

The Resurrected Life

Romans 6:8

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

This book contains the words of our Creator and there's one part of it that almost everybody in the theater will be able to relate to, whether you're Christians or humanists, it'll seem real to you. So, would you look at it, dear ones? It's in Romans 7:15.

Romans 7:15-23: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members."

I think probably every one of us here has experienced that seemingly supernatural force inside us that surges up and that we cannot control. Over the years, we take one of two different attitudes to it. One attitude is that we keep bluffing ourselves like the alcoholic.

We keep saying, "Well, I know that I don't seem able to do what I want to do but I am really in charge. I know I seem to lose my temper whenever I don't want to lose my temper but this isn't a supernatural force that I can't control. I can really be free of it when I want to be free." That's one attitude that many of us take. We feel, "Okay, don't get upset. Just keep cool. This is something that I can get out of if I want to." We live like that for 20, 30, 40 years, always deceiving ourselves with the idea, "I can really get free of this if I want."

The other attitude is just absolute despair. I think a lot of us come into absolute despair. It's that kind of attitude expressed in Romans 7:24. We come into that position, "Wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

Some of us have got beyond the stage of that naïve self-deception and we see, "Yes, this is something I can't control and I am just going to give up. I can't do anything with it. Let's face it, human beings are meant to get angry. Human beings are meant to lust. Human beings are meant to be irrevocably and incorrigibly proud". And we just give up.

Now brothers and sisters, neither of those attitudes are right. First of all, you couldn't get free of it if you wanted to. That's the first thing and it's pointed out in Romans 7:20 if you look at it. You couldn't get free of it if you wanted to, simply because it isn't you.

Romans 7:20 – "Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me."

The fact is your repeated failures to control your temper is just God telling you, "Look, this

temper comes from a force inside you that is bigger than you are and you can't get free of it, however much you try." Isn't it true that's what comes home to you and me each time we've made New Year resolutions? We've resolved, "I will not lose my temper again. I will not be covetous as far as clothes and furniture are concerned." Then we fall flat on our faces. And God allows us to make repeated New Year resolutions just to prove to us, "This thing inside you is sin. It's a supernatural force of evil in the world that you cannot control."

Yet do you see the other attitude is equally wrong, the attitude of despair? A lot of people who are Christians think that an attitude of despair and of failure day after day is the normal Christian life. It isn't. For years, many of us have been taught, "You just avoid sinning. You have to sin day after day after day after day, and just keep confessing the sin." Many of us point to Romans 7 and we say, "There, Paul. Paul was a Christian, wasn't he? Isn't he describing the normal Christian life when he says, 'The good that I would I cannot do, wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from this body of death?'" And they stop the chapter at verse 24.

Now brothers and sisters, the final solution to that subnormal carnal Christian life is in Romans 7:25. Paul says, "Wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." Thanks be to God, he will deliver me and has delivered me. So then, I of myself in the old days working on my own, I have myself served the law of God with my mind but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. So, I of myself can do nothing about it but thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who can do something.

We've been sharing together over the past few weeks, God's solution to that problem. We've been sharing how the part of us that links our day-to-day lives up with that supernatural force of independence and rebellion in the world, is best designated by the word "self".

It's self that has to be dealt with. In other words, the part of us that is a traitor and opens the door to that supernatural force of rebellion and independence (that originates with Satan), the part of us that does that is best designated by the word "self".

Now you know it doesn't mean personality. Self doesn't mean our personality or our individuality. Our personality is not bad in itself. Our individuality is a gift that God has given us. So maybe it's good first of all to see that when we talk about self being the problem and the culprit, we're not talking about our personalities. We should thank God for our personalities and we should thank God that when he deals with us in the Holy Spirit, we are freer in our personalities than we ever were before in our lives.

Loved ones, the problem is not your individuality or our personalities. That's not what the Bible means when it designates self as the problem. Nor does it mean self-respect. Self doesn't mean self-respect or self-love in the sense that we have a natural animal instinct to preserve ourselves so that when a car comes along the road, we do manage to get our foot out of the way before it runs over it. We have a desire to preserve ourselves and defend ourselves. No, that's not what God says is wrong. That is good.

It's good to have self-respect and self-regard for ourselves. It's good to have enough self-respect to wash in the morning and to use "Right Guard" [a deodorant]. It's good to take care of your body and wear the right clothes and take care of the place where you live. That's good and self doesn't mean that. There is a right self-regard and self-respect (and if you like to put it self-love) that God wants us to have.

Loved ones the self that opens the way to Satan is self-centeredness. It's self-glory. It's perverted self-love. It's self-love carried to an inordinate degree where you love yourself before everybody else. Now that's what God means when he tries to tell us that self is the problem.

