

Sermon Transcript by Reverend Ernest O'Neill

Have you ever thought how difficult it would be to make a person who could love you? Have you ever imagined getting into the God business? Many of us are in it all the time--but have you ever thought how difficult it would be to make someone who could love you? Even if we could make the brains, the bones, the flesh and the eyes, have you thought how extremely difficult it would be to make a person who could love you?

Some of us say, "It wouldn't be very difficult. You can buy Barbie dolls today and when you say to them, 'I love you', they answer you, 'I love you, too.' You can buy big J.R. dolls who say, 'I hate you' and you say, 'I hate you, too.'" Yet it is interesting, they can only say what we program them to say. Right there is the problem, isn't it? The Barbie doll says, "I love you, too," because she is programmed to say that! She can only say it if we put it on our little tape recorder. That's the unsatisfactory thing about it. We know she doesn't really love us because she isn't really a person, and the only people who can love you are persons who have free wills, who are free to choose to love you.

Have you ever thought how difficult it would be to make a person who is free, that is, a person who can exercise their intellect and emotions and will, free and independent of you? It is easy to make a pinball machine where the little metal ball hits various springs and levers at random, much the way certain computers can make random selections in connection with sweepstakes. It's easy to make something that works by chance, but have you ever thought how difficult it is to make someone who actually can exercise their will independent of your will, even though you have made them, and can choose to love you or not to love you? Even if you could conceive of making that kind of a person, do you realize how much restraint and forbearance is needed to keep your hands off them while they decide whether they want to love you or not?

There isn't a father or mother, a boyfriend or girlfriend who doesn't know the tremendous restraint that is needed to keep from making the person that you want to love you do what you want. Probably most of our romantic relationships perish on that rock--that we will not give a person their free will; we will not give them the right to do what they want to do. We don't love their freedom as much as we hate the consequences of their free action. Isn't that true? Every mom and dad have faced that, every guy and girl who has fallen in love with somebody else faces that. It's almost impossible to keep your hands off a person whom you want to love you. Yet, they will never love you unless they are free not to love you.

Have you ever thought how difficult it is for you to create a person who would have a free will and would be able to choose to love you or not to love you? Have you ever thought how difficult it would be, especially if you had some of the abilities that the present electronic toys have? The electronic toys have little built-in computers that can foresee a surprising number of possible answers to certain questions that they put to you. Because of the capacity of their little memory drums, they can stack up many different comments to make depending on which answer you give them. It is like little teaching machines. They seem to be able to perceive what mistakes you are making when you give a certain answer. They can't perceive it, of course. It's simply that they have a lot of different answers stacked up in their memory drum and a lot of different comments that fit those

answers.

That foreknowledge capacity assumes staggering dimensions when you move to some of the complicated computers that can play chess or can guide one of our space shots around Saturn. Then you begin to realize the incredible ability of a computer brain to foresee the apparently free choices of logical, or at times, illogical thinking. Have you ever thought that if you had the ability to foresee what someone you had made might do in a certain situation and what they might not do in another situation, what restraint and forbearance you would need to continue to maintain their free wills? Can you? How often have we sat and looked at the little three-year-old and thought, "I wonder what he's thinking?" And men and women who have fallen in love with each other often have said, "What are you thinking? Tell me what you are thinking."

We are always after a little bit of extra knowledge, but what restraint and forbearance we would need, loved ones, if we had that.

Can you imagine what restraint and forbearance would be needed by an infinite mind that could operate way beyond the realm of the most complex computer that we would ever create, and was able therefore to see a thousand million different permutations of responses and reactions?

Can you imagine the restraint and forbearance and the commitment to free will and to a heaven of love that would be needed for that person who was able to foresee from before the foundation of the world the birth of the man in Atlanta that has killed fifteen little black children? Or can you imagine the forbearance and love and commitment to will and freedom that a Creator like that would need if he were able from before the foundation of the world to see the birth of a man called Judas? Or can you imagine how deeply this Creator must be committed to free will and to our right to choice when he foresaw the birth of a certain Roman soldier whose hand would be used to thrust the sword through the side of his only Son?

