

Personality Weaknesses or Disobedience?

Romans 8:27a

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

All of our academic disciplines and all the attempts that we ourselves make at forming a philosophy of life are aimed at one particular target, and that is to try to find a unifying principle or one single idea that will make sense of life. One unifying principle or one single idea that will give meaning to life and that will enable us to know the purpose for our own lives. I think you'd agree with that. That's the meaning of philosophy, to find a single unifying idea or principle that will give meaning to all of life and will enable us to know why we're here at all. For weeks now, we have been sharing the principle that the Person whom we believe to be the Son of the Maker of the world has brought to us, and that principle is, the continuity of life.

[Diagrams are used from this point. See video of sermon.]

In other words, we've shared that if you think of the world as made up with many, many little circles, 3.5 billion of us like that. If there was some life source here that could get into each one of us and could give to us the same characteristics as this life source itself had, we could then begin to express that to each other. Then, you could see us possibly entering into some harmony in life. If this life source for instance had pity as one of its qualities, then that pity would come into the hearts of all these 3.5 billion people. If this life source had love as one of its qualities, then love would come into every personality in the whole universe.

We've been sharing that this actually is the plan of the Maker of the world, that we would each retain our individual characteristics: some of us would have beards, and some of us would speak quickly, and some of us would speak slowly, and some of us would like art, and some of us would like science. But through all of us would run this one kind of life. And in fact, we've been finding that Jesus has said that that life is the very life that runs through his own family -- that is, the family of the Father and the Son. It's the life of the Holy Spirit. It's uncreated life and it contains the very genes of God, the very characteristics of God's own personality. The Father's will is that, of course, we will receive that life and then we will begin to express it to the world and to each other.

It's no mystery, loved ones. I'll just point out to you that there are two problem points in that plan that you yourself can see. First of all, there's this point, the receiving of that life. So, there can be something wrong with our receiving apparatus. Then, there's the transmitting part of that plan. There can be something wrong with our transmitting apparatus, the method by which we transmit this life to each other. That's exactly where the problems are, you remember. We receive this life of the Holy Spirit into our spirits. In order to receive that life of the Holy Spirit into your spirit you have to be willing for your life to be governed by this Holy Spirit. You have to be willing for your life to go the way your Maker intended it to go. If you're not willing for that, then you're going to have problems with many willful characteristics of rebellion in your life. You're going to have trouble with things like anger, and jealousy, and envy. In other words, you're going to have trouble with what we would call our just "downright sins". So if you are unwilling for your life to be governed by this life of the Holy Spirit, then you're going to have trouble with what the Bible calls "works of the flesh".

Now on the other hand, as this life of the Holy Spirit comes in there [pointing to diagram], so he tries to get out. He comes up against this transmission problem, the soul. The soul consists of the mind, and the emotions, and the will. They are what God uses to transmit this life of the Holy Spirit to other people. If you have a problem because your soul is not fitted to transmit that life, then you have difficulty with other things -- what we would call "human personality weaknesses". You'd have trouble with things like facetiousness, or talkativeness, or being a little overbearing with people, or trying to swamp people with a kind of human love and putting them off. But you'd have trouble then in that area with human traits, human personality weaknesses. And the need there of course, is to allow the Holy Spirit to begin to reroute and renew your soul powers.

Those powers, you remember, have been used for an entirely different kind of life. God intended these powers of the soul to be used this way, he intended that the mind would be used to understand him. The Holy Spirit would come in like that, [pointing to diagram] and then as he was going out like this, the mind would understand what the Holy Spirit was giving to you from God. The will would obey that and the emotions would express the joy of your fellowship with God. So the whole plan was that the soul would experience an outgoing life. In fact of course, once you decide to reject that -- and we've all done that from the beginning of our lives -- then the soul began an inward turn kind of life. Where it tried to get security and enjoyment from the world itself. The soul became perverted and the mind began to manipulate. Instead of to understand God's will, it began to try to manipulate the other 3.5 billion people in the world. The will began to try to rule these people, to make some room so that we can get our own heads above everybody else's shoulders. Instead of obeying God, we became preoccupied with making other people obey us. Our emotions were utterly desolate and lonely because of the lack of God's fellowship and they began to concentrate on enjoying other people, enjoying things and getting joy for ourselves.

