

Living Spirits and Living Bodies

Romans 8:11

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Let's think of a situation that is typical for almost all of us in America about five o'clock in the evening, okay? Sitting behind the old wheel and those glowing red lights stretch endlessly in front of us and then everybody jerks together and we all start. And the foot goes down, we blast forward, then we screech the foot onto the brake and stop once again, avoided putting the engine in the other fellow's trunk, sigh, and then starts again. And we're all sitting there and then we think, "Boy I'm hungry. I haven't had a decent meal since last night's dinner." And really, we're not hungry. We know fine well it's a medical fact we could live off our own fat for another two or four months without eating anything else.

But we suddenly feel, "I'm hungry. I'm starving." And we're not starving, but really deep down, we're worried. We're worried about the tires, the tires are getting a bit bare, the back wheels, and worried about the recession, worried about the job and how long we're going to have it and worried about our marriage and our family. And all we're really doing is feeding the worry. That's why we're hungry and we just feel off. If we could only get home and get something to eat and then we see those lights stretching on ahead of us and we think, "It's impossible. This thing is never going to move. What's wrong up there? Somebody must have an accident."

And then we look over at the next fellow and we say, "If he would only move back, I could get into that lane. They're going faster. Why doesn't he hold back?" And boy, you begin to wish that fellow had some sense. Why doesn't he see that you have every right to move into that lane? And he won't move. And the old hands grip the wheel more tightly and the foot jams itself on the brake a little harder -- and more and more all the old pressure begins to get in on us and the old stomach begins to churn and you think, "Why don't they start? Why don't they start? Why do those lights take so long to change?"

And the stomach's churning and the muscles are tightening up and the old head's beginning to thump and all-in-all the old body is beginning to die more, and more, and more; and it really is. The whole body gets tight and tense and that's why the doctors say heart attacks occur more during the rush hours than at any other time -- because people experience tremendous physical pressure upon themselves sitting in those old traffic jams. And of course, that's what living in the flesh is. That's living in the flesh. That takes tremendous toll, dear ones, off your whole body and mine. That's what makes our glands secrete too much fluid and create acid in our stomachs and produce ulcers. That's what makes our muscles tighten up more and more in our bodies.

That's what increases the flow of blood to the point where we are in trouble with high blood pressure. It's living in the flesh that way. Living just the play thing, really, just the play thing is what we are. Of all the circumstances around us, all the physical environment in which we find ourselves, all the actions of other people, they're all pressing in upon us and we're letting them right in there and they're just wearing our body out. And that's why you remember, last Sunday we read in that verse in Romans that your bodies are dead because of sin. In actual fact, our bodies are dying, dying, dying because of this whole attitude we have that we're responsible for our own lives and us alone and there's nobody to take care of us at all.

And it's really living outside in. That's what it is. It's living from the outside in. Your boss criticizes you; your heart falls to the bottom. Somebody else praises you; you rise right up and get puffed up in pride. Somebody else crosses you; you work up resentment. Somebody just has to press a button and you produce the right reaction that destroys your body a little more and a little more. That's living from the outside in. That isn't the Creator's plan for us. His plan for us is to live from the inside out.

In other words, his plan is that we ourselves would be preoccupied not with the red lights stretching endlessly in front of us, not with this fellow in the lane next to us who won't move back, not with the fact that the old tummy seems to be rumbling and we need more food -- but his plan is that we should be preoccupied with what he wants us to do at that moment on his earth. And if, of course, our whole days were given over to the purpose that the Father has in putting us here, if that was uppermost in our minds -- then we would have a great confidence that he would keep his promise with us. That we were seeking first his kingdom and all these other things would be added unto us.

So the bare tires would be replaced in time and God would ensure that we would have the money to do it. Yeah, we weren't going to get home exactly in time for the TV program but that was not going to cause a second catastrophe in our life. We were going to live after that moment and God was going to enable us to be happy despite that. Our marriage was in his hands and we would begin to relax in that old seat and sit back and begin to sense, you know God is taking care of us and what I have to be concerned with is what he wants me to do at this moment.

