

The Father of Jesus Christ

Romans 8:31a

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, I'd like us to resume our study of God's explanation of reality in Romans if you would. So would you look at Romans 8:31. It runs like this, "What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us?" The verse is so great that I think a human being is dwarfed by all that's in it so I asked God to share with me what some of you needed to hear in regard to that verse. So that's what I am going to do loved ones, I'm not going to attempt to expound the whole verse but just to share with you some of the things that God showed me some of us here needed to hear in that verse.

If God be for us, who is against us? "Our own misconceptions of God". Some of you here don't realize how much God is for you. Some of you here don't realize how much God is really for you, really. The first place he showed me some of us had a misconception about him was in regard to that streak of perversity and irrationality in us called our carnal wills. You remember how often we have discussed it. It's that attitude that's expressed in Romans 8:15, "I do not understand my own actions. The evil I want to avoid is the very thing I do. And the good that I would, I cannot do."

And all of us know that that carnal, selfish will is part of that inturned reverse personality that we have developed over the years through trying to get all the security, and the significance, and happiness we wanted from others and from the world instead of from God. We all know that. And you all know as well that God took that selfish, carnal, perverted personality and put it into Jesus and destroyed it there. And you would all say these words, I think, back to me. In fact, you all know that what you have to do now is allow God to make that real in you today, to destroy that old selfish will, and then to put into you the life of his own Holy Spirit.

But some of you here this morning think that God is condemning you until you let him deal with every little last bit of that selfish personality. God showed me that some of you think that. In other words some of you say, "Yeah, I know that has to be made real in me, and I want it to be made real, and I know God isn't really doing anything but condemning me until it's made real." Loved ones, that's not true. God is for you. God is for you. Ever since you agreed to get onto the operating table of Jesus' cross and God began to work on you with the knife of his Holy Spirit, God has been for you. He's for you.

When he lovingly and gently with his knife begins to search into that anger problem in your life, or begins to probe into that jealousy problem in your life, or that problem of uncleanness in your thought life. When he lovingly and gently begins to probe with the knife of his Holy Spirit in there and you momentarily recoil, he's saying to you, "I know my loved one. I know it hurts, but I'm working with you to get rid of this cancerous disease. And I know it's entangled in all kind of ligaments and arteries throughout your whole life and I know you are feeling the repercussions of this everywhere, but loved ones, we have to get rid of this. Now let's work on it together." Loved ones, God is for you. He isn't against you.

The Bible says that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. That means that as far as God is concerned when he destroyed your carnal, selfish will in Jesus he has no more reason to

condemn you. He wants simply to get together with you and say, "Okay, now I have done all that's needed on the cross now, let's together get this real in your own life." That's the Father's attitude, loved ones. God is not standing off from you saying, "Get rid of that. Get rid of it. I am not accepting you until you get rid of that." It's not so.

From the moment you thanked him for letting Jesus die for you, from that moment on, he's your father. He's been working with you. He's a loving father working with his child to make you like Jesus. And it's as a father who loves you that he's working. The Holy Spirit is not witnessing to you that God is angry at you when he points out that you still have bad temper in your life, or when he points out that you still have greed in your life. The Holy Spirit is never witnessing to God's condemnation of you. He's always witnessing to his own desire to make you like the rest of his children and especially like his son Jesus.

But loved ones, his working with you is as a loving father not as a terrible judge saying, "You must come up to this level of purity before I'll accept you as my child." He is saying rather, "I accept you. I have no reason to do anything else. All I wanted when I condemned you to death was to destroy that selfish, carnal personality of yours. I did that in my son 1900 years ago, now I have only love to you. I have only love and acceptance to you until the end of this life. And then it's out of my hands. If by that time you have not let me deal with you and you have not received my Holy Spirit, then you yourself have excluded yourself from living eternally by refusing my Holy Spirit. But until that moment, I'm with you, I'm working with you."