Now loved ones, that's what I mean when I say the "transmitting apparatus", or the transmitters inside us have become preprogrammed, and rerouted and perverted. Until they are renewed and you begin to let your soul be governed by the Spirit, you're going to have trouble with what we call human weaknesses, human traits that are inexpedient for the expression of God's life. I'd point out to you that there is a definite difference here, because some of you may say, "Oh yeah, I have some of those human weaknesses: anger, bad temper, jealousy." No loved ones, those are downright sins and you better just call them sins. The problem with those is, in the reception area you are not willing for your life to be governed by the Holy Spirit and as a result of that, you get into a situation where you want to control it because you don't want the Holy Spirit to control your life. You can't control it so you lose your temper in order to bring the others to heel and enable you to get control of the situation.

When you're talking about things like anger, bad temper, jealousy and pride, the Bible has no doubt about it. Those are works of the flesh. Those are downright sins. Those are due to a willful rejection of the right of the Holy Spirit to govern your life. But I'd point out to you that if you have allowed him to come in, and you've really received the Spirit of Jesus into your life, and you're alive to God, and now you want to express that to others, you come up against another problem: the transmitting part of your life, the soul power, the psychological apparatus that you have. It's been used for years to take in from the world, and now it suddenly has to start giving out. There you begin to run up against human weaknesses like talkativeness. You've been used for years to talking a lot to try to get people to notice you. Now, you don't want people to notice you any longer. You're happy not to be noticed, but you've got used to talking a lot and you just keep on talking. The needle just won't stop. You just keep at it. The reason has gone for it, but you've got your personality into that kind of approach.

Actually, it's interesting. Talking about the good things that you've done in your life can be downright pride and boasting, or it can at times be something that you've got yourself used to. You've just got used to talking big. I know several brothers who were salesman and they had terrible inferiority complexes. They felt they were unworthy and had no value. Nobody respected them and so they got used to talking big to make people look up to them. Then they came and they received the Holy Spirit into their lives. They sense their significance as being God's children, but they had got used to talking big and they kept on talking big. Now that's what you mean when you talk about human weaknesses as opposed to downright carnal attitudes. These are downright carnal attitudes here. The only thing that will deal with those is letting Jesus' Spirit come in and take over your whole life and giving up the right to control your life the way you want.

Now on the other hand, these can only be dealt with by a gradual process of allowing the Spirit of Jesus to again and again brake you when you're in the midst of talking too much. You see the glazed impression coming over the other person's eyes. You know they're going to black out soon by you talking big. Then the Holy Spirit points out to you, "Well you know you did it again," and suddenly you realize, "Yeah, I did." You don't feel a terrible guilt about it, "Lord I didn't intend it." In other words loved ones, you can see that in a real sense these are kind of involuntary responses that you find yourself producing. These [pointing to diagram] are real voluntary responses.

The Bible makes a distinction between conscience sin and unconscious sin. If you look up Leviticus, there's a real distinction between conscious sin and unconscious sin. This may help some of you who have been concerned with another verse. The Bible talks about a sin unto death -- and that you are not to pray for -- but there is a sin not unto death. I think you can see the point there. That here [pointing] there is a deliberate rebellion against God which is due to your life not being controlled by the Holy Spirit. Here there is a deception. Some of you find, "I am doing it again. God doesn't want me to." Here you're talking about a gradual process experience of the cross, growing in grace. Here you're talking about a crisis and instantaneous crisis.

So loved ones there is a real distinction there. I'll just give you an example and then I'll stop long enough to let you push me on it in questions. You remember the situation with Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane? You remember when Jesus was being arrested? Peter took out the old sword and just whipped off the high priest's ear. Jesus really used strong language with him, and yet that was an example of this [pointing] rather than this. In other words, God knew that Peter's motive was, in fact, right. He wanted to save Jesus but his method of achieving that motive was of the old worldly system.

