

Exercising Faith For Others

Romans 15:8

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

You have a friend, who unlike you has a besetting sin. That besetting sin is breaking a confidence. And so you share something with them that you expect them to keep in confidence and they break that confidence. Next thing you know that comment comes right back to you through some other person. What do you do? Well, of course, you just never trust them again. Never trust them with another confidence until you're sure they've dealt with that besetting sin.

Or, you have a friend, a colleague at business, or a husband or a wife or a relative who hurts you in a certain way. They just hurt you. What do you do? Well, you just don't open yourself to being hurt by them in that way again. You make sure you don't open yourself to them in that way again. You never give them another chance to hurt you like that. We react just the way God has dealt with us when he finds that we have a failing or we have a besetting sin of some kind or, we do something that hurts him -- he immediately cuts us off and never gives us another chance to hurt him that way again.

So that's the way we deal with people by our own reaction to their hurt or our own response to their breaking the confidence. We exert pressure upon them by our response to force them to change. We keep exerting that pressure on them until they change, just the way God has done with us. You remember, just the way Jesus did with Peter, if you would like to look at it.

It's Mark 14:27, "And Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to him, 'Even though they all fall away, I will not.' And Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' But he said vehemently, 'If I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And they all said the same."

Mark 14:66, "And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the maids of the high priest came; and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him, and said, 'You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you mean.' And he went out into the gateway. And the maid saw him, and began again to say to the bystanders, 'This man is one of them.' But again he denied it. And after a little while again the bystanders said to Peter, 'Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean.' But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, 'I do not know this man of whom you speak.' And immediately the cock crowed the second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept."

Then look at Jesus' treatment of him, loved ones, in John 21, after warning Peter that he would deny him and then after Peter's denying him, so blatantly and so repeatedly, in John 21:15, "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?'

And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'"

In other words, the Savior went right out on the same limb all over again, just as God has done with you. You may think of how often you and I have messed up. You may think of how often he has convicted us of some failing or of some place where we have hurt him repeatedly. And you think of how we have made resolutions not to do it again and we have done it yet again and our God has not cut us off. You know fine well he hasn't.

Our God has not cut us off. You know how good he has been to us. You know how he has trusted us the very next day with something even more important. How he has opened himself up yet again and treated us as if we have never sinned; as if we have never failed him at all. He has gone out on a limb and trusted us all over again and you know that that's what keeps hope eternal in our heart.

You know the only thing that makes you think that you might possibly be what you could be is because God keeps on trying, keeps on risking, keeps on opening himself. He doesn't exert the old, subtle personality pressure. He doesn't draw back from us with the attitude, "No, they broke confidence with me last time. I am not risking it again." He doesn't draw back and say, "You hurt me last time. I am not opening myself to that hurt again. I am not going to be hurt. I am not going to be vulnerable." The Lord opens himself all over again to us, loved ones, to all of us.

In fact, the truth is this: if you're a judge, you're responsible for exerting justice on a murderer to protect society from that murderer. You're responsible for exerting justice upon him. If you're a parent, you're responsible for exercising discipline on your child to protect the rest of the family.

So there are certain functions that we all perform in our society where we are responsible for exercising pressure on the other person to do what is right. But if the only person to be hurt by the other person's failure is you, then God's word is very plain. We've to welcome each other as Christ has welcomed us. We've to treat each other as Christ has treated us. We've to refrain from this subtle personality response and reaction to the other person to try to get them to change and we've to continue to love them as if they had never done it.

That's what Jesus' attitude has been to us. Why? Because the other person has been delivered from their untrustworthiness. They have. They have already been delivered from their untrustworthiness. The other person has already been delivered from their disregard for you and for your pain. They have already been delivered from that. They've been delivered from their lying and their deception and their gossiping and their criticism. They've already been delivered from those things. That's why God tells them, "I want you to regard them as already delivered from this, even though you are still feeling the effects of the fact that they don't believe that."

Now if you say, "Why? That's madness. We haven't been delivered from it, that's why I am suffering, that's why they broke confidence with me -- because they haven't been delivered from it. That's why they hurt me -- because they haven't been delivered from their disregard for my pain. That's why they haven't been delivered. You're mad, you're mad." Old Paul was accused of being mad too and I'll show you the place. It's in 2 Corinthians 5, and at first sight, it seems like craziness. They said, "You're beside yourself, Paul, you're not yourself, you're beside yourself."

2 Corinthians 5:13-18, "For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind,

it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him, who for their sake, died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

A person breaks confidence with you yet again, embarrasses you thoroughly in front of a mutual friend. Satan comes to you and says, "That person is not to be trusted ever again. Don't make yourself vulnerable to them yet again." The Spirit of Jesus says, "Christ died for all. Therefore that person died with Christ and that person has become a new creation in Christ. The old has passed away and your job is to see them as they are, crucified in Christ -- that is spiritual reality. Your job is to continue to treat them that way until they catch the same faith from you, because it's going to be by grace through faith that they are saved from that dishonesty and that untrustworthiness." That's it, loved ones.

