

## The Death of Death

Romans 6:9

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Have you ever had the situation with your roommate or your friends -- or those of us who are married, with our wives -- where you've noticed a kind of strained relationship coming up between you and them? It's getting more and more strained and there isn't the openness that there was before. You think to yourself, "This is stupid. We're supposed to be helping each other. We're supposed to be close to each other. Tomorrow when I see them, I am just going to be like I was at the beginning. We're going to be as open as we were at the start." And so the next day comes and you try to stir up that old love for them but it just won't come. There's still the resentment and irritability inside and you can't do a thing with it.

You really want to make the thing right but somehow there's a big lead lump of resentment and irritation deep down that you can't get rid of whatever you do. Or, you've discovered that some of your friends are talking about you behind your back. When you meet them you just can't feel comfortable with them. You feel that they're lying to you straight, face-to-face. You know what they've said and you know the way they're appearing to smile and be friendly with you. You have a tremendous sense of being the odd man out and you find it's impossible to be open with them. You say to yourself, "This is silly. Whatever they have said about me behind my back, I have no right to have this kind of resentment against them." And so you determine the next time you get into that group, you're going to forget about it. You'll joke your way out of it. You'll laugh and pretend that it's just like it was.

You try to do it and it's just like lifting up big heavy weights off your shoulders. Inside, there's resentment, self-pity and a feeling that they're being unjust to you. There's a feeling that they're just utterly deceiving you and being traitors. In those situations, you know what you want to do and you know what is right to do to prevent the situation deteriorating impossibly but you cannot do it.

Now brothers and sisters, that's the kind of situation we've been talking about during the past few Sundays. We know fine well what we want to do and we want to try to do it but somehow there's a lack of power inside us to do what we want to do and to be what we want to be. Now, the reason for that is really very obvious. It's presented in the Bible very plainly and maybe you'd look at the passage.

It's Romans 7 and in it, God expresses through Paul this kind of problem that all of us have -- i.e. we want to do the right thing but we can't do it. Now if you read it emphasizing what is the primary factor in this passage, you'll find out very easily what the problem is inside us that makes us feel like that. I'll emphasize what is in fact the primary piece of grammar in the passage and it'll show you where the problem lies. (Rev. O'Neill reads the next verses emphasizing every "I", "my", or "me".)

Romans 7:15-19 -- "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.” 35 times the personal pronoun or the possessive pronoun is used in 10 verses. And that's the problem. That's the problem with us in both of those situations that we talked about.

You know what happens. We offend our friend or we take an action independent of them that actually causes them to resent us. That's what sets up the strain in the first place. What sets up the strain in their mind is that we did something and didn't consult with them. We maintain the strain by continuing to feel, "Well I have a right to do what I want to do. I had a right to do that independent of them. I had a right to say what I said."

In other words, what maintains that strain is the great 'I' inside. And that great 'I' feels it has the right to do what it's doing. It's the same if you think of the situation where they're talking about you. You know how you just sink down in self-pity. You know it. You feel, "They're all against me. I'll be brave and courageous and will manage all right on my own." And we feel self-pity and sorrow for the way that people are treating us.

Of course they on their part are doing it to make themselves feel better. They talk about you because they think if they have confidence with somebody else about you, it makes them one better than you. They're trying to elevate themselves by tearing you down. But whichever situation it is brothers and sisters, it results from this great 'I' inside us that wants its own way.

Now that 'I' self-attitude runs through the entire universe and actually it has run through the universe for centuries. It probably started in the kind of situation that Isaiah described. He was talking about the king of Babylon. The old prophets were magnificent. They could talk about a situation in their time and then could telescope history to see back into the beginning of infinity and eternity as to what had caused the present situation to crop up.

And so Isaiah does that at times. He'll be talking about the king of Babylon -- his pride and his resentment -- and then he'll go and talk about the power that made him resentful and selfish. That's what Isaiah does on one occasion in Isaiah 14. He is talking about this king of Babylon, who was going to take over the land of Judah in about the sixth century. This hadn't taken place yet but Isaiah was talking about it going to take place in about 150 years' time. He is describing this king and then he telescopes history. He looks behind the power or the force that had made the king of Babylon as selfish as he was. He begins to talk about Satan and the origin of Satan.