Loved ones, God is for you in this dealing that he's doing with each one of us in regard to these inward sins that we have. It's really as if you are walking along a muddy road with the Father at your side and you fall yet once more -- splash! -- into the old mud. And you get up and there he is you know, like any dear dad, rubbing the spot to get it off and your skin is burning a wee bit because he is rubbing quite hard. And you are crying out, "You don't love me. You don't love me." And he is saying, "Would I be here down in this muddy road with you? Would I have allowed my Son to become sin for you -- because that's it -- to become dirty for you? Would I have allowed myself to come down here to walk in this muddy road with you and pick you up like this, if I didn't love you? It's because I love you that I am trying to rub this dirt off." And loved ones, I think some of us here this morning need to see that -- that God is for us when he is working on the things that are wrong in our life. He's not condemning us, he's for us. That's the first thing that the Father showed me.

He showed me another thing that some of us are doing and we need to know that God is for us. You remember how paganism began, do you? If you'd like to look at it loved ones, it's Romans 1. It is just about three verses there explains the origin of paganism or non-Christian religions. Romans 1:20. This is the way things happen you see, "Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." So everybody knew there was a God. "For although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles." That's how paganism started.

Centuries ago we just started to ignore God and we began to make things we called gods. We knew they weren't gods, but we began to make idols out of wood and stone because we could control them. We could make them in our image, make them as we wanted. Now the incredible thing was that as we

did that our minds became darkened and we opened ourselves to spirits in the universe. Some of you have come across the phrase in Colossians “elemental spirits in the universe”. Loved ones, there are spirits, there are evil spirits in the universe. They fell with Satan. And they are a part of that group of spirit beings that work against God’s Holy Spirit.

Now once people began to worship idols and ignore God, they opened themselves to these evil spirits. And it's these evil spirits that produce the appearance of power that you get in spiritualism. You know with the table tapping or the appearance of power that you get in Hinduism or Buddhism, there is something that appears like power there and it comes from these evil spirits. Now of course, these evil spirits are out to destroy human beings, that’s all they are interested in doing. Satan himself is out to destroy us. And that's why you get pagan religions who are preoccupied with trying to placate these evil spirits. That's what they do. You’ll notice every pagan religion has a complicated sacrificial system or works righteousness system where they try to hold these evil spirits off from destroying us and they’re always placating them, trying to persuade them not to do evil to us. Now that's where that whole idea of placating came in.

Now loved ones, some of us have carried that over into our relationship with our Father. And “If God be for us, who is against us?” There is a misconception that some of us have that the father of Jesus Christ has to be placated. I think some of us feel that. Some of us feel, “Yeah, yeah, well God's for me, but I have to persuade him, I have to placate him and please him, I have to do something to persuade him to love me, to turn his wrath away from me. I have to do works that make me in some way worth appreciating in his eyes. I have to prove that I am valuable to him in some way. I have to keep him off. Otherwise he’ll let his wrath burn upon me.” Now loved ones that is not true.

There are lots of verses that say it's not true. But even just Romans 5:8 says it. “God commends his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” Now you are probably a lot better than you were, I hope, from when you first started to come here. You probably are. I hope you are. Now before you ever started to come here or before you ever started to think of God at all, God loved you. God loved you as a sinner. Jesus said, “I haven't come to save good people I’ve come to save sinners. I’ve come not to heal people who are well, I’ve come to heal people we are sick.”

Now loved ones, God loved you when you were far worse than you are now so you can be absolutely sure that you don't need to start placating him now to try to persuade him to love you. God loves you now as you are. He loves you as you are. He has no reason to turn wrath upon you. He turned his wrath upon you in Jesus once, that’s it finished with. He is not an unjust God, he doesn't burn a person twice for the same sin. He has burned you once in Jesus, once in Jesus he destroyed you. That's all. From now on he has a loving accepting attitude to you. He has always had that, but he had to deal with that carnal selfish will in some way and Calvary was his way of dealing with that.

I think, you see, some of us think Jesus had to die to persuade his Father to love us. No, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. It was because God loved us that Calvary took place. Calvary was God's way of dealing with the insuperable obstacle to him giving us his Holy Spirit. That was our carnal selfish wills, but God loved us even before Calvary. And you yourself do not have to produce a new Calvary of good works and good efforts to try to persuade God to love you. God doesn’t need to be placated, God's for you. God's for you. He’s not against you. God is for you. He’s saying, “Look, my arms are open, my loved one, come I want to give you this uncreated life that

fills me and my son Jesus. I want you to receive this. I am willing for you to have it. Here it is." God is for you, loved ones. You don't need to placate him.

