

## Death of Life in the Mind

Romans 5:17a

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Could you imagine going into an automobile showroom with your battered old VW (Volkswagen) and trading it in, in that great moment when you graduate or something happens like that? You trade it in on a shiny bright new Thunderbird and the salesman starts to explain to you the kind of oil and the kind of gas you should use in this kind of a high powered engine. You stop him and say, "No, no. I have always run my VW on regular, low octane gas. I only use four spark plugs. I know the kind of oil. I am just going to run it the way I always ran my VW." And the salesman can't do anything with you.

You go out and run the Thunderbird that way and you come back in a month's time, if you're lucky. The thing is pinging on the hills, it won't start in the winter and it's just an absolute mess. And he says to you, "Well, that's to be expected. That whole system is different from your old VW system and it only uses a certain kind of gas and a certain kind of oil. You have to put eight spark plugs in whether you like it or not because it has eight cylinders and it won't work right unless you use the right power and the right fuel. You're going to destroy the whole system if you use the wrong power in it." And that's what we've been saying week after week. That's what happened at the beginning of the world. Our personality was made to run on a certain power and a certain life that the Creator made at the beginning. If it doesn't run on that power or that life, the whole system begins to break down and deteriorate.

You remember the power is very plainly stated there in Genesis 2:9. The power was made available out of the ground. Genesis 2:9, "And out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." By the tree of life God made available to us this supernatural, uncreated, dynamic life that is really like premium gas to a high-powered engine.

God said plainly what the salesman said to us, Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." In other words, if you decided what is good for this engine and what is bad for it on your own, (according to your own knowledge of good and evil), you'll find that the whole system will break down. And that in fact is what Adam did, you remember.

He just decided to do it his own way. He decided that he would run his personality with the ordinary, natural, psychological and physical life that he had received. He would do without this supernatural uncreated life. And the same thing happened. The whole system began to deteriorate. It was gradual at first. You can see that in Genesis 6:3. The deterioration was gradual. All of us die at age 70, 80 maybe 90 at the most. That's about as old as we get. Now obviously the deterioration was gradual in the early days of the world.

Genesis 6:3: "Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." So obviously even though the life was no longer present and flowing through the body, yet still the bodies lasted longer than they do today. So the deterioration has increased as the years have passed and the centuries have gone. You can see it there in Genesis 4:22.

The deterioration in the mind was only gradual, you only have to look at the pyramids in Egypt or the Aztec or Inca civilizations or Chinese civilizations to realize that at an early time in life's history, men were able to do much greater things. They had minds that were much more alert and sharp.

Genesis 4:22- "Zillah bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron." Obviously they were able to do remarkable things in the early days. So though the deterioration was gradual, yet it was definite and you ended up in the situation described in Romans 5:12. That determination in Adam to do it his way rather than God's way resulted in this kind of atmosphere in the world.

Romans 5:12: "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned." All of us lacked this power of the uncreated life of the Holy Spirit, and so death spread to all of us. That's what God says again in Romans 5:14: "Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come."

So, that kind of death -- in our bodies, our minds, our emotions, and our spirits -- reigned throughout the world. That's the kind of situation into which we have arrived. And you know that it was all because of God's word. It was really all because of God's word. God said in Genesis 2:17 -- maybe you should look at it and then we'll talk about it a little. It was God's word really that brought us into this situation.

Genesis 2:17 -- "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." God said that. God said, "If you don't receive the life of my Holy Spirit into you, you're going to die." And God was bound by his own word you see. He had to keep it. You can see how he kept it in Genesis 3:24.

Genesis 3:24 -- "He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life." So God said, "You need this life -- you really do. You can't live without this uncreated supernatural dynamic life and if you determine to live without it, I have to withdraw it from you. You'll no longer have access to it." And that's what God did. We live in a world that does not really have access to that Holy Spirit.

You know that anybody in North or South Vietnam will agree with you, death reigns. Death certainly reigns today in their world. And the little child you remember that had all the burns from napong, (you remember it was the South Vietnamese I think that dropped the bomb on the village) and that little one, even though the pain has gone now after a month, will certainly say, "Yes, death reigns. Death reigns in our world." And you go to India or Africa, any of the underdeveloped countries, and you'll find people will say, "Yes, because of the floods and the droughts, death certainly reigns in our country."

