

Salvation

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, what we're talking about now this evening is salvation. If you remember, in our past three studies we talked last time about the Fall. Before that we talked about the distinction between spirit and soul, and then before that just about the spiritual life. So this is the fourth in the series of studies on the spiritual life.

It might be good in order to provide a framework for the study of salvation this evening, which I hope will be reasonably deep and reasonably detailed, if I would just remind you of the kind of personality that God has given us. It's a personality that is fitted for fellowship with Him. That's why He made us in the first place, that we would experience fellowship with Him.

He gave us a personality that is three-fold as is His own. He is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And, as He Himself possesses a spirit, soul and even a spiritual body (you remember Jesus' spiritual body was referred to), we have been given a spirit, soul and body. We operate at three different levels in our personalities and that's what that means. And, you remember, we discussed how the spirit has certain functions. It is able to commune with God and it is able through intuition to know what God wants us to do and then our conscience constrains us to act in accordance with our intuition. It does that by activating our soul, which is the psychological part of us. The soul has three main functions -- that of the will, that of the mind and that of the emotions. And, then, of course, the Trinity is in a sense reflected also in the body. But, that is the kind of capacity that God has given us so that we would have fellowship with Him. That's the whole purpose.

Loved ones, the dearest thing here on earth is friendship. The dearest thing here on earth is love between a man and a man, a man and a woman, a woman and a woman. That's the dearest thing in the whole world. No millions of dollars make up for that. No beautiful house makes up for that. That's the dearest thing that God has given us. That's the purpose for which He made us, that we would have friendship and fellowship with Him. That's it. Never think it's anything greater than that or anything less than that. God has made you to be His friend so you can know Him and love Him and for Him to know you and love you. That's why he made us with these capacities.

Now, you remember, brothers and sisters, He made us with those capacities but He gave us the responsibility of receiving the inner qualities that He has by our own will. In other words, He made us like this, but there were qualities of His own that we do not possess and we were not created with. These are qualities of spirituality, qualities of real liberty, real blessedness, real happiness, and a real love inside us. The ability to see things as they really are, those qualities He did not give us. He said you are to receive those from the Tree of Life, from my Holy Spirit, from my son Jesus. And, as you receive those, so they will come first of all into your spirit, then they will pass through your soul and re-make it in my image, and pass through your body and impart to it ability to live forever.

So, God made us with certain created capacities and then He left available the uncreated life of His own personality that we were to receive by simple willing. That was His plan. In communion with Him, walking with Him day by day, we would receive a spirit of His own life through that communion. We

would receive His own spirituality, His own blessedness, and His own liberty. It's much the same way that a friend rubs off on you or you rub off on a friend or as a husband and wife after five years are much more like each other than they were when they started.

God wanted us to fellowship with Him, to be open to Him, so that the inner qualities of His life began to come into our lives. Under that closeness to Himself we would know what He wanted us to do in life. We'd know what job He wanted us to do. We'd know what He wanted us to do day by day through the intuition of our spirits.

Our conscience would constrain our wills in the light of that. And so our will would obey our conscience. Our will, as a result, would act as a general in the soul. It would direct our mind to think certain thoughts and then would pass that through our emotions which would express the joy of our fellowship with God and that would come out through our bodies into the world. We would fill the world with the spirituality and the liberty and the blessedness of God.

That's why when you enter a room, the room is meant to light up. That's right. Sometimes I think you feel that's the prerogative of a few strange souls. It is God's will that every time you or I enter a room, that room should light up with a golden joy, a golden love and a golden peace that comes from us. We should not enter a room desperate for some happiness. We should enter a room filled with this life of God. That was the Father's will for us.

If we had done that, of course, we would have had a great sense of security, always knowing that God would provide for us because we were doing what He wanted us to do. We'd have had the great sense of significance. We'd have known our place in the world. We would have had a great sense of happiness, constantly allowing His life to come through us. That was the Father's will. The whole purpose of it was that in the doing of that will we would become like Him. It was not that we would redeem the world, or bring the world into order under His will (thought that was a secondary purpose). So, after 70 years here on earth, maybe 200 years, maybe 400 years, we'd be like Him and we could join Him face to face. That was the purpose God had for us.

