

Cleansed From All Unrighteousness

Romans 5:20a & 1 John 1:9

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I think Jesus would want us to share a few things brothers and sisters rather than the message that I prepared. I think it might be good to see what we've been dealing with on these Sundays and to stand back from it a little. Maybe you'd look at the verse in First John and that would point it out.

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now really what we talk about these Sunday mornings tends to be more for Christians. I have to apologize to those who aren't Christians for the Sunday morning sermons because "Romans" has brought us to that point where God is dealing with the problems in Christians' lives. Many of us as Christians have entered into part of that.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins." Many of us have entered into that. We really do know that our sins are forgiven. We do know that we're children of God. We do know that we're going to go to heaven and we have the peace that the brother and sister were singing about. But, the second part of the promise has not been made complete in us – "and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." There are many of us who know we're children of God, we know we're going to go to heaven, we know God has forgiven us -- but we are not cleansed from all unrighteousness inside.

Now, that is the state of a carnal Christian. The typical scripture we use to express that state is, "The good that I would I cannot do and the evil I want to avoid, that's the very thing I do." (Romans 7:19) And one of the real problems with many of us is we've been brought up in environments that have encouraged us to believe that that is the fight of faith that you have to put up with forever, until you see Jesus face-to-face.

Now the truth is in fact utterly different from that. The Bible repeatedly says that God can cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Acts 15:9 talks about it in a different way if you look at it. Paul is talking about the Gentiles and why we should accept them into the Christian body without first requiring them to become Jews. He looks back to what God has done with the Gentiles and refers incidentally to what God has done with them.

Acts 15:8, "And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith." Repeatedly brothers and sisters, in the New Testament and in the Old Testament, you find that God emphasizes, "I cannot only forgive the things you're doing against me. I can actually cleanse you from the thing inside you that makes you want to get angry, that makes you want to be lustful, and that makes you want to be irritable. I can cleanse you from that."

What we have been really sharing dear ones is that you're cleansed from that through being filled with the Holy Spirit in response to your readiness to die to self with Jesus. That's really what we've been saying. The problem with many of us who are living defeated Christian lives is that we have always thought of Jesus as dying for us but not us dying with Jesus. So that piece you remember in Second Corinthians was absolutely new to us -- we judge that if Christ died for all then all

died. We have never thought for a moment that we died or that we had any need to die.

So for many of us it's a new revelation –i.e. the whole idea of dying to self with Jesus so that the Holy Spirit can fill you with himself. A lot of you even after listening Sunday after Sunday will still ask me, "How do you come into this?" Loved ones, I can only share with you that it is a matter of real submission to the Holy Spirit and real believing. That's what it is.

It's "trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus." You trust what God says he has done in Jesus – i.e. that he has crucified your old self with Jesus. And you obey the Holy Spirit completely in your own life. If some of you say, "Oh brother, I have tried that. What's the problem? I still have this anger rising up inside me." Then dear ones, you have been unable to believe that you were crucified with Christ because there's a bit of you that doesn't want to be crucified.

So that's the problem with many of us. We keep on believing, believing and believing. We say, "Yes, I was crucified with Christ. I was crucified with Christ." But it's autosuggestion we're involved in. It's not real honesty with the Holy Spirit. So for many of us, a first step to being able to believe that we were crucified with Christ is simply to ask the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit, where am I not willing to be crucified with Christ? Where am I not willing to die to self? Where am I not willing for you to do whatever you want with me?"

Many of us need to come to the ground of our heart before we can really believe that we were crucified with Christ. Some call this by different names -- don't get involved with whether Campus Crusade agrees or whether The Navigators agree or whether the Baptists agree or the Presbyterians or the Methodists. That's not the issue.

In Baptists circles, we would probably call it full consecration. It's a place where you absolutely surrender everything and you are willing for Jesus to do what he wants with you. You are willing to be crucified with Christ absolutely and not to live for yourself at all. Then the Holy Spirit baptizes you with himself. He fills you with himself and brings about in you a love of people that you've never had before.

So dear ones, those are the two steps. It's real believing that you have been crucified with Christ. And in order to do that, many of us have to come the point where we're willing to believe that. Many of us will believe that up here in our heads but we'll be lusting away down here while we're saying, "I am crucified with Christ. I am crucified with Christ." Yet, there's a whole area of our sex lives that we haven't submitted to Jesus. So that's where many of us come into trouble.

We try to believe over the top of a whole lot of un-confessed sin and a whole lot of un-surrendered areas of our lives. On the other hand, some of us really do believe. But then when it comes to the business of obeying the Holy Spirit, we just won't. Someone was asked, "How do you stay in victory?" And this woman said, "Instant obedience, instance obedience. The Holy Spirit tells me to do something I do it immediately. I don't negotiate or discuss."

Now dear ones, maybe it's good that God gave us a shorter time this morning so that I could bring the real guts of the thing home to you again. The way to enter into victory is belief and submission, or trusting and obeying. The trusting with many of us is impossible because we believe it up here in our heads that we're crucified with Christ -- but we haven't allowed the Holy Spirit to show us down here in our hearts. We're not willing to be crucified with Christ.

Loved ones, I want to stop so that you can question. I know it's shorter but sometimes it's good. God knows the way we should deal with each other Sunday by Sunday.

Brother says, "Does it mean that we're cleansed from all unrighteousness, whether it's realized or not?"

It seems brother that righteousness in the Bible is essentially a conscious thing. In other words, God holds us responsible for the sins that we know we're committing. There may be a mass that we're committing that we don't know about and his blood covers that. This may be the unconscious sin that is talked about in Leviticus. But the sin that brings guilt to our hearts and an inability of the Holy Spirit to fill us is conscious sin. It would seem to me brother that the Holy Spirit cleanses us from all conscious unrighteousness.

