

The Spirit of Life

Romans 8:2

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Will you turn please to Luke 4:18? And Jesus, you remember, is preaching almost for the first time in a temple and he says this, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Why was the Spirit of the Lord upon Jesus? He himself says, "Because God has anointed me to do things that I couldn't do without the Holy Spirit. I have to touch eyes of blind men and make them able to see. And I've to touch withered flesh of lepers and make the flesh new and fresh and clean. And I've to take self-centered, avaricious people like Zacchaeus, and I've to free them from the greed. And that's why the Holy Spirit is upon me". So the Holy Spirit enabled him to do things that he couldn't do himself.

What is the Spirit of the Lord? What is it really? First thing you notice about Jesus and his apostles is that they didn't even call it 'it'. They kept on referring to the Holy Spirit as a person. And you see that, dear ones, if you look at John 16:13. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has his mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you." And this Holy Spirit is the very life that flows through our Creator and his pre-existent Son, Jesus.

Loved ones, really, I know we've said it before but the Holy Spirit contains the very qualities and attributes of God. Now that's just true loved ones. The Holy Spirit contains the very abilities and qualities of God, our Creator. And he carries those in himself, much as the blood that flows through your veins carried into you, the very qualities of your dad and mom. So the Holy Spirit carries those same qualities of God and of Jesus in him. And wherever he comes, he brings those qualities.

The Holy Spirit transforms everybody that he touches. And he is God's plan for transforming us. He is like electricity from God. And you take a bulb like this, and it's just a dull glass bulb. And it really has very little to attract you to it. And it's of very little value to a man on a raft in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It's useless. It's one of the first things he throws away. And yet, when you attach it to a wire like that, and you plug it into a power point down there, that bulb experiences an energy flowing through it that can change a whole room. And you know the difference it makes to a room if you put lots of those little bulbs on a Christmas tree. It just changes the atmosphere of the whole place.

Yet the bulb itself is useless without the energy that flows through it. The electricity makes all the difference. Really loved ones, you don't realize it but there is very real daylight comes into this auditorium. If you have these classroom doors open, sun shines through there. And yet, you feel all the time it's morning, don't you? You feel it's daylight in here. And yet those things up there [referring to the fluorescent light fixtures] are useless on their own until that energy flows through.

Now the Holy Spirit is electricity like that. Electricity is only one of God's gifts for changing our lives completely. And the Holy Spirit is a far greater gift, and a far greater power. How many of you understand exactly how that works? [Referring to the light bulb] How many of you could describe precisely how that energy gets from the generator through the wires to this bulb? You know that even those of us who would attempt to do it this morning, even we know fine well, all we're doing is giving convenient names to forces whose source we do not really understand.

In fact all of us in science and medicine are always involved in describing how things happen but never being able to tell why they really do happen. We describe the results that they have but we cannot really describe their source. And you know even our apparently fixed descriptions, we have to keep adjusting when somebody discovers two extra particles that we never knew about.

So all our descriptive terms are very temporary. But how many of you would make a covenant this morning with me that you refuse to touch another switch or use another light until you fully understand how electricity works? Well, you know you'll say, "Don't be insane. Think of all the ladies, and no hair dryers! It would be terrible!" I hate to think what we men would be like with no electric shavers. It's just madness! We just don't think of it.

We say, "Of course we don't understand how it works. But we've seen its power demonstrated so repeatedly that we cannot avoid using it, even though we do not understand it". Really loved ones, it's the same with most of the forces in our world. We call them magnetism or electromagnetism or we call them fields, in order to persuade ourselves that we really know what's happening here. And we know fine well how little we understand.

Do you see that the Holy Spirit is simply another power that has certain laws of it's own that, if we understood, we would understand as well as we understand electricity. And as electricity has brought a brightness and a warmth and a heat and a light into our lives, God has other powers that will do far-far more than that. And this Holy Spirit is one such power, loved ones.

