

Put Right and Made Right

Romans 10:10

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I think all of us here know what a curse on mankind alcoholism is. It's probably the most obvious example that we have of us human beings misusing a gift that God has given us to destroy ourselves. And I think too that most of us here know of instances of a loyal employee of a company becoming so disoriented by his alcoholism, that eventually the company just had to decide to get rid of him and to fire him.

I think many of us know examples of a company psychologist or the social worker suggesting an alternative to that. You know the alternative goes something like the president calling the employee into his office and saying: "John, you know that other people have suffered from alcoholism, and you know that they have been cured. Do you believe that?" And John says, "Sure, sure I know that's a fact." And then the president says, "Well, do you believe that that could happen to you?" And of course John says, "Sure, sure I do." And then the president says, "I tell you what. If you will submit yourself to a course of treatment for your alcoholism, then we are prepared to reinstate you in your position in this company."

And of course John immediately says, "Sure, sure I'll submit myself to the course of treatment." And of course, the president would say something like, "Now, wait a minute! Don't say, 'Sure,' so quickly! This is going to mean discipline on your part. It's going to mean changing your whole way of life. You'll have to change your attitude to your friends and your attitude to your relatives and your attitude to your colleagues. And you'll have to change your whole dependence in your life. You'll have to change it from what it has been in the past. Now, are you prepared to submit yourself to that kind of treatment?"

And John says, "Look, if I can be reinstated in my position in this company, if I can have back again the relationship that I had with all of you, I'll gladly submit myself to any course of treatment or discipline that will cure me." And then the president says, "Well, welcome back John! We're glad to have you with us again. And remember, it's really in a way probation; but welcome back into the company."

Now, is John cured the moment he grips the president's hand? All of us would say, "No, no, he isn't." What has happened is, he is being reinstated in the company. He is being given back his position in the company. He's had his relationship restored with the president and with his boss and his colleagues. In other words, he is being put right in regard to them. Everything's right again as it was before in the relationship. They feel they are justified in giving him his job back; he feels, he is justified in being there and has a right to be there. But is he cured? Well we all know – no, he isn't. The job has just begun of curing them. He now has to do what he said he would do.

He has to submit himself to a course of treatment that is based on the reality that a human personality can live without dependence on alcohol; that a human personality can live without chemical dependence; without artificial life support systems. He has to commit himself to that kind of life. As he does that day after day after day, slowly and gradually, his personality will be renewed and reformed so that he again becomes a source of vitality and life to his friends and to

his relatives. That's when the cure takes place. Now, loved ones, that's an exact example of the verse that we are studying today -- and it's truth.

So maybe you'd like to look at it. It's Romans 10:10: "For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved." For John, believing in his heart was not just believing in his head. Submitting himself to a course of treatment for alcoholism was not just an academic matter that didn't touch him or his life at all. In fact, you remember, the president had been very careful to point out that this included not just his mind, but it included his will. He said, "Do you know, John, that this will mean changing your way of life? It will mean taking a new attitude to your friends and your relatives. It will mean taking a new attitude to the dependence that has been in your life. Now, are you willing to submit yourself to that?"

Now, that's what believing in the heart is, loved ones. It isn't just saying, "Oh! Sure. Sure, I am ready, I believe that. I believe I can be cured." But it's being willing to submit yourself to it. The heart is the deepest part of a person's personality. It varies with all of us according to how far down we've got into reality -- in our own personalities. But the heart is the deepest part.

So, when that verse says, "you believe in your heart," it means you are willing to submit yourself -- your mind and your will -- to the facts of reality, and you are willing to live in that reality. Then, you remember that when John was ready to do that, then he was justified. That means he was put right with the company. He was put in a right relationship with them. He was accepted back in as part of a family, because he said he was willing to submit his life to the cure.

And then do you see the second part of it? He confesses with his lips and so is saved. The word for confess is "homologeō". The Greek word means, "to say the same thing or to agree" -- and it means making your life agree with what you say you believe.

So, it means that your life reflects what you say you believe and what you said you were willing to submit to. You actually do it. In other words, in the first century they used the phrase, "he made a good confession" -- talking about some martyr or some Christian. He made a good confession. That has nothing to do with verbal declaration, which we get all wrapped up in. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is my Savior, so that makes me Christian -- that isn't it at all.

Making a good confession is living a life that expresses what you believe is true. It means living the life that is required by what you believe. Of course, only when a person does that is their personality gradually renewed and recreated.

But why is it possible to reverse a personality -- to reverse an alcoholic personality or a chemically dependent personality? Or why is it possible to turn around a bad-tempered critical personality that has been running that way for years upon years?

Is it possible that there are powers of recovery built into our personalities that can be harnessed and that are constantly straining towards health and integration, just the same way as a needle and a compass strains towards the North Pole? Is it possible that there are powers inside even our personalities that are always straining towards health and sobriety and outgoing joy?

