

The Carnal Christian

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, what we're discussing this evening is the carnal Christian. The Sunday before last we talked about sin after conversion. Of course sin after conversion is caused by what we are discussing today, the carnal Christian. Next Sunday I'll try to deal primarily with deliverance from that kind of carnality, though we'll touch on that this evening.

Maybe I could just remind you of what we were discussing when we talked about sin after conversion. You'll find it in the uncomfortable verse 1 John 3:9.

I have to keep repeating to you (because I've known so many of us here in Minneapolis have reacted against these strong verses) that these are healing medicine. This is good. Every person who is in Jesus rejoices at this. They don't run from it. They don't try to rationalize it. They run towards it even though it's cutting them deep. They know that it is healing and curing.

1 John 3:9, "No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." Many of us who have received Jesus' spirit into our lives have read that verse and then we have read one definition of sin back in Matthew 5:22. "But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment." Or, we've read verse 28. "But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

We see the situation. We are converted. We've received Jesus' spirit into our lives and here we are sinning -- sinning in thought or in desire. Several weeks ago we talked about what you do when you get into that situation where you know the thing is wrong and yet you do it. You fall right into the scriptural definition of sin in James 4:17, "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

You know it is not right to be angry or lose your temper. You know that it's not right to lust or be unclean in your thought life and yet you are. You fall and you know it's sin. You know that no one born of God sins and you get into all that difficulty as to whether you are born of God or not born of God.

We shared two weeks ago that the answer in that situation is 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." The answer is this. There is the light coming down to me and it lights up the anger in my heart. I'm convicted that that is sin and I keep walking towards that light. I say, "Lord I know that's sin. I know it's wrong. Lord I confess it. You have said that 'if I confess my sin you are faithful and just to forgive me my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness.'" Lord, it is sin. I'm not pretending it isn't. I'm not pretending that it's a human weakness. It is sin. Lord I confess it to you and I ask you to show me why I commit that sin." That is walking in the light.

We get into real trouble if you define walking in the light as victory over that sin at that moment. I believe what God means when he says walking in the light is that you keep walking towards that

light. You keep allowing the truth of God to come in upon you and you side with his truth against yourself if necessary. The two things you refuse to do are to rationalize away the sin as if it was a human shortcoming, and you refuse to justify a sinning Christian life.

If you keep walking in the light in those two ways the Holy Spirit will draw you on into more and more light and eventually into the deliverance that we'll talk about tonight and again next Sunday. That's what you do when you find yourself sinning after conversion.

Can I plead once more with you that you don't defend yourself? I cannot tell you how many come up to me after Sunday mornings and try to justify the sinning Christian life. Loved ones, that is siding with Satan. We must always side with God's good word against ourselves. Then you are always walking towards the light. Never get yourself into the position where you are siding with Satan.

Here we all are children of the Heavenly Father and here is one of these children saying, "You know I believe God wants us to please Him completely." Now if you're children of the Heavenly Father you don't come to me and say, "No, no I don't think you can please Him completely. I think we are fully justified in failing to please him completely." Do you see it's the wrong spirit? If you are children of the Heavenly Father you say to me, "Yes, brother I want to please him completely. The spirit in me wants to please him completely. I don't know how to do it but I want to do it." Loved ones, that is walking in the light.

In other words, walking in the light is not so much walking free from every sin as it is walking constantly towards God's will with a penitent, soft heart that is always yearning for complete victory. That's the way to walk after conversion.

What I'd like to share tonight is why it seems we end up in that position. Why do some of us experience the New Birth and yet we don't seem to experience the full privilege of that birth. Because the full privilege of those who are born of God is undoubtedly 1 John 3:9, "No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." That is undoubtedly God's will for us. The scripture from the first chapter to the last chapter of Revelations is filled with obedience, obedience, and obedience. So undoubtedly that's God's will and undoubtedly that's what Jesus meant when he said, "Be ye perfect as I am perfect." That is God's best for us.

