

The Perfecting of the Personality

Romans 8:25

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

How many times can a wife or a lover bear to hear their loved ones say, "I love you?" Well, we'd all probably go somewhere between a million and 10 million, because it's not really the words that are boring but it's the life and reality that are behind the words. And every time the words are said, the life and reality seem to be strengthened and revived and confirmed. And that's really a commercial from me this morning because I would like for the benefit of those dear ones who are just beginning their friendship here this quarter, I would like for their benefit to outline some old truths that many of you know. And, I would like to point out that it's the same as the wife and lover.

There are not many new ideas in the world and it really isn't the ideas that count. But if you are living in the truth of these ideas then every time they're shared, your own life will be revived and confirmed and encouraged and you'll rise and think, "Ah, yeah, it's true and I experience it each day." And if you're not living in the midst of these, honestly as I share them, you'll say the same old thing again, and you will. And it'll just be the same old thing again to you because you're sitting Sunday after Sunday getting it in your head but not getting it in your heart. And when it comes into your heart, it doesn't matter how often it's expressed, it's new and it's real and fresh.

So I'd encourage those of you who are kind of old hands here to look into your own hearts in regard to your response to old truths you know. If you don't, you're going to eventually become drug addicts really. You're going to become addicts who need some new shot of some new kind of approach to life every other year. So I'd encourage you just to be real about it this morning. That's what all Irishmen do. They prepare the ground so that nobody can tear them apart.

Do you use Bayer or Anacin? Which tiny time pill is the pain relieving capsule for you? And we think, oh just a miserable thought; just miserable. And yet loved ones, the whole world seems to be experiencing pain of some kind, doesn't it? The whole world seems to be described more by pain than maybe by any other word. The whole world feels sore. The whole world seems to be strained. And it's not just because we Americans are always watching these commercials that we're very conscious of pain or headaches. The whole world seems to be in strain, doesn't it? And what I want to share with you this morning is that the Creator never intended it to be that way.

The Creator never intended the world to be filled with strain and pain at all. He created it so that it would be filled with a free flowing peace -- from the littlest insect in the universe to the greatest animal in the universe. The Father intended it to be filled with peace, and health, and freedom from strain. I'd like to share with you how that was to work in regard to our own personalities. Maybe even the old hands would turn to First Thessalonians 5:23. And I just know that this verse is a great blessing to those of us who have tried to sort out our secular psychology courses. And so it is an important verse loved ones, and it is God's plan for our personalities. "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly;" that's make you completely wholly. "And may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And we have so often shared that that's the way the Father made us. And not by any means that we can actually operate and take these things out from within us as we can with the appendix but rather that these are the three levels on which our personality operates: the spirit, and the soul, and

the body.

And loved ones, there isn't really time this morning to show you all the Biblical references but there are several tapes up in the library where I have explained it. So that if you follow through in detail the spirit, soul, and body in the Old and New Testaments, you begin to find out how our personality is made up in detail. I'm just going to plant the finished diagram on here but you could build it up simply by checking out where "spirit" is used in the Old Testament and where it's used in the New. Where "soul" is used in the Old Testament and where it's used in the New. And you can build up a real Biblical, and I would say, of course a real picture by our Creator of our personalities. And it may help those of you who like me have struggled with a lot of educational psychology and have difficulty seeing any balance or sense or wholeness in it. And if you follow it through, loved ones, that's the way it really breaks down.

The spirit, the inner circle you find has certain functions. There's the function of fellowship or communion with God. And the function of intuition, which we so often talk about as women's intuition where you know a thing just from inside. And conscience, which we all know is that which tells us what is right and what is wrong. And all those are found to be functions of the spirit. The soul is found to be the psychological part of us, which is reasonable because you remember "pseuche", which for the Greek scholars would look something like that [writing the Greek letters], and for those of us who can speak just English would be that English transliteration.

Of course, all you've got to do is add the word "logos" in Greek and whip out a word and you're getting towards "psychology". So the "pseuche" is the psychological part of us, the bit that we know the psychiatrist deals with. And if you follow through the references in the Old and New Testament you find it has the capability of understanding or judging things; the capability of mind or intellect. It has the capability of feeling; feeling desires or feeling affection. It has the ability of executing those things; actually doing them and therefore of will. And then you have the body itself.