Just one other thing that the Father showed me. You remember the way, before we believed there was a loving Father, we felt very insignificant. Indeed even some of you might feel it even today. You might feel, "Well, three or four billion of us here in the world, and I'm one little person, I'm nothing. I'm nothing. I'm not noticed. I'm not noticeable. I'm not significant. I'm worth nothing." Do you remember the way we decided "I'm going to make myself worth something. I'm going to be significant. I'm going to be important." And, we started to use our job, our looks, or our abilities to try to make ourselves significant. You remember that's what we did because we really did not believe there was a loving Father up in heaven who could see us or who respected us or loved us at all. And so we kept on doing that. Then, you remember, we began to see that the Father thinks we're significant. We don't need to depend on other people for significance. The Father knows us. He thinks we're significant.

Now loved ones, I think some of you this morning have carried over that old competitive spirit into your relationship with the Father. You don't need to but I think it just became second nature to some of us and we still do it. We still are out to compete with others to try to establish our significance. And even when we come into the Father's family, we don't just want to be ordinary sons, ordinary daughters. We want to be great sons, the greatest sons, the greatest daughters. In other words, I think some of you think that God is not for all of us equally. I think some of you think that Billy Graham, and Elijah, and Calvin -- now God could not miss those boys. And in heaven there will be a special level where they dwell up there. And there will be special levels of attainment. And that wouldn't be so bad even if we thought that, but the way we act is we think, "Well I can never be like Graham. I can never be like Elijah. But boy, I am going to be as good as I possibly can be so he notices me." Now, loved ones, that's anathema to the Father of Jesus Christ. That's anathema to the Father of Jesus Christ. God is for all of us equally. You don't need to be an outstanding son of God. You don't need to be an outstanding daughter of God so that he loves you. God loves all of us equally. There are no levels in heaven. The Father is for all of us equally. We'll all be the same in his presence. And you don't need to strive and strain to compete to try to be outstanding. You just need to be his child.

Now, loved ones, the teaching is so plain in many of the parts of the Bible. But maybe you'd just look at Matthew 20. It's a very obvious one. You remember it's the account of the owner of the vineyard, you remember, who employs laborers at different times of the day. Matthew 20:8, "And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?'"

Loved ones, the Father is for all of us equally. God is for us. I don't know if you're sitting there this morning with strange ideas about God being against you in some way or about you kind of competing with him, or trying to please him, or trying to prove yourself to him in some way. Loved ones, the Father knows you better than you know yourself. There are evil things in you that you

don't even know and the Father sees them. And yet he still has kept the blood flowing through the old arteries. He's still held the protons and neutrons together. He's still lovingly raining his rain on the just and the unjust. He still enabled you to go through day after day after day. It's him that's holding you together. He must be for you if despite what you are he continues to hold your life together.

Loved ones, the Father is for you and I would plead with you to stop looking at it as a competitive kind of battle and see that God is for you. He's working with you to try to clean up your life. He's working with you equally with everybody else. He's working with you because he wants to, not because you are successfully placating him with all your good works. So I'd encourage you loved ones just to stop the good works stuff and just say, "Father you know it all. Thou my God seest me. I don't understand how you could put up with me Lord, but thank you. Thank you for being my Father. Thank you that we can work on this together. Thank you that you're not judging me. You're loving me." I pray that some loved one here will see that. Because I just know there's some of you just going through agony because you're not realizing that if God is for us who can be against us? The real answer is nobody. The only thing that can be against us is our own misconceptions, our own disbelief that God is really for us. He is, loved ones, he's for you. He's for you.

Let us pray. Dear Father, we thank you. Lord, I suppose it's just a carry over from that old demon worship, but Father we have such difficulties with thinking of a God who doesn't need to be placated or satisfied in some way. Lord, we've been so used to proving ourselves to everybody else that we kind of feel we have to prove ourselves to you. But Lord we see that that isn't it, that you are the Father of Jesus, that he that has seen Jesus has seen you and that you are that dear Father in the story of the prodigal son and you always meet us more than half way. And Father thank you that even these dirty marks that we have in our lives, these things that we still have to take to the cross, thank you Father that even there you're not condemning us. You're just saying, "I'm down here in the mud with you because I love you. Let's work on this dirt together." Thank you Lord, thank you for being so kind and so loving to us and help us to be like that to each other this week. Thank you, Lord. Amen.