How come some of us seem to have the spirit of Jesus in us and yet we are not able to get free from some things that we call besetting sins? (These are things that keep on coming up in our life and we keep trying to suppress.) The answer really lies in 1 Corinthians 3:1, "But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ."

There are two kinds of children of God that Paul is talking about. There are children of God that he calls "sarkinos" and there are children of God that he calls in Greek "pneumatikos". These are spiritual (pneumatikos) and these (sarkinos) are carnal or fleshly. The reason you still have some sins that you cannot get victory over in your life is because you are still "sarkinos" -- carnal or fleshly.

How does it happen that you are carnal even though you are born of the Spirit? Could I remind you very quickly of God's plan? His plan was for his Holy Spirit to come through our spirits in communion and tell us what he wanted us to do through our intuition. Our conscience would constrain our wills to do what our intuition said. It would also constrain our wills to direct our minds and

emotions to express those commandments of God out to the world through our bodies. That was God's plan.

He wanted us to do that so that we would become like him in the process. He would give us his Spirit, but we would have to let his Spirit govern our psychological personalities and our physical bodies. He would give us his Spirit but he would require us by our wills to obey our conscience and let his Spirit govern our psychological personalities and our physical personalities. In that way of course we would become throughout our personalities like him, and we would be able to live with him forever.

The heart of "the fall" was when we decided that we'd like to be like God but not so that we'd live with him and love him forever. It was so that we could do what we wanted. We wanted to be like God. We wanted to take his place. We wanted to govern our world according to our wishes and desires. The heart of the fall was proud rebellion against God.

You remember what happened then. We lost the sense of security, significance and happiness that we were meant to have in relationship to God. And so we had to find it somehow. In order to do that we "ate of the knowledge of good and evil" as it says in Genesis. The fruit was good for food and it was a delight to the eyes and it was to be desired to make one wise. Therefore, we decided that we have to get security through the use of our minds, significance through the dominating power of our wills and happiness through our emotions by sucking it from the world and other people.

We developed a personality that was exactly the reverse of the one that God had planned for us. God had planned for it to work from the inside out. But we began to get our security, significance and happiness not from God but from the outside in. The whole personality became utterly perverted so that we couldn't make it to work as it was meant to work at all. And for that reason God did what he said he would do in Genesis 3:22-24. "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."

God encased the Holy Spirit in a hedge so that we could not get at him or receive him and our spirits died. Now God did that because we had developed monstrous personalities. He knew that if he gave us the power of the Holy Spirit which would enable us to live forever, move through great spaces at tremendous speed and from time zone to time zone in history, we would destroy the whole universe. So because we had developed those perverted personalities, he withdrew the Holy Spirit from us.

Now, before he could ever make the Holy Spirit available to us again he had to make provision for the complete reversal of this perverted personality. He did that by crucifying us with Christ on the cross in a cosmic miracle. While in time it took place in 29 AD, in actuality it took place in the eternal realm where our old selves were crucified with Christ. The Father then was able (because he had provided the antidote for this perverted personality) to make the Holy Spirit available to us again.

Now here's the crux. Many of us have had the Holy Spirit deal with us about some of the basic ways in which we have been living from the outside in. The Holy Spirit has shown us our conscience and

some of the outstanding sins in our lives. He has shown us some of the outstanding ways in which we are living in dependence on people and the world instead of on God. We confessed those and said, "Lord we believe that on Calvary you have done something that enables us to receive your Spirit and enables you to forgive us and take us back into your family. Lord we believe that. " For most of us that was the meaning of the New Birth and God has taken us at our word.

The Father has not said, "Oh but this little child doesn't understand what I did on Calvary. He doesn't understand the details of how he was crucified with Christ." The Father doesn't say that. He looks at your heart and mine and he sees that we are honest and that we want to be what he wants us to be. He sees that we are dealing with the things that he is showing us in our life and so he freely gives us the Holy Spirit.