You remember what we did in Genesis 3, if you'd like to look at it. In Genesis 3:5, Satan's words explain the heart of the Fall. "For God knows that when you eat of it," (this was Satan's lie - 'when you eat of this tree of knowledge of good and evil which God has told you not to eat of') then your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The heart of the Fall was that we said, "We know what your plan is, we want to be like you, but not so that we can live with you forever, but so that we can be independent and run our lives our own way." So, we accepted God's purpose but we didn't accept the motive for it. The motive of God's purpose (which was to make us like Himself) was so that we'd live with Him forever. We accepted that purpose but we said, "We can live on our own, independent of you, and do what we want so that we can be like God." We rebelled against God and out of pride said, "We want to be our own god."

Loved ones, whatever form sin takes in your life or mine, that's always the heart of it. You want to be God. That's it. I know it comes in all kinds of strange forms and all kinds of deceptive forms but that's the heart of sin. You want to be your own god. When you go into a temper tantrum as a child, it's because you're not getting your way and you feel you ought to get your way. When you are self-conscious, it's because you think the whole world circles around you and everybody's looking at you. When you get angry because you don't get a certain girl or a certain guy, it's because you feel you have the right to govern your world. All the things that we hate in our lives -- jealousy,

pride, and anger -- all those things come from our desire to be God. Don't be bluffed into thinking you're some kind of subtler or nobler sinner. You're not. You're just a proud little rat that wants to be God. It's good just to see it straight like that because it will help you sort your way through an awful lot of sins in your life. It's just a desire to be like God.

Now, what that meant loved ones, was we lacked utterly the security of knowing that God would look after us because we cut ourselves off from Him. We lacked utterly the sense of significance that we were important to God because we knew we weren't any longer. We had rebelled against Him and no longer did what He wanted us to do. And, we lacked a sense of happiness that comes from a friendship with Him.

So, we had to pervert our whole personality. Instead of it flowing this way, from the inside--from our relationship with God through the Holy Spirit-- we had to try to get from the world and people the security, significance and happiness that we were meant to get from the Father.

In the doing of that, our whole personality became perverted. Our emotions, instead of expressing joy, began to try to get joy from others. The husband and wife relationship became utterly perverted. No longer was it, how can I make her happy, but it was, how can I get happiness from this girl? No longer was friendship a matter of how can I give this person happiness? It was a matter of how can I get joy from this person? In fact, our lives became a search for happiness. Whenever we wonder what we are going to do on an evening, we immediately wonder, what will give me most happiness? Even when we think about what church we go to, we often talk about what church will meet my needs?

So, suddenly, our whole personality turned in. Our mind, instead of concentrating on understanding what our spirit was receiving through our conscience, our mind began to concentrate on manipulating other people so that we would somehow get the security that God had promised us. So, our mind concentrated almost entirely on manipulating our college degree into a means of earning enough money to make ourselves secure and sure for life.

Our will, which was meant to obey our conscience, concentrated on dominating other people to try somehow to win ourselves a position of significance in the world. So, loved ones, the whole personality became perverted. That's one of the effects of the Fall. The whole personality became utterly perverted. When you and I cry out, "The good that I would, I cannot do, and the evil I want to avoid, the evil I hate, is what I do" it's because of that.

You and I keep thinking it's a little failure of my will. But isn't it amazing the power that you seem to be coming up against? It's like a power. You don't want to lose your temper but you lose your temper. You will even sit at home and you will think rationally through a situation at work and you will know what you should do and yet somehow there's a power within you that makes you do the opposite. Now, it's because your whole personality is perverted. It's because for years, indeed, for generations, the human personality has worked the wrong way around and has become utterly perverted. Now, as well as that, God withdrew the Holy Spirit from us and our spirit died. Our spirit, which is the part of us that relates to God, died in relationship to Him. We, in fact, became dominated by our souls, and as the centuries passed by, our bodies.

Today, most people on the earth are governed by their bodies. Most are trying to get happiness through their bodies. Most people are trying to get security (food, shelter, clothing) for their bodies. Most are trying to get significance by looking as good as they possibly can. You get a

beautiful picture of the perverted personality if you just study the commercials on television. They are all speaking to the security, the significance, the happiness and the enjoyment that we're all trying to get from our bodies. Now, that's what happened in the Fall. That's what took place in the Fall. It was a perversion of our personalities that prevents us doing what God wanted us to do and operating the way He wants us to operate. It resulted in our spirit dying.