Now would you come with me to a forefather of ours, probably in Central Asia? And here is the way the Father planned. The Father planned that that forefather of ours would be in communion with God himself and would get to know his mind much the same way as we get to know our friends' minds. So that if I ask you what would your roommate like to do or what would your wife like to do, you'd know because you know them. You'd have traveled with them over a long period of time. So it was with God. He intended our first forefather in Central Asia there to fellowship with him, to come into close communion with him in his spirit. And he would begin to sense the kind of thing that his Father in heaven would want him to do.

He would begin to understand the way his Creator's mind worked and by intuition he would sense what his father wanted him to do and he would set out to go west. And he would come to the Atlantic Ocean and would tend to decide, "This is an impossibility. I can't go further west than that." But the old conscience would come in and would judge in light of the intuition and would say, "No. You have to keep going the way you sense your creator is telling you to go inside your spirit." And so he would, in response to that, begin to use his mind to work out, "Now, how to get across this Atlantic Ocean?"

And the mind would begin to understand what he was receiving through the intuition from his Father in heaven. And he'd build the ark or would build the old kontiki raft and he would set out across the Atlantic Ocean. And guided by the same combination of spiritual intuition and psychological

activity, he would reach the American coastline. He would head on across as his Father guided him because his Father knows the whole creation he has made intimately and knows exactly the place that that fellow has to arrive at if the world's population food problems are to be solved. And so he keeps on going halfway across the American continent to the one place where the top soil is deeper than anywhere else in the world.

And we always look down upon it you know, as a kind of an ordinary state. But that's it. It's 14 inches there in old Iowa. Nowhere else. Nowhere else. That's incredible. Nowhere else. I think it's 10 inches maybe in other places but Iowa has the deepest, richest top soil in all the world. And our forefather would arrive there and directed by the Father who knows the vegetable kingdom better than anybody else because he has made it, He would direct him which wheat, which corn to sow. He would begin to sow it and he would use his will to direct his body to lift the things, to dig, to plow, and he would begin to bring forth crops that would have solved any food problem that would ever exist in those early days.

And he would have continued to operate that way so there would have been no oil spills off the coast. We would not be in the present disastrous situation we are with our fossil fuels and the world would have been developed under God's guidance by us men and women. And loved ones, as a result of that of course several things would follow. Not only would that man's emotions be totally satisfied by the sense of his whole personality fulfilling itself in the way it was meant to. And you know what satisfaction you get in your emotions when you've spent the day fully and satisfyingly, isn't that true? You don't demand anything else.

If you've had a day that's really fully used every part of your personality, your emotions have no dissatisfaction. They have a great sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. And of course, his emotions would be utterly fulfilled but he would also have a great sense of his position in God's world. He would begin to see that he was working together with the Creator of the universe to develop the universe according to the Father's will. And he would have a great sense of significance in the world. No problem with identity crisis. A great sense of his position and his importance here in God's world. And of course he would have a great sense of approval from the Father as he began to work his world out the way God meant him to.

So loved ones, that's really the perfect way that God intended our personalities to operate. And that's what Jesus means partially when he speaks these words in Matthew Chapter 5. Maybe you'd look at the words because we often look at these words and -- I saw on a church board the other day, that this was impossible. Yeah. It's wild how you can so lightly contradict the son of the Creator of the world but we do it you know. We all do it. We've all done it in conversation. "Well you know, we're only human. I mean, we can't be perfect."

Matthew 5:48, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." And that's part of what Jesus meant. He meant your personalities are to work this way, the way they were planned at the beginning. This was the purpose for which they were created. This is the way they should work. This is a perfect pen. It's not perfect aesthetically but it's perfect for the purpose for which it was made. It can write. It isn't perfect for hammering a nail. It isn't perfect for screwing screws. You're not perfect for being the creator of the world. But you weren't meant to be the Creator of the world. You're perfect for the purpose for which you were made and you can perfectly fulfill that purpose and that's what Jesus is saying and he expresses it a little more completely a few verses above.

Verse 43, in what way perfect? "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and

hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." And he says, "Just as your Father concentrates on giving to the world, so I want you to live this kind of life. I want you just to give. I want you just to let the Father's mind go through your mind and you feed into the universe what your Father is directing you to do. I want you to live a life of outgoing love, of life that flows out continually. That's the way you were made to live."

