

Questions and Answers

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Dear Lord, we thank you for this evening. We thank you that it is like that evening on the road to Emmaus when it was towards evening and the day was far spent and you drew near to your two friends. And Lord Jesus we thank you for the way you were available to them as you broke bread at supper time. And Lord we would ask you to break bread to us this evening so that we may eat your life, and eat you, and be more like you Lord Jesus. And we ask this for your glory. Amen.

Well loved ones we're coming to the end of this evening series this year because you know at the end of this present month we begin to have the outdoor services where the elders and other brothers and sisters in the body begin to speak and to lead the worship time. And so through June, July, August we'll meet on the whole in the university mall probably somewhere and on very cold evenings then we'll meet inside. But throughout the services we'll be led by ourselves and so this is the end of our present series this year on the spiritual life. Of course, we have two more years to finish it but this is the end this month.

So we have three evenings after tonight and I would like to use them to try and deal with subjects that God has made clear to us we need to elaborate on in regard to what we've dealt with during these two quarters. But tonight we promised that we'd have a questions time. So I do think after pointing you to one verse and commenting briefly on it then you should just ask questions and I will really try to answer them in a simple, and clean, comprehensible way.

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And our studies during these past two quarters have been based on the last clause of that verse, "And cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And we've tried to emphasize that being right with God is living the way he wants us to live, and our personalities operating the way he meant them to operate. And we've often shared how the greater part of Christendom seem to have majored on the clause previous to that one, "And will forgive our sins." And that that is a very integral part of the work of Jesus in his death; that because of it God is able to forgive us our sins and we're able to be reconciled to him and be not only his friends but be his children.

But the precious thing to all who met Christians in the first century was that these Christians had not only come into the favor of God but had been restored to the image of God. And so they had not only ceased to be enemies of God and become his friends but they had ceased to be creatures and they had become the children of God. So they not only knew God but they looked like God and that's why hundreds of people turned to Christianity, because they saw that the children of God were cleansed from unrighteousness and were living like the Savior that they testified about.

And we have shared in these evenings that that's the greatest need in our world. It's amazing how many people have heard the gospel, and how many people know that God loves them, and how many people believe that God is willing to forgive them. But it's amazing how few people who know all those things have ever met Jesus in the flesh and that is of course, the great privilege that we're given -- to present Jesus in the flesh to other people so that they not only have this word here but they have the witness of another person who lives like Jesus.

And you remember we've shared that living like Jesus means that we have to operate the way Jesus operated -- and Jesus got his approval, and his significance, and his security, and his happiness from God his dear Father. And one of the great changes that has to take place in our life is that we have to begin getting our security, and our significance, and our happiness from our dear Father. And we found that many of us who are born of the Spirit do not get our security, and significance, and happiness from our Father but we get our security from our jobs, and from our money, and from our bank account. And we get our significance from the way our friends and our peers treat us, and we get our happiness from the love and the attention that our wives and our friends give us.

And many of us have found that we actually just live like ordinary men and women. Even though we're born of the Spirit and we have Jesus' Spirit and the Spirit of God inside us, yet we don't seem to get all we need from God, we seem to get it from all other people around us and from other things. And one of the great needs we have is to be freed from that. And that's what we discovered of course, Jesus did for us. That what in fact God did when he saw a whole race of people who lived from other peoples' approval and other peoples' sense of attention was, he destroyed them in Jesus; he crucified them and buried them in Christ. And it destroyed completely that old creation and raised it up in Jesus anew and that's what has potentially happened to us, and that's what can happen by faith.

We can by faith be crucified with Christ and be raised up so that instead of living from the outside in we live from the inside out. So instead of being a gasoline engine into which we're trying to feed diesel oil, we suddenly have the gasoline engine buried and done away with and a diesel engine put in its place so that the oil of the Holy Spirit can work the way he was meant to work through us. So the whole apparatus we have, the whole in-turned, perverted personality that causes us to cry out, "The good that I would I cannot and the evil I hate is the very thing I do" -- that was destroyed with Jesus and raised up and we are able to enter into that by faith in an instant.