And I really do ask you to be intellectually consistent. We know fine well that with all our descriptions of electricity, we're describing virtually nothing that we truly understand. Now loved ones, we do not reject the electricity because we do not understand it. And I put it to you; it is intellectually inconsistent to turn away from this Holy Spirit because he is invisible, or because we cannot describe exactly how he works, because we're in the same situation with electricity and with most of the other powers in our world.

The Holy Spirit is God's plan for our lives. Loved ones, honestly, you are as unattractive as that thing there [points to the unlit light bulb] without the power of the Holy Spirit. Really! Just a mass of flesh and bones and blood that a chemist would maybe give you a dollar or a dollar and a half for. And an undertaker at the end, will not even give you that much. In fact you'll have to pay him to get rid of you. But even in our own personalities, we're just as dull and gray and uninteresting as that light bulb without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Loved ones, that's why, that's why so many of us are relatively dull and relatively boring and relatively uninteresting and relatively unattractive, because we have not seen that the Holy Spirit is an integral part of God's plan for us.

You know we've talked about it often. I've pointed out that our personalities, according to God are

very different from the personalities that most psychologists and philosophers say we have. Most psychologists and philosophers -- not all -- but most will say, "Well we have an outside, you see it here, and you've an inside. You have a physical side and you have a mental side. You have a visible part and an invisible part." And most of them will say, "Well, you have a body, and you have a soul. You have two parts."

It's really in a way like saying, "This lamp here has a glass bulb and it has a filament. And that's it." And of course it's not true. And God, you remember, told us in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 -- but many of you will know it off by heart. If you don't loved ones, you can look it up. But it's there that God outlines the personality that he had given us. "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And you see that God mentions a third part of our personalities. Most philosophers and psychologists will say, "Yeah, a body and a soul." But God talks about a spirit. And really it's the same way and it has the same importance as has the fact of talking about contacts in the light bulb, because you can see that it hasn't only the glass bulb around it, or the filament, but it has contacts here -- depending on the kind of attachment it has. But it has a contact that connects with the power source. And loved ones, it's the same. It's the same with our own spirits.

God's plan was that. [Shows diagram of the personality as three concentric rectangles] That we would have three parts to our personalities, or we would exist on three different levels. And the whole purpose of this third part [shows the innermost rectangle] was that it would connect up with his Holy Spirit, and that we would receive the power of the life of God through our spirits and into our souls and into our bodies and out into the world. [Shows arrow from God to the inner rectangle, and arrow from inner rectangle (spirit) to the next level (soul), and an arrow from that (body) out to the world] And that was the Father's plan.

You know that if you follow through the 'soul' in the bible, you find that it covers all that we talk about when we talk about the psychological part of us. The very word for soul is psyche, 'psuche' in Greek. And it means our mind and our will and our emotions. And most of us have trouble with our mind and will and emotions because that's as far as we go. We try to operate from there down [on diagram indicates the second rectangle, the soul with mind, emotions and will, and the third rectangle, the body]. And whenever we have trouble with nervousness or worry or paranoia, we go no further than this [on diagram indicates the mind, emotions, and will]. And we try to manipulate these, one against the other.

The problem is, loved ones, that we were never meant to operate without this power flowing through us [on diagram indicates the Holy Spirit coming into the spirit], and that there is a whole other part to our personalities where, through communion with God, we are able to receive the Holy Spirit of his uncreated life through us. And that Holy Spirit is able through the intuition of our spirits to direct us as to what part we are to have in God's plan for completing his creation, because it is not completed.

He put the oil where it is because he intended some men sooner or later, and some women sooner or later, to release that oil in the way that he wanted, to improve and complete his creation. And through the intuition of our spirits we would receive that direction and then our conscience would constrain our minds to express those things out through our bodies. And so we would begin to develop God's world in order, the way he wanted to.

Of course as we did that -- we've often said it before -- our whole emotions would begin to experience the joy and the satisfaction of our communion with God. And the same joy that runs through Jesus and the Father, we would begin to experience ourselves. We would begin to experience it just naturally.

