

The Privilege of Assurance

Romans 8:15

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

What make is your watch? Do you know? Mine's an Everite. It's British and we use to say British was the best but I don't think it is any longer. And your car, what make is your car? And that presumably means some workers in GM, or in Ford, or in Volkswagen, or Toyota made your car. And what make are your shoes? And you say, "Well, don't be silly I know my car and I maybe know my stereo but I don't know what make my shoes are." And who made you? And some of us might tend to say, "Well, that's a loaded question and I'm kind of the result of a biological process."

Well then I push you on it a little, who started the process? And who programmed it so you would emerge from it? Because presumably someone, or some mind must have given the process direction, so who really did that? Well, would you look with me dear ones at the one who did it and it's John 1:3. "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Now, who was that person? Well, if you look one verse up in Verse 1, "In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And all things were made through him. And verse 14 tells you a little more about who that him was, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."

Your nose, and your hands, and your feet, and your hair were designed personally by Jesus. It was him that programmed your grandmother's body, and your great grandmother's body, and your mum's body so that you would turn out what you are today. So this Jesus made you and he designed you personally, loved ones. Now, some of the disabilities that you have inherited he couldn't prevent without suspending the free will of your mum and your dad. And that's why it says in those same verses you see verse 4, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Jesus' life that created you is what has produced all that is light and good in you.

Now, he couldn't prevent some of the other things that you've inherited, your dad's inferiority complex, or your mum's talkativeness. He couldn't prevent that without suspending their free wills, remaking them again, and breaking into the whole pattern of law that he had set up in nature. But all that is good and light in you is due to this dear person, Jesus, who designed you as you are at this moment. And in fact, he so arranged it that all the disadvantages that you've inherited from your mum and dad, and from your great grandmother and your great grandfather, all those disadvantages will never be enough to overwhelm the good that he has planted in you in his original design. Now, that's what that verse means you see in Verse 5, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

And the very fact presumably that you're here this morning, whatever you think of God, is kind of an indication that the darkness hasn't overcome it however much it may have appeared to. Because, somehow or other the stamp that this Jesus has put on you is still working inside you and pulling you towards him. But it's Jesus really that made us, loved ones.

I think a lot of us have the idea, you know, that some great and lively élan vital or some great impersonal force or power of magnetism or electricity in the universe did. But it's Jesus -- all things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made. And so you were personally made by Jesus. And what really is important to see is that he had a definite purpose in

making you. His purpose was this: to fulfill his own task. The task that his father gave him was to bring the whole universe into order, to bring it under his Father's will, to bring it all into harmony. And Jesus resolved to make you so that he could express his own life through you and by the power of his Spirit that he gave to you he would begin to fulfill the tasks his Father had given him.

So actually, you're designed by Jesus to do something in bringing the world under the control of the Creator that nobody else in the whole universe can do. Now loved ones, I think you have to grip that because I think some of you are used to so sitting in the midst of thousands and millions of people that you've lost that whole truth and it is a fact that Jesus has designed you to do something that no one else in the whole universe can do. Does it not even speak to you regarding the truth of that -- that there is no one else like you? There is no one else like you in the universe. There is not one other person that is exactly like you. Even your identical twin is very different from you inside.

And loved ones, Jesus designed you for that purpose. He designed you to express his power of life through you in order to bring the universe under the will of his Father and also so you would in fact come to know his Father as he knows him. Because that's really what Jesus wants, he wants you to think the same way about his Father as he does. Now, you kind of get him saying that if you look at Matthew 10:30-32, "But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven."

And that's the person who made you speaking to you. And he says, "Look, I've even counted the hairs on your head. I know them, nobody else in the universe knows that number but I know them. And I know you intimately and the reason I made you was so that you would come into this relationship with my dear Father that I have and so that you would be used by the power of his Spirit to bring the universe into submission to his will. That's why you're here. That's why I made you." And that's why, loved ones, that verse you remember we read in John reads, "His life is the light of men." Because it's Jesus' life that is the light that will guide you through your own life. It's Jesus' own life and the life of his Spirit that will be the light for you that will tell you which way to turn, will tell you what you should be doing here in life.

Of course, once you accept that explanation of reality, a huge number of benefits follow from that. I'd like you to just look at some of them, just they're so great. First of all, you really do begin to have a calm certainty when you're at school that Jesus knows what you're training for and has a job for you to fill when you get out of school. That's the first thing it brings. If this Jesus made you and he knows why he made you then you have kind of calm certainty throughout your time at school that he knows what he's training you for even though you yourself may not understand it. He knows he has allowed you to come into this course and he'll have a job for you when you get out of it.