Now, loved ones, let's go back to Central Asia and see how we miserable little pigmies devolved from those princely giants that God made us to be. First step was we rejected him and his right to govern us. That's the first thing we did. We rejected God and his right to govern us. We said we'll do it ourselves. The result was, his life in there was absolutely cut off and this part of us went dead, it just became lifeless. We lost any sense of fellowship with anybody outside this world and we could see those massive spaces out there and it created tremendous insecurity in us because we had no sense of anybody out there that we knew who looked after those spaces so we began to have a tremendous sense of insecurity.

Our intuition of course, was nonexistent. We had nothing coming from God at all so we had no direction in our lives. Our conscience became very, very faint and almost utterly dead so that we hardly knew when a thing was right or when it was wrong. There were vague shadows back there that seemed to indicate but we became very uncertain of what was right and what was wrong and it simply intensified the whole insecurity that we felt. So of course, the first thing that we missed was all the tremendous satisfaction that we were meant to have in our relationship with the Creator of the whole universe. We missed all that satisfaction. We missed all the security, and approval, and reassurance that comes from that and we became a bundle of little neurotic pigmies who will find ourselves here on this world scared and insecure and uncertain. Because of course, the other way, everything worked perfectly.

As a result of our activity from within the crops grew, the food supplies would have been there, the shelter would have been there, the clothing would have been there, we'd have had all we needed physically. We had all the emotional satisfaction we needed, not only from our own personalities working perfectly but from the sense of love that we had from our Father in heaven. We had a great sense of significance in the universe. Now we had none of those things at all. So loved ones, what did we do?

Well, we moved out to the next layer of our existence. We moved out to our souls and we began to use our souls to try to get the satisfaction that we had been getting in our spirits from our whole relationship with our father. And our souls, of course could only look to one place, all the other poor little pigmies and the material world itself. And so our minds became preoccupied not with understanding what our Creator was telling us to do. Our minds became preoccupied with, "How do I make more money out of that particular substance in the world than anybody else is making? How on earth do I keep myself above the crowd? How do I keep myself alive here?" And our mind began to be preoccupied not with expressing to the world the plans that the Father had for it, not with following his deeply profound and accurate knowledge of the universe, so that we would develop it -- but our minds became preoccupied with exploiting the little bit that we were in. And so we began to exploit the universe. We began to exploit each other.

This is where all the massive social and economic inequality began to come in. We cared only for ourselves and we began to use the mind to do that. We began to use the will not to execute the

plans that the Father had for us personally, we began to use our will to rule over other people. To get other people to do what we wanted or to keep them under us so that we could dominate as many as possible, because suddenly we began to realize there are two and a half, three and a half billion other people in this world and they're all trying to do the same thing as us so we'll have to try harder than them. And so the soul became preoccupied with ruling over other people, manipulating other people, and of course the emotions were utterly dissatisfied.

They were filled with a sense of loneliness and desolation and they became preoccupied with getting some satisfaction, some exhilaration such as the conscience seemed to imply away back in the shadows that we were due to experience. And so the emotions of course turned a thing like marriage into simply a source of emotional satisfaction, physical exhilaration, and emotional reassurance from the loved one. And we began, instead of being saturated sponges that were filled with good, clean water from our Father and could be squeezed and squeezed continually day-after-day dry for the benefit of other people, we became dry sponges that sucked in from everybody else all the food, and shelter, and clothing that we could get our hands on, all the emotional satisfaction we could get our hands on, all the significance for ourselves that we could establish.

And loved ones that really is the way that we monsters developed. And that's why it says what it does in Romans 8:22. This is a verse that we studied, you remember during the summer time, those who were here through the summer. Romans 8:22, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now." And loved ones, that's why it is. Because we are operating, really we're operating "in" like that from the world instead of operating "out" like that to the world. And so instead of living a life of love we live a life of taking love.

The only way to rectify that miserable mess is to somehow get that incoming life destroyed and finished with and somehow get real life in here from the Creator himself. And that's the problem, it's a two-fold problem really. To destroy that incoming life and that selfish will that wants that incoming life and that's a problem many of us have faced because we've found the good that I would, I cannot do and the evil I want to avoid that's the very thing I want to do. We find that our greatest problem is not knowing what is right to do but being able to do it. We find that the selfish will seems to be a monster that we cannot control.