Now, the spirit dying, is found there in Genesis 3:22. "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever' -- therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."

The Tree of Life is the Holy Spirit. It's not that God withdrew the Holy Spirit from the world but he prevented man having access to the Holy Spirit, which was His original plan for man. Why did He do it? It's because the Holy Spirit is able to make us live forever. He enables us to live forever and gives us powers of infinity. We can go through space at tremendous speeds. We can overcome the limitations of our body. We have great powers to work miracles and to control nature.

The Father knew that He could not make that internal life of His own personality available to people who live to get and who live to suck from others all that they needed. And, so, it would be like giving rebels a nuclear bomb. They would destroy the whole universe with it. So, He cut us off from the light of the Holy Spirit and with that, of course, cut us off from Himself.

Now, loved ones, do you see the great need in salvation is two-fold. One, there can be no relationship between God and ourselves unless our spirits are alive and enlivened to relate ourselves to God. I'm not saying that a dog doesn't have a soul, maybe it does. Maybe it has little instincts. But an animal is primarily a body. You can read "Paradise Lost" to your dog or your bird for hours. It will get nothing from it. You can read Robert Frost to it. It will get nothing from it. You can play music to it. It might cock its ear a little but it won't get very deep truths from Beethoven's Fifth. You can do what you like but an animal relates primarily on a physical level, a body level. You pat it, you give it the right food at the right time, you give it little treats, it's happy.

Now, we are better than that. We can not only give ourselves little treats and we're not only happy when we get ice cream or we get some dessert that we enjoy, but we can be made happy by feelings because we have souls. We relate on a slightly higher level to animals. Many of us can enjoy friendship with each other even if we aren't playing any game or doing anything like eating or anything physical. We can often be with each other and really enjoy each other. We can enjoy talking about drama or we can enjoy listening to music. We can enjoy talking about spiritual truths. We relate to each other on a soul level. We have souls. Now, do you see that the animal can have no relationship on that level? Unless you were able to give an animal a soul that could appreciate Beethoven or Chopin or Shakespeare, it can never relate on that level.

Do you see the truth with the spirit? Unless our spirits come alive, we will never relate to God. The most vital need we have if we are going to be saved and relate to our Creator is that our spirit be energized or regenerated. That is why Jesus said, "You must be born again. You have to have your spirit, which is absolutely dead, (except in its relationship to evil spirits and elemental spirits of the universe), you have to have it energized and regenerated and come alive, otherwise, you'll

never know my Father. He lives on a different level. He lives on a spirit level and you cannot relate to Him unless you are on that spirit level. The spirit within you has died because of your rebellion."

The second need, of course, was that our souls would be absolutely transformed. God refuses -- in fact, is unable -- to make His spirit available to us, unless our personalities are completely changed. You know the trouble we've had trying to change those personalities. That's why that verse echoes in so many of our lives. Romans 7:15, "The good that I would, I cannot do, and the evil I hate is what I do."

That's why so many people sell books on the power of positive thinking, and on how to renew your emotions. It's because we have found that that we cannot do. We cannot change the personality. Mao Tse-tung dreamed not of a new society, he dreamed most of all of a new man. Hitler dreamed most of all, not of a new society, but a new Arian man. Everyone who has tried to move the world for good or evil has dreamed of a way to change human nature and transform this personality which is irrational, obtuse, perverted and works the wrong way around. That was the heart of the problem that the Father had. He could not give his Holy Spirit to us unless our personality was absolutely changed and only He could change that personality.

That's why that dear miracle took place on Calvary. That's why a great Cross had to destroy that perverted personality. Only God could destroy it. You have tried and I have tried. What God did in Jesus on Calvary was to take the whole human race, (which is possible for a God who sees the beginning and the end all in one great eternal moment), put it into His Son Jesus and destroyed your perverted personality in Christ. That's the purpose of the Cross. The purpose of the Cross is not a moral influenced theory to move you to love God or to love other people. The purpose of the Cross is not even primarily to satisfy some ransom theory whereby God has to give some ransom to the Devil to win us back. God hasn't to do that. The purpose of the Cross is not even primarily a penal substitution. It is not primarily that God is angry and out to kill somebody and so He kills His Son. The Cross and the purpose of the Cross is so that God could take away from us the one reason that prevented Him making the Holy Spirit available to us. That is our perverted personalities.