And I was pressed by God in the introduction that I should keep it short, but I should stress to you that being delivered from selfish will, being delivered from anger, and envy, and jealousy is done in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, in an instant. And he impressed upon me to point out to you that even though you don't know Greek, there are two Greek tenses that express an action that takes place in the past. One is the perfect tense, "I have died". And the emphasis is that because of an action in the past I am dead in this present moment. And that's one tense in the Greek language and it emphasizes something that has happened in the past.

There is another tense called the aorist and we don't have it in English but it emphasizes an event that took place in the past in one instance and it's done. And it is always the aorist tense that is used when the Bible talks about us being crucified with Christ; it's done in a moment. Though there are many tenses that emphasize that we should continue to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the tenses that talk about being baptized with the Spirit are the aorist. They are tenses that say it's done in a moment, in an instant.

So one of the things we have talked about during these quarters is that we are delivered from our carnal selfish will in a moment by a crisis experience of being crucified with Christ and being filled with the Holy Spirit. And then we've discussed too, you remember, soulfulness. That even after a person wants to glorify Jesus above everything else and is freed from the desire to glorify himself or herself so that they can be gentle, and they can be kind, and they can be loving -- they're at last free from that terrible urge to lose their temper, they're at last free from that terrible urge to criticize other people, and they in fact, find a fountain of sweet water flowing up

from inside them, the Spirit that Jesus promised would flow from the inner most being. Even though they find that, they discover they have a personality that they inherited from their dad, or their mum, or their great grandfather, or their great-great grandfather, and it has traits in it that are not sinful in a sense and yet in a sense they are sinful -- it's just they're unconsciously sinful.

They have a gruff voice, or they have a bad memory, or they have an insensitivity to people that they inherited from their father or mother, or they have a strange facetious way of talking that makes people feel uncomfortable. Those personality traits, that soulishness is then something that is dealt with by the daily application of the cross of Christ to our personality traits. And that is the process experience of being crucified with Christ, or the process experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

So during this year we have talked about those two events. One, instantaneous deliverance through identifying our self with Jesus in a death to self, and to its rights, and to its ways by which we are delivered from the selfish will -- and then a daily experiencing of the cross of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and through breaking experiences and through the revelation of the Spirit by which we are delivered from those inexpedient personality traits that prevent the Holy Spirit pouring through us in the same free way that he poured through Jesus.

I think I should stop because otherwise I'd just go on and on because it is so good and so true. So, are there any questions, loved ones? I asked you if you would think of questions for tonight and if you haven't I'll just preach.

Question from Audience:

Why would a person have difficulty believing that God has forgiven them?

Hebrews 10:26-27, "For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries." And brother you're saying that it seems that forgiveness of our sins is conditional upon a knowledge of the truth. Well yes -- and I don't know brother what Jesus is showing you or the exact point you're getting at but I certainly believe that you can only have your sins forgiven if you do know first of all that God is willing to forgive you your sins and then if you do fulfill the conditions that are necessary to be forgiven.

And I can liken it to an experience of a personal disagreement, or a personal offense that we might have among ourselves. It seems to me that if you do something against me, even though you may know that, "Well he's a loving kind of guy and a forgiving kind of guy and he probably forgives me." Yet you can have no experience personally of reconciliation to me until you come and say, "Look brother, I'm sorry I did that to you. I really am and I ask you to forgive me." And forgiveness is the restoration of a relationship. Forgiveness is not an abstract concept that you believe in and therefore you've experienced. Forgiveness is only even worth talking about if it is experienced by a person.

And the best definition I've found of it is, it's the restoration of a relationship. And that's why I have real trouble with this concept that is often shared, "Oh God loves you. That's all you need to know, God loves you." Well, I think many of us knew God loved us but it did not change our life until we sued for forgiveness personally to him and had the relationship between ourselves and him

restored and then received his Spirit. So yes, I think it has to be a personal action, loved ones, between us and God.

The issue is not whether God loves us, that's silly. The issue is not whether God loves us. And with due respect to you loved ones who say, "Oh, I don't know if God loves me. I don't know if God loves me." Loved ones, that's a rough one you know, when you see Jesus bleeding on the cross and you see that his death is the best attested fact of history. It's hard you know, for you to continue to say you're not sure God loves you. I feel this, if I may say it, that you see the wrathful face of God because you are still not obeying him and therefore you see his wrathful face and his wrath is a precious, precious quality that God uses to draw us away from our sinful ways and our disobedience.