And then you begin to live from the inside out. You begin to look up to the Father, away from the glowing lights and you begin to say, "Lord, thank you for this car. And thank you, Father that you will keep it going as long as in your wisdom you know I need it. Father, thank you, thank for that. And thank you for this opportunity to rest back in this seat and relax. Thank you I have half an hour here to rest and just think of what you're doing. And here all I do is fiddle these feet around a little and the thing goes and I turn the wheel and it turns. Thank you, Lord. Thank you for that. And Father that poor fellow in the car next to me, look at the frown on his face. Lord, will you come down to him at this moment and remind him that you're in control and that you're God and that you love him and would you take the frown off his face."

And loved ones, you begin to live from the inside out. And that's God's will for us; to begin to live from the inside out, to be concerned with what your maker wants you to do and what he's thinking about you at that moment and then you begin to find something changing inside. In other words, if you're prepared to identify yourself with Jesus and to be concerned first with your Father's business, then if you're prepared to identify yourself with his life and have prepared to identify yourself with the way he died and the way he died -- to the noise round about him and the cross and the antagonism of the Roman soldiers -- I bet you his stomach wasn't churning. I bet you he was at peace. In fact, he obviously was, wasn't he? Your stomach couldn't be churning as you said, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit" if you identify yourself with Jesus and his death to all the effect of those external stimuli upon you; both the good and the bad, you see.

We're so anxious to die to maybe the effect of the screeching tires in front of us, or die to the freezing rain on the windshield, or die to the effect of a gloomy day when we get up in the morning, but it's also a matter of dying to the other things, this sense of puffed up pride we feel when somebody praises us. If we're prepared to die to the admiration of other people as well as to die to the criticism of other people then a miracle takes place. God sends the spirit of the Son into

your heart and you begin to find a positive flow of life coming from inside you as you sit in that car. A flow of life that seems to raise your thoughts up to the Creator and above that situation and you begin to find that flow of life is easing your body and is relaxing it and you're beginning to rest. And really that's what God is saying to us in that Romans 8:10 remember. Though your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits inside are alive because of righteousness. Because God is sending from the right hand, the power of Jesus' life into your life and that quiet, peaceful life is beginning to spread out and drive back that chaotic life that is coming in through the eye gate and the ear gate. And that's God's plan for us.

Now here's the question that I'd ask you to think about. Can you reverse the process? So the irritability that you feel because the other fellow won't move back because you're running your life by the external stimuli that are coming in upon you, the strain that you feel because of that is creating a contraction of the muscles in your stomach and is beginning to prepare the way for an ulcer. Now that's the death process operating. Now if you begin to live from the inside out, I'm asking you, is it possible to reverse that process? In other words, is it possible to stop your body dying? Is it possible for the life that is in your spirit to begin to move out and bring peace to your body?

Of course, we all answer on Easter Sunday, "Of course." That's the whole meaning of Easter. Of course, that when we die, the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will raise our bodies from death and will make them live again. And we'll all point --in fact, maybe you want to look at it just to see the verses -- First Corinthians 15 was part of that lesson that we read. First Corinthians 15 and verse 51. "Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality."

I think all of us will look back to funeral services that we've been to where we've talked of the poor, worn out bodies that we end up with when we're 70, 80, 90 years of age. And then we say those bodies are going to be completely renewed and the whole process is going to be reversed and we're going to get new bodies. And some of you may point now, "Isn't that the meaning of today's verse?" It's Romans 8:11. "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you." And many of us will read that and certainly for years I read it and said, "Yeah, now that's the resurrection and that's the reversal of the process."

Now dear ones, Jesus rose from the dead because of the spirit of holiness that was in him, because of the Holy Spirit. That's why he rose from the dead. But do you see that that Holy Spirit was in him from the beginning and though the resurrection was the completion of that reversal process, the reversal process began immediately the Holy Spirit dwelt in Jesus. That's the explanation of the transfiguration given. The Holy Spirit in Jesus was bringing such peace and confidence to his own heart about his own relationship to his Father and such peace and confidence in relationship to other people that there was a spirit of health within him that was beginning to spread through his mind and emotions to his body. And that was going on right throughout his life. In other words, the Holy Spirit was bringing about a gradual process of resurrection that simply culminated in the resurrection as we know it but the process was going on all through his life. That's the explanation of the transfiguration.

