

The Importance of the Mind

Romans 8:5

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

How many of our conflicts with others arise just because of self? Have you ever thought of that? How many of our conflicts at home or in our rooms in the dorms arise just because of self? You know the way it goes with a husband and wife, "Well love, you might have had my supper ready for me. You know I've had a hard day and I have to go straight out again." As if really our body were just about to disintegrate if we missed one hot meal in the week. Or the other side, "Well, you know that I am always ill, at this time of the month. And I am always irritable and I can't help it. And you know that's the way it is, and you ought to provide for it." As if we were just about to have a nervous breakdown if he missed one cue, or put one step wrong.

Or in the dormitory situation, "I am going to be late because of the mess you've left that bathroom in." As if for years we have been making up our faces or washing ourselves in absolutely spotless, clinically, perfectly arranged atmospheres.

The fact is that all these little irritable resentful, hostile comments that we make to each other that kind of just niggle and niggle and destroy the peace a wee bit and a wee bit more -- all those irritable and resentful comments are absolutely unnecessary, because we all know we're going to meet exactly those conditions a hundred times before we die. And we're not going to say a thing about them. And we're going to manage very well.

In fact, if you think of the numbers of things you've faced since you left home that you just would not have faced at home, the number of things you've put up with since you left home, that you just felt your mother was utterly a failure if she didn't provide them for you, you can see that repeatedly loved ones, we're facing a lots of circumstances that aren't perfect ever. And yet we'll get on quite well despite that.

So really the little irritable, resentful remarks are not necessary. And we know they aren't necessary. But it is great swelling, bombastic pretentious self. Isn't it really? "You might have had my supper ready for me. You know I've had a hard day." "You know I am always sick at this point in the month. You know I get irritable." "Provide for me." "Get out of my way." It's really great fat self, like some great, fat river barge just plowing its way down the middle stream and rocking all the little boats that are up against the bank, hitting them over and destroying their lives, because we want everybody to know that, "Here I come. I am coming." And really it's just self, sickening, ugly, great, swelling, bombastic self, wanting everybody to know that it's coming, and that you have to notice me. You have to notice me.

Loved ones, how many of our conflicts at home come from just self? They aren't necessary at all, not at all. If we just shut our mouths and let self go down for once, there would be no conflict at all. But self is often just like some great city that spends its time trucking into its centers all the fruit and vegetables it needs from all the outlying parts, and from everybody else so that it can use them, and the raw materials that it's grabbing from everybody to begin to make itself important again by the things that it makes with these things, or the security it gets from them.

Self is just so often like a city under siege that spends its time using every inch of the outlying

territory to try to get from it what it needs. And really all the time, it's bent on taking in from everybody else to make itself secure. And oh -- we've often looked at it -- but it's just like that. [Shows diagram of the personality with 3 levels, like concentric rectangles with the spirit in the center, the soul is the next level and the body around it.] And it looks out and it's determined to haul into it all the food that it needs, [shows arrows from outside into the body, into the soul and into the spirit] get its little tummy nice and full. And it'll kind of make self feel comfortable and satisfied. "Yeah well, I am going to have no trouble with that now. I have had a good meal." And then it hauls in from somewhere else, all the clothes that it wants, especially if other people have clothes that it likes, it wants to have the same kind of clothes. And, "Yeah, well now I've got the right clothes so, no problem with inferiority complex from that angle. Okay, I've the right food and the right clothes..."

And then you know, we get on a little and we graduate and we begin to gather some money together. And it's a right shelter. And we begin to haul in the right shelter. And So-and-So has a nice apartment, "Boy! Well, ours is okay but single bedroom? Well, double bedroom would be nice. Yeah, and one bath -- well it's okay this time, but what then?" By the time we're finished, we're hauling in -- trucking in from everywhere else, and really, utterly preoccupied and concerned with whether we're getting enough.

