

In Christ

Romans 6:10

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Have you ever heard of Boswell? He was a famous biographer of Dr. Samuel Johnson in the 18th century. If you've done some of English literature you probably have come across him. Boswell was really a very honest man and tried to be very honest about his own weaknesses. He wrote a diary and this is the entry for Sunday, November 28, 1762.

"I went to St. James' church and heard the service, a good sermon on 'By what means shall a young man learn to order his ways'. The advantages of early piety were well displayed. What a curious inconsistent thing is the mind of man. In the midst of divine service, I was laying plans for having women and yet I had the most sincere feelings of religion."

Now that's the problem that we've been talking about where you are supposedly thinking the most holy thoughts and yet you find there's another part of you deep down that is thinking the most unholy thoughts. Now, Dostoevsky talked about the same thing throughout all his novels, and he described it this way, "A man will talk to you with excitement and passion of the true normal interest of man. With irony he will upbraid the shortsighted fools who don't understand their own interest or the true significance of virtue. And within a quarter of an hour, without any outside provocation but simply through something inside him which is stronger than all his interests he will act in direct opposition to what he has just been saying about himself; in opposition to the laws of reason, in opposition to his own advantage, in fact in opposition to everything."

Now dear ones, I don't think there's one of us here in the theater who would not admit that, "Yes, we know that feeling and we've had it inside." And part of the popularity of the story of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" [by Robert Louis Stevenson] is that there seems inside each of us to be a Mr. Hyde. We have real problems being consistent and maintaining what we believe is right for our lives. What do the psychologists call it? Today the psychologists are so baffled but they admit there is just a perversity in human nature that they cannot explain. They have at last got to that point.

There was a time in the heyday of optimism when they thought they could explain it. Now they say, "No, there's just a perversity in man that we cannot explain." This Bible really does tie it down a lot better. It puts it into a definite category, if you look at it in James 4:17. It describes that situation exactly that we've been talking about.

James 4:17, "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it..." That's the situation. Boswell is sitting listening to the sermon and he knows that he ought to be thinking pure thoughts, "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin". So the Bible calls that kind of thing, sin. That force inside us that prevents us doing the best that we want to do, that's called sin.

Now, I think we need to see that that is sin. We need to get rid of all the brainwashing that we've had. We tend to say, "Drinking is a sin", or, "Hopping into bed with someone who isn't your wife, that's a sin." Now those are sinful acts. I agree with you. But do you see the heart of the problem is sin? It's the force inside you that you can't control. Often we think God is just trying to torture us by saying, "Oh, sin, sin, sin." God is trying to show you that sin is the force inside

you that you can't control.

God is not an unkind God. He doesn't just give a name to an outward act that you know fine well as wrong. He gives the name to the INWARD force that prevents you being what you want. He's trying to show you that there is an answer to it. Now, you can see that it's explained again in Romans 7:20. You'll see it's exactly the same experience. First of all you see it's, "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." Then he explains it a different way through Paul.

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." God takes us another step and says, "This sin is almost like a different person inside you. It's something almost that you cannot control. It's a supernatural force." Now what do most of us do? We struggle and struggle and struggle -- and try and try and try again. That's what we do.

We try to overcome that force. We know fine well that we're only accepted by God because of Jesus' death. We're not accepted by God because of all the good works we do. So it's interesting, we don't try to get God to accept us because of our good works. Yet that's the very thing we try to do to eliminate this evil inside us. We try good works. We try self-effort and strain and New Year resolutions.

In other words, we're ready to believe that we're justified before God by faith and not by works. But the tragedy is that most of us try to be sanctified by works. Now that's the real problem. That's why there are so many hypocritical defeated Christians around. Many of us are prepared to believe that God accepts us only because of what he's done in Jesus. But now that we're accepted, we believe that we can become like him just by our own self-effort. We cannot. God is trying to point out to us that there is an answer for this evil force within us.

Now, most of us haven't found that answer. It shows itself in our lives as a kind of independence. Someone wrongs you at home or in the office or at school. They wrong you. They treat you absolutely unfairly and unjustly. You know that you should depend on the life that flows from God to deal with them. That's what He says plainly in Luke 6:27-36. Or it can be the neighbor over the fence or in the dorm that does something against you. You know that you should take a certain attitude to them and let God's life deal with them but you work independently of God's life.