I think that's the way most of us enter into the new birth. That's how we become born of God. We confess all the sins that we can see but because our minds are darkened God cannot show us all the wonder of why he was able in the first place to offer us the Holy Spirit. He can't show us all that because our poor minds are darkened. Our conscience is only half clean. We can hardly see anything at all. It's like coming into a dark room and a little candle comes in. The candle seems so filled with light compared to the darkness of the room. It's only when the candle comes in that you begin to see how dark the other corners are. That's what it's like when we are first born of God.

It's not long before the Holy Spirit begins to give you light about this whole perverted personality and he begins to whisper to you, "Listen. My Father was able to give you, ME, because your old self was completely destroyed in Jesus. Moreover he has given me to you so that you will depend completely and utterly on me, so that you will not depend on the world for your security, significance, happiness and enjoyment but so that you'll depend on me." The Holy Spirit begins to give light.

I remember him giving me light about six months after I became a child of God. I remember him whispering to me, "What would it be like to give your whole life to Jesus and to live for him first and foremost and for him only?" I remember very well what my response was. I was at that time moving towards schoolteaching as a profession and I remember virtually saying to him, "But no one else is living this way. No one else lives completely for Jesus. Everybody else gets on with their own jobs and professions and makes themselves successful."

I knew nothing about this personality stuff, nothing about the Holy Spirit. I had never read Nee or any of those books. I was still a liberal in theology and questioned even scripture as the word of God. But I remember the Holy Spirit whispering to me, "What would it be like to depend on God for everything?"

I think it is not long after we become children of God that the Holy Spirit begins to show you and me why God actually was prepared to give us the Holy Spirit at all. He was prepared to give us the Holy Spirit because this old self that depends on the world for its security, significance and happiness was crucified with Christ so that it could be completely renovated and redeemed, and therefore begin to work the proper way.

In other words, the Holy Spirit was not given to be encased in our lives as in some kind of casket where he couldn't get out. The Holy Spirit coming into us is simply the beginning of God's redemption. The Holy Spirit then begins to reroute our whole personality and to enable us to live from God and from him only.

I believe that you and I begin to become carnal the first moment that we react against that light. I couldn't tell when it is for you. You couldn't tell when it is for me. But all of us here who are living carnal lives have at some time seen that light and we've reacted against it. We've said, "No, I'm not prepared to stop living dependent on people (for their approval), dependent on my personal relationships (for my happiness), dependent on my own ability to earn money (for my security), dependent on my position in my profession (for my significance). I'm not prepared to stop living that way. I want to be alive in God. I certainly want to go to Heaven. I know that you died for me, Lord. I accept that. I accept Lord God that you have forgiven me my sins and now I want to do 'both and'."

Loved ones, that's what the Bible means when it says the spirit strives against the flesh. A carnal or fleshly Christian is one who is not living totally dependent on the Holy Spirit for their security, significance and happiness and is partially living off the world. In a sense you can say that they are living only off the world, because they choose when to do one and when to do the other. It isn't long after a person first sees that, that they become utterly dominated by the world. They in fact only trust God when there is nothing to lose. It isn't long before they begin to lose the sense of the first love that they had of Jesus. It isn't long before their love of Bible study begins to fade and their prayer lives become flat. Even before that they cease to witness. It isn't long before they settle down with the old philosophy that everything is exciting in the beginning but you have to get back down to real life and deal with the practical everyday responsibilities that you face.

A carnal Christian is one who has turned his or her back to the full meaning of the cross. It's really like saying to God, "Father I want the Holy Spirit but I want him so that I can do what I want with him." It's really another failure to see what God refused to do. God refused to let the Holy Spirit continue among us once we had become perverted personalities that lived off the world and each other for the things that he wanted us to get from him. He refused to do that. The whole point of Jesus' death was to reverse that personality completely. That's why our old self was crucified with Christ. God will NEVER continue to give his favor and his presence to a person who rejects the work of the cross. The cross is the very work that enables God to offer the Holy Spirit and forgiveness in the first place.

A carnal Christian is one who wants only part of salvation. They want forgiveness of sins. They want a relationship with God. But they don't want the real purpose of salvation, which is to completely reverse the perverted personality and to allow the Holy Spirit to again continue his work of rerouting his whole personality according to God's image.

