

Dwell In Faith, Not Doubt

Romans 14:23e

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Have you any of this experience? Do you ever have a sense of foreboding? Do you ever have a kind of vague sense of fear or apprehension? Do you ever have a kind of anxiety about whether something terrible is going to happen in your life? It's amazing how many of us have that in these days.

I don't know if you ever saw a movie on television that was shown a year or two years ago. It was these two couples that were visiting each other just an evening at a bridge party or something. For one couple, it came time for them to go home and they didn't want to go home because they were scared. It just left it at that. It left it with a vague sense of fear that they had.

It's amazing how many of us are experiencing more and more of that feeling that the Bible talked about when it talks about "men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming in the world." [Luke 21:26]

Now I just ask you, do you ever have that? Do you ever have at times a kind of vague sense of foreboding or a fear that something terrible is going to happen in your life? Some of us don't have it as intensely as that. We don't have it as definite as that. We don't have kind of fear crises like that. We just become aware of a vague sense of apprehension that is in the back of our minds -- a vague sense of tension or strain in our minds. Sometimes we just suddenly become aware, "I'm frowning, I'm frowning. I don't know why I'm frowning but I am frowning. My brow is all furled." You're sitting in a perfectly relaxed situation and you should be utterly at rest and yet you find you're tense and strained. It just occurs to you, "I shouldn't be like this. I should tell my muscles to relax and rest." Do you ever have that kind of feeling?

Many of us don't even have it as mentally or as physically or emotionally as that. We just compare ourselves with the way we used to be as little children. We don't seem free anymore. We're suddenly aware at times how it used to be so nice when I was little. I remember those spring mornings when I was just exuberant and I just bounced along and you're suddenly aware I'm not exuberant anymore. I don't just go along light heartedly and carefree. I'm not. I kind of lumber along. And I notice that at times when there are jokes made or when there's light hearted conversation, I don't just react to it with a light heart. I kind of have to force myself to an appropriate response that people expect. Have you felt any of that?

Old William Wordsworth talked about it like this. He said, "In which the heavy and the weary weight;

Of all this unintelligible world,

Is lightened." [taken from "Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey"] It's not that you feel you're like Atlas [Greek God] with the whole world on your shoulders but sometimes you feel it's a bit like that. Sometimes you feel the whole weight of the world is lying upon you.

Loved ones, what causes that? Well, if you ask God to show you the cause, you'll find that it isn't just one thing. You'll find that it centers around many different areas in your life. That it has many, many centers of unrest, this vague feeling of fear and apprehension. It isn't just one thing. It centers on all kinds of areas in your life. That's what contributes to the vagueness of it and the all pervasiveness of it. It's because it doesn't connect up with one thing but it centers around different areas of your life, different centers of your concerns.

Actually the amazing thing is that it is an accumulation of little worries. That's what it is. It's an accumulation of little worries and anxieties about all kinds of different things that have built up in you over the years and that builds up in your unconscious mind. It consists of all kinds of unresolved things in your life. Events that have had no clean conclusion to them -- relationships that are vaguely still unsatisfactory -- things that you have stepped out on and you haven't brought it to conclusion -- all kinds of sides of your life that aren't really settled and have never really been settled.

The tragedy is that all these things build up and up, heap upon heap until they become a massive heap of unresolved situations in your life -- unresolved relationships, unresolved situations in your business, unresolved situations in your home, unresolved situations in your own attitude to basic things, basic truths in life. They pile up inside your subconscious mind. Actually they pile up so high that they even spill over into your conscious mind. So that at times you find your conscious mind gets preoccupied with those things and your conscious mind feels kind of heavy. So heavy that it begins to enter into a mental paralysis that actually prevents you making decisions. Very often you have real trouble shrugging off the mass of these unresolved issues enough to deal with even some of the ordinary, everyday decisions that you have to make.

The truth is that what you are experiencing, that general angst or anxiety, is only a mellow form of that mental paralysis that eventually puts a person into hospitals. When a person becomes so preoccupied with all these unresolved issues and these unsatisfactory things in their lives that they haven't any more concentration left in their conscious minds to deal with even the decisions that they make. So they start stepping back from making any decisions anywhere and their life falls into passivity. Eventually of course they sink into tranquilizers and eventually into the psychiatric ward.