And if it weren't for the wrath of God, who of us would ever turn towards him if we did not see some of the results of his wrath? If we did not see some of the results of his wrath; that is, many of them are built in responses and reactions of our own body and our own personality when we operate in a way other than the one he has planned. And so the wrath of God is a precious thing. But, I wonder, for those of you who cannot believe that God loves you, I really wonder if it's an intellectual problem? I don't think it is, I think it's a moral problem. I think you don't believe God loves you because you are not the kind of guy, or the kind of girl at the moment that God could love because you are still resisting his will consciously in your life.

Question from Audience:

Is resisting of the will the key to the whole business?

I know where you speak from because he was on the west coast writing me the wildest letters at one time because he himself -- and if you don't mind me because I think you'd give your own testimony if you were up here -- was resisting God's will often and yet knowing much about God. And loved ones, I can't tell you how much that is the key. It's resisting, resisting God's will, that's the key to everything. Loved ones, what we want is not more, even singing in the spirit, believe me -- you know, God will give us that, by all means let's have plenty of it -- but that's not what we need.

You so often want to believe, "What I need is more power, more power." What you need is more realization of your own weakness and then God would give you power. But, the key is aligning your will with God's will in every detail. That's the key every time. It's submission of your will to his. If you do that, you'll come through to everything. In Belfast we used to have a place called The Coalman's Mission. And the Coalman's Mission Hall was built in the shipyard area of Belfast, one of the worst areas. If any of you have lived in ports you know that the area nearest to the docks is usually the poorest and the worst area to live in.

And the Coalmen's Mission Hall was built there. Now, coalmen in Ireland, even when I was in Ireland in my teens, were people who delivered the coal to our houses by horse and cart. I know it sounds out of this world but to me it seems yesterday that they were delivering by horse and cart. And these poor souls of course sat on these carts and the Irish rain blasted upon them and they carried the bags of coal into the houses on their backs.

And of course they were covered in coal dust and I never remember them wearing ordinary clothes, it seemed to me they were always wearing rags because everything was black coal dust. And if you saw one of these poor guys sitting on the cart with the old horse, sitting there going through the old

Irish streets with the rain blasting down, he looked the most miserable creature alive. He looked the most degraded of humanity, he looked hardly a person really.

And in that Coalmen's Mission Hall loved ones came to the highest points of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. They came to the highest point of sanctification. I knew a coalman who had come to a place with Jesus that was free, and beautiful, and filled with love and they had no complicated doctrine of the Holy Spirit in that mission hall. In that mission hall they preached submit your will to God and he will give you all that you need in your life. And so that's really "trust and obey for there's no other way". That's finally all that is needed to enter into all of God's riches.

It's interesting to think of them because here we are a very sophisticated, we think ourselves intellectual type of people and so we like to dot all the I's and cross all the T's. But actually we'd enter into everything if we'd just obey God.

Question from Audience:

If you find yourself with difficulties with regard to personality traits and yet you ought to believe that you are crucified with Christ, you find the two are contradicting one another. For example, you find yourself lashing out at someone.

Let me try to elaborate just so we at least keep the definitions as clear as I think scripture makes them. When we say lashing out at someone, normally I think we mean we lose our temper, or we are critical, or cutting towards them. Now, maybe I should tell you that by soulishness we don't mean that. That's just downright carnality. That is the kind of quality that is mentioned loved ones in 1 Corinthians 3:1, and I know brother you just chose that and didn't necessarily mean it but I think it gives an opportunity to clarify. 1 Corinthians 3:1, "But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men," "pneumatikos" is the Greek word. "But as men of the flesh," "sarkikos" is the Greek word. Carnal, it's translated in King James. "As babes in Christ. 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." "Sarkikos", you are carnal. "For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?"

Now strife is lashing out at people. It's responding to people in a critical sarcastic cutting way, it's losing your temper with people, and it comes because you're still carnal, you're still of the flesh, you're still behaving like ordinary men. And you do that because you're still responding to people and events. Your life is still dominated by what other people do to you or what other things happen to you. And that's because you are still living in dependence on other people and in dependence on outside events. And that's because your personality is still working in, you're feeding yourself from what comes in through your body.