Isaiah 14:12 – “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!” And then this was Satan's attitude. Satan was at one time a spirit created by God to serve him and God trusted him implicitly but then verse 13.

Isaiah 14:13-15 – “You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the pit.”

And Isaiah is indicating that it was that kind of I-me, self-attitude that caused Satan to rebel against God at the very beginning even before creation.

Now brothers and sisters, it's that force that gets inside us and makes us cry ourselves to sleep. It's that force that makes us swell with pride and envy and jealousy. It's a supernatural force that

you cannot manage yourself. We've found that we can do nothing about it. We've tried our best but we can't do it. This I-me, self-attitude wants its own way, wants to be God in every situation, wants to determine what it will do and what it will suffer.

Loved ones, you can see it makes for chaos. There must be about six or seven hundred of us here in the theater and we're only a fraction of the three and a half billion people in the world, but do you see the chaos that results if we all had this attitude towards each other? The only reason we have a real sense of love and harmony together this morning is that we all are submitting our own wishes to the wishes of Jesus and God. That's why there's a sense of harmony and peace among us.

Now do you see that if there are seven hundred of us or three and a half billion of us, letting loose with that I-me self-attitude which insists on its own rights, wants its own way, asserts itself, and defends itself, that hell results? And that's what you and I have found. But we've tried to overcome this but we cannot and that's the problem.

I don't think there is one of us in the theater who have been here the past few Sundays, who cannot diagnose the problem. All of us would agree that it's the I-me self inside us that makes us want to get envious, irritable, jealous and resentful. Yes, it's the I-me self. But what do you do about it? Do you notice that's the same problem the eastern religions have?

Eastern religions emphasize that you have to negate the self and transcend the ego. Yet they have impossible problems ever succeeding in doing that. They always eventually sink back into abstraction or into a preoccupation with the ego itself. And so there are many people who have diagnosed that the problem is the ego or the self but they cannot tell us how you get rid of it. That's because they cannot produce a power inside that transcends the self.

Now brothers and sisters, there is a man that transcended that desire for self-glory and for self-will. There is one man who had such a dynamic power of love inside Himself that he destroyed this power of self. You can see it coming out in His life again and again.

Would you look with me at John 13:21 to see an instance of it? This man would find Himself in a position where one of his specially picked followers had planned in cold blood to betray him to the religious powers and yet you find none of the resentment coming out of him that comes out of us for much less reasons.

John 13:21-30 – “When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.’ The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus; so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, ‘Tell us who it is of whom he speaks.’ So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ Jesus answered, ‘It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it.’ So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘What you are going to do, do quickly.’ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the money box, Jesus was telling him, ‘Buy what we need for the feast’; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night.”

This man Jesus was incredible. Faced with that kind of situation he did not rip off any anger at Judas. He did not try to stop him but instead continued to love him and to respect his free will.

Now, this Jesus has that Spirit inside him. It's a dynamic Spirit that can produce what the psychologists say we should have.

You see that's the problem. Even the psychologists are right in the picture they paint of the integrated personality. But how do you bring that about? How do you bring about an integrated personality? This Jesus had one inside Himself.

There's another instance you know, if you look at Luke 22. The religious leaders were making fun of his ministry and they treated him just like a lunatic. Yet he didn't react but remained perfectly calm with them and was concerned only that they would hear the truth, whatever attitude they had towards him.

Luke 22:63-70 "Now the men who were holding Jesus mocked him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and asked him, 'Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?' And they spoke many other words against him, reviling him.

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes; and they led him away to their council, and they said, 'If you are the Christ, tell us.'

But he said to them, 'If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask you, you will not answer.

But from now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.' And they all said, 'Are you the Son of God, then?' And he said to them, 'You say that I am.'"

There is just incredible peace and unbelievable freedom from resentment and from all the feelings that rise up inside us. And he just went on being like that. The amazing thing is that even after he died and was raised from the dead, his spirit continued to be like that. You can find it in Acts 9:1-6. If you remember Paul had led a vehement persecution of the followers of Jesus and had therefore actually been trying to destroy the Spirit of Jesus completely even though Jesus had died as far as his physical body was concerned.