Oh, just other benefits, a real confidence that even the inconvenient events that happen in your life are under his control. Even the inconvenient events, even the unexpected things right from the fender bender right up to the leukemia that you cannot control. All those events are under his control. Now loved ones, you get it in Hebrews 2:7-8, "Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything," this is talking about Jesus you see, God has put, "Everything in subjection under his feet. Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see

everything in subjection to him.”

So those inconvenient events that don't seem to be fitting into the pattern -- we can be assured that Jesus has not let them go out as a wildcat event that he hasn't under control but all of them are in subjection to him and there is nothing that is outside his control. So it brings you a great satisfaction that what you're doing at this present time is God's will for you. His ideal will or his permissive will, but a great rest and satisfaction that what I'm doing at the moment is what God wants me to do. It's not what I'll finally do but it's what he wants me to do at this present time.

And oh, just a great freedom you know from anxiety and from worry. Great freedom from angst about, “Am I on the right track or am I not?” Once you really accept that it's this Jesus that made you and he knows where you're going, there's a great freedom about your relationship with other people, and a great freedom to be related to them in the way that Jesus guides you. And just a great sense that whatever is happening our lives are going to fulfill a purpose our Maker has for them.

And you get that kind of assurance if you look at it in Ephesians 1:11, that however it may look to you at the present time you can be sure that Jesus is going to bring the thing into line with the reason he made you. “In him,” that is, in Jesus, “according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will.” That Jesus does not let the thing run away from him, that he accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will and even the mistakes that you make, if you have an attitude of trust to him that he's in control he's going to accomplish them according to the counsel of his own will for you.

Loved ones, Jesus isn't in the business of putting the Amazon down in a certain place and holding it in that spot and not allowing it to move where the Nile is. Or, putting Everest in a certain place and not allowing it to move to South America and then allowing your life to move all around the place. Jesus is not in that business. Jesus ensures that things go the way he plans them to go if the person is willing to listen and to submit to him. So dear ones, it brings away all that worry and anxiety about marriage, and career. It washes it away because all things work together for good to them that love God. And so you have a great sense that this dear Person who made me is in control. That I am not just thrown out by chance -- from “time plus chance” kind of operation in the universe -- but that this dear Person who made me knows exactly where I'm going and he has the thing under control and he can bring it about as he wants it.

Immediately of course your life really becomes filled with the exciting adventures of the glory of the unpredictable once you begin to accept that. No longer is it a case of, “Oh I want to ensure that my life is going this way so this next thing will happen at year 2000, and this thing will happen at 2001.” No, at last you begin to relax in your life and see Jesus knows where he wants me. So he may want me to be an engineer in Honeywell or he may want me to be a peanut seller in Rio, but whichever it is he'll show me. And as long as it's what he wants, it's no big deal to me which it is. He may want me to be a teacher in Bloomington, or he may want me to be a housemother in Korea but suddenly the whole universe opens out to you.

And it's no longer trying to tread a little narrow path that is safe because you know it. “I dare not go outside Bloomington because I don't know the rest of the world outside Bloomington too well.” Or, “Nobody knows me outside of Minneapolis.” At last the whole of the world begins to open out to you and so it doesn't matter whether he wants you to be a nurse in Fairview, or whether he wants you to be a secretary in Moscow, but Jesus will get you to the place where he wants you to live your life. And loved ones, that's his plan you know. His plan is that you should think of yourselves as

sons and daughters of his dear Father and that this is his Father's garden and he created you to do a certain job in this garden and you can relax and enjoy being in the Father's garden.

And as soon as you begin to treat him like that there comes within you a spirit that cries up, "Father, Father." And no longer do you regard the universe as an unfriendly, hostile, strange place but you regard it as the garden that belongs to your dear Father whom you know and whom you love, and who loves you and whom you can trust. And so life begins to be peaceful and begins to have sense, and plan, and order. And that's God's plan. What a catastrophic contrast if you do not accept that presentation of reality.