Loved ones, you know yourself that most of the happiness's that we create for ourselves, are nothing compared with the tremendous satisfaction and joy you have when you have someone who loves you. You know how we spend so much money on ourselves when we're going out with each other, as an excuse to be together. And suddenly we discover, when we marry, that it wasn't going places that gave us the happiness at all. It was being with each other.

There is just no joy and no peace and no satisfaction like having someone know you completely, and then be known by you. And that was God's plan -- that we would have such joy and delight in our Father, in our Creator, we'd enjoy being with him so much that our emotions would be utterly joyous and utterly at peace -- so that we would pass that all to others each day, so that the people in the office would receive a joy from us that they couldn't explain.

Then it was God's plan, you know, that in the perfect economy of the world that would result, our bodies would receive all the food and shelter and clothing that they needed. That was God's plan, loved ones. And that's called the 'law of the Spirit of life'. That's the 'law of the Spirit of life', using 'law' in the sense that we use it in science. It's the description of how a thing would work. That's God's description of how the Spirit of life would work in our personalities, and work out to his world. And that was God's plan for us.

You know it would seem madness for anyone to turn their back on that. It would seem madness for me to get a box of matches and try to create some heat and light in that bulb. And you'd just laugh at it. Ridiculous! Create heat and light in the bulb by using matches? You'd have to strike too many. Well, it wouldn't matter how many you struck, you'd never get the heat and light in that bulb that came from the electricity. And we would normally think, "Well, that's sensible. We wouldn't dream of working any other way but the way God has outlined."

Remember what old Dostoevsky said, "The only reason a man or woman will act against their own best advantage is to have their own way." And really it's true, isn't it? The only reason we act against our own best advantage is to have our own way. And you remember that's what we did. We determined we will do it our way -- us and Frank [Frank Sinatra, famous for the song, "I Did it My Way"], would do it our way. And we decided, "Yeah, we'll do it our own way. We'll do it without the Holy Spirit. And we'll run this world the way we want to."

Of course, immediately we did that, God just cut off access to the Holy Spirit. He really had to, loved ones. If he hadn't, it would have been like giving electricity to a group of people who were determined not to use it for heat and light but to electrocute as many other human beings as they could. That's really it.

The Holy Spirit has infinite supernatural powers, really. Loved ones, the Holy Spirit is able to make withered, creeping flesh of a leper whole and clean. The Holy Spirit is able to take an avaricious, greedy, driving, covetous person and make them generous and loving and outgoing. The Holy Spirit is able to do supernatural things. He is the supernatural, infinite life that runs through God himself.

And so God could not give us the Holy Spirit once we determined to spend it on ourselves, on self-gratification. It would really be like making nuclear power available to a bunch of rebels in a mountain stronghold. It would be like making available to human beings, a power with which they were able to destroy themselves immediately or to pollute the whole universe. And so God cut off our access to the Holy Spirit.

Of course, immediately he did that, we were left with all kinds of dissatisfactions. We have no idea through the intuition of our spirits, how we should develop the world, so we began to develop it whatever way we wanted and usually for our own benefits. So Exxon [US petroleum company] rushed in -- and we talked about it before -- and they rushed in not in order to develop fossil fuels in a sensible way, but for their own sakes and for their own greed.

And we ourselves did the same. We began to develop the world in our own way. We began to manipulate it for ourselves, instead of our minds being ruled by God's mind, and ruling over his world, our minds began to be used to manipulate the world to our advantage.

Our emotions lacked utterly the satisfaction and joy that we would have got from fellowship with God. We began to try to find that satisfaction in events that would give us excitement and thrills, in human relationships that would provide us with some of the 'eternity' that God's friendship alone could provide us with. So we got discontented with each other. We were always expecting from each other more than we could actually provide for each other.