Luke 6:27-36: "But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

You come into that situation and you know fine well, "That's what I should do. That's what I should be like." Yet, you know fine well brothers and sisters, we decide we're going to live independent of

whatever life God puts forth to deal with that. We know in our hearts that his Holy Spirit will deal with the person if we simply love them but we determine we'll go independent of that. We decide we'll use our own weapons of resentment, sarcasm, criticism, hardness and unkindness.

You know that all that stuff just flows out against the person; doesn't matter what it is. It doesn't matter if it's a person next door to us who has dealt with us unkindly and unjustly or if it's a relative that has been unfair to us. We know that we should love them and let God's life deal with him but we live independent of his life. We decide we'll deal with it our own way.

In actual fact, what we're doing is saying, "That God up there doesn't know how to deal with this situation. But I do know how to deal with it and I am God in this situation and I am going to make it the way I want it and I am going to make it in my image, by my own force and by my own power." And that's what we do.

Now that's sin -- a whole attitude that wants to put a wrong right by our own power instead of loving the other person. We are mad people. We live with roots of bitterness within us, don't we? It would be interesting to find out how many of you have still got a root of bitterness against someone.

Moms and dads, how often we've had roots of bitterness against the kids because they wouldn't do as we said and we've never really forgiven them. And those of us who are sons and daughters, how often we've had a root of bitterness against our mom and dad because of some attitude years ago. We've long ago overcome the disadvantage but we still have a root of bitterness against them.

It's that old attitude you see, of wanting to put the thing right by our own power, by our own sarcasm, by our own resentment. Now Jesus was not like that. That's the amazing thing. Almost every one of us is like that but he wasn't like that. Now look at it in Mark 15. You see just a harrowing, provocative situation here.

Mark 15:29, "And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads, and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!'" You must remember that Jesus said at another time when he was telling Peter to put away his sword, "I could call millions of angels to my aid." And so he could have done it this time while they were jibing him and saying, "If you were really God you'd come down from the Cross."

Mark 15:31-32, "So also the chief priests mocked him to one another with the scribes, saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Those who were crucified with him also reviled him." Yet he held back from calling the angels to his aid. He held back from doing anything that would extricate him from the difficult situation. He trusted that God could even raise him from the dead if necessary, with God's own life.

You can see that this Jesus had an ability under the most provocative situations to stay steady and hold to the trust that his God would deliver him. Now dear ones, the only way you and I can experience the same victory is in having Jesus inside us completely. The only way you can ever come into that victory is to come into a real death with him to that right you have to deal with a difficult situation by sarcasm, by resentment, by criticism or by backbiting. And that's what he did.

He obviously came to a place where he said, "Lord, I do not care what they do to me. I don't care how they jibe. I don't care how they jeer. I am going to stay steady and love them and let you deal with them." Obviously he died to any right he had to call angels, archangels, anger, resentment, criticism, or sarcasm to his aid. Now brothers and sisters, when you come into dying to those things with Jesus, then you'll find that that amazing love inside him will begin to come out from you when you come into those situations. It's really true but it's only in Christ that it happens.

It's only in Jesus. You need a power greater than yourself that can produce that love. Now it is produced if you really cleave to Jesus. That's why so much of Christianity just gets back to that. It means embracing Jesus. It means pulling this person inside you and letting everything that is not like him be expelled on the Cross. That can be yours.

So it doesn't matter who has a terrible anger or a terrible resentment or a terrible bitterness here today. If you are willing to die with Jesus to your right to deal with that difficult situation yourself and instead trust God to do it, you will find that God will not only deal with the situation but Jesus will bring forth in you, an incredible love. Don't you see that that's what the world wants to see?

The world sees plenty of people being kind to each other. But the world sees very little of people being kind to people who are unkind to them. That's what makes the difference -- but it requires a real death. Dear husbands and wives, we're at it too in silly little ways. We think we'll put her right or we'll put him right. We don't put them right. We just mess it up all the more. It's the same in every home situation. We should shut up and let God deal with the situation, but that requires a real death to our independence of God's life and the substituting of our own methods.

Here's another obvious place that you see in regard to our status with other people. We're full of ideas of our rights, aren't we? We're very full of our rights like what we have a right to expect from someone else in the way of respect, or what we have a right to expect from someone else because they're our friends. We have a tremendous series of demands that we put on everybody.