At that point, the transformation had reached such a point that for the moment, it broke through his

physical body and his body became partially like his resurrection body. Well just look at the record you know, you'll see it. Matthew 17:1-2. "And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light." The Holy Spirit even there was beginning to transform the weakness of his physical body until eventually, you remember on the resurrection morning, it culminated in transforming that body completely into a luminous vehicle that could go through walls and could cover distances at tremendous speed. But you know yourselves that even in this world and natural things, nothing takes place like that. It just appears to.

But in everything that appears sudden, there is a gradual development that precedes it, so it was with Jesus' resurrection. The Holy Spirit within him was beginning to spread the eternal life and the health to his physical body that eventually overcame death. Now loved ones, that's the real meaning of this verse we're studying and I'll tell you why if you look at it, Romans 8:11 it is. "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you" -- at this moment - "he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies." Now if this were the same as First Corinthians 15, the account of the resurrection, Paul would say, "Will give life to your dead bodies," or, "To your bodies of death." But a mortal body, it's the Greek word "thnetos" and it simply means a body that is subject to death, a body maybe even that is a dying body but certainly not a dead body. "Will give life, not to your corpses but will give life now to your mortal bodies, also through his spirit which dwells in you." Even the word for "through" is the Greek word "dia" and it really means because of his Spirit which dwells in you.

In other words, Jesus could not help rising from the dead. He couldn't avoid it if he wanted to. The Holy Spirit of God was within and it burst through his physical body and raised him from the dead because the Holy Spirit cannot die. Now that's what this verse means. The same person who raised Jesus from the dead is able at this moment to give life to your bodies as they are at present because of the Spirit that dwells in you. In other words, loved ones, the process can be reversed even at this present time.

And what we're going to talk about over the next few Sundays is how living in the spirit actually enables the Holy Spirit to begin to move out through your minds and emotions and bring peace to them and bring healing and wholeness to your body. Our bodies will always die eventually because God has now allowed that to be his method of creating his new world -- but we should die well. We are meant to die well of good old age, not to die in misery and in sickness and in pain and this is what the verse is saying. That the glory of Easter Sunday is not, we're all going to be raised some great day in the future -- but this Jesus is alive at this moment at the right hand of God and he is feeding to you life of his Spirit that raised him from the dead and that life can transform your body now.

And we'll discuss in the next weeks about how that actually works. You can see a little of it of course at this present time. Because you know that every doctor will tell which is a more healthy thing to do, smile or frown. And he'll tell you that there's something that happens to the body when there is happiness in the body. There is incredible pain that a person can endure in the body when inside they are smiling and there is joy. Even the doctors will admit that medically, the attitude of the patient has a tremendous effect on how the body reacts. But loved ones, it's not only true medically and psychologically, it is true spiritually. That Jesus' Spirit within you is able to begin to drive that death out of your body.

Oh, many of you know of old A. B. Simpson. "Then the body broke away in every sort of way. I had

always worked hard. From the age of 14, I studied and labored and spared no strength. I took charge of a large congregation at the age of 21. I broke down utterly half a dozen times and at last my constitution was worn out. Many times I feared I should drop dead in my pulpit. I could not ascend any height without a sense of suffocation because of a broken down heart and exhausted nervous system. I heard of the Lord's healing but I struggled against it. I was afraid of it. I'd been taught in theological seminaries that the age of the supernatural was past and I could not go back from my early training. My head was in my way. But at last when I was brought to attend the funeral of my dogmatics, the Lord whispered to me the little secret, 'Christ in you.'

"And from that hour I received him for my body as I had done for my soul. I was made so strong and well that work has been a perfect delight. For years, I've spent my summer holiday in the hot city of New York preaching and working among crowds as I never did before. Besides the work of our home and college and an immense amass of library work and much besides. But the Lord did not merely remove my sufferings, it was more than simple healing. He so gave me himself, that I lost the painful consciousness of physical organs. That is the best of the health he gives. I thank the Lord that he keeps me from all morbid physical consciousness and a body that is the object of anxious care and gives a simple life that is a delight and a service for the master. That is a rest and joy."