And so when somebody treats you right and gives you respect you're pleased. You take that through your eyes and your ears, it comes in through your emotions and gives you a nice feeling. And you feel secure, and you feel important. But whenever they don't give you that kind of respect, whenever they give you disrespect, or contempt, then that feeds through to you, riles up your emotions, and you feel, "They're not treating me the way they should." Or, "They're not giving me the respect that they should." And so you immediately respond out to them in a way that attacks in order to defend yourself.

Now that's because you're still depending on other people and other things for your security,

significance, and happiness. That means you're carnal, that means you have not reckoned yourself to be dead indeed unto sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. That means you have not entered into the great blessing of crucifixion with Christ that he wrought on the cross for you. That means you are not willing to be crucified with Christ. That's the only reason you don't enter in: because you are not willing to be crucified with Christ. You're not willing to be treated with contempt, you're not willing to be treated with disrespect, you're not willing to go down Via Dolorosa as he did and have people spit upon you and swear at you. You're not willing for that.

So you want to go into heaven with him but you aren't willing to go down into the grave with him. And because you're not willing you're still carnal and you need to experience the crisis co-crucifixion with Christ in your life. Now, that's what we talk about in regard to temper. And then when we talk about personality traits, or souliness, we're talking about things that do not necessarily appear very wicked, or evil, or sinful on the outside. Though I think it is true what John Spaulding mentioned to me one evening, that it is true they are unconscious sins still.

But, they are things like having a great deal of human love so you're a very loving person. And there are some of us who had mums who would just take the whole world of children to themselves. And we inherited from our mums a very strong human love and so when we came to Jesus and were crucified with him, we wanted to love everybody but we loved them with our human love. And that human love is at times very binding because at times the human love goes out to others and then it wants a little of itself back. And so it enjoys itself in loving so it isn't absolutely at the beck and call of the Holy Spirit. It tends to be at the beck and call of other people still and yet ostensibly it's not because we're getting something from it and yet it is dependent on other peoples' stimuli of us. And so it's not absolutely free and under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Now, that's what we mean by human trait. A trait that is probably good in a human sense but it is strong with human strength and not strong with the strength of the Holy Spirit. And it is finally at the end of the day governed and sent out by our human self and not by the direction of Jesus. Or, on the other side humor; some of us are facetious. Facetious, we make jokes at the wrong time. We are in the middle of a serious conversation, or a serious talk of some kind and we can't resist that joke because we're born comedians and we just have to go out after it. And the joke comes out at the wrong time, distracts the other person from what you were saying and really on the whole does nothing for Jesus and tends just a little, to glorify the comedian.

And yet, you can't say that it has the same heaviness of sin about it as, for instance, bad temper. But, it is a human trait that is inexpedient. So that is the kind of trait that has to be dealt with by the daily application of the cross of Christ to our personalities and it means we have to come into a great humility about our own personalities. And we have to see that not only the evil in us has to be crucified with Christ but even the good in us.

So that's one way of making the distinction between souliness and carnality. Carnality is the evil in us that is preventing the Holy Spirit getting through to other people. Souliness is the good in us that is preventing the Holy Spirit getting through to other people.

Question from Audience:

Are there grades of sin?

I would just give that illustration from Billy Graham in one of his early tracts. And the fellow

has to leap across the chasm and the chasm is 30 feet broad and he has to leap across it. And he is a young man who has treated his body well and has kept himself in good shape and the man standing beside him is an old man who has drunk himself to death, and really is worn out and wearied. And they both have to cross that chasm.

And the old man totters back and he's breathless from all the smoking, and he totters up to the chasm and jumps five feet and drops on the rocks below. And the other guy of course, has taken care of himself and is in good shape, is a noble sinner. And he takes a massive leap and he does a jump off twenty five feet and he's five feet short and so the result is the same. And it seems that's it, you know. It's Romans 3:23, "All have fallen short of the glory of God." My wife will kill me for that one. I didn't intend that. [Laughter]

So I would say that sin is independence of God -- however little it is or however much it is. And that's why the little quiet smirk at the person in the office is as painful a sword thrust into Jesus' side as the Son of Sam that murders people in their apartments in New York. And the tragedy is that that comes as a shock to so many of us. And we're still being led out by Satan, being deceived by Satan into thinking, "That's only a little thing." Jesus bleeds the same and is worn out the same by the smirk and by the little caustic comment that strikes pain into another person. That crucifies him again.

