know, not to say, "I thank the Lord, that I am justified and sanctified," or, "I've been filled with the Holy Spirit," or, "I've spoken in tongues," but, "I ventured with bated breath to say that it did seem as if the Lord Jesus had come and taken the throne of my heart." "Mr. Hopkins too went home from that meeting to tell Mrs. Hopkins that he was like one looking out on a land wide and beautiful flowing with milk and honey, that it was to be possessed and that it was his."

Now let's pray for a minute. Dear Lord, give us grace to read this properly so that we may hear your word and live your life. Amen. "The first to be helped through him into this fuller experience of the Lord's saving power was Mrs. Hopkins herself. And so husband and wife went a way of fuller life together. It was the wonderful and abounding message 'God is able to make all grace abound unto you, that ye having always - all sufficiency in everything may abound unto every good work' 2 Corinthians 9:8. Which, came at this time to Mr. Hopkins' heart in a new way." It was that verse that came to his heart in a new way.

"And the grace of God as unfolded therein became the basis and the power of his after life and ministry. The writer still has in his possession a copy of Dr. Boardman's Higher Christian Life published in the year 1860 and given to his mother about that time. It was the year of Mr. Hopkins' conversion and a copy of this book came into his and soon after the light of God's salvation first broke upon him. He read it with great interest and he sometimes wondered in after days why he had

not then yielded completely to the Lord and trusted him fully. He spoke to a clergyman in whom he had confidence and he was warned against the teaching which was said to be quite exotic and dangerous.

So there were years of a more or less wilderness experience to be traversed before the fuller light came and actual entrance into the land of promise was found. We have already referred to May 1873. As a further indication of how wonderfully God was working at that time we may mention that it was in the following June that D. L. Moody landed in Liverpool to commence his ministry in this country, a ministry which resulted in the widespread and far reaching revival which can never be forgotten by those who lived through it.

The writer can recall a meeting in the drawing room above Mrs. Evan Hopkins' old home, Manor House, Hampton on Thames on the 1st of January 1874 at which both Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Moore were present and the address was given by the Reverend William Haslam. On January 20th and 21st of that year a two day's conference was held at Mildmay for the promotion of spiritual life. In an account of the meetings which appeared in the Pathway of Power for March we have a description of the condition of those who came to attend these meetings which is worth recalling.

Thoroughly grounded in the assurance of salvation, clearly apprehending their oneness with Christ in resurrection in the grace and purpose of God, many of the fruits of those blessed truths were manifested in their lives. And yet some among them have been led to inquire of late years whether there was not presented to them in scripture the standard of an available life of practical victory over all known sin and of maintained communion with their Lord which they had not grasped."

So it might be good, you've heard it a thousand times before, but it might be good for me to read that compound sentence again that these were not people who were backsliders, or people who were new to Jesus. These were ministers and ministers' wife and presumably missionaries thoroughly grounded in the assurance of salvation.

So they didn't own their salvation, "Grounded in the assurance of salvation clearly apprehending their oneness with Christ in resurrection," so even perceiving, you know, their union with Jesus.

"In the grace and purpose of God many of the fruits of these blessed fruits were manifested in their lives." So people would have thought of them as outstanding Christians, "And yet many among them have," this was being written in the present tense, "Have been led," "Many among them have been led to inquire of late years whether there was not presented to them in scripture the standard of an available life of practical victory over all known sin and to maintain communion with their Lord which they had not grasped. Again the account runs on possibilities of Christian life unconceived before - have dawned on many and there is a wide and deep feeling not only that there remaineth much land to be possessed but also that the Lord is able to bring us into it. And finally we are told what was distinctive in these meetings and what gave them their power was the urgent pressing in the most incisive forms of the responsibility and the privilege of the believer for definite and immediate full consecration to the Lord with the accompanying entire trust in the promises of the word."

And that's what came home to my heart, that it was possible now to be fully consecrated. That it was possible to bring an end to a continual failure, to the continual falling short, to the continual falling into depression, it was possible to bring an end to that. There could be a definite end and that's what he says you know, "What was distinctive in these meetings and what gave

them their power was the urgent pressing,” and these were Englishmen these weren’t Midwestern misters, “And what gave them their power was the urgent pressing in the most incisive forms of the responsibility and privilege of the believer for definite,” and that’s in italics, “For definite and immediate full consecration to the Lord with the accompanying entire trust in the promises of the word.”

