

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we would offer everything to you and we would offer this next half hour to you and trust you to use it in our minds and in our spirits in a way that will please your Father and will fulfill the purpose for which you have come to earth. We offer all that we are and all that we have to you for your glory knowing that you receive it with gratitude, with love, and with tenderness and will use it all as we offer it out of a pure heart. Amen.

I know that we've often talked about this before, but have you ever really examined how much of your life and how much of my life is governed by living up to standards? First when we were little our dad and mum said, "You're a good boy," or, "You're a good girl," according to whether we pleased them or not. And we got used to living up to their standards of what was a good boy and a good girl. And they taught us when we appeared to be eating right and when we appeared to be eating wrong that it was very good to eat with one end of the spoon and very bad to eat with the other end.

And right from the very beginning of our lives, we've been encouraged to live up to standards. And our parents, as we grew up, began to have other standards such as the kind of education we should get, and the kind of jobs we should get. And then later on, all the mums, the kind of people we should marry. And right through our relationship with our parents, much of it was dominated by our attempt to live up to their standards. And many of us who get married have real trouble in our marriages, I think, because we do not really leave father and mother and cleave unto our wives or our husbands. We in fact, keep trying to live up to some of the standards that our parents inculcated in us. And so we live up to the standard of our parents.

And then you know that we come into contact with educators, and we begin to be preoccupied with pleasing them. And we come into contact with a professor that we admire a lot, and it isn't long before we begin to realize we're running our intellectual lives in order to please him. Or, we want to get a certain grade in school, and much of our eight hour a day work life is concerned with living up to that standard that we've received there. And many of us who move into higher education then, start trying to live up to other standards of our fellow faculty members. And many of us fall into the whole trap of 'publishing or perishing'. And we're constantly living up to standards.

Many of us are dominated by the standards of our peers. You know that, that at school it was very difficult to run your life really independently along the lines of which you thought was right. You know that we again and again wanted to be swingers, or to be cool, or to avoid being squares, or to be thought popular, or to be thought a jock, or to be thought somebody who could do this or could do that. And more and more our lives became dominated by the standards of our peers.

And then there are all kinds of religious standards. Some of us begin to get to know God and then we fall into the trap of trying to live up to religious standards. And we decide we're religious if we speak in tongues; or we decide we're not very spiritual if we don't speak in tongues; or we decide we're religious if this spiritual leader thinks we're religious. And we begin to be dominated by living up to the standards of other so called 'spiritual people'. And you get that whole ridiculous invention of Satan, 'spiritual giants' and 'spiritual dwarfs', when all the time

there is only one 'spiritual giant', and all the rest of us are dwarfs. And really, we only partake of any giant because we're in him.

But you can see brothers and sisters that it is incredible how much of our life we live dominated by standards and living up to standards. And I agree with you that some of it is good. Some of it is very good. It is right to have certain standards. But you see that it becomes wrong when that becomes a way of life; when we begin to justify our very existence by the fact that we meet standards of all kinds of people. And you see that that's what God was concerned about. That's why many of us have inhibitions, and guilt complexes, and constant neurosis, because God said, "By the works of the law, by living up to standards, no man will ever be justified." And that's where this business of living up to standards becomes something satanic you see.

Standards are good in themselves. But when they become the very 'raison d'être', the 'reason for our being', when they become the very purpose of our lives, when they become the dominating and motivating force of everything we do loved ones, that is ungodly. It is anti-god, because God said, "Look, by living up to standards no man will be justified." And that's why you see many of us, though we're constantly living up to certain standards, still we feel guilt and we feel inhibitions. And the reason is that "by living up to standards no man will ever be justified." And many of us lose a sense of rightness with God, because we fall back into the trap of living by standards. And God said it is impossible you'll never do it.

And you remember that what he did say in fact was that, "You don't please me by living up to standards. You please me by trusting me." And you see that's the real controversy that God has with us. His real controversy with us is not that we're not good enough, because he knows you can be good independent of him. And so often living up to standards is just another subtle, clever, sophisticated way of living independent of God. And God knows that. That's why he says, "Living up to standards will never justify you in my sight, because it can just be another way of doing something without me. The controversy that I have with you is not that you're living up to standards, but that you don't trust me. The Atlantic Ocean has to trust me; Mars has to trust me; The Mississippi has to trust me; the Milky Way has to trust me. All of them have to trust me. They'd fall apart if they didn't trust me. But you refuse to trust me." And that's the controversy that God has with us, you see.