But even we brothers and sisters, even we in our nation will say that the fear of death reigns. The fear of death reigns even among us, the fear of terrorism. The fear of death reigns in other countries with the fear of the secret police. The alienation of death reigns. Alienation of death certainly reigns in our society. Fifty percent of our marriages end up in divorce. Certainly our lives are filled with that sense of alienation from one another. We find it even in the loneliness

of death. The loneliness of death as far as singles living in apartments in the large cities. That's what's killing many of us. They live in apartments in the great metropolises that we have in the nation. And death reigns in that we're lonely, we're cut off from each other, we're alienated.

Most of us would agree, "Yes, death reigns, it certainly reigns." Do you see brothers and sisters; it reigns because of God's word. God said, "If you do not receive the life of my Holy Spirit, death will reign in your land and in your life." And that's the way it has to be. The only way God could ever remove the flaming sword that guards the way to the Holy Spirit and make the Holy Spirit available to us is if somebody else died the death for us. And that's what enabled God to take away the flaming sword from the Holy Spirit.

That's what happened. You see it in Romans 3:25-26. It was this man Jesus who really stepped forward and paid this death penalty to God's justice so that God could keep his word and could punish our rebellion in an ordinary man and yet could replace the tree of life for us.

It was Christ Jesus -- Romans 3:25 -- "whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness." And his righteousness was in question if he simply removed the flaming sword without anything happening. Then we would have said, "Did you really mean that you are a righteous God at all?" This was to show God's righteousness because, in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins. It was to prove at the present time that he Himself is righteous, in spite of the fact that he let the Holy Spirit again come among us and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

Now dear ones, it's really the situation that results now among us that I'd like to talk about this morning. The Holy Spirit is really alive among us, today. Adam, the first progenitor of the race, passed death on to you and me. He passed an impaired mind on to us, unbalanced emotions on to us, and a weakened body. He passed on to us a world that was infested with evil spirits, that was pro-self and anti-God and that lacked the Holy Spirit. He brought death to us. He passed death on to us.

The second progenitor of the race, Jesus, started all over again. He is starting a new race and he is passing life on to us. This life makes a vital difference to every part of your personality and mine. I'd like to talk a little bit about the difference it makes. You know one of the problems that we have is our impaired minds. You have a mind that fails you at times, doesn't it? It makes mistakes. It makes wrong judgments. At times the old memory falters.

You have a mind that wanders away in wandering thoughts that at times you can't control. It even keeps you awake at night when you want to get to sleep. The mind is churning over and over. Now that impaired mind is one of the parts of death that our forefathers passed on to us. As they lacked the Holy Spirit themselves, so their mind became impaired and weakened and they begot children whose minds were weakened and impaired. And you know the kind of way that death expresses itself in a mind that works without the Holy Spirit.

God's original plan was that the mind would be empowered by the life of his Holy Spirit and would simply be used to understand his plans for the universe and to work them out in deductive detail. He would give us his desire for the world through the intuition of our spirits and we would use our minds simply as a machine to work out and understand what he had told us to do. We would work it out in deductive detail and apply it to particulars.

Now when we lacked the Holy Spirit, the mind realized that it had to work on its own. Instead of the mind being used to understand God's will, the mind started to try to make sense of the plurality of factors in the world on its own, by the scientific method. It started to look at all the many particulars in the world and to try to draw them into some kind of order and harmony. But the mind was working from a self-preserving kind of motive that in fact caused it to be unbalanced. It looked at all these particulars and tried to harmonize them under principles by trial and error. But it would at times make mistakes. It would draw them together wrongly at times.

This is why we ended up with many scientific theories that did not last. The mind was working independently on its own, saying, "Yes, we'll draw together a 4 and 5 in the theorem of Pythagoras. Yes, it will work there. Then we'll draw together these in the Archimedes principle. Okay, it will work there." But at times they would draw them together in the wrong combination. And so we ended up with wrong scientific theories at times that had to be changed. That's why science is all the time in a state of movement and development. It ended up at times in oil spills in the ocean. It ended up in decisions that actually contorted the world.