And then you know how it works. When you've kind of secured the body from outside by providing it with all these things, then old self continues to draw in from the body again. And it begins to use the body to provide it with all the little exciting thrills and emotional stimulations that it needs. And it begins to use the body to bring in to the old emotions, all the feelings that will give it a feeling of satisfaction and enjoyment. And again all the emotions are drawing in from the body.

Of course, in at the center of the whole thing, sits a great, huge 'general'. And he looks after the whole operation. And he spends his whole time doing this. His job is to look after self. And he has telescopes, and he looks out. And if he sees anything happening on the fringes at all that would hurt self, he's out there and sending the army out to defend self. And if he thinks that self may, by any chance, in ten years' time be short of clothes, he sends out reinforcements out there to ensure that self will have the clothes.

And loved ones, it's that great person there. [Shows diagram again with self in the soul with mind and emotions and will.] He just sits there in headquarters hauling in, hauling in, hauling in to the body -- then hauling in from the body to the emotions. And all the time in a subtle way, using the people that he has already used to get all this food and shelter and clothing from -- using all the colleagues and friends that he has already made use of to get that stuff in.

He now begins to try to manipulate their lives, because that, of course, will give him himself the most satisfaction, when he begins to be able to manipulate and move and motivate the minds and the lives of his colleagues and his friends. The more lives he begins to control, the more he feels himself important. The more people that he can influence and change, the more lives he can upset by the things he does, the more he feels he is worth being regarded as god. And really his aim then begins to be to control all the outlying people and begin to make them go around him so that he has his own little solar system. And he is the sun. And they all circulate round him. And he really begins to feel, "Now I have identity."

Now loved ones, so often, so often in clearer or in less clear, in milder or in stronger forms, our

mind is involved in that kind of self life. And that's what the Bible of course calls the 'life of the flesh' -- the 'life of the flesh', because it's taken up with getting from other people what you need to make yourself important. Or it's called in the bible, 'sin in the flesh'. And that's you remember, what we've been talking about the past few Sundays.

How many of us walk according to the flesh like that? [Indicating his diagram with arrows from the outside in.] We're walking that way day-after-day, making sure that self is well stocked up. And really that's what causes our conflicts. And half of those little conflicts over whether the bathroom caused you to be late or not, half of those little conflicts come from this 'general' inside being just trigger happy.

He's so insecure and he's so uncertain that he doesn't know whether this bathroom affected the issue or not. He doesn't know whether you being irritable to him, affected you or not; but he thinks it might. So he's trigger-happy and he goes out after you. And it's all because there's such insecurity -- because self is involved in defending itself all the time.

Of course what we found was the whole thing came to an end, the moment you realized that that self has been crucified with Jesus. The moment you once grasped the fact that that self that you spent all your time defending and protecting was destroyed with Jesus, that moment you're suddenly freed from being a slave to protecting and defending yourself.

And really it's just a miraculous moment when you realize that. And of course the truth that we saw was, God just did not let us be born as babies until he had taken care of that great bombastic swelling self. He just wouldn't dream of letting us into his universe with that bombastic self alive. And he actually crucified it in Jesus. Really we're like rattlers [Rattle snakes] from whom the poison has been extracted. We have no more any power to destroy his universe.

Of course, you can see that yourself. Almost the biggest spaceship any of us could send up still wouldn't affect more than maybe one or two planets.

So really the poison has been extracted from us. We, with all our self-gratification, can never destroy God's universe. All we can do is, as poor old rattlers whose poison has been extracted, keep on rattling at each other -- keep on irritating each other -- keep on pretending that, "Well, our self is still here and we still have to defend it."

The truth is of course we don't. If you were crucified with Jesus in 29 A.D., your funeral took place in 29 A.D. That self with all its great needs, that was destroyed in 29 A.D. And all that movement [shows diagram arrows again] of your personality was destroyed then. And really it's a fact that each one of us, you know, Stan Halverson, Miles Johns, John VanDerkay, Ernest O'Neill, Mike McKay, Helen Christiansen -- each one of us had that old self dealt with it in Jesus 1900 years ago.