And loved ones, many of us have discovered the truth that is stated in Romans 6:6 that that selfish will and that whole incoming life has been destroyed miraculously in Jesus and that that is the significance of Jesus' death. "We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed." And in fact, the first part of that miracle was wrought there on Calvary.

If I had a heavier pen I'd show you. But that whole incoming life, that whole selfish will was destroyed on Calvary. And the truth is, that the moment that you and I are willing for that to happen in us, the moment that we are willing to stop living off other people, the moment that we are willing to stop using everybody to establish our significance or our importance, the moment we are willing to stop using each other for our emotional satisfaction -- the moment we are willing, in other words, to stop living a selfish little pigmy life as if there were no Father looking after us -- the moment we are willing to die to that self inside us, that moment God begins to fill into us the Holy Spirit of his own uncreated life. And we begin to find a new, pure life that is inside beginning to try to get out. And that is of course what we call the New Birth or maybe it's fairer to call it Baptism with the Holy Spirit because the fullness of that is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. And many of us move towards it in two stages: being born of God first and then being Baptized with the Spirit. But loved ones that is what God wants.

Now I'd really like to start this morning's sermon, but I'll finish very fast. The problem with

many of us is we have found that pure, loving life dwelling inside us and we have felt, well there is perfect intention within us. We are perfect as Jesus told us to, we are perfect in love. We have a perfect desire to be of help to other people. We have a perfect desire to put other people first before ourselves. We do find a perfect intention coming from inside us. But there seems some sense in which we're still not absolutely perfect. And loved ones, it's that second way in which we're not absolutely perfect that I'd like to share just for maybe five minutes.

Many of us have found that our old personalities or our souls have been programmed for years to serve self. That is, for years they've been operating the wrong way. For years the mind has been manipulating instead of understanding. For years, the will has been trying to rule over other people instead of being ruled by God. For years, the emotions have concentrated on enjoying themselves rather than receiving joy from God. For years, in other words, our souls, our psychological beings have been operating backwards. So you can be baptized with the Holy Spirit and yet you have a psychological personality that is operating backwards. Now loved ones that's the progressive side of growing into perfection.

Now, you can't grow into love. Love is a gift that is given by God the moment you're ready to die to self and be filled with Jesus' Spirit. You can't grow into love. But you do have to grow in your personalities into being able to express that love the way Jesus wants to express it. And that is the progressive part of coming into perfection. It's in that sense you remember, that Paul says in Philippians 3:12, "Not as though I am already perfect." And then a few verses later he says, "But let as many of us as be perfect." And it's not the word for "mature", it's "teleios"; the same Greek word for "perfect."

So he says in one sense we're perfect, in one sense we're not perfect. Loved ones, God expects us to be perfect in love. He does really. And the reason why you and I are not perfect in love if we're not is because we simply have not been willing to die to self in Jesus and take part in that cosmic miracle whereby God destroyed our right to ourselves and our right to our own way. And the moment we're ready for that, God fills us with his Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in us the love of God and of other people.

But that is the crisis part of entering into perfection. What I'd like to share for a minute or two is this gradual process part of making the soul or the psychological part of us a fit servant and an efficient instrument to express this perfect love. God describes in this morning's verse how we should think about that activity and what our attitude should be. If you'd just look at it. The last verse I'll ask you to look at. Romans 8:25, "But if we hope for what we do not see," that's the perfection you see, that is coming about in us, "We wait for it with patience."

Now society does not say that. And the world of books does not say you wait for that perfecting of the personality with patience, it doesn't. It says you get it through reading the right books like "The Power of Positive Thinking". In other words, you get down to it and you have a do it yourself job. The world says, you get hold of your own personality and you make it right yourself. You read a book, you repeat that activity in your personality and gradually your personality will become effective. I don't know how many books you've read of that kind but I have read it seems hundreds. "How to Stop Worrying and Start Living", "I'm Okay, You're Okay", or "I'm Okay and You're a Jerk", "Be a Super Salesman With Mr. Tremendous Jones."

