

Freedom From Sin

Romans 6:7

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

You've just had one of those monumental battles with your roommate. Either he left his socks on the table for the 25th time or she left her stockings hanging from the light in the middle of the room. Tempers flew and everybody lost control. But there's a little spirit inside you that is saying, "This is stupid. Go and apologize and make the thing up and make it right." But there's another power inside you that says, "No, I had a right to say what I said."

I don't know that there's one of us here in the theater who hasn't experienced that. An explanation of it is that when Jesus died and was raised from the dead by God, his Spirit was let loose in the world. His Spirit is working in every one of us in situations that can be rectified. His Spirit is working in us trying to get us to be like Jesus himself was in his physical body.

In other words, he is trying to get us to be kind to other people, to people who hurt us. He is trying to get us to be gentle with people. He is trying to get us to be understanding. He is trying to get us to defend others' reputations even if it means losing our own. His Spirit is always trying to reproduce in you and me, in a critical moment, what he Himself wants to do. That's the explanation of that Spirit inside us that says, "Look, apologize. Go and make the thing up. Don't run a cold war for the next three days. Settle the thing and get it right." It's Jesus' Spirit that is trying to do that in you and me.

That can be with the roommate or it can be with our wives or our husbands or it can be with our moms or our dads. It can be with professors or teachers in school. There comes that critical moment when you could either go the way that Spirit is telling you -- or you have this other spirit that seems at times almost an overwhelming force, doesn't it?

It is just determined not to let go. It says, "No. No, you have every right to do what you did. You have every right to say what you said and if you don't say it they're going to walk all over you. No, they'll have socks in your soup. They'll have stockings hanging all over the place. You have to put your foot down. You are right to express it to them the way you did." And that force seems so powerful that it almost seems impossible to fight against it. It is a powerful force.

It seems an almost supernatural power of independence and rebellion. It seems to be so all pervasive throughout the world that at times you can't do anything about it. That's obviously what is breaking out in the streets of our big cities. It's that force that is also present in every one of us at a time when a situation could be rectified if we would only respond to this Spirit of Jesus inside.

In fact some of our psychologists say the force is utterly impossible to resist. Tom Skinner would say that no man is free. He would say no human being is free to do anything. No human being is free to react against this determinism that is brought about by his hereditary environment. There are many psychologists who spend all their time not studying the perfect man but studying imperfect man. They come up with the conclusion, "You can't do anything about this force, you just have to work with it, and you can't do anything about it".

Now, brothers and sisters, Jesus died because God had to destroy that force in us. If God hadn't

destroyed that force in us, he would have been stupid to let us continue to live at all because that force is so ugly. That desire to be our own men and our own women, to have our own way whatever it costs anybody else; that determination to stand up for our own rights whatever it costs anyone, that would destroy the world if it was let loose in an unrestrained way. That's why Jesus died.

God had the alternative of wiping us all out with a flood or putting us all into Jesus and destroying that force in Jesus. And that's what he did. That's really why Jesus died -- because God had to have some way of neutralizing that force if he were going to let us continue to live in his world. In actual fact that force has been utilized. That's what it really means in Romans 6:6 you remember, if you like to look at it.

Romans 6:6, "We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin."

And that's why Jesus died. That old self inside us that wants its own way, that insists on its own rights, that wants to walk over everybody else, that bursts out in temper, envy, anger and lust, that old self is so powerful and such a supernatural force of independence and rebellion against God that God had to destroy it in Jesus. That's what that means.

"Our old self was crucified with Jesus." That's why we're so stupid when we try the cold showers for the lust or we try the power of positive thinking for envy and jealousy or we try some of Dale Carnegie's tricks for the inferiority complex. It's silly. It's stupid. It's like beating against a tank moving against you with little wooden sticks. You try to get it to stay back, but it's moving on and on. It's hopeless. It's a supernatural force and you know it. Isn't that right?