And it is undoubtedly God’s will that we would go in possess the promised land. They tell later, and I mind as well tell it to you, he tells towards the end of this chapter of a Frenchman, Thomas Manon who became a great leader in the movement at this time and he apparently spoke, continued to speak with a French accent but as he says he had the clearness of mind and the gift of auditory that is characteristic of his nation. Then he tells of course, of one illustration that Thomas Manon often used and I think it’s appropriate to mention at this time when I mention definite and immediate full consecration, his illustrations were always simple.

They had a touch of restrained humor in them and they were often most incisive. “Seeking done day to warn people against the danger of listening to teaching without acting upon it, he told them of an incident in connection with the first exhibition in Paris. A lecture on aeronautics was delivered in the hall in the exhibition grounds and at the close the lecturer said that his hearers could now accompany him in an ascent in a captive balloon but the audience said, ‘Let us have another lecture.’” And I think that one has to be careful that one does not continue to say, “Tell me it again,” you know, “Describe it to me again.”

There comes a time when you have to get in the balloon or our saying, you know, is you ‘fish or cut bait’. “But in the most incisive forms the responsibility and privilege of the believer for definite and immediate full consecration to the Lord with the accompanying entire trust in the powers of the word.” And each of us know what happened to the Israelites, when they paused – outside the promise land, Caleb and the other man – Joshua came back with the grapes of Eschol and said, “The land is filled with milk and honey but there are giants,” so the people said, “No, we cannot possess it,” so they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness.

[And it’s important it seems to me that we do not fall into that passivity, you know, of looking continually into the land, to describing it - in all its wonderful colors - even sharing all the great books with all the world about this and ourselves failing to enter in and possess it by what he says definite and immediate full consecration to the Lord. “Following this, similar meetings were held towards the end of February at the Hanover Square Rooms, London; Mr. Hopkins speaking on Romans 6:13 on pardon and acceptance but in the degree of pardon and acceptance, you see of forgiveness. A Holy Presence, if while we claim to belong to – Henry Varley - testified that whilst the last year of his utter sinfulness apart Christ from all that defiles.”

And of course it’s the all sin spoil – that we are still our own, only part of us is given to him. Thomas Monroe, you know, is the one that wrote, “Oh the bitter shame and sorrow,” - the hymn ‘Oh the Bitter Shame and Sorrow’ that runs, you know, ‘All of self and none of Thee’. And then the last verse is, “None of self, and all of Thee.” You know, and of course, often we think, “Well some of self and some of thee,” but it’s not so. When it’s some of self it’s really all of self and none of thee but we keep pretending, you know.

So that’s the point here, “It was thus manifest in the early days of the movement that on the one hand salvation from sin was not sinlessness,” and we often said that that surely you make mistakes, certainly you’re overcome by certain infirmities or sickness, certainly we will do things that our

emotions will overwhelm us, and so on. It's not simply salvation - it's not for sinlessness, and on the other hand - to be really saved from sin does mean a holy life, because it is a life of constant fellowship with the Holy One and a life of growing likeness to Him. The river of blessing was flowing with increasing fullness but not only in London but in many large centers meetings were being held in which the fullness of salvation was widely proclaimed and in Dublin, Manchester, Bristol, Nottingham, Leicester, Paris, and other cities the servants of God gathered together desiring to share in the fullness of life that was being spoken of.

A small but very interesting conference took place at Chamonix in the summer of 1873. Evan Hopkins, E. W. Moore and R. Pearsall Smith were there and 10 days were spent in continued waiting upon God. At the time it was anticipated that much would result from these quiet hours and in after years it was felt that the great gathering following soon at Oxford and at Brighton and eventually Keswick itself had their beginnings mentioned in connection with the meetings held at the time in Hannover Square rooms. At his own hospitable home, Langley Park, Norfolk in June 1874, he and Lady Beecham entertained a large number of guests including the leaders of the new movement. The circumstances were remarkable as the kind host had been informed shortly before by his doctor that he would probably not live more than six months and he actually passed away during the autumn.

This week proved to be one of deep waiting upon God the conviction came that the time was right for a more public effort and this purpose was carried out during the autumn at Oxford and that again led onto the beginning of Keswick. But before we reach the time when the movement came fully into prominence, one other most important source must be referred to. This was the remarkable conference held at Broadlands in Hampshire. The home of Mr. Temple afterwards Lord Mount Temple went about how a hundred persons gathered for six days in the latter half of July 1874.

Those who came together there were not by any means all of the same mind and outlook. If we mention the names of Canon Wilberforce, George McDonald, Andrew Jukes, John Postberg, Theodore Manon, and Edward Clifford 22:28, also Ms. March, Madam Antoinette Sterling and Mrs. Amanda Smith as being present it will be seen that this was a gathering," Amanda Smith was an ex-slave you know, "That this was a gathering somewhat different in composition than those already referred to and yet a wonderful unity of purpose was realized.