The doctors have no problem answering that. They'll say, "Of course! All we do is release the inherent powers of health that are working in the body all the time. We remove the obstacles to

their working and then they bring about the health in the individual.” And the psychiatrists would say the same thing. “We simply release, set loose, take away the obstacles from the inherent urge towards integration and balance that is constantly moving in the mental processes of human beings.”

In other words, is it possible that someone foresaw how we would pervert our personalities as we try to lift the burdens and the tasks of this life? How we would pervert them into worry and anxiety? Is it possible that someone has planted in us mighty powers of recapitulation? And that when they are set loose or harnessed, they actually move us towards health and wholeness and the kind of joyful free people we were made to be? Of course that’s exactly what has happened. Some of you are here for the first time and have never seen this diagram. It will be the same life to you as it was to me when I first saw it.

It’s the outline that the Bible gives of our psychological makeup and it describes the way we were meant to operate. So I’ll try to go through it quickly and yet slowly enough so that you’ll understand it.

God has outlined the personality this way to us -- we exist on three levels: the Spirit and the Soul and the Body -- not three separate entities, but three levels.

The spirit has the ability to commune with God. It’s the part of us that relates us to God. The soul relates us to ourselves. It’s the self-conscious part of us. We can look into ourselves with our minds and see what we are thinking. We can feel with our emotions and feel what we are feeling. It’s the part that’s conscious of ourselves. The body is the part of us that relates to the world and to other people.

The spirit is capable of communing with God and of knowing by an intuitive knowledge of him what we ought to do. The conscience judges us on the basis of that information and constrains our wills to direct our minds so that our minds understand that, and we are able to express that through our bodies to the world -- while our emotions express the joy of our friendship with God. That’s the way God planned for us to operate -- just like that [pointing to the diagram].

We of course rejected that whole plan, and we live as if there is no God. Therefore we have developed a personality or a strain of humanity that is perverted -- perverted, because it has no sense of identity, no sense of meaning -- because it has no belief in a God, and it wonders why it’s here.

In all its desperation, it tries to get what it would have got from God’s own love and God’s own friendship. Of course those are three main things -- it would have got from God a sense of security as he provided all that he needed; a sense of significance as he made clear the importance of his job or his function here in the world; and a sense of happiness in his relationship with the great infinite, only significant other in the whole universe.

This perverted personality started to try to get these things from the world, instead of living the way it was meant to -- instead of living from God and always giving outward to the world. It began to be a leech on society, and a parasite on other people. It tried to get from the world of people and things the security and significance and happiness that it was meant to get from God’s love. {Pointing to the diagram.}

You can see the whole personality became perverted. The mind, instead of concentrating and

understanding what God had directed it to do in his particular job or financial situation, began to try to manipulate events, stocks and shares, and other people's circumstances -- for its own security. The emotions, instead of expressing the joy of a relationship with the one significant other in the universe, had no joy and tried to get joy. It perverted marriage to a place and friendship where it was a matter of what joy or happiness you could get from the other person or from the circumstances. The will, instead of obeying the conscience, became utterly submerged under the mind and emotions, which were in turn dominated by the body so that the will was absolutely useless.

{Pointing to the diagram} That is the perverted personality that you and I have inherited, and that's what God was faced with. What he did was, he destroyed that in a cosmic miracle. He took your individual perverted personality and put it into his Son in pre-creation eternity and he destroyed it there.

That's the miracle that is set forth in our space-time world at Calvary. God destroyed that perverted personality -- so that now, because of that action, there is in you (believe it or not) the power to destroy that perversion. God has built that power into you. There is a power of Jesus' crucifixion in you that is able to destroy the perversion of the bad temper or the drug addiction or the alcohol addiction -- and that power is in you. And God destroyed that perverted personality so that you are now at last free to live by the power of Jesus' resurrection life, the way you were meant to. There is in you a resurrection life that will live naturally and normally -- the way we were created to live in dependence on a dear loving father.

That is the reality. There are two steps to enter into it. First of all, are you willing to submit yourself to that kind of life? That's very simple. It just means, are you willing to live from the inside out instead of from the outside in? Are you willing to live without peer approval? Are you willing in fact to live, if necessary, with peer criticism? Are you willing to be in Jesus where God has placed you, and therefore willing to be absolutely confident that he is in control when all the circumstances surrounding you seem to be intent on destroying you? Are you willing to ignore those circumstances, and to believe nevertheless that your loving Father is in control and has you in his hands? That's what it means to believe in your heart.

Loved ones, believing in your heart means a willingness to be in accordance with the reality. And the reality is that God has destroyed that {pointing to the diagram showing the wrong way of living}. Actually, any of us who intend to go on living like this will only live like this until this life is over. Then you will be wiped out, because there is no place for that kind of life in the new world that God is creating.

But the question this morning is, are you willing to stop living that way? Are you willing to allow that to be made real in your life? Are you willing to live as Jesus lived, and to die to the things that he died to? That's what it is to believe in your heart.

I would just point out to you that willingness is a big thing. Someone here might say, "Oh sure. Sure, I am willing." But loved ones, the willingness is a big issue -- because some of us here get more joy from a girlfriend or from a dear husband or a wife than we care to admit. Some of us are utterly enslaved to peer approval -- and it's not simply that we are not free of it -- we don't want to be free of it.