In fact, the heart of the attitude of self that opens the way to the power of sin coming into our lives is outlined there in the record of the first time that we ever rebelled against God. It's Genesis 3. The heart of that attitude of self is outlined in Genesis 3:5. It's as if God wanted to tell us (the very first time that our forefathers rebelled against him) and make clear to us why it had happened.

Genesis 3:5 – “For God knows that when you eat of it (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

"Your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil." The heart of this attitude of self is that we think we're God. The real reason that Satan is able to infuse into us a spirit of envy or jealousy or criticism that we cannot control is because we have an attitude of self that thinks of us as God.

We think of ourselves as God. It's such a subtle, invisible, unconscious attitude that it comes as a shock to us if anyone charges us with it. If you think of it, isn't it extremely difficult to put yourself in somebody else's shoes? Isn't there a terrible tendency in all of us to think that nobody is facing the same things as we are? We are uniquely different from everybody else. We are uniquely different as God made us, but isn't it true that most of us think, we're uniquely different and better than everybody else? We have the feeling that we have the right to make life and circumstances and other people operate in a way that will suit us.

Now the Bible calls that “inward sin”. Inward, because it's often very thoroughly disguised before it expresses itself outwardly -- and sin because it's challenging God. It's challenging his right to be God and to control and operate things. And that's really the attitude of self that opens the way to the power of Satan in us. It shows itself in different ways.

First of all, it doubts whether God loves us with all his heart. It doubts whether God loves us with all his heart and it doubts whether he has a plan for our lives. And so it does three things on its own. It's always trying to get its own way. Whatever it costs anybody else, this self believes that a god always gets its own way. And so this self is always trying to get its own way. It's always trying to manipulate people or circumstances to suit us.

This self is always insisting on its own rights because it sees other people treating us as if we aren't God and that shocks and upsets us. Therefore we're always insisting on our own rights. If somebody criticizes us, we insist on our right not to be criticized. We should not be criticized, we're above criticism. You must admit, very few of us can accept criticism, isn't that right? Most of us automatically resent criticism when it comes.

Then thirdly, self is always trying to enjoy itself. Deep down we have a sneaking feeling that gods should always enjoy themselves whatever it costs their creatures. And so self is always anxious to enjoy itself.

Now, brothers and sisters, those are the attitudes of self that open the way for Satan to come in

and fill us with uncontrollable anger or uncontrollable lust. Our problem of course is that we go for the lust and the anger and we try to keep that stuff down. We can't keep it down because that comes straight from Satan. But, we can change the attitude that allows that to come in and that's the attitude of self.

Now, you can find illustrations of it in the New Testament. You see it there in John 18:10-11, when they came to arrest Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane. "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?'"

Now, regarding getting our own way -- we come into a situation like Peter and we decide we'll tackle it our way. And so we're always trying to get out of trials or difficulties our way. We don't care much about how God wants to work it, we want our way. And that's one of the marks of self -- always wanting your own way. That's why it causes such problems in the room with the roommate. There is no great reason why the books should be set the way you want them but you just want them set that way. You want it done that way.

It's the same at home for you dear husbands and wives. The issues, you must admit, are not massive ideological issues that divide us at home. It's just that she wants it her way and we want it our way. It is because it's such an illogical thing that we keep treating it as something unimportant or small, but it is the heart of Satan. When you look back, isn't it the thing that causes all our unhappiness and unpleasantness with each other?

You get one of the other marks in Matthew 20:20-21. This attitude probably rules most faculties, executive boards and most businesses. "Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him, with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. And he said to her, 'What do you want?' She said to him, 'Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.' But Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking.'" And it's that desire to insist on our rights, to have our position and our place, and to get people to treat us the way we ought to be treated.

Loved ones, think of how many times you have cried yourself to sleep. Or you've worried and strained yourself to sleep because of the way people were treating you. You felt they weren't giving you the right sense of dignity, the right position or the right degree of respect. Now brothers and sisters, that's self. That's self wanting its own way and insisting on its own rights.

Self -- wanting to enjoy itself, you get it in Matthew 16:21-23, where Peter can't bear the idea of Jesus having to be inconvenienced or having to suffer in any way. Unfortunately that's the attitude that self takes to itself.

Matthew 16:21-23: "From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men.'"

If you think about it, we run our lives by convenience to ourselves, don't we? If you think what you are going to do after the service this afternoon, most of it is connected with what is convenient

for you, isn't it? It's about what we really enjoy doing. We really look upon ourselves as incredible martyrs if we put ourselves out for half an hour to drive somebody else home or to help somebody else. It is incredible the way we tend to run our lives for our own enjoyment.

Now, dear ones, do you see that that attitude of self is what let Satan's power and force of evil into our lives? What we've been saying the past two or three Sundays is that that attitude of self is such hostility to God that he cannot possibly let us live without destroying it. What he in fact did on Calvary, 1900 years ago, was to destroy that attitude in us. We read of that in Romans 6:6 if you like to look at it again.