If you really live as a practical atheist, as one who lacks any awareness that there is a loving Father controlling your life day-by-day, loved ones, then you move into hell itself. You go to school and you think of yourself as that little 17 year old, not as a unique person who was created by a loving Father and by his dear Son for a certain purpose in their world, but you see yourself as a miserable little 17 year old in the midst of those 2,000 maniacs in that school and you see, "Somehow or other I have to bring myself before their attention. Somehow I have to get some of them to notice me." And you set about that miserable slavish task of getting them to notice you.

And so everything becomes subservient to that task. The sports that you should enjoy become a method by which you may somehow bring yourself before the attention of the coach. The football that you really should just enjoy playing because it's one of the lovely inventions God has given to his world, it becomes a ladder that you can use to climb up over somebody else so that somehow somebody will recognize you. And school for many of us, at least high school, was that kind of slavish attempt to get people to notice us. That old adolescent insecurity and that old adolescent uncertainty about yourself, and self doubt, and self consciousness, seems all to stem from this feeling, "Well, I wonder if there's anybody really significant who knows we're here?"

And I think many of us have felt that at time, "I wonder is there anybody who is really important anywhere in the universe who knows I'm here and who knows why I'm here?" And somehow at high school it begins to express itself in a desperate desire to let somebody notice us. At least if our peers notice us, or our coaches notice us, or the faculty notice us, at least it'll be somebody that notices us and it'll take away that terrible feeling we have that maybe nobody knows we're here, maybe nobody knows why we're here. And so you know how it goes, the clowning and the jokes, even your looks, all of those things we begin to use to make other people notice us and approve of us.

And then you know the next step, we just come into a real slavery to that applause that we get from them. And it's not long before we would do anything to get them to approve of us. They recognized us yesterday when we did something funny so maybe we'll do something funnier today and they'll recognize it. Or, we said something clever in class last week and they noticed us so maybe if we say something super clever this week they'll notice us. Before you know it, loved ones, your life has ceased to be a free thing and it begins to be a slavery, a slavery to the applause of the peers that you have or the significant others whom you respect.

Then we go off to university or we get into the early days of our work life and really it tends to be a continuation of that attention seeking. And we tend to keep on wanting people to notice us and so often you who have jobs know that the old joy of the job fades away and you begin to be concerned about whether somebody approves of the way you do it, or whether somebody is acknowledging you sufficiently. If the other fella gets the sale and you should have got the sale then the old resentment comes up because you aren't getting the recognition you deserve to have.

And then you know how another factor comes into the whole picture because you begin to look around and see what everybody else is running for. And they're obviously all running for the things that they need materially, and they're living for the food, and the shelter, and the clothing. And it's not long before you begin to switch over and you see, "Oh, it was my singing in the glee club that got me attention before and it was cleverness that got me attention from my professors. Now, I see it's getting as much food, shelter, and clothing as you need and more than anybody else needs or has."

And before you know it, the old life begins to be dictated by a new kind of slavery and you begin to dedicate yourself to the principle of getting these things that everybody obviously feels they need and so you must need too. Half the time you're getting them not because you need them but because if you have more of them than anybody else it kind of gets you attention, gets you recognition, gets your approval, makes you feel that you're making some kind of a splash in this mass society and somebody maybe will notice it. And who knows, maybe somebody way beyond this world will somehow notice it.

And you all know how the whole "televisionitis" [addiction to television] has just increased that whole feeling, because you somehow feel when somebody is up there in front of millions, "Well, at least he's noticed. Well, maybe he can't die without some angel out there somehow noticing he died." And underneath in our subconscious we keep on trying to get more of this stuff not because we need it but because somebody might notice us. After all, John Paul Getty is noticed. After all, old Onassis is noticed. So maybe we'll be noticed. Even if we're only noticed on our block, we'll be noticed.

And you know loved ones, how it goes on from there. You begin to dedicate your life to the things that you need and you decide, "Oh, I want another car," or, "I want another stereo," or, "I want a new coat." And you begin to enjoy doing certain things, "I enjoy going out for meals," or, "I enjoy going on this kind of a vacation or that kind of vacation." And, "I enjoy this kind of friend," and, "I enjoy this kind of activity and recreation." And bit by bit we make our demands greater and greater. Really, behind it all is the desire that somehow somebody will recognize we're there or that at least we recognize we're there ourselves. Maybe nobody else will know it but we'll see how far we've come.