That's why, loved ones, you have those verses in Galatians 5:16-17. "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh." That's what happens. The desires of the Spirit are coming this way (from the inside).

For example, Peter is standing in the courtyard and the little maid says, "There's one of them! He followed the Galilean." The Holy Spirit in Peter at that moment comes to him and says, "My approval is all that you need. I will take care of you. You won't die a moment before it's your time to die. I approve of you. What does it matter what any other person thinks of you?"

The Holy Spirit moves from inside and prompts Peter in that direction. But Peter is still dependent

on men's opinions. He still thinks that men and women have power over his destiny. He looks around at all of the people and realizes if they think he is one of the Galileans then they'll crucify him too. And so he swears and says, "I never knew the man." That's a carnal Christian. The Spirit is moving out this way (from the inside of us), but the desire to be approved of my men and women or to depend on the world of people for what you should get from God is working against it.

Then you see what happens in Galatians 5:17, "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would." So many of us here have found ourselves in that situation. We've known we should speak out at the office what we think has just been put over as a joke. We've known we should speak out. But there is that fear of man inside us that we have not taken to the cross. Of course it hasn't been taken to the cross because we in fact have not gone to the cross ourselves. We still care about what people think of us. We are still operating in the flesh. We are still walking according to the flesh. We are still depending on men's opinions for our security and our significance.

So it goes on that every sin a carnal Christian commits and has trouble with is because they have not really stopped depending on the world and people for the things that they should get from God only. And so a carnal Christian comes under more and more and more conviction.

What most of us do is we struggle and we strive. We are still working by our own power and so what we do is try to control this thing by the action of the flesh itself. That's why all the cold showers are so popular. What we need is a better Bible study system. Or, if I only had more power of the Holy Spirit we could do this. And so we seek more power and fall more often. Then we try to justify the power of the Holy Spirit being together with an impure heart and we get into all kinds of difficulties.

In Acts 15:9 it says, "God gave the Holy Spirit to them as he did to us and cleansed their hearts by faith." So we try and get more power and it seems we have more power on this side, (though we're not quite sure where it comes from) but our lives are just as carnal and disobedient. We get into the hideous situation where we are speaking in tongues and working miracles on this side but at home we are angry, bad tempered creatures that are destroying any respect for God in our home life.

We keep on thinking if we had more power, or more discipline, or more rules and regulations. We try again and we fall again, we try and we fall. We set the alarm clock and it goes off at 5AM or 6AM and we turn it off and go back to sleep. Then, we try to trick ourselves. It's a safe battle because we don't really want to be tricked. We try to trick ourselves by hiding the alarm clock somewhere in the room. It's the self trying to get rid of the self which is impossible. The self doesn't really want to get rid of the self and so it plays a trick that the self can't sort out. We hide the alarm clock, we go after the alarm clock, find it, put it off and get back into bed.

We keep on doing this and we fall and fall and fall and fall. We try again. We confess our sin and try again. We confess our sin and repent. But we keep on falling time after time after time. Of course what God is trying to show us is that this is not a problem of discipline. This is not a problem of insufficient Bible study. This is not a problem of inadequate power. This is a problem of too much power -- of self. This is a problem of a man or woman that is trying to share their life between God and the world. They are not prepared to die with Jesus to what the world can give. They are still trying to get something from the world so that they will always have a guarantee -- something to fall back on.

God wants only one kind of person in his Heaven. That is the person to whom he is God. He alone is God and to whom he alone will supply their every need. The Father has rejected from the beginning of the world any kind of worship of many gods. And so he will not deal with us until we get rid of that world and until we die to the supplies that the world can give us.