Christopher Woodard was a Harley Street specialist in London; he still is. Treats a lot of the athletes in Britain. And he began to see that the meaning of Jesus' resurrection was that that same life that he has at this moment could be transmitted into us. One day he went to a home where the son had been paralyzed for something like 15 or 16 years. And he went through the door and the mother welcomed him and said, "Dr. Woodard, we're so glad, we're so glad you're here. Will you sit down there or would like to sit down over there or would you like to sit there? Would you like a cup of tea? Would you like coffee?" And he said, "Well I like tea." And she gave him tea. "Would you like milk in it? Would you like another spoon? Is that okay? Is that knife okay to butter the bread with? Would you rather sit over there at the light?"

And immediately, he sensed there's a spirit of nervousness and fussiness in this house that is so desperate that it would be impossible for anybody to be whole and well for too long a time. And over a period of weeks and months, he dealt with that dear mum, and with the dad, and with the whole attitude in the house. And bit by bit they began to see that living in Jesus is a simple, relaxed experience and they began to live that way themselves. And two years later, the son was healed. All his paralysis was gone.

So Jesus does it different ways. "Six years ago, five years ago I went down to Rochester where a lady was in convulsions because of the kidney disease. And as I was going down, her daughter passed me coming the other way and her daughter was coming up to make the funeral arrangements for her mother. And so I went on down to Rochester and went into the ward and the dear woman was in convulsions and could not even recognize me. And I laid my hands on her in Jesus' name and three months later she was back at church and is at church today."

Now loved ones, that's what I mean. The resurrection life of Jesus is able to drive death out of your bodies now and so it is possible for the whole process to be reversed. It is possible not only to see that living in the tranquilizers and the aspirins day in and day out is wrong, it is possible to see living depending on the saunas and drinks that that is not only wrong but that there is a beautiful way to go that is far, far better than those ways. That's why old Paul said, "Don't be drunk with wine. Be filled with the Spirit." It's far better, believe me. That's why, that's why he put those two opposite one another. Because there are two ways to go and one way simply brings

more tension even though it appears at that time to get rid of other tension. The other way, which is the way of the resurrection's power of Jesus' Spirit coming into us and beginning to spread itself through our minds and emotions and through our bodies, is God's beautiful way and his plan.

That's why God says, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his spirit which dwells in you" -- at this present time. So it's possible for you to let the Spirit of Jesus within so bring your minds and emotions into such peace and harmony with your Father in heaven that your body itself begins to experience the beneficial effects. And if you say to me, "Is it possible to live forever?" Well, God has ordained that. Maybe around 120 you have to die, but loved ones, lots of us are dying before our time you know. And why? All because we're living in the flesh. Because we're living from the outside in. Because we're living depending on everybody else's opinion of us. Depending on what everybody else does to us. Because we're not really believing that there's only one Person who is in charge of our ultimate destiny and that's the only person who can control his own and that's our Father in heaven and he alone is the one to be dealt with really.

Once you begin to put him in the right position in your life, you begin to find that health spread. So I pray that at least on Easter Sunday that you'll get the gist of the message and that you'll pursue it yourselves either by reading the books or by trusting Jesus to bring this life into you or that you come back next Sunday and we talk about it more. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you're alive at this moment and that the life that raised you from the dead is in us. It's the dear life of the Holy Spirit; the same Holy Spirit who destroyed the weakness in your body and overcame it and enabled your body to rise from the dead. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Now we would pray for each other this morning. We would pray Holy Spirit, that you will not only fascinate us by stories of healing but that you would fascinate us with the Healer, the great Healer. That you will show us that it is desire for the Healer himself and not for the healing that will bring life to us. And so Lord Jesus, we see that we're living our lives upside down, we're manipulating, we're working angles. We're trying to get techniques that will enable us to survive in this little world and Lord, all the time, we don't need to be half so devious. All you want us to do is look up to you and find out why you put us here and begin to do that well for you and to please you and trust you to add all the other things after us. So Father, we would do that this morning. Lord, we're tired manipulating. We're tired of managing our own ways. Father, we ask you to tell us why we're here and we want to set about doing that, whatever it is, and we ask you to give us the Spirit of Jesus within, to begin to drive out this death that encroaches on us day after day. So we trust you Lord Jesus, to enable us to come into the same attitude that you have towards your Father and into the same health and resurrection so that your life may spread and drive out death from our world for your sake. Amen.