Question from Audience:

What about when you discover that as you're praying and your mind wanders off the track -- and then you discover it and put it back on the track?

That will be next year. Brother asked about the question of mind wandering in prayer and you know that we'll be dealing with it when we talk about the mind next year in September. But brother, it can be due to several things. It can be due first of all to not being crucified in Christ and therefore still living for ourselves. And that's one of the big problems, I think, of all of us who claim to be children of God -- that we're really still living for ourselves, we don't like to be put out. We don't like to be inconvenienced. We still live primarily for ourselves. We say Jesus is our Lord but if he is not Lord of all he is not Lord at all -- and for most of us Jesus is not Lord of all.

He is our advisor, or he is a friend in need but he is not the one whom we will obey come rain, or snow, or sunshine. And so when it comes to prayer time we concentrate as well as we can. I would prove that to you very easily by pointing out to you that when a moment of crisis comes we can concentrate. If we have to get the car around that bend we can concentrate. If we have to make sure that we got the right change back out of two hundred dollars we can concentrate. We can actually concentrate when we have to.

And so, I think, one of the reasons many of us have wandering thoughts in prayer is because Jesus is not Lord of all and he is not the most precious person to us and so we do not put forth our best for him. And prayer time to us is something that is between a séance and a siesta but it is not a going into the Holy of Holies and meeting -- not the President of the United States, or the Queen of England -- but the King of kings and Lord of lords. And so I think that's one reason we have wandering thoughts in prayer.

I think that's indicated by the way we go into prayer. We rarely prepare ourselves outwardly, we

say, "That's Old Testament. That's Old Testament where they sanctified themselves and their garments. No, we can go in any way, it doesn't matter whether we washed, or shaved, it doesn't matter whether we're ready." Strangely enough, not attending to those little things lets us almost dream our way into prayer so that it is very difficult at times to tell the distinction between sleep and prayer for many of us. And I think that whole approach to prayer which is connected with the fact that we are not our Lords but rather we think he is ours to do what we want with, that's one of the reasons.

The other reason undoubtedly is mind discipline. Many of us have spent the holiday camp time of high school in absolute indiscipline. We've never really caught hold of our minds even at college because we found courses that were possible to pass easily without much concentration, and many of us have never, ever disciplined our minds or our thought life. So it is connected up either with one or the other.

Question from Audience:

How do we discipline our thoughts then in prayer?

If you say to me, "What's the answer?" Oh, I think the old Catholic saints would say verbal prayer, verbal prayer; at least that's a help towards it and then get on to mental prayer. So verbal prayer would be moving your lips and even praying aloud if you're in your own bedroom on your own -- or if you're not, actually moving your lips and forming the words so that you at least externalize the prayer. And then getting onto mental prayer and then onto spiritual prayer.

Question from Audience:

Regarding Quiet Time, would you share briefly your own experience, as to what you do to further your own relationship with your God?

Don't you think that you have to say six o'clock and make it? It seems to me if you say 6:00 a.m. when it's convenient -- then two or three days pass by and you've forgotten. So I know my trip to London was strenuous this week because we're trying to learn how to run a fruit and vegetable shop and so the mornings came very fast. I flew on Monday and then I sat at the standby line in New York at 6:00 a.m. and then I caught the Pan Am flight at 11:00 a.m. Then it arrived in London about eleven o'clock that night.

Then you go to bed with the jetlag and try to hit it at 5:00 a.m. the next morning and I know the temptation I had was, it was a hard night and let's just rest. But it seems to me the moment you accept that you reject that you're living by the power of Jesus and you state to the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven that you're living by your own strength and you need an extra hour. So it seems to me at that moment, you have rejected Jesus and you've accepted Satan's argument, "You're not on the cross. You're not resurrected with Jesus. You've only your own strength and health and you haven't had enough sleep so have another hour."

So I think we miss it there. We miss it at that moment. Strangely enough, we miss it not because we've missed the prayer time but we miss it because we have rejected Jesus' offer of supernatural life to enable us to get up at that time. So it's actually because we've accepted Satan's deception that we lose out that day, more than because we've missed the prayer time. So it seems to me, you have to say, "Whatever time is suitable to you." Whatever time is right for you.