Acts 9:1-6 – "But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'"

Brothers and sisters, that Spirit is alive today. That Spirit is alive in our world. That Spirit can come into you and bring about those same reactions in you. That's how you can be delivered from self. This Spirit of Jesus transcends circumstances and overcomes the old self. It produces in you a love in place of the resentment, and self-pity. The fact is, the Spirit of Jesus does not just destroy your anger, envy or your jealousy, but he brings about in you a positive love, a kindness and a gentleness that is supernatural. And that's the miracle of it, you see.

Often I have looked up to him and said, "Lord Jesus, will YOU love?" And there has come out a supernatural love from my heart that I couldn't produce for the other person. We're all the same, loved ones. We all have petty little resentments towards friends. We all have little critical attitudes to those who are hurting and offending us. Yet, none of us have the power inside ourselves to respond any differently. Do you see that the Spirit of this man Jesus is still alive? He can respond differently inside you. And that can happen to you.

If you say, "On what conditions?" You know them. You've to be willing to die to self with Jesus. But it's not the readiness to die to self that produces the love. Do you see that? You could be ready to die to self, be nothing for him, be a failure for him and be treated whatever way people wanted to treat you, but that old self inside you would not produce love. It's only his Spirit that is able to fill you completely; that produces a supernatural love and a supernatural gentleness. This is why some of you feel at times, "Some people are just different from me. They don't have my hang-ups. They don't have my critical attitude."

Brothers and sisters, we're all out of the same mold. We're all more or less the same this morning. We all, more or less, have the same kinds of problems and the same kinds of feelings of resentment and self-pity. The truth is that only if you receive and are filled with this new Spirit, can you ever transcend that.

And if you say, "How?", the answer is to be willing to die to self with Jesus. Let God destroy all the old self inside you and allow Jesus to take over.

Now if you say to me, "How do you know it happened?" The Holy Spirit witnesses with you when you've really come to the end of self. He witnesses and then he fills you with his new love. You find yourself going into situations where you know people are talking about you. Yet there can come continual love and peace from your heart. It's not a "put on thing", but a real thing that comes deep down from inside you. You can come into situations with your roommate who may have done all the wrong things. You know how hard it is to apologize if you weren't the one that did the wrong thing? We get self-righteous and proud. We're glad they made the mistake and we didn't. We say, "Well, it's up to them to apologize."

It's true, isn't it, in the home or in the dorms or in your room. It's easy to feel, "It's their turn to apologize." It's so good to have a new spirit coming out from inside you that wants to put your arms around them, apologize, make the thing right whatever and absorb the wounds. And really that's what we need.

In our society, we don't have a lot of perfect people. We need a lot of people that will absorb a lot of punishment and respond with a lot of love. And that Jesus himself did and is able to do in you. That's why I urge you that the only answer to the old self is really allowing that old self to die and letting Jesus' Spirit take over. He will produce a miraculous love inside you. Let us pray.

Dear Father, You know there are countless situations in our lives where we have been unable to produce love. We've tried and we've wanted to. We've wanted to be magnanimous and big-hearted and generous but we just hadn't got it in us and we've sunk down in the midst of that impotence. Father, if your Son Jesus, if his Spirit is still alive and can bring about that love in us, then Lord, we want that.

So Father, wherever you see our old self ruling our lives, wherever you see us wanting our own way or insisting on our own rights, will you reveal that to us during today and these coming days so that we can come into real freedom from self. Let us see how bad we are inside and that the only thing to do is not to patch our self up or improve it but to allow it to be destroyed with Jesus through the power of your Holy Spirit.

We ask that you'd allow his Spirit to fill us completely so that his supernatural love comes about

inside us – the love that is patient and kind, that is not jealous or boastful, that is not arrogant or rude, that does not insist on its own way, that is not easily provoked; that love that bears all things, believe all things and that never ends. Father we trust you to bring us into that however hard we have to suffer to come in. We trust you to bring us into that victory for your glory and for our own salvation. Amen.