Now when we talk about human weaknesses that's what we're talking about: the end is right. The person who has been filled with the Holy Spirit, who has received the Holy Spirit and allowed him to fill every part of his spirit, the end is right but the means are wrong. That's really what we're talking about when we talk about human weaknesses or personality prayers.

Now loved ones, I think I should stop for a moment. Any questions? Does anyone want to try to push me to clarify this or anything?

Q. Does the person on the right [pointing to diagram] then not know God at all and is he not a Christian?

A. Brother, I think that many of us have real trouble with this area of our lives, that is,

conscious disobedience. Even though we have entered into as much of the gospel as has been preached to us -- now I'll put it that way. I think a lot of us have heard often that Jesus has died for our sins, but we have never really been told what -- I hesitate to you use the word because it can become a school very quickly -- but I would call it radical Christianity. In fact, I would call it just ordinary Christianity. But we've never been taught the radical remedy that we have been crucified with Christ. So many of us have an intellectual concept that Jesus had died for our sins -- and we're really good Jews. We're just good Jews. We believe on him who is to come, but we ourselves have no tremendous awareness as Jesus as a person in our lives. We believe the concept, we'll believe our sins have been forgiven but we have not entered into any crucifixion with Christ, any death to our own right to rule our own lives, and so we're still having trouble -- conscience disobedience.

Now brother, you can see the direction I'm taking. I'm saying that a person who has entered into all that God has for them -- which is being filled with the Holy Spirit or being baptized with the Spirit, being crucified with Christ as well as believing that Jesus has died for them -- you're right, they would then have victory in this area and are meant to have victory in this area. So does that help? So if you want me to answer your question, I would say, "A person here [pointing to diagram] would be a Christian, would be a Christian growing in grace. I'm afraid that there are many of us who call ourselves Christians who are -- I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm moving it back and forward -- a person who has had victory over these things would be a Christian, but was still growing in this area, that would be a Christian. I think there are many of us who are Christians who seem to be in the midst of this kind of problem and have not victory over it. Boy, I have done my best to confuse that one!

Loved ones, I think you see, even though I was pointed to the wrong thing, what I'm suggesting: that a Christian is meant to have to be free from this kind of thing. Free from that, and growing into this. What I'm afraid you see, many of you loved ones do, you say, "Well I'm not free from this but I'm growing into this," or, "I'm growing away from it. I'm growing free from it." No, you're freed from that by your instantaneous death with Jesus on the cross and by being filled and cleansed by the Holy Spirit. Now push me loved ones.

Q. The past three weeks you've split the Spirit into three. Can you go over that again?

A. I think brother, that's it. That there [pointing to diagram] I tried to talk about some of the functions of the Spirit. I think those loved ones, are some of the functions of the Spirit. The Spirit has a function of conscience. Then of course, it's God's will that that would govern our wills. So our wills would be in direct submission to our consciences. Where we get into trouble of course, is we try to put our wills under direct submission to our minds. Our minds of course, should be in direct submission to our intuition of our spirits. But we so often, put our minds in submission to our problems that we're having with other people and we end up manipulating.

Fellowship should fulfill all the needs of our emotions so that those of us who are husbands could love our wives freely without trying to drag love from them because we're receiving the love from the Father. It would be true with all of us who are roommates. I think it's good loved ones, even though I know it's important for us to have a definite teaching every Sunday, it's important once in a while to stop like this so that you can get at me a bit and hold me back.

Q. By "sin onto death" do you mean a continual unrepentant rebellion?

A. Yes brother, I would say that. Now brother, I think we have to be very honest with ourselves because there is a tendency for some of us to say, "Well I lose my temper three times a month, but I'm not engaging in a continual unrepentant rebellion." I think there's a very tricky time there where we have to decide sooner or later, "Listen, are we continuing in what is virtually apostasy and a continuous unrepentant rebellion. How long can we continue rationalizing this sin before we harden our conscience and before the Holy Spirit is no longer able to bring a spirit of penitence to us?" But that's it brother. Yes, a sin unto death would be a continual unrepentant rebellion.