We feel we have a right to expect certain things from our mother and a right to expect certain things from our father. And he's always a bad father if he doesn't give us those. We have a right to expect certain things from our children, our friends, our girlfriends, our teachers and from our pastor. Our whole life is bound not so much by the things that they ought to get from us but by the things that we think we have a right to get from them.

We talk a lot about Nixon's political debts. We all know that because of the system that we have, his coming to power involved incurring many political debts for all kinds of groups and all kinds of interests. He has spent maybe too much of his time paying off those political debts. But our tragedy is we don't spend our time paying off debts to other people. We spend time counting up the debts that they owe us.

If the wife doesn't behave in a certain way, you get resentful. You expect it from her. If the friend doesn't come up in a certain way in a time of difficulty, you get resentful. He's not being a true friend. We expect things from each other. It's as if we're gods and we have the right to receive all kinds of things from all the poor little minions that surround us in our life. Isn't it true that a lot of our resentment comes because they don't come through? And so we bind them and we bind ourselves.

We don't get a certain vacation that we think the friend or our parents should give us. The root of bitterness comes up inside and we feel that they haven't paid us what they owe us. Now brothers and sisters do you see that lets loose a force of resentment. And what we're actually doing is, we're asking too much from the world.

We're really being utterly unfair to each other. We demand love and attention from our wives, husbands, brothers, sisters and friends that couldn't give those things to us if they were the most loving people in the world. We're demanding superhuman things from the world. We demand tremendous excitement and exhilaration either from sex or from the motorbike, but we want something exciting. We're demanding incredible stimulation and exhilaration from poor things that can't give it to us. And that's a force of sin inside us.

Now Jesus was free from that and you can see it if you look in John 13. He just did not have this attitude that he was master of everything and that everybody should give things to him. He was not continually defending that position.

John 13:1-5 – “Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.”

John 13:12-14 – “When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.’”

This man obviously did not take the attitude that they owed respect, love and service to him. He obviously didn't feel anybody owed him anything.

Now, do you see that the only way to come into victory is to live that way? The reason why we have long wars of attrition on this is because we decide we'll do it gradually. We gradually get over the idea that people owe us things and we'll begin to give to others. But it will never come about. You'll never get rid of the resentment and bitterness that way. It can only come the way it came with Jesus. Let's look at Romans 6:10, the verse that we're studying today.

Romans 6:10 – “The death he died he died to sin,” (that is, the sin of that independence or the sin of these rights that we feel we have). “The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.”

Now do you see the three words, “once for all”? The only way to come into victory over that attitude is to be willing to die with Jesus to our rights to have anything from anybody. Now that's it, brothers and sisters.

It needs a crisis experience or a crisis decision. It's no use saying, "Oh well, I'll keep on expecting things from my mother because that's fair enough. After all, she has Mother's Day when we give her presents. We ought to get things from our mother. But, I'll try to ease off demanding

things from my friend." No. It has to be a death to your right to expect anything from anybody. The only way to do that is to come into the death that we suffered in Jesus.

It is a fact, that God destroyed us all in Jesus. And once you're dead, you can't really look around expecting too much. Corpses don't drink too many sodas and they don't ride too many motorbikes. When you come into a place where you're willing to be crucified with Jesus and you say, "Yes Lord, I see that what you did was destroy me in Jesus", then suddenly you are free from having rights and demanding things from people. It is a miracle. You find instead that Jesus lives his life through you and begins to look to God for everything.

It's a great thing for a husband and wife in bed together, when the husband is receiving from the Father all the love that he needs. Then it's a beautiful experience because suddenly he is not trying to get love from his wife. He is able to give her love. It's great when two friends in a dorm look to God for all the encouragement and help that they need in their examinations. Then the night before the examination they aren't demanding notes from each other or they aren't feeling resentful against the other person for not giving them this kind of help.

There's a great freedom that comes when you are willing to die with Jesus to getting things from the world or from other people and are prepared to live to God alone. I have found in my own life that it required a crisis time. It was a time when I really did decide and said, "All right Father, this I am not going to do anymore."

Just one more little thing loved ones that I'd like you to look at for a moment. How many of us have expressed it in a different way? We've lost our temper because the car wouldn't start at 30 degrees above zero. If it won't start at 30 above, what's the point of having it? It wouldn't start and the temper goes. Or, we're on the way out of the house and we have to meet a person in 10 minutes flat and the button comes off the coat and that's not the moment for it. Or, the vacation falls through and we were looking forward to it so much. Or, the job doesn't come through that we were fully expecting.