And what we have been looking at the past few Sundays is a man who lived in the year 2,000 BC, who was told by God, even though the man was 100 years of age and his wife Sarah was 90, he was told by God, "You're going to have a child." And this man believed God and his belief, or his trust was reckoned to him as righteousness. And that's the same with us. God says, "Listen, by living up to all your standards you'll never please me and you'll never please all the rest of the people anyways because they're changing their opinions all the time. But if you trust that my son's death makes you right with me, you're right with me. That's it. That's all you have to do. Just trust that my Son's death, however little of it you understand, or however much of it you understand, just trust that my Son's death has made you right with me, and you're right with me. That's it! Just trust me, and start living as people who are right with me." And that's what God says.

And many of us make the mistake in our own lives that we think that that's a past act of the will instead of a present attitude. You see brothers and sisters, many of us keep thinking that's a past act of the will, it's not a present attitude. But do you see that if it's the trust that makes us right with God, it's something that has to be continuous day-by-day. In other words it's not a moment of coming up at a Graham Crusade or some other Crusade and exercising an act of the will and

saying, "I trust, God, that your Son's death has made me right with you. I trust that. Now that's it settled, now I'll get on and live my own life." It isn't that.

Those who are justified in God's sight live by this trust in faith day-by-day, and that is how they continue to sense their rightness with God. Now you can see that brothers and sisters if you want to tie it down to one verse in Romans 1:17. God says plainly there that trust is a continuous attitude that we have towards the Father. It's not a onetime act of will. Romans 1:17, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" Or, the King James Version reads, "The just shall live by faith."

Now it's living by trust in God day-by-day that enables him to give us a constant sense of our rightness with him. And what we have been doing these past few Sundays is to talk a little about what it means to live by faith, and what is involved in living by trust in God as our Father. You remember one of the things we saw last Sunday from Abraham's experience was that if you're going to live by faith you must reject human hope and you must receive divine hope. You must reject human hope and live by divine hope.

Now you can see that in the verse that we will continue to study this morning, but that we began last day, Romans 4:18. God says of Abraham, over this business of the child being born to Sarah at the age of 90, "In hope he believed against hope." And if you're going to live by trusting your Creator in your own life, you have to reject human hope and you have to receive divine hope. And you remember we said that human hope is often a vague wishful thinking that something may happen. And it's usually based on the past record of our human abilities and experiences.

That is, if we've done it in the past, we think, "Well, I hope I may be able to do it this time. I broke the record last time well I may be able to do it this time." But human hope is that kind of vague wishful thinking on the basis of our own human abilities and our past record. Now, if you're going to live by faith in God you have to reject that completely. You have to reject that kind of human hope. Divine hope is a sure and certain expectation that God is going to do something on the basis of his past record and men's experiences of him. Now that's a different thing entirely, you see; they are two different worlds. And it's not just a matter brother and sisters, of human hope being a help to divine hope, human hope is detrimental to divine hope. You see, you can't exercise both.

In other words, you can't read all the medical journals carefully to find out how many women recover from an operation for breast cancer, and then on the basis of the statistics persuade yourself that you don't have so much to believe God for in regard to your mother. You see, you can't read the statistics in order to sort of bolster up your divine hope by a little bit of human hope. You read the statistics and people say to you - I remember it in my own situation when my mum had breast cancer. And I remember the situation where dear ones would say, "Well, you know, most people recover in some way and maybe they recover completely. And then I thought at the time that that would help my faith."

Loved ones, that is detrimental to faith. Human hope is not something that helps divine hope. It is detrimental to divine hope. And what we saw last day was this business of getting into grad school, you don't look up all the statistics, check up on your own grades and then say to yourself, "Well, humanly speaking I probably have a fair chance, so I'm not asking God to do too much to get me into grad school." And you sort of eek out, you have the divine hope with human hope.

Loved ones, it's wrong. We believe in hope against hope. You reject human hope and you believe completely in divine hope. And you see the reason is, God will not share his glory with anyone, you see. God won't share his glory with anyone. And he certainly won't share it with your sizing up the past statistics, and your own human abilities, and your own past record. Then if he ever does something in your life you'll never be sure if it was him or not. You'll say, "Yeah, well God did a fair bit there, but of course I had some human hope that it would work out anyway."

It's a little bit like old Peter being told by Jesus to get out of the boat onto the water and old Peter puts a water ski on one foot and gets out. It just is detrimental. It steals glory from God. God will not work in that kind of situation. He won't work unless we reject human hope, unless we believe 'against' hope and believe 'in' hope in him. It's the same thing as old Joshua running around with a magnifying glass checking the cracks in the wall before he told the people to walk around Jericho seven times. It's the human hope and the feeling, "Well, I'm not asking God to do too much."