Q. Would the consequences of that eventually be a separation from God?

A. The consequences of that would eventually be separation from God and that would seem even if you're a Calvinist and would hold to eternal security. You could go with old [Watchman] Nee who would say, "You then behave as if you were dead." Yes, yes -- but it would be a separation -- certainly a separation from any consciousness of God's presence.

Q. I'm asking for your opinion. Is this something you believe that we are very conscience of: whether we are in a state of voluntary sin or involuntary human weakness?

A. No brother, I would say that probably with both of these, each of us are unlike God in three million different ways. Perhaps they're divided maybe into kind of two million and one million, and God is just dealing with us in certain areas. But it seems to be the voluntary ones are the ones that we're conscience of and that he's beginning to show us. Maybe he's shown us 150 of that three million. Now it seems to me that God intends us to deal with those and deal with them victoriously.

But there may be perhaps two million ways in which we're not like God that are over here that we don't know about, and yet God is gradually beginning to deal with us on them. Now I would say that these we'll continue to grow in until we meet Jesus face-to-face. I would say this is where you talk about growth in grace. It is a growth in perfection. If you'd like to put it another way loved ones, this is a freedom from sin. This is a growth in obedience. As you can have various degrees of anger, so you can have various degrees of love. So this is a growing into perfection. This is a being freed of positive evil. And I would say that it is the Father's will that we should be freed from this mess here -- and we should be growing here. We will continue to grow here in this area until we see Jesus face-to-face, I suppose.

Q. Is it unrighteous for a Christian who has been filled with the Holy Spirit to feel extreme anger at injustice to himself?

A. It's very difficult loved ones, to be sure every time that you're angry with the person because they are opposing Jesus in you, rather than you yourself. We are such miserable, tricky people that we find great difficulty being absolutely honest about that, and so it's a very dangerous area. I would imagine brother, it is. I would imagine strictly speaking it is possible for you to sense that this person is despising Jesus in you in some way, and so you express wrath. I think is a better biblical word You express wrath against him. You express God's reaction against anything that infringes his sovereignty and his goodness. You express wrath to them.

You remember the Bible says, "Be angry and sin not." So obviously, there is an anger that is not sin. I would say that the anger that is not sin, is controlled and unselfish, and the anger that is sin is the very opposite of both of those. It's uncontrolled and it is selfish. So I think maybe

I'd rather tackle it that way. I'm sure that the answer to your question is, "Yes a person could express wrath against people who were opposing him himself, for God's sake." But I think those are maybe better ways in which to determine that. Is it controlled? Is it unselfish? Is it on God's behalf or is it uncontrolled, selfish, and on my behalf?

Loved ones, you remember that I am not Pope Paul and so I'm just answering your questions as God gives me wisdom here.

Q. [Question inaudible -- person quotes], "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." Does this mean that the Holy Spirit is showing more?

A. That's right, it means the inexpedient, involuntary faults.

Q. Sis says, "God can always forgive us on our weaknesses, but he cannot forgive us in our iniquities".

A. The only thing I quarrel with a wee bit is, because so many of us have come through psychology and we use weaknesses rather generally: "My weaknesses is drunkenness and hers is adultery" and so on. But I'm with you what you're saying. Loved ones, isn't the truth is that, "Until 70 times seven (isn't that the Father's promise) "Until 70 times, seven as long as your heart is penitent enough to come to me, and ask for forgiveness I will forgive." Loved ones, that's it. That's why I do this -- so that you'll be very honest with yourselves.