At the moment, this life that we have is not ours, and does not need to be defended by us. In fact, it belongs to Jesus. And he can defend himself, and he's well able. He defended his own life as he wanted to. He can defend ours also.

And that's really what God has done. And that I think we've shared often before -- that all this preoccupation with ourselves is unnecessary. We don't need to defend ourselves. God knows what you need. He knows what I need. And he is able to give you what you need. And you don't need to keep grabbing it for yourself. And in fact that grabbing attitude that you have, God has laid that to

rest in Jesus, if you would just, for one moment, accept that and dwell upon it. And really that's the only way for it to become real.

The great 'general', the mind that governed all the previous life, he has to govern this present one. Loved ones, the only way for it to become real is for your mind to dwell on those fact centers, for you to set your mind on the fact that that great bombastic, swelling self was destroyed with Jesus, and does not need to continue to be bombastic or swelling, because God will look after you for you.

And really that's what this verse says. Maybe you'd just look at it, loved ones. Then we'll just close in a moment or two. It's Romans 8:5 and it's the verse that we're looking at today. Really it's the secret of living according to the Spirit or walking after the Spirit -- the first step in doing that. "For those who live according to the flesh, set their minds on the things of the flesh." And that's what we described there in that diagram; the old mind concentrating on, "Am I getting enough food? Am I getting enough shelter? Am I getting enough clothing?" That's what we're preoccupied with. "Will we make it through these six months in this recession situation? Are we going to have enough?" Our minds are built on that -- are dwelling on that. "But those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit".

Really, the only way to walk after the Spirit is to set your mind on your position in Jesus. In other words, morning breaks. The alarm goes off. You waken up. You have two worlds that you can set your mind on. You can set your mind on the unreal one from which you have already being delivered, the one that you can see and that you can touch and that is on its way out. You can set your mind on the snow outside, the cold inside in your room, the bad taste in your mouth, the prospect as you look forward to all the miserable assignments and unpleasant commitments that you have that day. And you: you're with your poor little body having to exist through it all, to face it all and somehow to hack some order out of that chaos before the sun sets.

You can set your mind on that. And if you set your mind on that loved ones, the hinter land of your flesh will truck in all the feelings of inadequacy and inferiority and insecurity and worry and anxiety that it can truck in. And you will start the day filled with preoccupation with the mass of things that you have to do and you can't do.

Or, you can get up when the alarm goes off and you can set your mind on the fact, "Lord Jesus, I thank you that this body of mine, I don't have to drag through this day." "Lord, I thank you that this self has been crucified with you. I thank you Lord Jesus that I have been destroyed with you. And Ephesians 2 says I have been raised with you and I am sitting with you at the right hand of the Father. And you have tucked me safely up in heaven with you. Thank you Father that that's where I am."

"Lord Jesus, thank you that that's where I am, in the real world that exists forever. And I can now from that exalted position above every rule and authority and power, look down. And you and I are going to face the first step which is breakfast. And the next step Lord, you will have organized when I get to the next step. But I don't need to think of the office until you bring me to the office. And you are going to exert the power in my life that I need when I get there."

But loved ones, the first step in walking after the Spirit, is the setting of the mind. Do you see that?

The same thing -- you get to the office and you have two worlds again. You have the world of the flesh that is unreal because God has already delivered you from it. He says, "You have been crucified with Jesus. This isn't your office. This is my office. And I am free to use your mind and body in this office as I want, to bring about my order in it."

You can either look at it in that light and you can say, "Thank you, Father. You have crucified me. I don't have to drag this Ernest O'Neill through this office day today. I thank you that I am destroyed with you and I am raised with you Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Father. Thank you. Thank you that this mind and body now is in this office for you to use as you want. And you can begin to bring the warming life of your Holy Spirit into my boss's heart through me today. Thank you, Lord, that I don't need to try to defend myself against him, or against my colleagues."