So husbands began to demand too much from their wives. Friends began to demand too much from their friends. And everybody began to feel dissatisfied and discontented. And then, you know finally what happened, our bodies lacked -- in an economy that was chaotic -- our bodies lacked shelter and food and clothing. And our whole lives began to be dominated by the need for food and clothing and shelter. And instead, loved ones, of our whole personalities working like that [shows on diagram arrows from God to our spirits, out to our souls, out to our bodies and out to the world] from God, out to the world, our whole personalities began to work the other way completely [shows arrows all the other way]. And we began to get from the world, and from other people, all the things that we were meant to get from the Holy Spirit.

It never worked. The more we got caught into this system, the more we realized we were locked into it, because God himself could not give us this Holy Spirit now, simply because our whole personalities were working in this reverse order [shows arrows the other way again]. And so it was impossible now for him to give us the Holy Spirit even if he had wanted to.

So we found ourselves locked into the law of sin and death. Sin is trying to live independent of God. And death is the loneliness and deterioration that we increasingly feel in our own lives. You know it yourselves, if I lit a match, I could get some heat, but it's little compared with the heat that would come from the light. If I lit a match, I could get some light but it's nothing compared with the light that would come from the electricity.

So we ourselves, in trying to get from other people and from the world -- some of the joy that we should get from God -- we derive a little joy from time to time -- a little joy. We derive a little warmth from other people's recognition and acknowledgment and approval from time to time, but it always has a tinge of dissatisfaction in it. It always has a tinge of decline in it and of loneliness. And as life goes on, of course, more and more of us realize that it is the beginnings of

death that is setting in upon us, because we are not, at the end of the day, getting everything from the world that we really want.

You men certainly can testify, can't we, that as life goes on, we find that some of the great dreams we had, aren't coming through the way we thought they were. Even some of us who are in our 20's have begun to scale down some of the great aspirations we had. And we begin to discover some of the disappointment and the half satisfaction of death. That's what sin brings, loved ones. That's the law of sin and death.

Now would you look at the verse today, because it really talks about those two laws? That's the way sin works and the way it brings death. There's a verse that proclaims that God has provided an answer and it's in Romans 8:2. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death."

How did it happen? The reason why God couldn't give us the Holy Spirit again was because of this reversed order in our personalities [on diagram shows arrows from the world outside in to our bodies, then in to our souls, then into our spirits], because our personalities were always working from the outside in. We were trying to get enough shelter, food and clothing to give us a sense of security and a sense of enjoyment so that, maybe we would be able to feel a sense of exhilaration in our spirits.

When Jesus died, God put that whole reverse personality into Jesus and destroyed it. He destroyed that whole old self and that old world. He destroyed all of this world the way it now works. You remember it says, "Our old self was crucified with Christ." And in fact, when Jesus was crucified, the whole selfish world order was crucified and destroyed. This whole group of two and half billion, three and a half billion little parasites living off each other -- all of that was destroyed in Jesus 1900 years ago, so that God was able to make the Holy Spirit available to us.

Loved ones, the Holy Spirit becomes available immediately to any of us who realize that that has happened. If you say, "But why am I still living this way if all of that has already been crucified and destroyed, if I have already been set free?" Why do you see stars that no longer exist? Because we do. All of us who look up to the sky at night see stars that don't exist any longer. They've died millions and millions of years ago. And what we see is the light that left them millions of years ago, and is still traveling towards us.

Loved ones, that's the case with that old self of yours, and with this whole old world system. It died 1900 years ago, but you and I keep on looking at the strife and the envy and the anger in our own hearts. And we keep on saying, "No, it's still alive. I am still alive the way I used to be." Loved ones, we're looking at the light that has come from a world that has died.

God is not worried about the chaos of the world because he has already destroyed it in Jesus. And already he has sorted out all the people who are going to live with him in eternity. Already we have been crucified with Christ. And the moment you are willing to live like Christ in your own life, that moment the same Holy Spirit of uncreated life will begin to motivate your whole personality, really.