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 saw that God had destroyed that old self in Jesus 1900 years ago and that that was an attitude that he had already neutralized completely by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 6:7 we saw that unless you're willing to let him do that in your own life, you won't be free from that power of sin, "For he who has died is freed from sin".

We saw last Sunday that the only way we can enter into this deliverance from self in our own lives is to be willing to actually die to self with Jesus, because that's what in fact happened. God put us into Jesus and destroyed all that desire for our own way, all that insistence on our own rights, all that desire for our own enjoyment, he destroyed that in Jesus. God can make that real in us miraculously through the Holy Spirit if you are willing to die to self with Jesus.

Last Sunday, we saw some of the things that were involved in dying to self. We talked about being willing for people to think badly of you, being willing for people not to have a good concept of the kind of person you are, being willing to die to your reputation, being willing not to be a man-pleaser but to please God alone even if it meant hanging on a cross and being insulted and criticized by the riff-raff of Jerusalem. Yet if you're willing to die to self in the way that the Holy Spirit is showing you, then the Holy Spirit miraculously neutralizes that attitude of self.

When Jesus died to self and reputation by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, (when they all wanted him to be a great military Messiah) and when he died to self (by allowing Himself to be destroyed on the Cross as a useless criminal), at that moment when he humbled Himself and didn't claim anything for Himself, God not only sent forth his Holy Spirit to neutralize the self-attitude in you and me (because of our death with Jesus), but he gave to Jesus, the satisfaction and exhilaration that comes from being at the right hand of God.

So when Jesus died to self on Calvary, he was raised by God willingly, voluntarily, lovingly and graciously to the right hand of the Father. He was given back far more than he had ever given up. Now brothers and sisters, that's what it means if you look at Philippians 2:6-11.

Philippians 2:6-11, “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Now today's verse says, "If we die with Jesus, we believe that we shall also live with him." Brothers and sisters, here is the miracle. If you're willing to die to self with Jesus, then God,

through his Holy Spirit, not only neutralizes that attitude of self that opens you up to Satan's power but the Holy Spirit fills you with the love that Jesus feels at this moment for his Father.

In other words, you can die to envy but it's really hard to do the opposite thing and praise people, isn't it? Now the Holy Spirit will fill you with an attitude of praise and love for that person. It's one thing to die to criticism but how do you produce an attitude of appreciation? Have you ever tried it? Maybe you try Andrew Carnegie's psychological tricks, "Well, I ought to look at the good things in that person. Well, they're quite talented or they're quite kindly." You try all those psychological tricks. It gets harder for you husbands and wives, with each other, doesn't it? It's hard to find their good points. There is no way that you can do it, loved ones.

You can't love each other truly by trying those psychological tricks. The truth is, if you die with Jesus, you live with him. If you're willing to die to self with Jesus, the Holy Spirit fills you with a healthy, loving attitude towards people. It's a miraculous thing. Our place is simply to be willing to die. God will take care of the resurrection. If you have impatience, you ask the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit, why am I impatient?"

Well, you're impatient because you think you're God. You think everything should be done in your time and just as you want it to be done. You come into a place where you're really willing to die to self and for things to be done even if in your opinion they're late. You're willing for them to be done the way God wants them. The Holy Spirit miraculously fills you with a patience and a gentleness towards your friends and relatives. It's a miracle loved ones, but that's what it means if you look at Romans 6:8.

Romans 6:8, "But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him". The truth is that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father today. If you're willing to die with Jesus, God raises you to that place (heaven) and that place is beautiful. No, I don't go for the harps or the golden sidewalks but it is a beautiful place of peace and love. There the Father with Jesus, his Son, the angels and archangels and probably a lot of old grandmothers and grandfathers of ours, they're all gathered together. And they are continually occupied in actual things that give them satisfaction in an actual love and light and enthusiasm and peace and understanding with each other.

Now Jesus sends that kind of attitude down to you when you're willing to die with Jesus. So it's a real miracle. You just don't realize where the love has come from. You don't realize where the patience has come from. But it is a fact that if you're willing to die with Jesus then you will start living with him and experiencing his resurrection life.

The last thing I'd like to share with you is that there is no resurrection without a death. There isn't. There is no resurrection without dying. Our place is to be honest with the Holy Spirit and ask him to show us where that attitude of self still rules us. Then decide whether we're willing for that to be destroyed in Jesus. The moment you say yes, the Holy Spirit not only destroys it, but fills you with the fruit of the Spirit -- the very opposite things to the vices that you felt inside for so long.

I am trying to take as long over this as God has taken over it in writing Romans 6. Will you speak to God about it, loved ones? Let us pray.