When you lose your temper, there's nothing that can hold it. There's just nothing. Such a power of envy can come up inside us when we get a 'D' and our roommate gets an 'A minus' that we can't hold the thing back. It just bursts out. You know you're better than her, (she might not know it but you know), and it's just an overwhelming force within you.

Now brothers and sisters, it is a supernatural power of evil. We're just stupid people when we continue to try to overcome this by the power of positive thinking. Or we say we're growing in grace. We're trying to grow in grace and meanwhile this thing is growing more subtle inside us as we're growing in grace.

No, this force is so powerful a supernatural entity that God had to destroy it in Jesus and he did. He really did. He destroyed all that desire for our own way and all our insistence on our own rights. He destroyed all that supernatural power that destroys our lives in Jesus, 1900 years ago. That's why he has nothing against you and me this morning. Otherwise, he would wipe us right out this morning. But he knows that he has already destroyed that power and so he can afford to let us live for another 60 or 70 years for one purpose -- so that we would let him make that real in us. That's it.

If you say to me, "Well brother, you've got us into an impossible dilemma here. If God has destroyed all that is wrong in us and has nothing against us, then why don't I feel reconciled to him this morning?" Loved ones, it's because reconciliation is a two-fold thing. God has made every arrangement necessary to reconcile you to himself -- but until you say to him, "Yes Lord, I accept your arrangement", you'll never feel a sense of reconciliation.

While you continue to keep that old self alive in you, while you play up to that old self's need for pride and that old self's need to have its own way, while you do that, there'll be no sense of reconciliation between you and God. It's not that God has anything against you. If you feel guilt this morning, it isn't because of past independence. God has destroyed all that in Jesus. It's because you're saying to him, "Yes, I know what you've done but I don't want that done in me." That's really why you feel guilt.

In other words, there are two sides to reconciliation. One person can make all the necessary arrangements but unless the other person enters into those, there's no reconciliation. Now that's what Romans 6:7 is really stating if you'd look at it.

Romans 6:6, "We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to sin." We know that we've been crucified with Christ. We know that all the power of evil in us has been destroyed. Then in Romans 6:7 is the way to make that real. "For he who has died is freed from sin."

In other words, Romans 6:6 presents God's solution and attitude. Romans 6:7 presents the change in our attitude that is required in the light of God's solution. Romans 6:6 shows us how a holy God could forgive unholy people like us and let us continue to live in his universe -- because he has already destroyed all the evil in us. Romans 6:7 tells what we unholy people have to do to take advantage of his action.

Romans 6:6 would tell the cure and the remedy that the position has provided. Romans 6:7 presents the responsibility of we suffering patients to accept that cure and that remedy. Now that's the relationship of those two verses. Romans 6:7 is the way to let this thing happen inside us. The only reason we have guilt is not because God has not provided a solution but because we will not accept that solution. We don't want it.

The only reason we have guilt is not that God can't find a way to forgive us. He has already found a way but we don't like it. It's not that God has not done something to deal with that selfish will inside you that you cannot control but it's that you and I won't let him deal with it in us. He has already dealt with that selfish will. We just don't like the way he has done it. That's why we have guilt, dear ones.

In other words, when you wrestle at home or in your room with your own jealousy or self-pity, you say to yourself, "I wish I could overcome this. I wish I could overcome it." Or brothers, when we wrestle with the whole problem of unclean thoughts and we say, "I wish I could overcome this," dear brothers and sisters, God has already destroyed those things in Jesus. You and I just won't let him do it in us. That's really it.

You're dead right. You can't destroy them yourself by all the tricks in the world. By all the psychological or physical manipulations you cannot destroy that force inside you. God has destroyed it and will destroy it in you if you will become willing to that. That's really it. Many of us, of course, continue to have guilt. Many of us even who believe John 3:16 continue to have guilt for this reason. We believe, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but has eternal life", and we believe that and we accept it but we still continue to have guilt. Why?

It's because we're saying to God, "Yes, we realize you've done everything in Jesus that is necessary

to destroy this selfish will of mine. We believe you and thank you for doing it. But we don't want you to make it real in us." God is aware of your resisting his arrangement. That is why you continue to walk not only in weakness and moral impotence but continue to walk in increasing guilt.