On the other hand, the Holy Spirit fills a lot of other areas in our lives. So who can say? I am sure you can't say, "He doesn't cleanse you from the unconscious sin." But it would seem to be the conscious sin that causes us the problem. He cleanses us from that. Then it seems to me as we live on under the Holy Spirit, he brings us more light. He may make you realize that we talk too much and we have never seen that before. We may not have realized that we were talking about other people but the Holy Spirit shows us that we talk about others.

Many of us have attitudes to our moms and dads that we don't realize because they're so unconscious. When the Holy Spirit brings them into the light, then we need to submit on those areas too.

Now if you say, "Brother, is this a crisis experience or is it a gentle, gradual experience?" For many of us it has been a crisis experience. For some of us it seems to come so naturally that we don't think of a crisis. The heart of it is when the Holy Spirit asks you, "Are you willing to do anything?" and you're immediately willing. Then you know that you're in the right position with Jesus.

So it's like conversion itself. It's not a matter of looking back to some great experience that you had. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The proof of what you've experienced in the past is your present attitude to God's will. Now there would be other advantages and other benefits of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Many of us have found a new life of prayer – an absolute new vitality in our prayer lives.

All of us I think have found our witnessing lives being just effortless. We have found all parts of our lives coming into line with scripture and it seems almost an effortless way to us after we come into being filled with the Holy Spirit. It's good to keep clear of denominational questions because they're not always the most edifying but are there any denominational questions? It seems to me if we look into all our denominations at the bottom of all our hearts is the yearning for this life of full surrender. They all teach it in one way or another.

Sister says, "Am I speaking of being filled with the Holy Spirit in the same sense as baptism of the Holy Spirit?"

Yes. It seems to me if you look at the New Testament, baptism with the Holy Spirit is both an inward and an outward work. It is an inward cleansing from inward sin: from anger, jealousy and envy by being filled with the Holy Spirit. And it is an outward anointing with the Holy Spirit of the nine gifts of the Spirit for power and witnessing in a ministry. It is all one experience. Maybe if we

were more like the New Testament people, we would find that conversion and being filled with the Holy Spirit was more one experience than we really believe.

I think with many it was and with many it could be. It seems there's no reason why if we lived as an obedient group of people here, that our children might come into everything that God has for them and not have to come into it in two stages like many of us. But yes, I would feel that the New Testament preaches a complete work, a baptism of the Holy Spirit that is an inward filling and an outward anointing. I know that the dear Pentecostal brothers and sisters have tended to emphasize the outward anointing with the ministry of the gifts. I would just suggest that we all go astray when we put more emphasis on the victory or on the ministry than on the Holy Spirit. It seems to me it's not the gifts or the fruit that is vital but it's the Holy Spirit Himself. Are we in a completely submissive relationship to him?

Brother asks, "How do you discern guidance from the Holy Spirit from your own personal motives?"

Brother, it seems to me that I had most problems with guidance in my own life when I was like a radio that was tuned in to several stations at once. Only one of them was coming through and it was coming through faintly.

I found that before I settled things with Jesus about living for his glory alone, when I was seeking guidance about a job, I was half alive to my own wishes for finances. I was half alive to my own wishes for success, for fame, and for all those other things. It seemed to me when I died to those and tuned out from those other things, then the voice of the Holy Spirit began to come through strong and clear. I think that's part of the answer.

I am sure it's not all of it but I think that's part of it. I think another part of it is coming into a place of real neutrality about what God wants you to do. "Lord, I am willing to go there or go here. I am really willing." Allow the Holy Spirit to search you to show you if you're in a real place of neutrality. Then when you are, the Holy Spirit comes gently through.

It seems brother that God said, "I will guide you with my eye." You see it if you have a dad and a little son and he is guiding with his eye. I can do it with my little dog. He knows fine well what to do and what not to do by the way I am looking at him. Now, I am afraid most of us are looking everywhere else except God. And so we are not able to be guided by his eye. We want him to guide us with a loudspeaker and he won't. He says, "No, if your eyes are upon Me, I will guide you; if they're not, the guidance is worthless anyway."

One of the greatest difficulties is to see a brother or sister that is terribly critical of everybody else and yet they come week after week and say, "Oh I am praying to get the Holy Spirit to show me what's wrong with me, but I can't see it." It's coming out in their lives moment-by-moment and it seems to me, the Holy Spirit will allow symptoms to express themselves inside us.

Many husbands and wives here who have tried to come into an awareness of the Holy Spirit have found that they've become harder to live with. That's because the Holy Spirit has allowed them to come into situations where the self expressed itself more than ever it had before at home so that it became obvious to them. "Yes, now I can see what part of self I have trouble with. I now have no doubt."

Dear ones, praise God that we can converse like this. I know we can only converse as long as the

Holy Spirit enables us to converse and be interested. We really need to thank him for being gracious to us this morning. I'd like to try to preach this Sunday's sermon next Sunday. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the way you're bringing us into a real family relationship with each other where we are at ease with each other and willing to go with each other in things. Lord we thank you that this is so different from Watergate. It's so different from the distrust that seems to rule our society. We do thank you for bringing us into a body and a relationship with other brothers and sisters where we can really converse, discuss and share together.

We thank you Lord Jesus that you are able to bring absolute victory into all our lives. We would trust you Holy Spirit to show each one of us this week new places where we are to find our place on the Cross with Jesus -- new areas of our lives that we're to walk into obedience. Lord Jesus, we trust you for that. We trust you for a good day today -- a day when we live above ourselves and live for you and for each other for your glory. Amen.