But according to when you have to get to work you say four o'clock, or five o'clock, or six o'clock.

Then you get to bed at the right time the night before. You work back. You need seven hours, or you need eight hours, or you need six hours, whatever. And you work back to that time and you get to bed at the right time because you see, God will not over a long period of time encourage you by his grace to despise the temple of the Holy Spirit which is your body.

And so he will give you grace for the emergency situation but he will not give you grace to mistreat your body. So you ought to work back, find out how many hours you have to sleep, go to bed at that time, and then get up at four, five, six o'clock -- whatever is the time -- so that you get down to prayer with God. So I would say the first thing is you set the time and you say, "Lord I'll see you here whatever, whatever. And, I'll trust you for strength and grace for that."

And I would testify to this fact, that the times when I've gone late to bed or not had sleep, those are some of the easiest times to get up. And I'm sure you've often found the same, that God gives you the grace so the only reason you don't give up is because you don't want to get up. That's right, it really is. At the end of the day loved ones, all the pretending is bluff. William Law says it in his "Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life". He says, "The only reason we don't pray is we lack the intention to pray." And I think we just all bluff ourselves and we're just hypocrites when we don't pray in the morning because we're saying, "Oh we want to, we want to." Well, you don't want to. If you wanted to, you'd get up.

So you set a time and you get up at that time. Then I think, you do deal with somewhat the personality trait problems because I think many of us do have trouble concentrating and I think if you get up and you roll out of bed and onto your knees and you aren't able to discipline your mind and you haven't a disciplined mind, then there is no question five minutes after you're on your knees you'll discover that prayer has suddenly become a very relaxed experience. Really, you'll find you'll just move through it and suddenly it will be an hour later and you'll have been amazed; you'll be able to understand that "a thousand years in his courts are as a day" because you have just fallen asleep again and you aren't praying at all.

So if you have trouble with mind discipline then be sensible, just be sensible. Get up, have a shower, wash yourself, shave, whatever you have to do, get yourself ready for the day and then go before the King of kings and the Lord of lords so that your mind is alive, and alert, and sharp, and you're giving God the best. If you have read the little booklet "Power Through Prayer" by E.M. Bounds, it's an old book but the greatest book on prayer besides Torrey's "How to Pray". Bounds quotes many of the great pray-ers as saying, "I go before the Lord of lords and the King of kings early in the morning because I want to give him my best time."

My best time; not the time before we have coffee, or the time before we shave, or the time before we come fully awake, but the best time. I want to give him my best, the best part of my day. So then you should get organized like that and if you still have trouble keeping awake you go to the window and you do deep breathing exercises, you do anything to get yourself fully awake so that you're alert before the King of kings and Lord of lords. And then you kneel down. I just think it's good to kneel down because I think it is the Lord of lords and King of kings.

And I remember having a struggle over the kneeling business and maybe you don't, but I had a lot of pride and I didn't like the idea of kneeling. And it is good to kneel and kneel in your spirit, kneel your whole will down before God, bow your whole personality before him, bow your whole life

before him. And then get out the Bible and do what Jim did this evening, either start at the first Psalm or the last Psalm but you use at least some part of scripture and you read it. And how lovely is thy dwelling place. And you read it, "Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

And then you close the book and you pray read and you say, "Bless the Lord oh my soul. Lord, I bless you, I bless you with my whole being, Lord and all that is within me. Anything Lord, if there's anything in me that doesn't bless you, will you show me at this moment by your Holy Spirit? Will you show me anything in me or in my life that doesn't bless you? Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not all his benefits. Lord, I wouldn't forget your benefits to me. Thank you Lord for this floor, this carpet that I'm kneeling on. Thank you Lord for these clothes. Thank you for this bed, Lord. Thank you for the books, thank you for the - " And you pray read the piece of scripture up to God.

What that does is it begins to get your mind and your thinking going exactly in the same path as the Holy Spirit led the psalmist's mind and his thinking years ago. And so you are beginning to bring your soul, or your personality, or your psychological powers into the same line as the Holy Spirit himself. And then as you begin to do that then your spirit begins to take over and your spirit begins to lift yourself up to God and you begin to sense God's presence and then you can just be led by the Holy Spirit as he guides you.