You can elaborate on it. You can go to the works of the flesh that that produces. It's Galatians 5:19 and says, "Now the works of the flesh are plain." First it mentions the sins that defile the body because we are always working from the body out. You'll find that in a carnal Christian the body is pretty important because few of us have souls that are very highly developed. There are some of us that are very intellectual or very emotional or very willful people. But most of us are utterly dominated by our bodies. It is usually the sins of the body that overwhelm us. These are sins of eating, of resting more than we need, of tiredness and wanting comfort for ourselves. Those are always the things that prevent us.

I remember so well that one of the differences the Holy Spirit made to me was when God said, "Go", I went. Before that, it would be a cold, cold, night and I knew I had to go out and visit that person. The body would not want to go. The decision was then a foregone conclusion because the body always wins.

That's what makes you heavy. Have you ever felt a heaviness of spirit? That's what makes you heavy. You haven't really cut your connection to the body. You haven't really come to the point where St. Francis did that the old body is a donkey and deserves a good kick every day to keep it in its place. You are still at the place where the dear body has to be looked after. "Whatever the body says I will do." That's what gives you a heaviness so that even when you do obey God there is a heaviness of spirit in you.

Now the sins of the body are, "fornication, impurity, licentiousness." And then supernatural communications occur because we don't get satisfaction from God because we are not fully obedient to him. We have to find some kind of substitute. So we have "idolatry, and sorcery". Then there is the sinful temper.

The peculiarities that the temper brings are "enmity, strife, jealousy, anger".

We do not have control of all our circumstances. There are things we cannot control and so we get angry with those. We lose our temper with them. Really we are stupid people because we were never made to be God and we haven't the power to be God. Even a man like Howard Hughes had not the power to make everything go the way he wanted it to go. Any so we have temper and enmity, jealousy, strife and anger.

Then we have religious sects that come with "dissension, and party spirit". You'll notice that carnal Christians in a church are always involved with criticism. There is always some kind of strife or dissension. They are preoccupied with how everyone else is failing or how things are going or not going. When a carnal Christian gets their eyes off Jesus they have them on other people and are always tearing others apart.

Then, back into the midst of the flesh we have, "envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like". Those are some of the works of the flesh.

You can see that God's will is a complete work. A complete work did take place at times. If you look

at Acts 9:17 you'll see Paul's own conversion. "So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized, and took food and was strengthened."

You do find that many loved ones who are not brought up in our Christian civilization actually accept the whole gospel. They accept the whole truth that God is able to give you his Holy Spirit to regenerate you if you are willing to be baptized into Jesus' death so that your personality will be completely turned around and you'll depend on God for everything.

In simple societies that have not become sophisticated or clever in their attitude to God, they will often advance into the whole work. But do you see in our society we have taught a partial gospel. We have taught that it's enough to have your sins forgiven and then do your best to grow in grace. But we've had little teaching in regards to the mighty work that God did for our personalities on the Cross.

So there are two reasons that people are carnal Christians. Some of them are carnal Christians because of what it says in Acts 19. You remember that Apollos had been at Corinth and had preached. It's in Acts 19:1. "While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said, 'No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They said, 'Into John's baptism.' And Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied."

They had failed to enter in because they hadn't known of this. They hadn't known what God could do in their lives. I think many of us are in that situation. But I would point out to you that you do know now. And you are now in the position of the people in 1 Corinthians 3. They had not entered into deliverance for a different reason. 1 Corinthians 3:1, "But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food." A carnal Christian cannot take deep teaching. They cannot understand spiritual teaching and are always asking questions. They can never find answers to things. They see everything as difficult and contradictory.

1 Corinthians 3:2, "I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?" Now those are people who know the truth but don't want to enter in and it's a willful rejection. They do not want to enter into it and therefore are behaving as ordinary men. Ordinary men are governed by the world - by what people think of them. They are getting their security, significance and happiness from people and things. They are behaving like ordinary men because they want to.

So there are two reasons why a person is carnal, one - because they don't know of the deliverance that is available in the Cross and two -- they know it but they don't want it. Loved ones, that is the heart of carnality. It is this "will" refusing to go through the whole contract that they signed with God. It is saying, "Holy Spirit you can dwell in me and I will call upon you at times but I

will certainly not burn my bridges behind me. I will certainly not cut myself off from the security, significance and happiness that I can get from the world and people. I will keep that as a backup system."