You don't have to struggle with God about it. You don't have to plead with him to give you the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is around us at this moment. The Holy Spirit is here in this auditorium. He is able to take hold of your whole personality if you will be willing to live like Jesus.

That is, if you will start living, depending on God for the direction in your life, depending on God for the joy and satisfaction in your life, depending on God to guide you so that you'll have enough food and shelter and clothing to see you through this life -- instead of looking to all of us, instead of looking to your boss, instead of looking to your parents, instead of looking to your professors, instead of looking to society, instead of depending on them and trying to draw all those things from them, if you're willing to die to that whole old world system, God will fill you with his own Holy Spirit.

Loved ones, it's just a choice really. You've to choose whether you lock yourself into the law of sin and death or whether you lock yourself into the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus.

See there are older brothers here that wonder about the bank account and we say, "Will God supply the bank account deficit?" Loved ones, if you would settle to live like Jesus this morning, God would work that thing out, and would make you strong enough to bear whatever he chose not to work out.

And there are some sisters here who sit saying, "Well, if I don't make my own way in regard to marriage, God won't find somebody for me to marry.", He will loved ones. He did for 2000, 3000 years with all his servants in the Old Testament and New Testament. He'll surely do it for you. If he arranged the right girl for Isaac, he'll surely arrange the right girl for you. If he arranged the right husband for Rachel, he'll surely arrange the right husband for you.

In other words, if you will settle on God and begin to trust him for all these things, he will make available to you the Spirit of life. And the attributes and qualities of God miraculously become yours. Really, loved ones! And all you have to do is decide, are you going to lock yourself into the law of sin and death or into the law of Spirit of life in Christ Jesus? And that's it, you know.

If you sit there and say, "Oh it must be more complex than that." It's not, if you decide this morning. And you know, each of us have some things that we're thinking of at this moment. What about the bank account? What about marriage? What about exam? What about my future? What am I going to do next summer? What about the sense of inferiority I have? Nobody really cares much about me. Nobody recognizes me. I am not known by anybody here. I am just a little cipher here. Nobody appreciates me. Nobody approves of me. Nobody praises me. Who will care about what job I did?

Loved ones, all those things -- if you'd stop trying to sort them all out yourself and stop trying to manipulate it all so that somehow you'll turn out with a reasonably satisfactory life, and you'd give up all the manipulations and say, "Lord God, you put me here. And I want to live off you and stop living off other people. I want to start trusting you," that moment, loved ones, the Holy Spirit will begin to come through your life. Truly! Really!

So, I wouldn't wait. I wouldn't wait for a whole lot more complex explanations or complicated books to read. I'd just settle it this morning where you are at this moment.

You remember Stanley Jones [E. Stanley Jones 1884–1973, Methodist Christian missionary and theologian] was in India as a missionary. And his health broke. And he came back to the States; got gathered together again, went back to India, tried it for another couple of weeks. Health broke again, not only physically, his whole emotional strength broke. He really had a breakdown; went up to the hills, came back down again, did another two weeks of ministry, health broke again. Went back

to the States for another six months, back to India, health broke again.

One night, he was trying to say prayers --not saying them very successfully, but trying to say them -- and then a voice seemed to come through to him, "Stanley, will you hand the whole thing over to me?" And he said, "Yes."

I heard him four years ago in Minneapolis -- he was 84-85, and he was doing press-ups every night before he went to bed, and he was preaching six months in India and six months in the States for 40 or 50 years.

Loved ones, that's it. You're not here on your own. You're not a miserable little cipher trying to manipulate all the other billions of us so that you'll be able to continue to breathe and eat. You could trust the Father. You really can. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we felt all along that the satisfaction we're trying to get from other people will never utterly satisfy us. Father, we have felt for a long time that this whole business of trying to get satisfaction and a sense of recognition and identity from our jobs is hopeless. Father, even the things that we have tried to work out and have kind of worked out the way we wanted to, even they have been a bit of a let down. Father we... [audio ends].