God, in other words, instead of flooding us out with another flood as He did in the days of Noah, put us (in a cosmic miracle) into His Son Jesus and destroyed our perverted personalities there. That's the purpose of the death of Christ. Loved ones, that's why Jesus had to suffer in every part of Himself. It's good just to look at it now because it brings it home to your own heart. Look at it in Psalm 22:16. "Yea, dogs are round about me;" (this is one of those miraculous Psalms, which look into the very heart of Jesus on the Cross) "a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet - I can count all my bones - they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots."

Jesus took your feet and your hands that have so often worked to get you security, significance and happiness and He destroyed them on Calvary. Jesus had you in Himself when he died on Calvary. That's the only reason your hands or your feet can ever become instruments that work the way God wants them to work. It's because they died there on Calvary.

Loved ones, every time you use your hands to give yourself pleasure, every time you use your hands to destroy someone else, you are mocking Jesus who allowed those hands to be destroyed with Him on Calvary. It's the same with your feet. It's the same right through the whole record of the death on Calvary. Jesus suffered in His heart, He suffered in His emotions, and He suffered in His spirit

when He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That was the God forsakenness that you and I should have borne and couldn't bear. He took us through the Hell that we deserved to destroy our sin, to destroy it.

Loved ones, He did not do it so that we would not have to bear that but so that we would be able to have this actualized in our lives. It's so that our personalities could be transformed and could work the right way. That's the whole emphasis right throughout the death of Jesus. Look at Psalm 22:15.

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
thou dost lay me in the dust of death."

How often have you found that your tongue rattled off something that you did not intend to rattle off at all? That tongue was the master of you and that tongue acted just from outside; in and out again. That's exactly what happens. Somebody said something, came through your ears, the tongue answered. It never went any deeper than that. You regretted it for days; indeed, many of us have regretted it for years. That tongue of yours was included in Jesus on Calvary and was destroyed there. Every time you say I cannot control that tongue, the Father is saying, "I control that tongue. I destroyed it on Calvary. I destroyed that personality of yours that is perverted. You can be free but only if you believe that I have done this in my Son and if you then submit yourself to my Holy Spirit."

He can make real in you the death that took place on Calvary. Loved ones, there's no salvation for us outside the death of Jesus, there isn't. There is no salvation for your personality unless the death of Jesus can be applied to your life. Honestly, there isn't. There isn't. The books are silly. The books are foolishness. The books are Satan's self-help salvation such as how to control your emotions, how to clean up your mind, how to strengthen your will. It's madness. It is Satan's method of trying to get you to try to save yourself.

You'll never save yourself because there's something in you that doesn't actually want to be saved. There's something in you that can only be crucified with Christ. There's something inside you that wants to go up to the very edge of salvation as long as it can remain in control of its own life. There is a mind of the flesh in you that is enmity against God. It is not subject to God's law, neither indeed can it be. Loved Ones, there's a personality in you that will play at religion and play at Christianity as long as it continues to be in control of its own life. That's why the only answer is the death of Jesus. It's the only thing that will bring a complete salvation into your life -- the death of Jesus applied to your whole personality so that it becomes real in you.

Now, then, God is free to give us the Holy Spirit. Do you see why a certain verse in scripture is true? It's 2 Corinthians 5:19. "That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." Then in verse 18, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. That's what it says in verse 19. Now, I've mentioned this to you before but it's important for you to see it. That means that the guy in New York that is killing an old lady at this very moment, as far as God is concerned, He has already put that perverted personality into His Son Jesus and has destroyed him there in the timeless world of eternity. As far as God is concerned, He has done everything needed to reconcile that man to Himself. God has nothing against that person. He is grieved beyond anything that we can describe.