Loved ones, God is a big and a great and a magnificent God. Our God is bigger than any human hope we could produce, and we can afford to believe against human hope. Brothers and sisters, do you know, I think many of us prevent God doing mighty things in our lives, because we are trying to eek it out with human hope? We're trying to eek out the divine hope with human hope. And do you see that we can't do it? You believe in hope against hope.

Now maybe we should deal just a little today with the other fact that you get in 4:18 and in that first clause, "In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, 'So shall your descendants be.'" Now, if you're living by trust in God, it means that you go beyond hope. That's what Abraham did. Divine hope is a certain and sure expectation that God is going to do this thing in your life on the basis of his past record and men's past experiences of him. But faith is believing that God has already 'done' the thing. And believing is a deeper thing than hope. And that's why it says you see, that Abraham didn't just hope and hope against hope but he 'believed' in hope against hope. And if we're going to walk trusting God we don't only hope that the thing will happen, we don't only expect that it's going to happen in the future, but we believe that it has already happened. And that's what walking in trust in God means. You believe that the thing has already happened.

Now maybe it's good to just see that really from the verse itself in Romans 4:18. You see how it reads, "In hope," Abraham, "Believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, 'So shall your descendants be.'" Now, do you see the clause, "That he shall become the father of many nations."? Now you can see that that is really a purpose clause, if you've suffered under general analysis or you've suffered Latin, or suffered Greek. "That he should become the father of many nations," that is a purpose clause.

Now some people have translated that as a purpose clause, as it is there in the RSV. Then it would mean you see, Abraham believed at this moment and hoped against hope that many centuries hence he would become the father of many nations. Now the Greek doesn't read that way and you can check it and there is that Greek New Testament Interlinear in the Oak Street Offices if you haven't one. The Greek reads, "eis to genesthai" and that form of the Greek is the expression of a result and the correct translation -- and I'll show you from the Old Testament -- the correct translation is that "In hope Abraham believed against hope so that he became the father of many nations" at that moment. So that he was the father of many nations at that moment. In other words, the moment he believed

it that moment it was true. It was a historical fact the moment he believed it.

Now you can see that this is in line with the actual Old Testament references. Look at Romans 4:17 which refers to the Old Testament event itself. Romans 4:17, "As it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations.'" In other words, God said to Abraham, "I have made you the father of many nations. That's it. I've done it now. You may not have a lot of little children running around your home but I have already made you the father of many nations. At this moment you're the father of many nations. The symptoms have to occur and appear but at this moment you are already the father of many nations."

Now loved ones, let's look back to the Old Testament because it is a hard concept for some of us to get hold of. Look at Genesis 17:5. Maybe we should look at Genesis 15:5 first and take it chronologically. Genesis 15:5, and God brought Abraham outside, "And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'" Now that was the promise. Then do you see Abraham's response in Verse 6, "And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness." And the moment Abraham believed it that moment it became historical fact.

Now you can see that if you look over at Genesis 17:5, and don't forget Abraham still hadn't as son, "No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham," and God even changed the name to make 'the father of many nations', "For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." Now do you see that living by faith is believing that God has already done the thing?

Now loved ones, do you see we have such a weak idea of faith? Do you know with our idea of faith we wouldn't be seen dead near that Red Sea. We wouldn't go near the walls of Jericho, we'd be so afraid we'd be let down by our God. No, but these Israelites in the Old Testament times, they went completely into the Red Sea, they walked around the walls of Jericho because they knew it had already happened in God. It was already true in Christ. And loved ones, walking by faith in God and walking trusting God does not simply mean, "Oh yeah, I believe it's going to happen. Yeah, I believe it's going to happen but I still have faith, you know." It's not that but, "I know it has already happened. I know God has already done it. It is already historical fact."

Now do you see why this is so? The reason these things are not so is because you and I lived independent of God, and therefore God withdrew from us his power and his life. But the moment Jesus died for us, God made all that power and life available again, and so we were replaced in the Garden of Eden with all the power and ability of God that was available before the fall of man. And so in actual fact, the whole world has already been reconciled to God. That's what the Bible says, "God has already reconciled the whole world unto himself."

