

Spiritual Life #14

The Dangers of the Soul Life

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we would thank you for what you are doing in our own lives. And Lord thank you, that somehow when we concentrate upon you there comes about a beauty of your life in us and Lord spontaneity and witness that is so different from that old ideological brainwashing that we used to practice. And Lord thank you, thank you that it is true, "Look unto me and be saved." And when we look unto you and turn our eyes upon you then the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of your wonder and grace. And Lord thank you, that other loved ones do see shining faces as we come from the mountain tops.

Lord we thank you that that's our only business, to worship and love you with a whole heart and a complete will and then the world will see your beauty and they'll be drawn to you. Thank you Lord. We pray Holy Spirit that you will show us how to do this this evening in a fuller way for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Loved ones, what we're trying to talk about in these Sunday evenings is the spiritual life. Tonight we'll talk about the dangers of the soulish life. And we've spent some time, perhaps 10 or 12 evenings talking about the way we got ourselves into the spiritual state or spiritual lack of relationship with our Creator that we are in today. And, we spent some time therefore on the new birth and the truth of the new birth. Then, we spent some time on deliverance from carnality and now we're talking about soulish life. And I could outline very clearly to you the distinction, if I would point out to you that God's plan is that we should get all we need from him and then we would be able to give continually to each other. Now that's his plan, loved ones.

We all, because of our various states, rebel against that and we think, "No, no brother don't we need each other?" Or, "Don't we need this?" Or, "Don't we need that?" But loved ones, the truth really is that God's will is for us to get all we need from him. And you can imagine that being possible if you just think of what we like to call the love of a good woman. And you could say the love of a good father, or the love of a good mother, or the love of a good brother, or the love of a good sister, or the love of a good husband, the love of a good wife – boy, that works wonders in a person.

If you know somebody really loves you, that brings a great peace into your life. A great sense of peace in your heart. Those husbands and wives here, those of you who had dear dads or mums that had that kind of love for you, you know how when we were little tiny kids, we just thought, "They control the whole world." And we thought, "Boy, they love us and what have we to fear?" And as long as we had Dad by the hand or we had Mum's arm around us we felt as secure as a person could possibly feel. And when we were little children we never worried about where the next meal came from. We knew it always came from the kitchen because that's where Mum was and we had no doubt that there's where the next meal would be.

We had a great sense that everything was safe, a great sense of happiness. It was just delightful to be able to share Dad's bacon, or Dad's egg, or go out with him to the garden, or something like that. Happiness was a very simple thing. It was just being with these great significant others that loved us with all their hearts. There was no fighting or competing really to make yourselves

important. If Dad thought you were important, if Mum thought you were important, that was everything. It was just great to walk down the street with him because you were with him and if you were with him that gave you a sense of importance.

That's what God wants us to receive from him, loved ones. Our dear Father in heaven wants each one of us to sense that we're individually related to him like that and that he loves us just that same way, and that he has put us here as if we were the only people here in the whole world. He has put us here to do a special job, to live a certain kind of life and his love is just pouring down upon us. And as long as we do that we'll never want, we'll never lack. We'll have all the security that we need. He'll so organize the economic life of the world that we'll have all the food, shelter, and clothing that we need and we'll be more important to him than anybody else and we'll sense that. And that is God's will for us.

That's why when the dear psychologists talk about a fully integrated personality they often describe exactly what a godly person would be. They're often describing exactly what a real Christian would be, a person who is secure in the love of his dear Father in heaven. And that is God's will for us.

And if it worked that way loved ones, we would have all we needed from God and that's exactly how things would work. And I'll just show it very quickly on this diagram [body, soul, spirit]. So into our spirits would come that great sense of God's love and all the security we needed, all the significance we needed, all the happiness we needed. And I think we really need the Holy Spirit's light to make these things real to us. I think so often you can reel them off and yet not really grasp them.

But somehow when somebody loves you, and when it's the most significant other in the world that loves you, then all those things come into you. And of course, it was God's will that all those things would flow from our spirits through our souls. Our soul, we discovered, is the psychological part of us: our mind, our emotions, our will. And then from our soul that life would flow out through our bodies and that would be the progression. It would flow right through to the world so that we would fill the world with all this love of God -- the security, and happiness, and significance that God gives to us.