You know that "Reader's Digest" exists on the basis of that kind of article doesn't it? And there's a whole facet of the publishing world that prospers on that kind of book because we all of course sense the problem. And we all think the answer is do it yourself, bring your own personality into

perfection by your own exercise of will. And loved ones, you know what it does. It results in a very polished personality that has a hardness in it and that lacks that sensitive, fragrant love and life of Jesus. It can often produce a very successful person I think. It can often also produce a very successful businessman or student, but it produces a personality that is not the sensitive one of Jesus himself. And so you know how it works.

We love our roommate, we love our partner, we really do. And we want the best for them. And we want them to see God as we see him. And we want them to experience the experiences that we have had. And loved ones, there's nothing so much as those undisciplined, unrenewed personalities of ours who have perfectly good intentions, there's nothing so much as them have destroyed more Saturday mornings, more Sunday mornings, more Christmas days because we want the best for our roommates and what gets over to them is exactly that. That we want the best for them. And so we subtly hint to them, "Would you like to come to church this morning?" And then we try it differently the next Sunday, "Ah, did you see that service on television?" And then we try it differently the next Sunday.

And it's all good and it's pure and it's perfect love but the old unrenewed personality is doing it in the old way. And what comes over to our roommate or our dear partner is exactly that -- that we want them to do what we want to do. Or we offer them rides eternally. Or silently we judge them. Yeah? Silently we get over to them that we don't think they should be sitting around on Saturday afternoon. We don't think they should be reading the New York Times on Sunday morning. And what comes over to them is just that, that we want them to do what we want them to do.

Now loved ones that is not downright, outright sin, it's simply the death that is ministered by a personality that has not begun to be perfected by the Holy Spirit. And loved ones, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with your spirits. You're probably wanting the very best for those dear ones, you're probably loving them with all your heart. But do you see that that personality of yours is taking that love of Jesus which is in you for them and it's so perverting it, that it simply comes over to them that you want to dominate them and you want their lives to go the way you know they should go. And so it's not the fragrant loving life of Jesus that accepts them as they are and loves them that comes over to them -- it's your desire to have them do what you want them to do.

Now loved ones, that's only one tiny example of an unrenewed personality, an undisciplined personality, a personality that is still working in the old reverse way. Dear ones, there are millions of examples but you know that that one applies almost to every one of us here. How many Saturday mornings have you spoiled? How many Sunday mornings have you spoiled? How many Christmas' have you spoiled? How many vacations have you spoiled? How many times when you were going to go to a football game together have you spoiled it by you wanting them to do what you wanted them to do? And that's what came over to them.

Not acceptance, not love, not the kindness of Jesus but that you wanted them to do the right thing. And you felt justified. You felt, "Well I do want them to do the right thing." But do you see, it's not Jesus' life? What does the Bible say? It says you wait for it with patience. Passivity? No, you wait expectantly. "Apekdechomai" is the Greek word. It means to wait expectantly, eagerly, to wait expecting the Holy Spirit to begin to change and reroute your personality. Wait for it with patience.

I'll show you what it is. It's such an important word. It's "hupomone" in Greek and it looks like that or it looks [H-U-P-O-M-E-N-E]. And that word there, I'm sorry, that word there, that "hupo" is

under and “meno” is the Greek word to remain under. That's what patience is. Remaining under the circumstances that God has been putting you in in order to bring about the breaking of your own perverted personality parts and to bring them into his image. And you've often wondered why am I still waiting for her? Why am I still waiting for her? The store will be closed. Why doesn't he hurry up, we're going to miss church? And God is saying, "Hupomone". Would you remain under it? Would you accept it with patience? And while you're accepting it with patience, my Holy Spirit is beginning to break that massive strong personality of yours and remold it to be a fit servant of my spirit. And if you just let me continue to bring you into these breaking situations and circumstances, believe me, I will remold that massive monstrous personality of yours into a fit servant for your spirit.” Well, loved ones that's what it is.

So would you – well, would you think about it and would you ask the Holy Spirit to show you next time it comes about? So that you'll know what's happening and you won't get mad and you'll begin to see that the Holy Spirit is trying to make you a picture of Jesus his son and is trying to produce in you what he wanted to produce in that dear old forefather of ours in Central Asia. And if you do, you'll begin to see life turning round the right way, true. Really appreciate your patience waiting this long. Let us pray.