Loved ones, that's what happens if you let all those unresolved issues in your life continue to weigh you down in this life. You eventually stop living in the present at all and you live 95 per cent in the past and 5 per cent in the future.

Now what are these things? Well you know it's ridiculous -- they vary according to what stage of life we're at. They seem very little innocent little things. That's why we allow them to continue. Those of us who are not married even though we see certain advantages in singleness, yet we still kind of feel we want to have somebody of our own like everybody else. Those of us who aren't married have that kind of unresolved desire and wish in the back of our minds, "Well I wish I was married." Those of us who are married have all kinds of situations in our relationship with our spouses that aren't settled and aren't clear. There are all kinds of disagreements that we've had over the years. All kinds of attitudes to things that we have chosen to disagree on. We've just put them in the back of our mind. So those of who are married have all kinds of unresolved things in our relationship.

Those of us who have babies get all preoccupied in planning the career for the baby and planning where they'll go to school. We have a whole part of our subconscious mind that is preoccupied with that. Those of us who have children at grade school, we're all concerned with their grades. We're preoccupied with their sports and how their doing in sports. Even though we say, that's a normal concern of a parent, yet those things are unresolved things that fill our minds.

Those of us who have loved ones at university, we're concerned with whether they'll get on drugs or whether they'll get on alcohol or what they'll do for a career. Those of us who are in college are preoccupied with our major and what we're going to do to get a good job. These are all little things that we're preoccupied with and we're not meant to be preoccupied with. We're meant to deal with those things as they crop up but what we do is we tuck all these things away in our subconscious mind and we carry them like baggage.

Those of us who have careers are concerned with how we'll hold our position in the company or how we'll forward our own interest and our own promotion. We're not meant to do it. We're meant to live gloriously in the present moment, forget all that stuff. Those of us who have careers get preoccupied with all those thoughts. Those of us who have ideas for our business are preoccupied with how the business is going or where our product stands in the market place. Those of us who have new plans for our careers are preoccupied with how those are going to develop.

Brothers and sisters, I know there is a tendency for us to say, "Now wait a minute those are the normal concerns of life." Those aren't. We are not meant to be preoccupied with those things. Those are things that happen or don't happen according to how completely and well we live this present moment. Those things are not meant to be the preoccupations of our subconscious mind.

Yet, loved ones, those are the things that eventually accumulate and accumulate because we have resolved none of them and very few ever get resolved. Some of them disappear. Some of them switch places with others that are

worse. They are all in the whole unresolved issues that we carry around like baggage in our subconscious mind. And our conscious mind is conscious that all those things are there.

Eventually the elemental spirits of the universe will use those things to bring it an overwhelming fear and an overwhelming anxiety to you that you can't get your hands on. You must agree with that. You feel you can't get your hands on it. If I could get my hands on that worry I'd deal with it. But I somehow can't get my hands on it. The spirit of the universe uses these things to give us that kind of feeling. The feeling that these are all vague things that are unsettled and you can never settle. They become overwhelming to you.

Where does the heaviness come from? Strangely enough the heaviness and the fear doesn't just come from the worry and anxiety itself. It doesn't. The heaviness and the fear come from sin. The heaviness and the fear are the witness of the Holy Spirit that you are in sin -- that you are at that moment separated from God your Father in the way you're thinking of those things. The Holy Spirit witnesses to that by bringing fear to you to waken you up and make you see that you're not living the way you're meant to live and the way you're free to live.

So the heaviness and fear, loved ones, comes from sin. Now what sin? "For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." [Romans 14:23] That's it. It's the sin of not having faith, that's it. It's the sin of not having faith for all those things. It's the sin of just leaving them there unresolved with no definite ideas about them and just letting them roam about your mind. That's sin. I don't blame you if you think as I thought, that's not sin, that's all you can do with these things. Yes, it is sin, loved ones.

We sin in regard to these things in two ways. In regard to present things like our career, instead of living by faith, we live by sight. That is we judge our career by what our relationship with our boss is like. Or, how we are getting along with our colleagues. Or, how the person above us thinks we did last week in regard to that job. In other words, we walk by sight. That's not the way we're meant to walk.