How many of us, in that situation, have found rising up within us a resistance and a rebellion against the events that are taking place? We feel this isn't fair. That's the old sin. God in his goodness has allowed these things to happen. He knows that there's something inside us to be dealt with but we don't see it that way at all. We don't see it from his point of view. We resist completely, not only his ideal will but his permissive will in the situation. And there rises up within us a tremendous resentment which we take out on everyone. We take it out on anybody that's anywhere nearby. We feel that they're responsible. The world's responsible and it's treating me unfairly.

Now, that's sin. You'll find that Jesus was just absolutely free of it. Let's look at Matthew 26:39-46. Whatever God planned for him ideally or permitted to come to him, he was willing to receive. It wasn't that it was all easy, or automatic. You can see this in this chapter.

Matthew 26:38-46 — "And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;'" (so he certainly considered the thing) 'nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.' And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done.' And again he came and

found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.'

Jesus showed no resentments about it but said, "Lord, if it's possible for it to happen another way, it would be good but if it's not then, okay let's go and meet it." That's an entirely different attitude towards an unexpected event. It's an entirely different attitude towards things that weren't convenient for him. Now do you see that the only way to come clear of that resentment that's bound up inside us is to enter into Jesus, into his death to what he thinks of the things that are happening. It's not fatalism.

Fatalism is giving up any hope that you'll ever understand what's happening and just succumbing to it. But this is rather an embracing of the thing saying, "Father, I don't know what this means at this moment, but I trust you that you're in charge of it and that you're weaving this unexpected accident into your plan and will use it to conform me to your image. So Father I accept it and embrace it." It's a real dying to your right to understand everything that happens to you the moment it happens. Instead it's a real living unto God. It's a real dying to the sin of resisting the events that God allows to come to you and a real living unto God in the midst of those events.

Do you see what it means? It means that a person who has died with Jesus (to that right to understand every event), can meet every event with real joy and peace, even the ones he doesn't understand. So a person who is in Jesus, who has died to self in that way, is utterly victorious all the time even in the midst of cancer, even in the midst of a relative dying, even in the midst of a job falling through. That person is dead to that resistance to those events. He is not a little god struggling with the God in heaven saying, "This shouldn't happen this way. I am going to make it happen another way." But he is a creature saying, "Father, I don't understand it but I know you know what the purpose of it is and I trust you, Lord. I know that you're going to work it out right anyway."

Now dear ones, all those freedoms can only come in Jesus. I have explained some of the mental machinations that take place within. But the actual dynamic for being freed from that sin of independence of God's life, that sin of insisting on your own rights and demanding from people all the time, that sin of resisting the events that happen to you -- freedom from that kind of sin can only come in Jesus.

What I am saying to you is: embrace Jesus. Cleave close to him and say, "Lord Jesus, I want you to live that kind of life through me again. Show me what I have to die to for you to do that." Dear ones, Jesus will begin to show you through the Holy Spirit. You'll begin to enter into an incredible victorious life.

You can't lose much after you're dead. You really can't. It doesn't matter what they do. It's a beautiful experience of having died to what you expect from this world. Yet you find yourself still in it but not demanding a whole lot of things from it. You are trusting God for everything you need. It's really good, and just a different way to go. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we know that this is what you want us to do. We know Father that you want us to see plainly that you destroyed us all in Jesus. We were all crucified with Christ 1900 years ago. We were such a bad lot that all you could do was to destroy and finish us. Our freedom is found in

accepting that and allowing you through the Holy Spirit to live whatever kind of life you want through us. Lord Jesus, we know that it's your kind of life that the Holy Spirit will live through us. We thank you that we can get insight into what we have to die to by looking at your own life and seeing what you died to.

Lord Jesus, we see that you died to any right to expect anything from your friends. You died to any right to feel resentment against Judas Iscariot. We thank you Lord Jesus that you died to any right to call legions of angels, sarcasm or criticism to your aid. You died to the right to have events go the way you wanted them to. Lord, we trust you to show each one of us how we can come into that death too and into the victory that you have where you live to God alone. Lord, we trust you to show us through the Holy Spirit that we may live victoriously for your glory. Amen.