Now of course, we rebelled against that and we started to abandon God himself and so we ended up as poor souls with none of these things at all. And what we in fact decided to do was to get them whatever way we could. So we began to operate our whole personality the opposite way exactly. We began to look to the things that God had given us -- the food, shelter, and clothing -- and we began to use those, began to use those as a source of the security, significance, and the happiness that we have. So instead of clothing being something that clothed us it became something that showed us off and made us important in other people's eyes. We just perverted everything that God wanted us to have.

We perverted it to try and make up for these things that we were meant to get from him. Shelter no longer just became a roof over your head but a certain kind of room, certain kind of bedroom, certain kind of shelter that would give you a sense of happiness; happiness that really could finally only come from a love relationship with God. It was the same with food. The food wasn't meant to make us feel better when we became anxious or worried, the food was just to keep us alive. But we began to use the food to try to get that sense of security that could only come from God. And so we did that with everything, loved ones.

You remember I shared with you how God gave us a desire to propagate the race. And instead of

propagating the race of course, we turned that into a kind of thing that we could get satisfaction from. Of course, that's why we're all so twisted up in regard to sex. We don't regard each other's bodies as just an incidental method God has of propagating the race through a husband and wife but we begin to regard each other's bodies as an end in themselves, as a way to get the exhilaration and the tremendous sense of peace that really we're meant to get from the Father's love and from his relationship to us.

It's the same with all the things that we have. The old self defends things that God gave us; we have a desire to defend ourselves. We turn it into self glory. And in connection with the whole business of how we dress and how we appear to others we spend our lives trying to glorify ourselves before other people. And it's the same with the whole business of the preservation of the race, of preserving ourselves. And that's why God gave us a desire for food so that we would preserve our bodies. But we turn it into gluttony in order to get this kind of security that we need.

And so loved ones, the whole personality, you see, instead of working as it was meant to work, from the inside [spirit] out -- instead of receiving everything from God into our spirits and then expressing it out like that, instead the whole personality began to turn inward and began to steal from the world and from other people what God meant us to receive from him. And loved ones, the truth is that many of us are born of God. Many of us see that we need to be born of God's Spirit and we hear about how to receive his Spirit and we hear of the mighty work that was done on the cross. And we receive the Spirit of God by faith into ourselves.

But we don't realize that the mighty work that God did on the cross was actually to destroy that whole internal direction of our personalities so that we could begin to work outwards again the way he planned. And so we receive the Spirit of God but we don't realize the purpose of the cross was to destroy completely that inward working and replace it with an outward working. And so many of us find the Spirit within us is trying to get out but we're still living by the flesh. We're still living by what comes in through our bodies.

Probably the greater part of Christendom still lives that way. That's why we have arguments in churches about whose cake is the nicest and whether she looked better coming down the aisle than my daughter did. And it's probably the reason why we build so many monuments to God with our churches. Because we're living by the Spirit and yet we're still really depending on what we receive from other people -- both pastors and people. We're living really by the security, and the significance, and the happiness that we get from each other and from the world. And so much of Christendom is in a carnal state.

That's what a carnal state is. It's a person who is born of the Spirit and in whom God's love is trying to get out but they themselves are still living by what they get from other people. That's why, you remember, Paul speaks those words in Galatians, "If we are born of the Spirit or if we live by the Spirit let us walk by the Spirit." But he points out, "Most people though they're living by the Spirit inside, they're not walking by the Spirit." They're not walking by the love that comes from God, they're walking still by the security, significance, and happiness they can get from other people. They're walking by what comes in from their body.

Now loved ones, when you talk about being delivered from carnality, you're talking about being delivered from that selfish will that still wants to receive from the world and receive from God at the same time. And so you're talking about a person who has a conflict inside because they say, "The desires of the Spirit are against the desires of the flesh to prevent us from doing what we

would.” And there’s a conflict in there as one battles against the other. And a selfish will is a will that wants what it can get from God but still wants to depend on the outside world for what it can get there.