And then you know it falls into slavery, especially as the old recession sets in and you see other people losing their jobs and you've just increased your standard of living again and again as you seem to get more efficient at earning the money. But then you come to a point, either in a recession or when your job isn't so needed, or when you come to a certain age in your life where you can't increase the income anymore and you find them beginning to lose their jobs. And then the old fear begins to grip your heart and you begin to wonder, "Will you be the next one?" And then you fear every call that you get from the office.

Now as your expenditure outstrips your income, you begin to fear every phone call that comes and every bill that comes through the mailbox. Then you find yourself really involved in just a slavish fear. And a spirit of a slavish fear gets hold of your life. You're just manipulated. You, who wanted to manipulate the world so you could use it as you wanted, you find yourself more manipulated by it than you are manipulating it. And you who wanted to be God of your own life and do what you wanted to do find that almost everything else in your life is God over you. The car can send you into a tremor of worry about whether you'll be able to make the payments, or whether you'll be able

to make the repairs or not. The job sends you into a worry if it wants. Your boss can almost create whatever feeling he wants in you by doing anything. Everybody seems to be your God.

Now loved ones, those are the two alternatives. And you know, there really aren't any others. You either accept reality, which is that this dear person Jesus, who is the son of the Maker of the world, made you, knows why you're here and has a plan for your life and will guide you without any flaw at all. Or, you accept that you are a chance little creature here among the rest of us who has to somehow bring yourself before all our attention. Loved ones, it's either one way or the other.

I'd point you to the verse that really we're studying today, and it just states it. And that's where I'd like to end. Romans 8:15, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!...'" And "Abba" is just Aramaic for "father". It just means when we cry, "Father! Father!" And the person who made you is trying to get through to you this morning and say to you, "Would you turn away from all those foolish goals that you've set yourself since high school days and would you accept that I am your Father and that I love you. And that I have a plan for you to fulfill here in my universe and that I will lead you into it. And all you have to do is trust me and do what I tell you from day-to-day. And leave all the scrambling for the food, shelter, and clothing to the others and just concentrate on me."

Loved ones really, he's saying that to you. And you're the only one who can change it. You're the only one who can change from that spirit of slavery unto fear -- into a spirit of sonship towards your Maker whereby you call him Father, Father. And really the Aramaic, you know, would bear the interpretation "Dad, Dad". And your Maker wants you to think of him as your dad, as a dear person who knows you and has counted all the hair of your head and loves you, and has life organized, and can lead you into his plan if you'll trust him.

I know the men that I see here of 40, 50, 60 -- I know you know so well what I'm talking about. But loved ones, I think those of us who are younger, even we're beginning to see it. You end up either as a miserable slave to everybody on earth but God -- or you take this stand that he, the maker of the world, is your Father and has a special job for you to do that nobody else can do. And, ah, I don't know how to make you believe it, but that's it. That's what it is. It's not that other old scrambling on top of dog-eat-dog to keep your head above water. That's not it you know, that's not where it's at. It's not that old scrambling up the mud heap to be king of the castle. That's Satan's lie. The world is not like that as far as God is concerned.

You say to me, "But all the rest of the world is." Yeah, but he looks after you in the midst of all that chaos. All the darkness can't overcome the light however much of it there is. Besides, he has control of the one that goes on forever and ever after this one ends, so it's good in this life and good in the next one. So would you think about it loved ones? Those of you who are just worn out, just the old body worn out, tired of the depressants, tired of the stimulants to try and keep up and maybe about ready to face reality. I pray that will be so.

Let's pray. Dear Father, we would pray for each other here in this room this morning because we really do love each other Father. We would pray for any dear brother or sister here that is just fed up, just worn out with the old slaving away to try to keep up, anybody here who is just tired of living by fear. Father, will you speak to them as they can understand and explain to them that you made them through the instrumentality of your son Jesus and that you know why they're here, that you have special plan for them. Father, we would pray that you would make this clear to each of our

brothers and sisters who sit beside us in these seats this morning.

Thank you Lord that we don't need to wait years or months to accept what you say. Thank you that we can accept it this morning. We can simply decide deep down in our hearts that we're tired of this kind of life. That it's the wrong way to live and it's the wrong way to die. And we can decide, our Father, to look up to you this morning and maybe for the first time in our lives say, "Father, I thank you for being my father and I thank you that my life has been created by you for you to use and I now give it to you and ask you by the power of your Holy Spirit to begin to make sense of it for your own glory and satisfaction, and so that my own life will not be lost." We'd thank you, Father, that you will accept anyone who turns to you with a whole heart and keeps that promise for your glory. Amen.