Now I don't know that I can find the verse but maybe you would look at I think its 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 where it says plainly that already the whole world has been reconciled unto God. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, " God was "in Christ", not 'will be' but was in Christ "reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." This means that already God has nothing against the whole world. Already all his ability and all his grace is available for the whole world. Already all sickness and pain has been born by Jesus, already all that has been cleared away.

Now do you see that only when we believe it does it become historical fact? But the moment we

believe it, it is historical fact. Even though we still have no son we're already the father of many nations. The thing has already been made real in us because there is a realm in Christ where all this has already taken place. Your father is already whole and well in Jesus. That's a fact. Already there's no reason except Satan's lie that he still believes, there's no reason why he shouldn't be actually up out of his bed. Already his sickness has been healed in Jesus. That's what Isaiah 53 says in the Hebrew, "Surely he has borne our sickness and carried our pains." They've already been carried, they've already been borne and the moment we believe it, it becomes historical fact in our lives.

Loved ones, even though some of the symptoms may still be there it's already historical fact. And you can see this if you look at some of the Old Testament illustrations. Let's look at Joshua 6:16, "And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, 'Shout; for the Lord will give you the city.'" No, it's the past tense, "Shout; for the Lord has given you the city." Now dear ones, those poor souls would not have walked up to the walls of Jericho and shouted out madly like that unless they were already sure that the city had been given to them. After all think how corny you'd feel if you were left there shouting and the old wall is still standing. But those brothers and sisters knew that the walls had already fallen down. The symptoms of the walls were there but they were already down in Christ at the right hand of the Father.

Now, do you see that we live in a realm where all these things have already taken place and they are actualized and materialized the moment you believe them? Now, it's up to God to remove what symptoms he wants. It's up to him if he wants to remove the solidity of those walls and leave the appearance of them still standing. It's up to him to remove which symptoms when. It's up to him when to remove the drip from your nose, and when to remove the sense of oppression that the cold has on your spirit. It's up to him to decide when he's going to remove the different symptoms but it is our place to believe that the thing has already happened. That's what faith is.

Loved ones, faith is not believing that God will do it. That's hope and hope is good but if we have only hope in Christ God says, "We are of all men most to be pitied." But faith is believing that the thing has already taken place. Dear ones, that's the only way you could walk into that old Red Sea, isn't it? You couldn't dream of walking into the Red Sea if you were just saying, "Yeah, I believe it's going to move back. I believe... blub, blub, blub [sound of bubbles from your mouth], I believe it's going to move back." No, no! You walk in there believing that God has already moved that sea back and it's up to him to remove the symptoms of that sea when he pleases. But that is the Father's will for us in faith.

Now dear ones, it keeps going through you see if you look at Joshua 8:1 you get the same situation; you remember when they were attacking the city of Ai. Joshua 8:1, "And the Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not fear or be dismayed; take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai; see, I will give into your hand the king of Ai?' No, "See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land." And that's the only thing that enables you to walk firmly forward in faith, knowing that the thing has already happened. And it's so – Old Jonah is sitting in the old whale, right there are all the symptoms all around him. There's a big whale's stomach all around him. He couldn't avoid it, he could see the tonsils. That was a whale, he was inside it. And yet old Jonah offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving in the whale, thanking God that he had delivered him from the whale's stomach. Now that's what faith is. It's thanking God that the thing has already happened even while the symptoms are round about you.

Now loved ones, do you see it gets over all this problem that many of us have with sicknesses? Often we're walking by sight; we're not walking by faith at all. We have a cold and we say, "Lord, will you deliver me from this cold? Okay, the symptoms are still there, you haven't delivered me. Alright, Lord will you deliver me from this cold? Okay, I'm still not." Do you see? And we're walking by sight we're walking by the symptoms. We're looking in on the symptoms each time and each time God delivers us and then we'll look at the symptoms, we cease to walk in faith, we walk by sight and Satan gets back in and inflicts the cold upon us. Now walking by faith is believing that God has already done the thing because we've asked him and "we know that if he hears us in anything we ask then we have confidence he will answer" [1 John 5:14-15] and we walk on knowing that that thing has already happened.

Loved ones, do you see that it's really very easy to see that the service station [reference to a new business started] is already the success that God wants it to be. It's very easy for us to see that there are already 10,000 of us out in the world for Jesus. It's very easy for us to see that The Stable [house where several young people lived] has already been bought. It's very easy for you to see that your difficulties have already been solved. It's very easy for us to see that our relatives are already healed, because that's what faith is. Believing that in Christ the thing is already taken place. All things are already reconciled unto Christ.