We have one responsibility -- to see each other as already crucified and changed in Christ -- because that is spiritual reality. That's what this dear Book says, "Christ died for all, therefore all died." Right up to the last moment of Hitler's death, Hitler had been crucified with Christ. All his cruelty had been destroyed in Jesus. And all his indifference to the other human life had been destroyed in Jesus and he had been raised up and made a saintly man. Up until the moment of his death, he had the opportunity to believe that, to have faith in that, and to have that made real in his life. After death, the Bible says, "Then comes the judgment." Then there's no longer opportunity. But up until that moment of death, our responsibility to each other is to see each other as crucified and completely renewed in Christ.

You see, man's way is utterly different. You know it. We all know it. We know the kind of people we are. You know what we do at home. The other person gets the knife in, you get the knife in just a little differently, or you twist the knife, but it's all personality pressure. They do that to me, so I exert pressure on them to change, because I don't believe they will change if I don't exert pressure upon them.

Indeed, how many of us would say that that's the way families go. Back and forth, and back and forth, until after about 15 years, nobody really knows anybody else's heart. "Why do they do that? Because this person, it's this one?" No, we back up from them so they won't hit me again. Then they lash out and we back up so that they won't hit me again -- we just keep backing from each other to protect ourselves from each other. And as we claim to change each other through the war of nerves or the cold war that we exercise on each other, the result is simply distance and separation.

The Father's way is utterly different. It is, "See the other person as absolutely crucified in Christ. See them as changed completely. Treat them that way, and believe that yourself -- because the only hope for them is that they catch that faith from you and they begin to realize they have been changed -- and that change is manifested to them through the Holy Spirit."

If you say, "They'll murder me. They'll murder me. If I do that, they'll cut me up in little pieces." Well, look at 2 Corinthians 4. I suppose there is "no gain without pain" and there is no easy way, loved ones.

2 Corinthians 4:10-12, "Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, [You will be doing that. You'll be bearing their sins and absorbing them.] so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you." You're right. You are right. You will have to bear their sins, you will. And there will be pain and if you say to me, "There might even be death," -- yeah, but aren't you looking forward to heaven anyway?

That's what we all say we're living for, at least this big talk, if it's not real in us. We're all saying we're looking forward to it. Yes, it may bring death. If you say, "Yeah, but the worse of it is" -- we love to be very high and noble about this -- "The worst of it is, it'll frustrate God's will for my life." Well look at Galatians 6:14 and it'll give you reassurance about that.

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." No, it won't frustrate God's purpose for your life. The world has been crucified in Christ. The world that would frustrate God's purpose for your life has been destroyed. Whatever those other people do to you, they can't frustrate God's purpose for your life. God has crucified that capability in Christ. He has destroyed the principalities and powers. Whatever they do to you, they won't frustrate God's purpose for your life.

No, you can afford to treat them as crucified and raised with Christ and let them destroy your free will because God will never allow his purpose to be spoiled for your life. Now, why do you do it -- for their salvation? Well yeah, but actually that's secondary. There's a bigger reason, it's Romans 15:8, that's the verse we're studying today.

Romans 15:8, "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised, to show God's truthfulness." That's it. That's why you do it, to show God's truthfulness. You do it to show in this world that all people were crucified with Christ and that that particular person was crucified with Christ and was raised a new creation. That's why you do it.

Yes, you do it for their salvation. Yes, you do it because it's right. But you do it for a far bigger reason than that. You do that to show God's truthfulness: that that person actually was crucified with Christ and that all their selfishness and their indifference to your pain was destroyed in Christ in Calvary. You do it for that reason -- to show God's truthfulness.

See, Satan is involved in trying to destroy the truthfulness of God. Satan is involved in trying to fill this world with people whose old natures have not been crucified -- with people who are demons and devils in their life here on earth. In fact, God has crucified them all in Christ and has raised them up new and made them new creations and he has called you and me to demonstrate his truthfulness by seeing them that way through our own way so that they will catch that faith themselves.

But that's the only thing that will ever save them and it's the only thing that will ever show forth God's truthfulness. You've to do the same with people who are narrow-minded. For instance, some people who are, you would say, legalistic. They think some things are sin that you don't think are a sin and you think, "Oh, they're just narrow. They're just legalistic."

God calls you to do the same with them. Don't look upon their legalism. Don't look upon their narrow-mindedness. Cast that out of your mind. See them as crucified in Christ, as pre-created in

him as whole and completely new with the magnanimity of Jesus running through their whole beings. Treat them as that. Treat them as absolutely perfect people in Jesus.