The Holy Spirit knows that. He is the Holy Spirit of truth. He can see into the deepest part of your being. He knows whom you care for most and because of that he's not able to fill you himself. Loved ones, how long can you remain a carnal Christian? Paul says, they were too long and it had been two or three years. He said, "That's too long. It's time that you moved on and into the fullness that the Holy Spirit has for you."

The vital step is that "will". The selfish will has to agree with all that the Holy Spirit is showing it in regard to the cross of Jesus. Once you go to God and say, "Lord I want you and you alone. I am willing to do without the approval of men. I am willing to die to all that I have been getting from people in the world." Once you are serious and real about that, the Holy Spirit is able to fill you with Himself and to deliver you from the double mindedness that brings this constant defeat in your life.

Next Sunday I'll try to talk a little more about the deliverance from carnality. That I think is why carnality takes place.

Would you like to ask questions? I'll try to answer them.

Q: Is a carnal Christian saved?

A: Yes. But in 1 Corinthians 3 you remember that Paul says, "But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ." So he does call them "babes in Christ". He says you are alive but you have been too long babies.

Now it is a different question to ask, "How long can they remain saved?" Obviously the reason for all the warnings in books like Hebrews is that there is a real danger of losing salvation if you continue to grieve the Holy Spirit.

Q: How does marriage and raising up a family relate to a carnal Christian?

A: It was my experience that my home life was a hypocritical pretense. I remember it was being such when I lived with my parents and continuing to be such when I lived with my wife. I remember my mother often saying, "Oh Ernest, I wish the church people could see you now", when I was in one of my tempers. So, I know that it makes an absolute hypocrisy of any testimony at home.

I know too that it makes a complete change at home when you come through deliverance from carnality. I know from my experience with my wife, that those who know you best notice at last that there is a real change in you. So, I cannot see how a carnal Christian with responsibility for children and a wife and all the strains that come in that situation can possibly live in anything but spiritual chaos. It is constantly failing, constantly passing onto the children a monstrous image of God. It makes the same mess of home life as carnality makes of our work life.

Q: Aren't there some people that live their whole life not coming into this teaching?

A: I think there are -- for two reasons. Some loved ones honestly have not heard it and are walking

as best they can. But I think there are other loved ones that have received the strong teaching so popular in evangelical circles. That is that we are not saved "from" our sins but that we are saved "in" our sins. Therefore the only difference between a Christian and non Christian is that one sins and is condemned for it while the other sins and is forgiven. I think there are many that are under that kind of false teaching.

I believe that we need to be very careful when we are dealing with ones that are beginning to come into this. The Holy spirit often guides me in the preaching because there are many loved ones that come here Sunday by Sunday to whom this is new. I think great care and love and kindness is needed because only the Holy Spirit can convict of sin.

Q: Are you saying that Christians should be sinless and perfect?

A: I certainly would not dare to disagree with Jesus who said, "Be ye perfect even as your father in Heaven is perfect." I would not dare to disagree with God's word that says, "Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin." But having said all of that I think it is very important to define sin clearly. There are two kinds of sin in scripture. One is conscious sin where you know you are doing wrong and the other is unconscious sin. Now it does seem that God expects us to be free from conscious sin. In other words he expects us to be free of what James defines in James 4:17 that "whoever knows what is right and fails to do it for him it is sin."

Now, there are other sins that we will commit that we won't know. Maybe I won't know that Tom's parents are Swedish. I make some joke about miserable Swedes and Norwegians and it hurts them. It seems to me that is not God's perfection. It is strictly speaking something that is not like him and therefore sin, but it is an unintentional sin. Or, you are facetious and make a joke that hurts somebody. You didn't intend it and you didn't know it was wrong but you did it. Once you become aware of it you become responsible for apologizing and putting the thing right. But it seems to me you have to make a distinction.