Some of us here love to feel self-pity. We love to feel that nobody is bothering with us and nobody

loves us. We love to cry ourselves to sleep at night. Some of us like that. We get actual satisfaction from paranoia and from feeling we're on our own.

Now, are you willing to give that up -- however perverted a pleasure it may be? Are you willing to stop living like that? That's what it means to believe.

So, how do you become the kind of person God made you to be? How do you become related to him? How can you be justified? How can you be put in a right relationship with him? Only by being willing to enter into this {pointing to the diagram} -- and to change your way of life from that kind of existence there, to that kind of existence there -- to be changed from an ingoing existence to an outgoing life.

Are you willing to believe that? If you are, then God witnesses his contentment with you in your spirit and you know that you are right with him. You are justified in being in his world, in his life, and in his company. That means you are justified. If you believe in your heart you are justified, you suddenly sense, "God loves me. He forgives me. I am right with him." Do you see that's the beginning of the cure? That's not that you're cured. You still have this miserable old personality. Now the only way to be cured is to live that way day-by-day.

So day-by-day, instead of using your mind to manipulate, you will again and again, day-by-day as the Holy Spirit gives you light -- you will use it to understand what God wants you to do. Instead of day-by-day using your emotions to get joy from other people, you'll day-by-day use your emotions to enjoy God and to express that joy. Instead of day-by-day allowing your will to become a jellyfish that never exercises itself at all, you'll make your will obey your conscience.

And day-by-day as you do that, do you see what will happen? The life of Jesus' resurrection that is in you will begin to spread through your whole personality and will renew it and recreate it and redeem it and save it from deterioration and from destruction. And so, when you confess with your lips, you are saved.

Do you see the difference? And do you see also that if at any point in this process you falter -- that you throw everything into jeopardy? Do you see that John would lose his relationship with the company if he did not go through with the cure?

Don't some of you have trouble believing at times? You say, "I have been a child of God for years and suddenly I am having trouble believing." Do you know why? Because you are trying to stop this process whereby God is trying to save you -- trying to save your whole personality, to make it what it was meant to be at the beginning. You are hesitating somewhere here.

Somewhere here you are stumbling on a surrender. So your original belief begins to come into doubt. Do you see that God's plan is for Jesus to express himself fully in you and to be recreated in you? It means that you've to believe in your heart and you are justified. You are put right with God. And then confess with your lips -- agree with your life -- and you are saved.

If you've never taken that step, you could take it today. You could just begin it today without a whole lot of fuss, without anybody else knowing if necessary. You could just begin today quietly -- even if there is someone here who has been on the way but has hesitated and has stepped back from being saved. They are justified but they are holding back with this being saved. They are holding back the redemption of their whole personalities -- and therefore, they are coming into doubt in

their original belief. Loved ones, go forward! Deal with whatever surrender God is bringing to your mind and start going forward again -- because you can't be partially saved. You have to be entirely saved.

So let's just spend a few moments in quietness. If you have never made this step of believing in your heart and confessing with your lips, you can make it now. And if you yourself have been doing this for some time, but need to fix some things, then fix them now. Let's pray.

Father, we see it's very clear. And we have seen some incredible powers within our personality that we haven't been able to understand. We have seen powers of temper that have frightened us. We've seen powers of hatred and bitterness that have frightened us. But we have also seen other powers that make cuts in our skin heal and make our bodies get well again after being ravaged with disease. We have seen powers in us that keep drawing us the right way instead of the wrong way.

So we see, Lord, that in a real way there is within us a power for destruction and deterioration, and there is also a power of surgery and crucifixion and resurrection life. Lord, we thank you for the miracle that you worked in Jesus and we thank you for the expression of it in our own lives. And now we see that we have to choose which way we are going to go. We see that we can submit to one power or the other. Lord, thank you for making clear to us what our responsibility is.

As we pray, I just ask you as you have your head bowed -- are you willing to believe in your heart and to be justified? I just remind you that you cannot be put right with God until you have made some move towards declaring to him your willingness to be completely changed in his Son Jesus. And I'd ask you, are you willing to do that with all that that entails for your life? If you are, I'd encourage you to say that to God quietly in your heart, and to ask him to receive you back again as his child, and as a son or daughter who will be loyal to him from this day forward.

And then, are you willing to confess with your lips -- to make your life agree with that -- so that your whole personality can be reclaimed and can be recreated and renewed? If you are, God's Spirit will clearly show you today and tomorrow and the next day the moments when you have to choose. And as you choose, the resurrection Spirit of Jesus will begin to integrate your personality and to redeem it.

Lord, you know what each of us have done now this morning. And we would ask you now to give us light to pray for each other, so that this week may be a new week for us, so that we may enter into the dynamic life, changed from glory to glory. So that each day will be new for us, and we'll become a new person every 24 hours as we are changed into your image and saved completely. We ask this for your glory and to fulfill your plan for us.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and throughout this week. Amen.