Loved ones, that gives you a little feel for the unbelievable kindness and wisdom and forbearance of our dear Creator. It gives you a little feel of the incredible complexity that is needed to produce beings like ourselves who can spit in his face or can kiss him. That's it. Do you realize that it is even more complicated than that because the freedom to choose means that you are free to choose the creation. The ridiculous situation is that if you can choose the creation, in some ways you become less free. All of us know that. We know that the more we exercise the choice our free will has in the wrong way, actually the less free we become.

For instance, look at joy. In our world the greatest joy any of us could experience is to do fully what God has put us here to do, with the Maker right beside us. The greatest delight we could ever experience is to look at the Great Barrier Reef in Australia with our dear Father who made it right beside us, pointing out the details. When we go for counterfeit joy from the creation through a shot of heroin or marijuana or alcohol or tranquilizers or something else, our physical and mental organs become in some way addicted. It's harder for us to choose freely next time. Isn't that true?

Everyone of us knows that in strange ways we fight that, night and day. Those of us who are young eternally in our hearts are always fighting that. We don't care about middle age or old age. It's the middle age mind we are fighting. We see that loved ones as they go through life choose this way instead of that way, that way instead of this way, and each time they choose they seem to become less free, less spontaneous. They seem to become more addicted, more dependent on certain things. That's true.

It doesn't matter whether it's choosing to take a certain attitude toward people in our jobs where we become rather indifferent to human relationships, or at the other end of the scale, we are hyper-sensitive about certain opinions that people have of us, so we become very hyper-sensitive and in that way we are no longer free.

In some way, we are enslaved and enchained. That's what complicates it even more. Do you see that? Our dear God has given us these seventy years and during these years he has given us the privilege of free will--to choose to love him and to depend on him or to love the creation and depend on it. Even as we are making our free choice we are involved in making ourselves less free. How many of us have said, "I wish I had known at eighteen what I know now" or, "I wish I had had the wisdom and experience of life at eighteen that I have now" or, "I wish I could start over again"? The personality that was once free and spontaneous is narrowed down and has little ruts. The amazing thing is, our Creator saw that. He saw that we would make choices that would enchain us, enslave us, imprison us and eventually steal from us our free wills. He saw that we would develop ruts in our personalities, little twists, little idiosyncrasies, little habits, little ways of thinking that would begin to drive us, instead of our will continuing to keep us free.

Loved ones, that's why Calvary is so important. He previewed your life before the foundation of the world. If our computers can do it, well, our Creator is greater than any computer. He previewed each one of our lives. He foresaw the way we would go. He foresaw the ruts that would develop in our personalities, the twists and the idiosyncrasies that would begin to imprison us and prevent us being free to choose him. Before the foundation of the world he destroyed that rutted, twisted, idiosyncratic personality and remade the new, fresh, pristine one that he originally had in mind. The amazing thing is that because that one exists today, we have a real choice.

You can continue to choose the personality that you are forming in this life and that you have formed up to this present moment by the choices you have made. Because of the great cosmic destruction of mankind's crippled personality that took place in Jesus before the foundation of the world and was expressed on his cross on Calvary and symbolized by the great flood when God destroyed all the earth physically, there is a new, clean personality that is available to us from God's own hand, and you can receive that one by faith.

We are a very privileged people. Look at what you have made of your personality up to the moment, and thank God that because of this new birth of yourself that has taken place and this new personality that is available from him, you can actually turn your back on all of that and choose a new, fresh, clean personality that will make the choices that God knows are the ones that will really fulfill you. It is interesting. We are people who have the privilege of making a choice, seeing what we have become and seeing what God rescued us from, and we can still choose. That's really why Paul says in Romans 11:33: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" Thank God!

Let us pray.

Dear Father, we do see what you have put up with. Lord, we see a little glimpse of the inscrutable ways of your wisdom and knowledge. We can lose ourselves in the depths of it. We do see this one thing that we can still retain our free will and can choose to love you.

We can only thank you, Lord for this privileged position we stand in here where we can see what we

have made of our lives so far. Yet, it is still possible to be delivered from the imprisonment of those decisions by receiving by faith the new personality in Jesus at your right hand in this moment.

Thank you, Lord, that we are still free and we can choose today, choose you this day whom we will serve.