Look at 2 Corinthians, I'll show you where it is. It's 2 Corinthians 5:7. [I have a friend in California who has this as his number plate; 2COR57.] "For we walk by faith, not by sight." In regard to your career, stop walking by sight. That's what brings the fear and the apprehension. The boss smiles one day and you're happy. He frowns the next day and you're worried. The job goes well this week but it goes bad next week. You're up and down. Don't walk by sight.

Walk by faith in regard to the things presently in your life like your career. Don't walk by sight of the circumstances. Walk by faith that God has already dealt with that thing. I'll show you where, loved ones. Galatians 6:14, "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Fix your faith on that. In Jesus the world was crucified to you. The world, all the elemental spirits of the universe that govern your boss, that govern your colleagues, that govern your company, that provide for your job. All those powers were crucified in Christ, destroyed there and laid down flat. Your career is in the hands of your Father. He is the one who has it all planned out and has

already settled success and victory for you there. He has brought you not for destruction to this place but for prosperity -- to give you a future and a hope.

Fix your faith on that. Walk by faith. In regard to the circumstances of your present life, don't walk by sight. For whatever is not of faith is sin. As you walk by sight, so you sin and the Holy Spirit begins to bring to your heart heaviness, worry, anxiety and vague fears and apprehension. That's where they come from.

Loved ones, in regards to future things -- developments in your marriage, or developments in your home life -- what most of us do is, we say, "It's the future and it's unresolved, so it's really the unknown. I don't know how it's going to turn out." We fill our minds with that kind of uncertainty. We wonder how it is going to turn out. How is my family life going to turn out? How is my marriage going to turn out? How is my future career going to turn out? We fill our minds with faith? Yes, it is with faith because it's fear. We have all kinds of fears. Fear is not just the absence of faith. Fear is faith in Satan's ability to make things turn out badly for you. That's what it is.

Loved ones, there's no such thing as a kind of neutral uncertainty. You know well I'm just intellectual about this. It may turn out well. It may turn out badly. No, you can't be neutral. You either have faith that God has already destroyed all these in his Son and has recreated them completely new and triumphed in them and will lead you and triumph through these things. Or, you have faith in Satan's ability to make all these things turn out badly for you.

Brothers and sisters, that's why some of us can't sleep at night. Because we're playing this old neutral position game where we think, "I don't know how my marriage is going. I don't know how my career is going. I don't know how my finances will turn out." What you're really saying is, "I'm putting my faith in the powers of evil in this world to make them turn out as badly as they usually have in the past." Because you have that faith, it is unto you according to your faith.

And loved ones, that isn't reality. That is unreality. That is the fallen world. Reality is that that fallen world has been crucified in Christ and God has destroyed all those things. That's why he says, "In everything God works for good with those who love him." [Romans 8:28]

Brother and sisters there come times in your life before you're going to bed at night or in those twilight moments after you awaken in the mornings or in those moments when something has gone badly in the job or at home. There are moments in your life when you need to stand up and say to God, "I believe what you said, that all things are working together for good. Lord I can't see it with my eyes but I believe that. Lord I believe it. I think it and I feel it." Loved ones, you have to do that.

If you don't do it, there are spirits in the world that will drive you to absolute despair. Because the reality is that God has already

brought all those things under the counsel of his will. He has planned your life for you. He has already made the crooked things straight in your life. He has already made the rough places plain. He has brought you here for joy and victory. You know it yourself. You know what your dad was like. He was a good dad. He wouldn't have hurt you for the world. His big aim in life was to get you going through life just in absolute peace and in absolute safety. Now the dear God that has made you and me, he has exactly the same wishes for you and me. He isn't sitting up there thinking how he could bring problems into your life or how he could make it heavy going for you.

Loved ones, it doesn't bring joy and glory to our creator for you to fail. It doesn't. Our Father put us here to be happy and to be successful. He may bring us through some hard things as he did his son, Jesus. His will is for us to be victorious in them. He wants you in regard to future things not to be sitting back in neutrality as if it may go badly or it may go well. I'll wait and see. He says be an active participant with me in bringing this to victory in your life. There are several verses you could look at, such as Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters." Just say that. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters." Lord I believe that you're my shepherd.