You see loved ones, it's no use. It's no use saying to a surgeon, "I believe you can take this cancer out of my body. I believe you are able enough to do this", and then never go to him and let him do it. There's no sense in it. You're going to die of the cancer. Believing he can do it will change nothing. You have to be willing to let him do it in you. The fact is that only when we have actually died with Jesus do we experience a real freedom from sin in our own lives. Really that's what is needed for all of us. We need to enter into this real death with Jesus in our own personal lives and then we begin to find ourselves freed from sin.

Now, maybe it would be good to just ask, what do we mean "freed from sin"? Well, we mean freed from its power. That's what Romans is talking about.

Romans 6:1-2, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means, how can we, who died to sin, still live in it?" In other words, we're talking about freedom from the power of sin -- not freedom just from the guilt of sin but freedom from its power. What does it mean to be freed from the power of sin?

Well, you see in the last part of Romans 6:6, "So that we might no longer be enslaved to sin." Sin is that supernatural force that makes us want our own way, insists on our own rights, stick up for ourselves, and destroys everybody else in order to defend ourselves. That's sin. That's the power of independence and rebellion that wants to be God and wants to rule everybody else's life and my own life.

Now, to be "freed from the power of sin" means you're no longer a slave to that force. A slave is one who has no rights to disobey the power that is over them. Now to be freed from that means you're at last free to disobey that force that is working inside you. To cease to be a slave means that you're at last free to do what you really want to do and what you know is best to do. That's to be freed from the power of sin.

It's really being free to be able to disobey the force for selfishness inside you. If you say to me, "Is it that you never sin"? That's not the issue -- whether you sin. It's up to you, and it's your own fault. At the moment, you can't help it because you just do it and do it and do it because you can't disobey that power of selfishness inside you. You can't stop being angry even if you wanted to.

To be freed from that power is to be free to disobey that if you want. If you do sin, it's your own fault after that. But you see the issue is not, "Does this mean you never sin"? The issue is, "Are you free not to sin if you wanted"? The killer with many of us sitting here this morning is, we'll admit, "No, I am not free. When that envy comes up inside me, I can't kill it, whatever I do. When that temper looses inside me, I can't stop the anger whatever I do to try." To be freed from the power of sin is to be free from having to sin. It's to be free not to sin if you don't want to sin. That's what results when you at last come into a place where you're willing for God to make Jesus' death real in you.

Now, what does it mean to die? A lot of people look at these verses and say, "Oh, he who has died is freed from sin. It means when you die physically and leave this world, then you're freed from sin."

Well dear ones, God isn't talking here about physical death. You know that. He has just been talking all the time about our death with Jesus. You see it there in verses 3-6 there.

Romans 6:3-6, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."

The whole talk is not of our physical death but of Jesus' death. Then Paul says, "For he who has died, is freed from sin". So it's dying with Jesus that frees us from sin. Now, what would this mean? Let's look just at one instance, one example of it. Would you look at John 19, back to Jesus' own death.

John 19:1-5; "Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him. And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and arrayed him in a purple robe; they came up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again, and said to them, 'See, I am bringing him out to you, that you may know that I find no crime in him.' So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Behold the man!'"

So they put a purple robe on him and the crown of thorns to try to say, "Oh you're the great king. Okay, we'll put a robe on you and crown on you so that you'll be a king." That was just making fun of him. And when Jesus died, he died to men's respect. He died to his need for men's respect. He died to his own reputation. He died to what the leading people in his own religion and the leading people in the political world of that time thought of him.

He died even to what the prostitutes and the tramps were doing to him as he walked down the Via Dolorosa and they spat at him and struck him. When Jesus died, he died to his need for people to look up to him, respect him and think well of him. He was willing to be thought just a useless political criminal. He was willing to be thought even as someone who was sacrilegious -- He, who was the very Son of his Father.