And when you talk about a person entering into the crisis experience of death with Jesus, Romans 6:6, “our old self was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin” -- the body that is used to being used by the independent power of sin to get satisfaction from the world – “so that the body of sin may be ‘rendered inoperative’, you remember, is the Greek word. We translate it “may be destroyed” but it really means “may be left unemployed”. So that the body of sin might be left unemployed and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

Now, when you talk about a person dying with Christ in a crisis experience of the cross, you talk about a person coming to Jesus and saying at last, “Lord, I’m willing to be crucified to the world. I’m willing to die to the opinion of my peers. I’m willing to die to depending on my bank account and my job for security. I’m willing to die to the praises of others or the criticism of others. I’m willing to live only to the significance that you give to me. I’m willing to die.” And for those of us who are husbands and wives, this is important, and who have friends and dear ones who we get satisfaction from, “I’m willing to die to the satisfaction that I get from my loved one. I’m willing to die to dragging it from them, to sucking it from them, to being a parasite upon them. I’m willing to die to that and to depend only on the happiness you give me. If you don’t give me happiness I’m satisfied with that.” Being crucified with Christ in a crisis experience of the cross is dying to the world as a source of what we’re to get from God alone.

Now loved ones, that’s what we talk about as the crisis experience of the cross. And where we got to last day was in showing that a subtle thing happens even after we’ve been crucified with Christ. And I’d like to show you it this way on this diagram again [body, soul, spirit]. If you think of the body as the method by which we get security, significance, and happiness through that self defense perhaps and through the desire of self preservation and self propagation, what we need really to see is that these things all find expressions in the soul. And all these tendencies in our bodies have trained our soul in a certain direction.

So we give up maybe our self defense here with our body but we maintain it here in the soul with our will. Our will tends to still want to dominate over other people. We have given up maybe self preservation depending on the food, shelter, and clothing we get from the world, but the mind has been trained to manipulate its own preservation for years. We may die to the happiness and the thrill that we get from lust here in our bodies, but our emotions have been trained for years to enjoy what they get from the world. And here’s the subtle domination of Satan: that after a person has died to what they get from their body in that crucifixion with Christ they find they still have a soul, an independent soul that has been used to getting satisfaction from the world for years and that is still operating in that way. And that’s what we mean by a soulish life, loved ones.

And when we talk about the dangers of a soulish life, we’re talking about the dangers of a psychological part of our personality that continues to operate the way it used to operate when it was dominated by the body -- even though the body now has been crucified with Christ as far as its getting things from the world is concerned. The point is that the soul, instead of being an instrument of the Spirit to give out Jesus’ Spirit to others, the soul is still operating the way it used to. It’s still continuing its old habits. And so when you talk about dying daily, it’s this area of the soul that we’re talking about.

Now you remember in Luke 9:23 that phrase is used. And some of you have been concerned, "Oh now, in what sense are we crucified once for all in the sense of Roman's 6?" Our old self was crucified with Christ and those of you who know Greek know it's the Aorist tense. It's a once for all thing, it's happened. In what sense are we crucified once and for all and in what sense then in Luke 9:23 do we die daily? "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Loved ones, it's in that sense. The sense in which we're crucified in Christ is the sense in which the selfish will dies once and for all to depending on people, and on things, and on experiences for the security, significance, and happiness that we should get from God. But the dying daily is concerned with the independent soul, the habits of the independent soul that have to be changed. And that is a daily experience and probably will be a continual experience until we meet Jesus face-to-face.

Now, how does this affect other people? Have you met Christians who really do love Jesus but they really do get to you? I mean, they really do. They're always slamming you with, "Will you go to this meeting? Will you go to that meeting? Will you go to this meeting?" Or, they're hitting you with what they think of the Jews, or what they think of the Arabs, or what they think of the Second Coming. They're blasting you with stuff almost, it seems, to brainwash you with their opinions. And in a way actually, after a while, you begin to want to avoid them because they kind of bore in on you and they actually are bores in a way. They keep on boring, and boring and you don't feel uplifted. When you see them you kind of shy away or hide somewhere.