Now listen, am I playing a line here with God? Am I kind of pretending that I don't know about this, or am I being honest? Because loved ones, the tragedy is that if you're just bluffing you're actually beginning to destroy the sensitivity of your own conscious and that's what will prevent God forgiving you. He will forgive as long as a person's conscious is sensitive enough to him. But the tragedy with those of us who keep on keeping on and on in known sin is that our conscience gets harder and harder and harder until the point comes where we are no longer able to repent. Remember that Hebrews passage says, "It is not possible to renew again to repentance, those who trample under feet the blood of Jesus." Not it is impossible for God to forgive them, but it is impossible to renew again into repentance those who continually trample under feet the blood of Jesus. That's why it's important to be very honest, and very straight about whether you're involved in some involuntary human weakness that you're giving your whole heart to God to get rid of or whether you're involved in a downright sin that you just are not prepared to let go of.

So it's the attitude of the heart, loved ones, more than the number of sins. Some of us used to get caught up with this business, "What is habitual sin?" You counted it. "Well, habitual sins -- three times a week -- and it's not habitual if it's only once a week." But that's not it. It's not the number of times. It's the attitude of heart. Are you fighting against it with all your being, or are you getting used to it, rationalizing it, and justifying yourself in the midst of what's real?

Q. Could you explain the trinity?

A. No, Sis. I'll be glad to try to go into some analogies some Sunday, but I know that it would be just a wild one to try to pull into this present discussion.

Q. Could the two things be going on in the same time in the person's life?

A. Undoubtedly they are, loved ones. Undoubtedly you're getting some light about some human personality trait that you inherited from your father. Undoubtedly, there are many husbands here who know that they're not sensitive to their wives, and that very often they hurt their wives without knowing it. And not only us husbands, I think, have our heads on the block, but all of us who have roommates. We often are aware that because we have inherited some of the briskness and the roughness of our fathers, we're not being sensitive to our roommates. The Holy Spirit is showing us that. But underneath, there is also a downright irritability with those roommates. God is showing us that comes from a different source than the briskness. The briskness is a personality trait that you inherited and that I will work on gradually. This irritability is because you think she ought to do it when you think she ought to do it. You want to be God of this apartment, and you're not getting the thing done the way you want so you're irritable. Now this is because you haven't let the Spirit of Jesus come in and cleanse you from self, sense of right and rights and right to his own way.

Well loved ones, I think it's good to clarify the things with each other but I'd really encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you're dealing with and to see that the remedies are different. I'd remind you that you would really question a doctor if you went to him and said, "I have been diagnosed as a cancer case, and I believe I will have to have my stomach cut away." He said, "Just eat a lot, and your healthy body will outgrow the sick part of your body." You know, you would repeat the reply to him, "No it will all grow together. The sick stuff will just grow as much as the healthy stuff grows." In other words, you can't grow out of sin. You have to be delivered out of sin by accepting your position with Jesus on the cross and allowing the Holy Spirit to cleanse you. You can only grow into perfection and purity -- so maybe you'd remember that. Stop trying to grow out of your sins. You'll never grow out of them, but you can grow out of your personality inexpedient traits and into traits that express Jesus. I'd like to share next Sunday personality prayers and spirit prayers.

Let's pray, shall we? Dear Father, we thank you for your clear word. We thank you Father for the plain responsibility that you lay before us, that you expect us to obey you. You expect us to be free from voluntary rebellion against you. You expect us to take advantage of the provision you have made in Jesus, for us to be filled and cleansed by the Holy Spirit, so that we will not be angry, irritable, impatient, lustful people, but we'll be people who have pure hearts, and clean thoughts. We thank you Father, for showing us so plainly that even our human weaknesses are intended by you to be cleansed by the Holy Spirit as we grow in grace.

Father, we thank you. Thank you that the vision of a perfect world, at least in our homes or in our classroom, is possible. Father, we know that it'll never come about in the world as a whole, but thank you that if we all share the same life that flows through your own character, that perfect world can come about here in our homes and in our schools. Father, we pray that you'll lead us into a greater awareness of ourselves, and most of all, of you during the rest of this day. We ask this for your glory. Amen.