If you say, "Well, it's like being some kind of a servant to them. I mean you love them as if they're exactly the same as you are and then they come around the back, knife you in with one of these narrow-minded comments and you've to go back. It's like giving them something and they throw it on your face. It's a thing like being a servant." That's exactly what the verse says. Romans 15:8, "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised, to show God's truthfulness." You know more than a servant, if you look at Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53:7, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment, he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth."

That was much more than becoming a servant. That was allowing them to buffet him and to put a spear in his side and to kill him and nail his hands to a Cross. Why? To show God's truthfulness. One of the ways that he showed it there was even by his burial, "And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death." And when Jesus was buried in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, that prophecy and God's truthfulness was demonstrated. Jesus suffered whatever was needed to demonstrate God's truthfulness. Probably one of the greatest promises that God made to the patriarchs was in Genesis 18:17, if you look at it there.

Genesis 18:17, "The Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him?'" So God has promised that not only the Jews would be blessed by Abraham but everybody would be blessed by Abraham, all the nations. And that was fulfilled in Galatians 3:6-9.

Galatians 3:6-9, "Thus, Abraham 'believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith."

In other words, everybody, from every nation who has faith in Jesus, is blessed with Abraham. And the promise that was given to Abraham was made real because people are able to have faith in Jesus, who became a servant to the circumcised, to show God's truthfulness. So that the promises that were made to the patriarchs would be fulfilled. That's what that Romans 15:8 says.

Romans 15:8, "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs." That's why we treat each other as crucified and raised with Christ, to show that God is true. Let every man be a liar but God is true. You were crucified with Christ.

The most agonizing thing about the little soul who says, "I have tried and I have tried and I have tried and I have tried and I cannot stop drinking. I've tried and I've tried and I've tried and I've tried and I cannot stop lusting. I've tried and I've tried and I cannot stop criticizing or lying."

The worst thing is, it's throwing God's truthfulness back in his face because that person has been delivered from that in Christ. All they have to do is catch the faith that that is so, and that'll be manifested in it.

Loved ones, you and I can either beat each other down or we can lift each other up. You can. You can either beat the other person down by distrusting them and playing the old self-defensive game, "I am not going to let you hurt me again. I am not going to let you get at me again." Or, you can open yourself as a man did with just a loin cloth on, on a Cross and said, "I trust you. I love you. I think you've been completely changed and renewed and by my attitude you can see that I trust you." Even if the very next moment, a spear comes into your side. That's it.

That's beginning to bear the sins of others with Jesus and through that, he will begin to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Because through your faith, in that other person being crucified and raised with Christ, the Holy Spirit will be able to make that real in the other's life. That's the only way.

Actually, as you sit there, you know it's the only way. How many moms and dads here, how many of us as colleagues, have tried the other route, the subtle pressure on the other person, the subtle defensive reaction against them? It does nothing. It just builds walls and we separate more and more from each other. The other way is the only way, "I believe that you have been completely changed in Christ and I thank God for that."

"Feed my sheep." Loved ones, that's it. So really, was it Dean Martin who had a song "Welcome to my World"? Well, welcome to a new world. Come on, come into a new world. Live in a new world. Live in a world full of saints. Live in a world where you look upon people as they really are in Christ. Bear a little of the pain that comes from it, knowing that this is the only way that change will ever be manifested in them.

So come in, come into a world where we know no man after the flesh but we know all men after the Spirit. Where we no longer know anyone from a human point of view, but from now on, we know each other from a spiritual point of view. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we want to thank you this morning for every one that we know, friend or colleague, roommate or relative, that has hurt us in some way by some sin or by some failing. Lord, we want to thank you for that because we know it is you telling us that this too passed away on Calvary, that this too was borne by you into death and into extinction. We know that this old has passed away and the new has come in this person's life. And you expect us to look upon them as completely crucified and raised and made new in you and you expect us to act in accordance with that, trusting them yet again and in every way making our response to them consistent with a person that we can trust absolutely.

So Father, we're going to back off this human pressure that we exert to make them change. We're going to back off our sarcastic comments. We're going to back off the cold war that we exercise against them. We're going to back off these things that simply separate us more and more.

Lord, we want to thank you that as far as we're concerned, we agree with you -- Christ died for all, therefore all died. Therefore this person has died with Jesus and has been crucified and raised up and made new and they are a new creation. Lord, we aim to treat them that way until we die and we ask you dear Holy Spirit to work through our faith and our attitude of respect and love and trust to

bring them into the same faith and into the same manifested change so that God's truthfulness will not only be respected by us but will be respected by them and will be demonstrated for all to see in this life. We ask this in Jesus' name.

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 evermore. Amen.