Now, loved ones, if they're born of God and if they have a real love of Jesus, they're conceivably soulish Christians, you see. Their soul is not dictated or ruled by their spirit. Their soul has not been softened and disciplined and remolded by Jesus' Spirit. Their soul is still the same old soul that they serve themselves with. And you get various kinds of soulishness. There are some people who are strongly willful people. You see, not all sinners have weak wills; many sinners have very strong wills and they're strong willful people. And those people, if they don't allow the Holy Spirit to remold their wills, come over to you as willful. "Won't you come to this meeting?" And you feel, "Boy, I better go just to get them off my back."

Or, some are very intellectual people. They're intellectual and they use their minds to manipulate things to their purposes before they became children of God. And now that they're children of God they use their minds too but this time it's to manipulate people into things. And they usually come at you with all kinds of intellectual discussions or intellectual arguments, or they try to get you into a corner and manipulate you to go to this meeting, or prove to you that this is the only thing that will answer all the problems in your life. But, it's primarily a mind thing, it's an intellectual strength.

I remember as a little guy at the Methodist church in Ireland that you'd get emotional Christians. Emotional Christians, that is – my wife would hit me with this because I know all you ladies do not have maternal instincts -- I accept that -- but it did seem often to me that these dear ladies were loving me to death. It wasn't a kind of gentle thing where I sensed the beauty and the fragrance of Jesus' love, it was just they overwhelmed me with their love, they kind of dominated me. They almost put their arms around me and drew me into the meeting and it was off-putting to a little guy.

I think a lot of us have met those loved ones who love but they love with the old soulish love. It's just that they're loving a different person now but they're still loving with their old life. So do you see, in a way it's interesting, because a soulish Christian is living his life in the

right direction in a sense. He or she wants to do God's will but they're doing it with an undisciplined soul life. With a soul life that is still living by its own power and its own strength. And so instead of the beauty and the fragrance of Jesus' life coming over, you're impressed primarily by the person themselves. You're impressed primarily by their personalities. "Oh, he has an interesting personality, hasn't he? Oh yeah, he's very loving, or very kind." But it's primarily the person you're impressed with, it's not a sense of touching the Lord.

Now loved ones, that's what we mean by soulish life. And really, in a way, if you allow that to continue it'll actually draw you back eventually into the realm of the body. Because, where this was the WILL of the old creation, or the old nature -- this is the LIFE of the old creation and the old nature. And actually, it will draw you eventually back into submission to the old self completely. And so it's vital to begin to take up your cross. It's vital to begin to deal with your soulish life. And I would say that is why we see the dreadful powerlessness of Christendom at the moment. And it is incredible you know, there is incredible powerlessness in Christendom.

The dreadful powerless of Christendom, -- when you think of how many of us are children of God -- the dreadful powerless of Christendom is because we have not the power of the Holy Spirit getting through us to the world. The power of the Holy Spirit is buried inside most of us and what the world sees is our soulishness trying to serve Jesus. And so there's very little life of Jesus coming through us to others. And you'll feel the pressure when you're in the office during the week, you'll feel that pressure. Many of us feel, "What could I say to this person to get them to be interested in God? What could I say to this person?" And we're often involved in looking up little things that "Time Magazine" reports, or thinking of something that will bring the subject up.

Don't you see loved ones, it's nice of you to do that, and it's good, and God is glad that you're trying to do something, but even that is soulishness. Don't you see that? That what loved ones in your office most want to hear is not you trying to manipulate them by some kind of clever trick into talking about God, but what they want to sense is something of the beauty of Jesus. It's interesting, but the world today will only be convicted by Jesus. The world today will not be convicted by all our arguments, or all our cleverness. The world will be convicted by a glimpse of Jesus. That's all it needs to see. The loved one in your office only needs to see a glimpse of Jesus.

And you know, we're so proud aren't we? We say, "Oh, well they can see Jesus all around the place. Just turn the old TV knob and they'll get KPIS, turn another knob and they'll get Campus Church." We're so proud and we don't realize Jesus has to be seen in us. That's what people most want to see. And once they see and touch Jesus in us, they will fast enough begin to ask us, "Brethren, what shall we do? Oh, what must we do to be saved?" But we see so little of that that we're always answering the question that they haven't asked and that's what adds to the complete confusion because they wonder what on earth we're at. They haven't even asked that question and we're trying to give them the answer. And what they want to see is Jesus' life coming through.