Now as the mind began to do that, so the mind began to come under adverse judgment from other human beings. That's because other people would look at the man who decided to drill an oil well off a California coast and would say, "That was a stupid decision." Men began to judge each other for the wrong judgments their own minds were making. Gradually, brothers and sisters, our minds began to be preoccupied not with the discovery of truth, but with defending ourselves against other people's judgments. We began to be more concerned with defending ourselves by our minds than with discovering the truth of how the universe works.

As this increased, you can see our minds began to be more and more paranoid. We began to retreat more and more from the discovery of truth and to be more and more concerned with justifying ourselves. Now brothers and sisters, as that developed, you can see the situation that we have in many of our colleges. You know fine well that many faculties are preoccupied with proving that they're valuable to the university rather than preoccupied with discovering truth. Many members of faculties are more concerned with defending themselves against their fellow members in the faculty than they are with discovering truth.

So, instead of the mind being used to understand God's will, the mind began to be used to discover harmony in the world as best it could and then to defending its judgment and its harmonizing of the world's many particulars against other people. And the mind began to defend and justify itself against each other. Now as it went on, you can see that the mind discovered its own inadequacies and frustrations. It became more and more disappointed in itself. It became more and more uncertain and unsure of itself. And as that happened, it became more and more unbalanced.

The mind began to make judgments that were quick and hasty – "publish or perish." You had to bring a decision out early. You weren't sure whether the vaccine really worked, you weren't sure whether Thalidomide really did the job but you had to bring it out fast against your competitors. And so the mind was driven by the sheer pressures of other people's opinion upon it. It was driven into wrong decisions and wrong judgments. It was driven into prejudiced judgments.

The mind began to be unbalanced itself. It began to make mistakes. It began to lack the ability to concentrate because it was thinking of what other people were thinking of it. It began to worry. It began to come into all kinds of tensions. Now brothers and sisters, that's how the mind has come into the kind of death that you experience today. You and I have minds that don't seem part of us.

We don't seem even able to control them. They at times run away with us. Now loved ones, that's because the mind started with the lack of the Holy Spirit.

Now what was God's plan? It was absolutely the other way. God's plan was that we would receive through the intuition of the spirit God's own plans to develop his world and his universe. We would use our minds just to understand those principles and to apply them in detail to life. The kind of wisdom that that produced was utterly different and utterly peaceful compared with the other kind of wisdom.

You can see those two wisdoms if you like to compare. James 3:14-15 describes the kind of earthy wisdom that comes from what some of you philosophers will recognize as the inductive method -- as opposed to what God's plan was, the deductive method. So if you look at James 3:14-15, you find the kind of chaos that resulted from the mind working backwards trying to harmonize the world according to its own judgment and coming of course into mistakes and into tension. It's interesting how it describes to a great extent the academic world.

James 3:14-16; "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This wisdom is not such as comes down from above" -- it comes up from underneath in an inductive method -- "but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice."

Some philosophers may be wondering, is there not a place for the inductive method? Yes, but we would have been guided to use the inductive method as God guided us to use it. He would have pointed out the possible harmony in the universe. You must admit that even the inductive method requires that man set up hypotheses that they prove. If we had our minds working the way God wanted us to, we would see those hypotheses revealed by God to us and we would simply apply them.

The wisdom that comes from God is utterly different. James 3:17; "But the wisdom from above is first pure," -- because it has only one single desire: to find out truth and discover God's plan -- "then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity." That's the kind of wisdom that God intended us to receive as we allowed the Holy Spirit to come down to our minds.

Our minds then would have been taken up with discovering God's mind. That's it, brothers and sisters. The top scientists among us, the top philosophers among us would have been concerned with discovering God's mind and the principles that govern his mind. When our mind is working the right way and the life of the Holy Spirit is flowing through it, that's what we're preoccupied with. We're preoccupied with discovering the plans for the universe from the very mind of the Creator of the universe.