Now brothers and sisters, do you see that he, who has died, is freed from sin. When he has died with Jesus and to his need for men's and women's respect that frees you from a whole multitude of sins that are connected up with your concern about what people think of you. Dying with Jesus means dying to what your friends think of you.

You see our problem is this: that most of us are such miserable, petty men pleasers that we are not free from men's respect at all. We are so anxious for everybody to think well of us, our parents to think well of us, our professors, our teachers, our peers, our colleagues at work, our girlfriends, our boyfriends, our husbands or wives. We are such miserable men pleasers that we have not died at all to men's respect, we thrive on men's respect.

Don't you see that's why we get envious? That's why we get proud? We are so concerned with what men think of us in our conversations, in our actions, in our relationships that we will do anything for people to think well of us. We will cajole and lie to become thought of as a swinger or to be thought of as somebody who is really "with it". We will do anything to get people to respect us. We will cease to be our real selves. We will pretend. We will be hypocritical. You know it. We will put on fronts of all kinds. We will try to be a smoothie or try to be cool. We do anything to get people

to think well of us.

Now brothers and sisters, that's what brings the whole series of sins with it. It brings lies. Think of how often you've given a better impression of yourself than is really true. Think of how often you've put your best side forward so that somebody would look up to you. Think of how often you've told lies about what you were really thinking just so that they would think you agreed with them. Think of how often you know you've exaggerated in your conversation just to get close to somebody else so that they would think well of you.

Brothers and sisters, there is a whole series of sins that stem from the fact that we've never really died with Jesus to men's respect. And when it says there, "He who has died is freed from sin", it really does mean it. When you come to a place where through counseling with the Holy Spirit, you find out all that this dying with Jesus will mean for you and you really agree, "Lord Jesus, I really am willing for only you to approve of me. I really am willing to die to the respect that men and women have for me. I really am willing to die to my need to maintain a reputation of some kind. Lord Jesus, Your opinion is the only one that counts", the Holy Spirit will meet you.

Brothers and sisters, when you come to a deep place of honesty with God and with yourself where you're really willing to die with Jesus to that need for respect, then the Holy Spirit will witness that you're there. He'll witness, yes, you've come to the ground of your heart in regard to this need for men's respect. And the Holy Spirit will flow into you and will fill you with a joy, peace, assurance and confidence of God's approval that will leave you free from envy, jealousy, pride and all the things that are connected up with what people think of you. It's really true. It really works that way.

God is really able to free you from that inward sin if you're willing to die with Jesus to the things that he died to. In the coming weeks, we'll see other things that he died to. But the Holy Spirit can show you this morning what you need to share with Jesus in his death. He can free you and that's really the heart of victory.

That's kind of what we call "being filled with the Holy Spirit" or "having your heart cleansed by faith", or "dying with Christ", or, "crucifixion with Christ". But you can see that it demands tremendous honesty on your part with the Holy Spirit. Because if you ask him to show you in what way you're alive to men's respect, he will really lay you flat. You will find things out about yourself that you never knew before with all your introspection.

You will find hundreds of ways in which you are a miserable slavish man pleaser and in which you aren't really yourself at all. It's when you see all the mess that you'll begin to realize why God had to destroy that force in Jesus and why He is willing to destroy it in you.

Dear ones, maybe it would be good just to pray this morning but sometimes I think it'll be good to have questions so that you can push me a little on the real inner meaning of this. But I think it will be good to get into it deeper during these Sundays.

The heart of it is, what about yourself? What about your own temper? What about your own anger? What about your own envy and pride? Are you freed from it yet? What God is saying here is, you really can be. I've tried to write about it a little, and it's with those books there that you can get. There are two little booklets that I've written – "How to Stop Sinning" and "Free to Live". Then, Ted Hegre from Bethany Fellowship has written that book, "Freedom from the Power of Sin" plus there are

lots of tapes available in the library either to listen to or to buy.

Really this is why Jesus died -- to free us from this. I really do pray that everybody in the theater would really come free. It would be magnificent. It would be a great change in the world if the five, six, or seven hundred of us came into freedom here. It really will be easier on your roommates. Let us pray.