Loved ones, a shepherd doesn't look at the silly little sheep and go over and give it a good kick. He doesn't. He lifts the silly little thing up and brings it into line again. We all know that. We all think of a shepherd as somebody dear and kind, beyond any sense it seems. Because the sheep are so silly and always getting themselves into trouble. That's what your Father is like.

It is fatalistic. It is pagan to think that the future is unknown or the future is uncertain. That is pagan, loved ones. That's against everything that your Father says. Your Father says, look I bring everything into accordance unto my will. "All things work together for good to those who love me." Our Father is saying, have faith about future developments.

In other words you need to take the aggression about all those unresolved things. Don't let them wander around in your mind. They will eventually destroy you. Start exercising faith definitely for each one of them, that's it. Start exercising faith positively and particularly for each one of them. You have a relationship that isn't right? Start exercising faith for it. Start saying, Lord I believe you took this relationship and you put it in your son, Jesus. You destroyed it absolutely and you recreated it new and I thank you for that.

Lord, I thank you that you have destroyed the principalities and

powers that are creating the tension between us. Believe that. Let it dwell in your mind. Govern your thinking and actions by that and not by your fears about the relationship.

In regard to your finances and career would you for goodness sake stop lying down and allowing Satan to beat you over the head with every worry and anxiety he can think of. Stop it. Stand up like men and women of God. Say, "Lord, I don't know how this is going to turn out. I don't know what the future holds but I know who holds the future and you have promised me that you will lead me according to the council of your will. Your will wants good things for me. So Father I thank you that you are going to bring this out victoriously." Loved ones, our Father deserves that amount of confidence from us.

In other words there are two factors in faith. One -- joyful anticipations, that's it, joyful anticipations. I'll show you the verse that applies to that. It's James 1:6. "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." Real faith is a positive, joyful anticipation that God is going to do all things well. It's filled with boundless optimism that our Father is in charge and that in Jesus he has dealt with the power of the world and he has made everything open for victory for us.

In fact, it's very like power of positive thinking except that people who believe in power of thinking think that it's their positive thinking that brings the thing about. But faith knows that it's God that has resolved all these things in his son, Jesus. Loved ones, do you see that we who believe that have gone to the other extreme? We have said, "I don't want to get into positive thinking. I know God has destroyed it all in Jesus but I don't want to give him too much help." Really, we've retreated into a position of neutrality where we fail to enter into all that God has done for us in Jesus because we fail to exercise faith.

Loved ones, faith is full of joyful anticipations. In other words, faith affects your feelings. If it doesn't affect your feelings then you need to question whether your feelings or your faith are governing your life.

What I found myself doing was I said, "Oh yeah, I really have faith. I really have faith that God has brought everything victorious in Jesus. It's just my feelings are a bit down today." That's all bluff, you know. Your feelings are governed by your thoughts. If your thoughts aren't governed by your faith, your faith isn't having any affect on your life. Your faith transforms your feelings because you look at what God has done in Jesus. You believe him that he has resolved all things. Then faith has no mental vacations.

I don't know if you got into this thing. I would get up to a position of faith. "I believe that God is working all things according to the concept of his will. I believe that all things work together for good to them who love God." Then just in a little moment when the guy in the back slammed into my car -- or when the overdraft was higher than I thought it was -- just in a moment, I would think, now what if this doesn't turn out right? I convinced myself that that is a very legitimate thing to do. By all means, let's ask the Lord to calm the lake but if he doesn't calm it, maybe I should look to a life belt and make my own arrangements. That's really what we're doing when we have those little mental vacations, those little times when we let our minds have a rest. We don't want to kill the poor mind with a whole lot of faith all the time. Let us relax back into hell for awhile and see things as they really are. Loved ones, you're giving up the whole of faith when you do that you see. That's it.