Now loved ones, any questions? Are there any questions about the basic understanding of that? Because, I think a lot of you listen to me using the term soulishness and you wonder, "Well, what on earth are you talking about?"

Question from audience:

What if we keep failing in some area. Why can't we change?

Yes. I could use an example, just a very simple example, that many of you have heard before. There are two problems people can come up against in getting up in the morning to pray. One, is self will that needs to be crucified with Christ once and for all. The other, is an independent soul and I can instance it in this way. Many of us set the alarm for five or six, whatever time it is, and the alarm goes off and a voice goes off inside us saying, "Oh, just five minutes more." Then if you examine that voice it's really saying, "Well, you know, what does it matter, what does five minutes more matter? What does it matter? Really, I mean, it is my body and I know how it works best and I do have a right to have five minutes more."

Now, that's a person who has not died to self will. That's a person who still thinks their body is their own and they have a right to do what they want with it. And they still think obedience to God is negotiable. They really haven't grasped what obedience is. They think obedience is more or less doing what God tells you. They don't realize that obedience is "go and he goeth, come and cometh". They haven't faced the fact that obedience is doing what God tells you whether you agree with it, whether you see the point of it, whether you think it's necessary, whether you think it's convenient or not. And so they have not died to self will. They pretend they have because at times they do things that they agree with. When they agree with God they sometimes do his will but they don't see that obedience is the submission of the will to another whether you understand why he's telling you to do what he's telling you or not and whether it's convenient or not.

So they still think, "My body is my own. I have a right to five minutes more. As long as I get up in five minutes it's okay." Now, that is a need to die to self and there probably is a whole realm there that brings you all kinds of other problems with food, and with lust, and everything else because in some sense you haven't died to your control of your own body and you still think your body is your own to do what you want with. So probably, you have all kinds of other manifestations. But I would see that as not dying to the selfish will.

Now, I do think a loved one can come through to dying to their selfish will, dying to their right to have five minutes more, dying to the right to their own body, and the alarm can go off and they can get up and get down on their knees and they just fall asleep. And seven o'clock -- suddenly it's there. "What a great prayer time except I can't quite remember what I prayed about." And the wee soul has got up and they prayed but it's the same problem as the disciples had in Gethsemane. You remember, the Spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. And their personality was still not used to getting up, being alert, and active at that time, especially in prayer. And so it's a soul defect, it's a soul that isn't yet disciplined and rerouted by the Spirit of Jesus. And there it's a case of not an unwillingness -- as with the other -- but it's simply an independent soul that is falling into its old habits.

Now, that's partly what we mean -- that the Holy Spirit then has to begai to lead us into breaking experiences until that soul is broken of its old submission to the body and its memory of its old habits and is changed completely and rerouted. And until it is, I don't see how a person can be an effective minister of Christ at all. Even in that situation of prayer, they certainly can't intercede in prayer, they're so utterly dominated by the soulish habits. So that would be one example.

I could very fast give another that I know I fell into. You know, we run businesses here and I am the beloved or the hated president. I think I'm maybe the beloved president. But, I end up trying to guide other loved ones in business. And there are two ways to guide a person who does something

wrong. One, is to slam them and say, "Look, you're dumb. That's the fifth time you've done that, Ron." And in that case you lay the emphasis on what they've done wrong and you try to rouse them by over stimulating, or prodding them by your criticism into life. And I think that's the way most businesses continue. Or, you can trust the Holy Spirit to rectify that thing in them and lovingly show them the positive thing to do without laying emphasis on the negative. And I would say that I am trusting the Holy Spirit more and more to teach me to do that. Because I used to be a school teacher and school teachers are experts at zeroing right in and laying it on the line. And it seems your soul has to learn a whole new way of going. And I would see that as an example of soulishness that has to be changed over a period of time.