But, He has already crucified that person in Christ and that man will not go to Hell because God has not been reconciled to Him. That man will only go to Hell because he isn't willing to take advantage of the miraculous work that has been done in Christ on his behalf. He is not willing to receive the Holy Spirit into himself and to allow that Spirit to transform his personality.

It's important to see that the atonement is universal. Christ has died for all men and for all women. All men and all women have been included in His death. They are able to be transformed in a moment and changed in a moment by faith so that the whole personality begins to work in the right direction. This will happen if they are willing and will allow the Holy Spirit to regenerate their spirits. That's the vital need for salvation.

Do you see that there's something just a little suspect about this kind of comment, "Well, I know God forgives me but I can't forgive myself." Or, "I can't believe that God forgives me." It's nonsense. It's satanic lies. I know it's popular talk but they're satanic lies. There is no question of God forgiving us. If God has put us all into His Son Jesus and has destroyed everything in us that stands against us receiving the Holy Spirit, then God Himself has nothing but love for us and has never had anything but love. There's no question of God Himself being willing to forgive us. There's no question of God not having done everything that is needed for us to receive the Holy Spirit. Whenever a person says, "I can't forgive myself," or "I don't believe God forgives me" it's for one reason only. They are not willing to accept what God has done to them in Jesus and they aren't willing to let the Holy Spirit come in and rule their lives.

Here's what happens. Once a person has seen this, the Holy Spirit begins to work in the conscience. The gospel is presented to the mind. The mind sees truths in scripture. Truths like some of the ones I could show you. Romans 6 states very clearly what the death of Jesus has done for us. Romans 6:6-8, "We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."

It's the same in Romans 8:3. "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh." That is, He destroyed sin in the flesh. Why did He destroy it in Jesus? In order that the just requirement of the Law might be fulfilled, not in Jesus, but might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

It's the same in 2 Corinthians 5. It's the same truth that the purpose of Jesus' death is so that we ourselves might be freed by that death and might be included in it -- so that our lives might be changed. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died, (so that we can be freed)." And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves (no longer with an in-turned perverted life) but for him who for their sake died and was raised."

It's the same message in Colossians 3:3. I just share these verses with you because so often we think, well, maybe this death with Christ is just in one or two scriptures. It's throughout scripture. Colossians 3:3, "For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." And, then, you know Galatians 2:20.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

Loved ones, the Bible presents that to the mind. The conscience meanwhile is already under the conviction of the Holy Spirit -- that the person is not living the way they should. The conscience brings a sense of guilt to a person and brings a sense of their moral impotence. Therefore the conscience is working within. Do you see that all approach to a person who is not saved has to be concentrated on the mind and on the conscience, because it is the spirit that has to be touched?

It doesn't matter what you do in the soul. You can give them all the mind training books that you want, all the emotion training books that you want, all the will training books -- all you'll have at the end of that is a person who still has a spirit that's dead to God. Unless you touch their spirits, they will never come alive through the enlivening of the Holy Spirit.

A person needs to believe with their minds that these things have happened. That's why Jesus said, "Repent and believe the Gospel. First of all, believe. Believe that something has been done in me that will transform your personality." Then begin to apply that to the person's spirit. The only part of most people's spirit that is even half alive is the conscience. This is possibly because we did eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and so we are still concerned with a sense of right and wrong.

The Holy Spirit begins to convict the conscience. The life of Jesus through you begins to convict the conscience. The Word of God begins to convict the conscience. Then the conscience begins to constrain the will. The center of the New Birth experience from the human point of view is the will. And the question before the will is this: are you willing to live like that?

That's the question that the will faces in salvation. The will is the heart of conversion. It's the will moved by the conscience. It's not the will doing all the things that you tell it to do. It's the will responding to what the Holy Spirit is pricking the particular personal conscience on. The Holy Spirit will show the conscience in what way your life works the other way, in what way you're not prepared to die with Christ, in what way you're not prepared to change. The Holy Spirit reveals that to the conscience and then it attempts to constrain the will. The moment of breaking is when the will obeys. When the will obeys, then God regenerates the spirit with His Holy Spirit.