There's a guy that some of us know called Kenneth Hagan. He's a dear fellow. I think many of his followers have been more extreme than he has been. He tells of how he had a brother that didn't know Jesus. He had been praying for him for years. The guy was no nearer God than he was when Hagan first started to pray. Then Hagan saw that one of the reasons why the brother did not believe these things was because he was blinded by spirits, by elemental spirits of the universe. He said to himself my brother wants happiness just as I do. He wants a life that is as satisfying as I do. There must be something that deceives him and blinds him. So he began to take authority over those spirits. He prayed through to an absolute confidence that his brother would be saved. He just got through to that and was getting up from his knees and a little thought occurred to him. "Your brother won't be saved." It's very interesting. I thought he was actually going to strangle the thought completely. He was so hostile to it. He said, "I threw it out of my mind immediately. I don't let that kind of thought have a second's existence in my mind."

You know it contrasted with what I had often done. I thought, look it's a good, red-blooded American thought that deserves democratic right to have a place in my mind and to be entertained for a little while, examined and turned over, then may be cast it out.

The killer is while you're doing that you're not walking by faith. You're not exercising faith. You're a person who is doubtful and a person who is doubtful and of double mind will get nothing from the Lord. So Hagan cast the thought right out of his mind. The next day the thought occurred to him again as he was walking across the bedroom. "Your brother won't be saved." Immediately he turned his mind from it and turned his mind to God and said "Lord, I thank you that you have promised me my brother has been delivered from sin and from self in Jesus. I thank you for that." He governed his mind according to what he knew was truth.

Loved ones, our education has prepared the way for Satan by giving us this practice of the free association of ideas. Where we

let any thought come into our minds and let it wander around there and destroy any faith we have. Then wander out when it chooses to. We're being caught in all kinds of intellectual passivity. The next day Satan said to Hagan in his mind "You don't think your brother will be saved." He said "You're dead right, Satan. I don't think he will be saved. I know he will be saved." It was interesting to see that he wouldn't allow any doubt to dwell in his mind.

Well, brothers and sisters couldn't you do with some power in your life? Couldn't you do with walking in joy and delight the way God intended us all to every moment of our lives? Well, you can if you begin to exercise faith in what God has said he has done for your life and for the circumstances of your life. He has said he has destroyed the principalities and powers and has brought them to naught. He has redeemed your life completely and has planned it out for victory and success. He asks you to believe that. It is possible to walk with delight and with joy continually. It is.

It is possible to walk free from all these fears and apprehensions. You do it by beginning to exercise faith for each of those centers and areas of your life where fear or apprehension has developed. Loved ones, I'd encourage you to begin today. If you know of some places in your life where you're living in fear or where you're living in apprehension or a vague uncertainty, will you join me today now in taking a stand of faith for those things? In exercising faith in those areas every time you feel even a twinge of fear or anxiety. So would you do that? Each of us knows the areas. It does require you to take a definite stand in faith. Let's do it. Let's pray.

Dear Father, we thank you that you have not left us without help about these things, that you have not left us with only fear and uncertainty to rule our lives. You have not left us to live a life that has anxieties and worries in it.

Father, in Jesus we believe you did crucify the world. We believe that in Jesus you destroyed the principalities and powers, the invisible spiritual forces that bring these fears to us and that would make the circumstances of our lives turn out wrong. Father, we believe that you destroyed those powers and that in Jesus you have resurrected our lives. You have recreated them new and the original plan that you have for our lives is laid out before us and we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which he has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Lord, that our lives are stretched out before us in victory and in total joy and delight.

Father we're now going to exercise faith in that for every one of these areas where there has been fear. Every place where we have anxiety or worry, we would begin now to exercise faith, our Father. As we exercise that faith we would arrange our thoughts around that faith. We will begin to think those thoughts of faith. As we think those thoughts our Father we would allow our feelings to rise up so that they begin to make us optimistic and joyous -- expecting good things from your hand and no longer fearing bad

things.

So, our Father, we would begin to walk in this joyous life that you have prepared for us. Lord, we thank you for that. We thank you, our Father, for what you have done in Jesus. We thank you that we are meant to live free from all fear and anxiety and that you meant what you said when you said, "rejoice in the Lord always; let our forbearance be known to all men and have no anxiety about anything. In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known to God and the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep our minds in Christ Jesus." [Ephesians 4:4-7] Father, we commit ourselves to that kind of faith life because we know that whatever is not of faith is sin. Lord, we do not want to be separated from you. We want to be yours every day of our lives forever. In Jesus' name. Amen.