Now loved ones, it does seem to me that these soulish habits can fall into different categories and you can see complete victory in different areas. And I would imagine that it is Jesus will for us, in this present life, to come free of all soulishness that affects the ministry of our lives to others at least.

Question from Audience:

What is God's view of man and where does this view comes from in the Bible?

Would you excuse me in saying that if I were to answer the question we'd be here until Tuesday as I try to spend most of my time answering that question. But, it does come from Genesis of course, and I tried to outline it, I would imagine the very first of this series. And if you'd forgive me answering it this way, there is a video tape of the very first film that I preached back in September and you could see it in the research center. And Robin actually could show you how to get it and it would present it. But very briefly, it comes from Genesis of course, and then I'd have to go into why I believe Genesis is historical and that ties up with Jesus and the kind of person Jesus is and whether he's God's son or not. So I think that's rather a long line but the stuff is all on video cassette. If you'd forgive me.

Question from Audience:

Could a 10 year old child understand it, comprehend it?

Well, I think that Jesus' Spirit gives to a 10 year old what he or she is able to receive. And I think a wee soul like that enters into a lot of this without making it implicit at all. And it seems to me it would be true of a loved one who maybe wouldn't understand even these terms. If there's a full surrender to the Holy Spirit he leads them in to this implicitly. But why I make it explicit is that many of us here on campuses have been bewildered as to where psychology ends and spirituality begins. And many of us have found ourselves involved in one when we should be involved in the other. And so it's been very important for our understanding of where we were to begin to find terms that we could discuss these things in. But I would answer you that God is so good that he enables the plainest man to find his way whether he understands these terms or not.

Question from Audience:

Can psychologists help with these problems?

I know Ross and Elaine are psychologists sitting in the back row there and I know they feel the same

that I do, that often psychologists deal really primarily with that – the word I think I shared it with you already, is “pseuche” -- that’s the word for soul. And that is the area that psychologists deal with. And often dear psychologists are dealing with problems in the soul that actually come from the spirit, except that by their very definition, the definition of their profession, they cannot normally touch the spirit unless they are Christian psychologists. And so psychologists are often dealing with a soul that is in turmoil of all kinds and their only way of healing it is by manipulating it almost against its self. And their method normally is not to change the direction of the soul. And it’s the direction of the soul that is wrong and so they end up in all these problems.

And that’s where we all end up with this, “I haven’t a good self concept.” Because, the psychologists sees, “Yeah, their problem is they have no sense of significance and what they need is a sense of significance.” But they’re tied to operating with a soul that is operating the wrong way anyway so their only answer is that, “I’m okay, you’re okay. Well look, you need a good self concept. Now, here are your strengths, and here are the things that are valuable.” And so they end up in trying to deliver a person from a bad self concept, they end up putting the person in slavery of people’s opinions. And so we end up with a very sick society because we’re always trying to take the norm of fallen man, this is the norm, fallen man psychology is regarded as the norm -- and tries to somehow make it healthy.

And the only answer of course is to see that this is fallen man. And the only true study of a psychologist is Jesus, the perfect man, and then us all coming into that kind of direction in our lives. So yes, this is the only kind of explanation that made any sense to me of psychology. And it seems, oh when you get into the whole realm of the charismatic movement among us, it is vital to begin to see this because it’s so easy to see that there are real dangers in the charismatic movement if there is not the beginnings of a deliverance from the domination of the soul.

Loved ones, next Sunday I would like to speak what I was going to speak tonight. So shall we pray? Lord Jesus, we thank you for your Holy Spirit. And we thank you Holy Spirit that we don’t need to know it all or understand it all. Holy Spirit what we need is you and the love of you and honoring of you, and submission to you and you will, as Jesus promised, lead us in to all truth. So Holy Spirit, we would put ourselves before you and we would trust you this coming week to give us revelation about our own soulishness. Give us revelation about the ways in which we are misusing the mind, and the emotions, and the will that you’ve given us and show us how to begin to allow your Holy Spirit to use it.

And we ask you Holy Spirit to lead us into this truth and into this deliverance so that the ones in our offices and our homes this coming week, may touch the beauty of Jesus and not us. We ask this for his glory in our lives. 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 evermore. Amen.