The spiritual atmosphere during these days was of a very intense character. All hearts were drawn into a closer relation with God and a fellowship with one another was experienced such as many who were present had never known before." One who came from outside to join in the fellowship was Thomas Manon, you know and then there's another interesting one that I thought I'd read you just because you know of it. Oh someone says, "In summing up the results of the meetings at Broadlands, the pathway of power for August 1874 contained the following, 'No description could convey the wonderful sense of the presence and power of God which attended these six days of waiting upon the Lord. Something of what it is to be filled with the Spirit was realized and many ministers and others present acknowledged that they had stepped out and found firm footing on great passages of scripture which had always before seemed beautiful and possibilities for them. A new range of the possibilities of faith opened up to them with the confidence that they should hence forth not merely admire the way of holiness but by faith walk therein.'"

"Then R. Pearsall Smith," I thought this would interest you, "Was the leader of the meetings and he and his greatly gifted wife author of *The Christian Secretive Happy Life* took a large part in the speaking as their united influence was so central in the early years that we have been describing, this may be the place to tell something of their history. It was Mrs. Pearsall Smith who first

entered into the fullness of the life of Christ and this after she had known the Lord as her Savior for some years. She had a very hungry heart as she herself expressed it to be a child of God and yet unable to act like one was a very pitiful condition.

Going one day to a meeting she listened to the testimony of a woman who was a factory hand and she heard her tell how she had been occupied with herself until she got such a sight of her Savior as brought her down in deep humility before him. This reached Mrs. Smith and in returning home she entered into her diary that night, 'I find there are some Christians who say that by receiving Christ by faith for our sanctification just as we received him by faith for our justification all that I long for is accomplished. I begin to see that the Lord is worthy of my boundless confidence.' This was the commencement of a new condition in her life which became one of remarkable blessing and power.

Then for a time Mr. Pearsall Smith held back but at least he saw in Romans 6:6 the way of deliverance and stepping out in faith upon the word of God he too found the way of freedom from sins which had marred his past experience." And of course eventually later on they finally describe the experience as an experience of scriptural holiness, you know, and that they were called to spread that and of course those were Wesley's own words 200 years before, "The methods are raised up to spread scriptural holiness throughout the length and breadth of the land."

And it's obvious to anyone who reads the newspapers that our land, you know, and most lands now today except maybe ironically enough some of the backwards lands, but most of the western lands are shot through with a so-called Christian religion that seems to be filled with sin and failure. And of course the need is obvious and plain, you know. But really the need is first our own to walk in this ourselves and that requires honesty ourselves with Jesus and honesty about each other and a holding onto God for each other wherever we see inconsistencies because the only way that Jesus' sacrifice will be fulfilled is if we each one live a life of victory over sin, you know. And once again you know that we'll read those verses about his birth where the promise is you shall bear a son and his name will be called Jesus which is Josiah in Hebrew and means 'salvation' for he will save his people from their sins.

Probably the thing that comes home to all of us as we face the dreadful picture of our president's behavior is we feel that same lying and mendacity and lack of trust runs through our whole society and is the cause of the breakdown of the marriages, and the home, and the family life, and all that kind of thing. But really, those big national sins each one in the nation has to repent of these. We have to be responsible for our lives though and I think you can see that when Jesus fills all-in-all then here's nothing, there's no place left for sin. And if you're in any doubt about the heart of it, it seems to me the heart of it is that the intractable self, the carnal self that we find we cannot improve or we cannot change, that self has been crucified in Christ and as soon as we see that and agree with that the victory of Christ becomes real in us and that's why they say, you receive sanctification by faith and not simply by willpower.

Willpower and discipline are needed after the heart is cleansed but the actual cleansing of the heart, the actual destruction of the old self can take place only by us seeing and accepting that that has actually been done in Christ. In other words, by faith the self is put to death and of course as long as we avoid that truth and that fact, that it's something Christ has done and something the Holy Spirit will immediately make real in us if we see it, and accept it, and are willing for it the moment we see that that moment the fullness of the Holy Spirit becomes real in us. Until then we'll just keep tampering and tinkering with the old self, and praying for

forgiveness, and trying again. But the heart of the experience of sanctification is that it is experienced by faith. By faith that you have actually been crucified with Christ and that you no longer exist and this life is his alone and you are willing for that and accept it.

Let us pray.