Loved ones, do you see it's like Old Plato said really, "There is a perfect heavenly world where there are perfect forms of everything" and there is a place in Jesus at the right hand of the Father where all these things have been resolved. It says that Jesus died to save us from the curse of the law. Now the curse of the law includes every disease that has ever come upon people. And that means that Jesus has already saved us from all those sicknesses. There is a realm in Christ where all these things are perfect.

Now, how do you do it at home? Well, you stop this business of praying, "Lord, will you release the tensions in our home? Will you stop my father getting angry and will you stop my mother gossiping? Lord, will you stop this? I believe you can stop it." No, you have to change that and say, "I hope you can stop it," because that's a certain expectation that it will happen and we need to start saying, "Father, I thank you that in Jesus you have already destroyed all these tensions. Already you have dealt with Satan in my father or my mother. Already you have released them from these pressures and I thank you that you have." And then you go to the home knowing that it's already happened.

Brothers and sisters, those of us who are in faculties, that's what we do with these old faculty tensions. You don't go saying, "Lord, I believe you can do it. I believe you're going to do it." No, that's hope. "I hope you can do it. I expect you to do it. But now Father, I thank you that you have done it. I thank you that in Jesus all these things are destroyed and I'm going to walk in you Lord Jesus, here in the faculty room and I'm going to trust you now to clear away the symptoms when it pleases you."

But, loved ones, that's the only part that God needs to do, clear away the symptoms. Once you ask in faith God has already done it and that's the way he wants us to walk. But you can see that walking, trusting God is believing that the thing has already taken place. It's already done. It's already something that we thank God for and that's part of what it means walking by faith.

So I'd ask you, "Okay, are you walking that way? Are you living by faith in God or are you still seeing all these mountains as something that God will have to remove?" Well, he removed them 2,000

years ago and he wants you to believe his word rather than the outward symptoms. So will you think about it and we'll really try to talk a wee bit more about it next Sunday because I know it's a new idea because we're all used to this believing that the thing will happen in the future. So we'll talk more about it but will you think about it brothers and sisters and will you begin to pray about it that God might reveal to you how to walk into the Red Sea with absolute confidence that the sea has already moved back, how to walk around the walls of Jericho and shout, not in order to knock the walls down, but because the walls have already fallen down in Christ? And you can see that Satan has stolen a lot of victories from us all because we haven't been exercising faith at all, we've been exercising hope.

But God wants us to walk in faith just as Abraham did; he believed that he was the father of many nations. The moment he believed it, it took place. Is it the power of positive thinking? No, it's not, not at all. The power of positive thinking accepts that this is the real situation and maybe we can influence it by thinking hard. But faith believes that this isn't the real situation that these things that we see around us and these tensions that are in front of us are unreal and that in Christ these have all been released, and transformed, and changed, and the real world is the unseen world in Jesus at the Father's right hand and that is where we live and that is what we thank God for.

So I pray that Jesus and the Holy Spirit will give you grace to see those things because I remember so often listening to this kind of message and thinking it was crazy. And it does, it's a strange kind of divine logic, but really when the Holy Spirit reveals it to you it just changes our lives, dear ones. It means we walk with assurance and confidence instead of with this uncertainty that dogs so many of our steps. Well, that's part of what's involved in living by faith and that's part of the way we have a continual sense of rightness with God. I pray that God will give you grace to do it. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we're tired of living in this old compromised diluted version of faith that it's believing that something is going to happen in the future. Father, we are not any longer going to make you a liar and we are not any longer going to be deceived by Satan's outward façade. We are no longer going to try to walk by sight and walk by faith at the same time. Father, we accept the world as we see it now as a fallen world and that most of the appearance of it indicates that you are not in charge. But Father, we reject that. We believe that you are in charge. We believe that you have overcome the world in Christ and that there is a realm in your immediate presence where all things are right, where there is no sickness, where there is no controversy, where there is no strain, and no argument, and no jealousy, and no anger, and where there is no war. And Father, we thank you that our job is to believe this real world down into the middle of this unreal world.

Father, we undertake to do that now. We undertake to begin to walk by real faith trusting you that you have already done these things, that they are already actual, they are already historical facts and it is only your responsibility now to remove the symptoms or the appearance of things when you please. Until then our Father, we will continue to thank you that the thing has been changed, the position has been rectified, the sickness has been healed, the problem has been solved because it is so in Christ at your right hand where we also dwell.

So Father, we thank you that we can walk in this kind of backward faith looking backwards to 1900 years ago when you destroyed the world and you reconciled all things unto yourself. We thank you for this in Jesus' name. Amen