Loved ones, those of you who are sales people, in the old fighting over jobs that must be increasingly taking place at this time, it's not your job to fight your corner. It's not your job to fight your corner. God put you on this earth. He knows where you have to be. He knows what job you've to have. If he takes the job away from you, no doubt he'll still give you power to continue to live as long as he wants you to. But it's not your concern to fight your corner. It's not your concern to keep your job at all cost. It's your concern to set your mind on your position in Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, and say, "Thank you, Lord, for this present position that I have. I want you to do what you want in this situation as you please."

But loved ones, without exercising the mind in some way, you cannot walk after the Spirit.

I think some of you have been the victims, like so many of us here, of the brainwashing in our society at present. And that brainwashing is done by very powerful forces, simply because those forces know that the first step in walking after the Spirit is setting the mind. And those forces have persuaded us again and again, "You cannot set your mind. You cannot set your mind on certain things. You cannot think what you want to think. You cannot possibly oppose every stray, distracting thought that is coming into your head."

Loved ones, you can. You can control your mind. It is not the plaything of society. It is not the plaything of the hoardings and the media. You can set your mind firmly on this 'world of the Spirit' as opposed to the 'world of the flesh'.

And I know some of you are sitting there and saying, "Brother, I've tried, but my mind is undisciplined. My mind is distracted. My mind goes in circles." Loved ones, you can bring that mind under your control if you continue to exercise discipline over it, because that 'is' your mind. God 'gave' you that mind. And for years, you may have let it drift hither and thither, and for years other people may have used it. But you have the power to pull that mind back under your control, because that old dissipated mind that you used to have was destroyed in Jesus. And you're now in him and you have his mind. And 'that' mind you can control.

So loved ones, I'd really encourage you to take the first step tomorrow morning or even today, because you face it now. You know. I'll pronounce the benediction; immediately you have two worlds to look at. You have just two worlds. Is this you, on your own, in this little world with all these masses of people around, and you have to say the right thing if someone says something to you, and you have to assert yourself if somebody's walking over you? Is that it? Is that what it is? Or in fact, has that old self been destroyed, and you don't need to carry it on your back?

Do you see that God, our Father, wants you to enjoy the ride? He wants you to enjoy the ride -- to stop trying to haul that old self around on your back, trying to make a great reputation for yourself, or trying to keep yourself safe. God wants you to enjoy his 'Life Spirit' coming through you -- indifferent to what affect it may have on you, yourself, because he has done the worst to you that could be done. He has crucified you in Jesus. So that's finished with. Your funeral has taken place. Now you can get on and enjoy living, and that's really what he wants you to see.

So now loved ones, I know that's full of intellectual paradoxes that only the Holy Spirit can resolve. But will you see that the first step in walking after the Spirit is to begin to set your mind on the things of the Spirit? Begin to set your mind on the reality of your position in the spiritual world. I really do pray that some of you will come free of it this week, because it is -- it's just a beautiful way to live. It's just great. Let's pray.

Father, we know that this is why Jesus died. We know Father, that you put us all into him and destroyed us there so that we wouldn't have the burden of trying to defend ourselves, and assert ourselves, and get our own way in life. We could instead begin to treat you as we used to treat our dads and moms when we were little children --just trust them implicitly, leave it all up to them to do the things that were necessary, and we would simply do what they told us.

Father, thank you that we're still in that position. And yet you'll often ask us to face harder things than we ever faced before but somehow it's not us facing them ourselves. It's simply us looking to you, preoccupied with you Lord Jesus, and with our position, right next to you at the right hand of God, looking down on this old world here and beginning to bring it into order by your power. Father, we thank you.

Thank you that those who walk according to the flesh, set their minds on the things of the flesh, and that if we're walking according to the flesh, that's what we're doing. But those who walk according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. Holy Spirit, we ask you to begin to give each one of us notice, this week, when we are setting our minds on the things of the flesh, and remind us, and prompt us, so that we can set our minds immediately on the things of the Spirit, and live above it all and yet responsible in the midst of it all. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.