That's why Jesus said, "Repent and believe." Repent is an action of the will. It is repenting, turning around from this reverse perverted way of living, and turning to this way of living. Now, loved ones, it may come to many of us simply in regard to some sin that is in our lives. It may not come as this whole presentation. It may simply come as some sin in our lives. Some of us maybe use alcohol to get enjoyment when we need it. The Holy Spirit convicts our conscience of that and then our conscience attempts to constrain our will to turn from that sin. When the will turns from the sin, the Holy Spirit is free to come in and regenerate the spirit. Then, of course, all kinds of light and life begin to flow in and the Holy Spirit begins to outline all the details of this and all the reality of our death with Christ. Then, as the will continues to obey the conscience, we move into the fullness of the Spirit, into walking in the Spirit and then to the higher reaches of our fellowship with God.

But, it would be good for you to see that in salvation the vital need is for our spirits to be enlivened by the Holy Spirit so that we are related again to God. That can only happen if the part of our spirit that is still half alive begins to respond to the information that it receives through other people's lives, through the Word of God and through the Holy Spirit working within. Those three factors enlighten the conscience so that it begins to see, "Yes, I see what should be done." It then begins to constrain the will.

Now, at that moment, if somebody comes and begins to feed in to the soul a kind of Mormon type of gospel, (here's the way you should live, here's what you should do if you want to be in Heaven, do what our group does) or a Jehovah's Witness kind of brain washing, that person turns from their conscience. They can no longer hear the conscience. The information coming through the soul is so strong that they turn around to that and they turn away from their conscience. Therefore their spirit is never regenerated.

That's what would happen in some cases with "The Way", you remember. The Way is one of those groups that specialize in intellectual indoctrination. What happens is our loved one begins to get interested in what appears to be a healthy interest in the Greek behind the New Testament. They get interested in that but the Way begins to sell them this idea that if you just understand the thing the right way, then you'll be in it. They can teach you about speaking in tongues from a primarily soulish angle. It has nothing to do with salvation, nothing at all. The heart of salvation is the regeneration of the spirit. The spirit will only be regenerated if your conscience can constrain your will to obey what you alone have heard from God. Then, as you do that, as you begin to turn this mighty will and say, "Yes, I'm willing to live this way. I'm willing to be turned around and to repent. I'm willing to live the way you want me to" -- God then gives you His Holy Spirit.

That's why there are so many verses like, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man will open the door with his will, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me." That's why all the emphasis is on the will and on repentance.

I think I should stop now and try to deal with some questions.

Question 1: Well, Steve, I think that the Mormons are not the only loved ones that are in this business of soulish conversion. I think there's a great deal of it here in our own Christianity. I think there are lots of people that think that if a person grasps truth with their mind, and understands all that the Bible says and begins to respond something like Christians, then they're Christian. I think there's a lot of that. I think there's a great deal of this emotional stuff. There's a lot of that in our Christian circles where my emotion influences your emotion and you feel happier when your emotions react as mine do. Maybe mine are right and I'm really right with God. Maybe, I'm really alive in my spirit. But you, instead of going any deeper, you're just influenced by my emotions. Before God, I am responsible to know that unless your conscience is dealt with, there will be no chance of a real spiritual regeneration in you. I am responsible to bring that home to you but I think there's so much vagueness and deception in our Christian circles that many people don't realize that.

Question 2: Prayer. It's the same business with the Jehovah's Witnesses. You don't argue a Jehovah's Witness around to your viewpoint because all you're doing is meeting exactly on his own soul level. That's what he wants, a good argument. What you are involved in doing, (even if you do get him to agree with you), is saving him from one soulish kind of life into another kind of soulish life. No, never argue with them because all that is in this realm.

Jesus said when the Holy Spirit comes He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment. You have to pray that the Holy Spirit will convict him in his conscience. Whenever he begins to show some light from within, you reinforce that. So you pray.

Then it's vital for us ourselves to live from our spirits because that is a light to a loved one. They don't know what they're seeing, but they sense, there's something not quite right. You're always wrong when you get onto a soulish level in discussion. You are actually being a dog when you're really a human being. That's what you're doing. You're existing on a lower level of life. All you'll achieve is what you can achieve on that level.