We are not meant to be in sinless perfection, which most people think means angelic perfection. Angelic perfection means you make no mistakes. You never offend anybody. You never do anything that you didn't intend to do. I don't think we can ever be like that. I think we will always be making mistakes, always be making errors of judgment, always using the wrong tone of voice, always be doing things that we didn't know were wrong but we did them. But, we are responsible to experience Christian perfection and that is to walk in conscience obedience to what we know God wants us to do.

The issue is not, can I take out my diary and say, "Well, yesterday I did run the risk of losing my temper and the day before I kicked the dog." I don't think that that is what the Father is anxious about. I think the Father is concerned about the fact that many of us here are not free to obey. We are not free from the power of sin. When somebody does something we lose our temper and can't do anything about it. We can't do anything about it. I would say the Father has freed me from that captivity of having to lose my temper. Whether I lose my temper, that is for everybody here to judge. Whether I am unkind to anybody, that is for everyone here to judge and for me to deal with God honestly about it.

But I could say I thank God that he has delivered me from having to have unclean thoughts. I thank God that I can now do what he tells me to do. I'm not claiming that I will always do it but I would tell everyone now that he has freed me so that I am able to do it. If you find me not doing it it's

my own fault, so tell me. If you had told me before I would have defended myself. I would have said, "No, I didn't!" and would have tried to justify myself.

I think it would be very dangerous for us to say, "I've sinned twice in the past 15 years."

Q: How do we know the voice we are hearing is from the Spirit or from our head?

A: There can be no certainty of that until a person has ceased to be carnal. If I could tie it up with the truth that we are sharing in that way. You can never know why your mind is double. Part of the time you are governed by what people think of you and you're governed by whether they approve of you. Those voices are so strong that it's the earthquake and the fire inside you. Loved ones when they want to know who they should marry are so caught up with still getting satisfaction for their body and having someone nice to walk beside them. They are still so preoccupied with the approval and recognition that they can get from the world that they can't tell that this girl is for them from God or whether this girl is for them for themselves. And so at this point a man or a woman has no way of knowing. Once a person has come through with a single mind and comes through to a death to the world, regarding their life as ended as far as what the world can do for them, then there begins to come a clear voice through and they begin to have direction.

I would testify to that. There was a mighty change in my life. There was a certainty at last of what God wanted me to do. So, it makes an immense difference. The only way is to die with Christ and to stop living off the world. The phrase "a worldly Christian" is a good definition of what a carnal Christian is. A worldly Christian is one who is living off the world, living off the security, significance and happiness that the world gives. One who has ceased to be carnal is one who is crucified to the world and to whom the world has been crucified. That is joy and full salvation. That is full Christianity.

If you ask me if I preach that on Sunday morning as full Christianity, yes I do. If you say to me, "Do you not think you are asking everyone to take one step when some of us have had to take two?" Yes! But I reckon if they move in the right direction at all then they can come the second step later. We need to share the full gospel of Christ and God. And we need to live the full gospel of God. We need to stop pretending that it's all right to sin. It is not all right to sin and we don't need to sin. We have a loving Father who has done a miraculous work on the Cross and can deliver us.

I'll try to talk more on this next Sunday. Let us pray. Dear Father we thank you that you are a God that does a full work and that the whole purpose of giving us the Holy Spirit was so that he would continue to work out through our personalities and redeem them completely. We see, Lord God, that we are saying, "Yes" and "No" to salvation when we say "No" to the Holy Spirit taking our lives over completely. We judge that "one died for all" and we have signed that large print on the contract. But we are balking at the small print "therefore all have died" and holding back.

Lord we see that the Holy Spirit is showing us the small print in the contract. If we are really serious about our acceptance of your forgiveness then we have no alternative but to go on into the full experience of the cross of Christ and into complete resurrection and to a place where we allow you alone to be our God, not our peers, not our colleagues, not our parents or our wives or husbands but you alone. We want to get from you alone all of our security and significance and happiness. Then we thank you that your Holy Spirit will fill us and flow through us freely. 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 coming week. Amen.