You get that kind of emphasis there in Psalm 139:14. This would have been the preoccupation you see, with the mind that is governed by the Holy Spirit. Psalm 139:14-15: "I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works! Thou knowest me right well; my frame was not hidden from thee, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth." See, you knew everything. You had it all planned so if I discover what is in Your mind, I'll discover the meaning of the world itself.

Verse 16: "Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance; in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." That's good too, incidentally,

for those of us who don't like the way our nose goes, or who don't like the way our hair goes. Don't you look down on something that God has planned so carefully. God designed you carefully before you were born. He is pleased with what he made, so don't disagree with God just because your nose has a bump in the middle.

This would be the attitude of a scholar whose mind is governed by the Holy Spirit. Psalm 139:17-18, "How precious to me are thy thoughts O God", not my own guesses about whether light is rays or particles but thy thoughts. "How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand." Of course, that presents to you the sheer difficulty that a mind working from the other direction has to try to harmonize the thoughts that are more than the sand on the seashore.

Now, brothers and sisters, when you begin to allow the Holy Spirit to come into your mind, (to work through it the other way and allow it to be preoccupied with God in His thoughts in His mind and stop this business of using your mind to defend yourself against other people or defending your judgment against other people) then you'll find the Holy Spirit will begin slowly to bring that mind back under the control of God. And he will begin to take away all the limitations and the frustrations that the mind has.

A man called Simpson said this about his experience of the Holy Spirit working in his mind, "I had a poor sort of a mind, heavy and cumbrous that did not think or work quickly. I wanted to write and speak and to have a ready memory so as to have the little knowledge I had gained always under command. I went to Christ about it and asked if he had anything for me in this way. He replied, 'Yes, my child, I am made unto you wisdom.' I was always making mistakes which I regretted and then thinking I would not make them again. But when he said that he would be my wisdom, that we may have the mind of Christ, that he could cast down imaginations and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, that he could make the brain and head right, then I took him for all that." He actually received by faith the mind of Christ through the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit began to give him that mind.

"And since then, I have been kept free from this mental disability and work has been rest. I used to write two sermons a week and it took me three days to complete one. But now in connection with my literary work, I have numberless pages of matter to write constantly besides the conduct of very many meetings a week and all is delightfully easy to me. The Lord has helped me mentally and I know he is the Savior of our mind as well as our spirit."

Now dear ones, I know that a lot of you who are involved in studies are troubled because the mind is just in bits and pieces. Now dear ones, do you see that the life of the Holy Spirit can integrate your mind? If you begin to trust him and ask him to give you light (on the ways in which your mind is impure, in which it is double minded, in which it's trying to manipulate other people and circumstances, in which you defend yourself against others and at the same time with the time that is left try to discover truth) -- if you allow the Holy Spirit to reveal that to you he can expose to you why your mind is disintegrated and fragmented.

Loved ones, I tell you the Holy Spirit is able to change and renew your memory. The Holy Spirit is able to bring you into such a place of rest that your judgment is unimpaired and balanced. The Holy Spirit is able to clear your mind of those prejudices that are so deep that you don't even know they're there. The Holy Spirit is able to give you rest at night when you go to sleep. He is able to give you rest from vile imaginations and from wild thoughts. He is able to bring you into rest in

your mind.

I only got a third of the way through the sermon so you can see that there's a lot to talk about in regard to the emotions and the body but there's a lot more even to say about the mind. I'd ask you to begin thinking about it. Would you begin praying about it? Above all, would you begin to see that if your mind is under the control of death, then your mind must be in a mess? I'm afraid that's true, isn't it?

Most of our minds are terrible messes that we manage to collect together long enough to do an examination and then they go to bits again. We haul them together again for a great decision on which car we should buy and then they go away again. But most of our minds are not really under our control. It is the Holy Spirit's will that you should have your minds under the control of God and working in the right direction.

So maybe you'll begin to think about it. I think those of you who are interested in philosophy at all you know that there's a lot more to work out there. That's only the brief outline of a possible approach. But most important is that we let the Holy Spirit work it out in us personally. Let us pray.