I would think that our churches are filled with soul Christians. Some are intellectual Christians, some are emotional Christians, and some even are willful Christians. You'll notice the Mormons are very strong about what you ought to do in your life. Seventh Day Adventists are very strong on what you do in your life. They're strong willed people. But, it's not a will governed by the conscience and informed by the Holy Spirit. It's a will governed by the mind that is brainwashed by other human beings. Salvation is a very personal thing. It's just you and the Holy Spirit.

Question 3: If a person has his salvation, can he ever lose it? There is a certain Chinaman that would say, "No, you can't." I love that Chinaman [Watchman Nee] a lot but I don't agree with him. There are brothers and sisters who believe both ways. Some will stand on a verse like, "None shall pluck them out of my hand," and will say, "No, you cannot lose your salvation." Others of us will stand on a verse like John 15:6 where Jesus uses the words "The branches that do not bear fruit will be taken away and burned." And so we talk from different viewpoints.

Watchman Nee will go this far. He will say that if you don't walk after the Spirit, you've become as if you were dead. Now, he's a tricky Chinaman so I don't know what he means. But, he goes that far. He says you've become as one who is dead. I, of course, tend to say by the fruits you shall know them and if there aren't fruits then they are dead.

It isn't actually as big an issue as you think. It doesn't matter whether you believe in eternal security or you believe that you can fall from grace. When a person seems to be apart from God you give them both the same advice. That's what is important. What is the practical outworking of the doctrine? If you believe a person cannot fall from grace and is eternally secure and you see a person who is not living a life like Christ, then you assume that he has never been born of God. You'll say he could not lose his salvation, so you'll assume he has never been born of God. You'll tell him to repent and believe the Gospel.

If I come along and I see a person living that way and he has proclaimed himself a Christian, I'll believe that perhaps he was a Christian once, but he isn't now. So, I'll tell him to repent and believe the Gospel. I share that because I have seen so many of us in other churches lose so much time arguing about the theory of the doctrine when God expects us to be concerned with health giving doctrine. That's what the Greek word for doctrine means. It means doctrine that gives health, not doctrine that provokes meaningless arguments and theorizes them.

Well, loved ones, that's good if you will just think about these things as we go on now into deeper studies. We'll constantly refer back to this truth of what real salvation is. I believe that it will come as even more light to you. I would just remind you that you have to address yourself to the mind as far as what has happened in Jesus is concerned. But then speak to the conscience of men and women and pray to the conscience of man and woman. Then they have to constrain their will to act on that. If a person doesn't act, God cannot do anything.

Question 4: Brother is asking about the local church movement, which Witness Lee, who was an associate of Watchman Nee, started in Los Angeles and spread throughout other cities. Brother is

wondering to what extent Witness Lee used Watchman Nee's teachings. I think that he used many of Watchman Nee's teachings but then he very quickly began to develop his own interpretation of them. This is especially in regard to the normal Christian church life. In that book Nee emphasizes again and again that we do not take this as a book of principles. This is the way the Lord led us but it need not be the way He leads others. It seems to me, (and I'm sure Witness Lee is a dear man of God) that he has taken that as a book of principles and led himself into some illogical positions.

Brothers and Sisters, we're surrounded by rapids. Really! There are rapids on all sides and rocks and all we can do is keep our little boat going straight ourselves. That's what we should do. Look at the side and see that's a rock we want to avoid but don't spend time studying that rock, or trying to break it up with a pickaxe. No, keep the little boat going because on down those rapids there are four billion loved ones who do not know Jesus and know nothing about fine points of doctrine. But, they are desperate to see a glimpse of the Spirit of Jesus so that they can touch it and become alive. That's what He has called us to do.

Let's pray.

Dear Lord, thank you for this evening. Thank you for the blessed time in worship and the good time You have given us in our study. And now, Holy Spirit, we know that we know nothing. After all of this, we know nothing. We can only go home and put ourselves under Your counsel and say, "Holy Spirit, we want to be taught by You." Thank you for the words that the brother has shared with us. Thank you for the words that have come from human lips and confirm some of the things we have learned. Lord, we must learn it from You. Blessed Spirit, we must have You teach us. Will You make these things real in our lives so that this week people may meet, not little experts who know all about the spiritual life, but beautiful people who live and talk and think like Jesus. We ask this, Holy Spirit, for Your glory among us and for the lifting up of our Savior, Jesus. 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 and through Thanksgiving. Amen.