So I would suggest that you do that and that you say to yourself, "I'll begin with 15 minutes, or 10 minutes." There's a little booklet that we use and it's called "Seven Minutes with God" and it's probably in the bookshop and we use it in our family groups and this author says, "Begin with seven minutes." And he outlines how you can use the seven minutes in detail in that booklet. And then he says, "If you will just establish seven minutes every morning. Never less than seven minutes, seven minutes every morning. Just be faithful, do seven minutes throughout your life then eventually it will become 10, 12, 15, it will just grow."

If you are faithful with seven minutes that would be the beginning of driving Satan back. If you would just say, "Seven minutes, I'll be here for seven minutes. I'll set the alarm for six o'clock. Then when I get up I'll set it for seven minutes past six," or whatever, "And it will go off and I'll get up." If you'll just do seven minutes and say, "Whatever happens I'll do seven minutes in my life with God." Then it wouldn't be long before it would grow to 15, then 30, then of course to an hour.

And what we haven't touched is Bible study. You are just mad if you try the old blindfold yourself and stick the pin in the wall kind of Bible study stuff. That's what many of us do; we're told to read John's gospel because that's a good way for a new Christian to begin. Or, read the gospel of Mark. But 10 years later that's what we're still doing, we're still just reading our way through the Bible. But unless you've had some training in exegesis and in use of commentaries, you won't really derive what God wants you to from the Bible just by reading it yourself.

You need to get "Search the Scriptures" [Intervarsity Press] which is a series of Bible study notes that covers the Bible in three years. Or, at least, you need to have Oswald Chambers, "My Utmost for His Highest". Or, those of you who have had some experience with Bible study need to get some of the commentaries, either the Lenski ones that I use in connection with the Roman's work or Keil Delitzsch (the Germans) if you're studying the Old Testament. But, you need to have something that will enable you to exercise your mind on God's word. And only that way will the Spirit then begin

to give you the life that is in the Word.

So you should then do half an hour prayer and half an hour Bible study. And then as you get on it will be an hour of prayer and an hour of Bible study. But you would develop it gradually starting first of all, by putting a stake in the ground to stop the rot. And I wonder how many of you just have to stop the rot? Stop the chase that Satan has got you on where you determined you would get up at six o'clock, "Well now six isn't good." So you try 6:30 a.m., "No, 6:30 was bad." So you've stopped it for a while; you pray after you come home at night.

Well, you'll do that for a while and then you'll get worn out with it and then you'll say, "I must make another effort so I'll do it at 7:00 a.m.." "Well no, I'll pray at work." "Well no, I'll pray in the car." Well Satan has you, he's just dangling you like that. That's all he's doing. You think you're in control, you think you're a Jesus person. You're not. Satan is just jumping you wherever he wants and he can do anything with you. So you have to stop that rot that is taking place in your spiritual life and say, "Six o'clock, seven minutes, whatever, that comes first in my life for the rest of my life."

Question from Audience:

Does God intervene in the actions of evil rulers? How do our prayers affect that – if God has given us all free wills?

And you know brother I'd be a brave man to say I can answer the question because I'd be the first one in history that can do it. So, I'll have a shot at it about some of the facets I can see, and that's what I tried to present maybe a couple of Sundays ago. That though Pharaoh is absolutely free to do what he wants and he does what he wants, yet somehow God is able, without changing his will or forcing his will, to guide so that it is executed in a way that will at least not hamper his plan for his other children.

And so when evil rulers' powers come into conflict with the plan that God has for his obedient children, God is somehow able to weave the one into the other so that without taking over the will of the evil leader he can govern – so govern at least the execution of his will so that the plans he has for his children are not hampered. So it seems that God never took over Hitler's will but there are incredible moments in history, in the history of war, there are incredible moments when events seem to have taken place that are beyond human explanation. One of those was undoubtedly Hitler marching his forces along Calais and the French ports, and ready to invade England in the last war. Undoubtedly that was one of them. And really it was – it's almost inexplicable why that invasion did not take place.

It's the same situation with the air war over Britain. Germany had the place at its feet completely and yet didn't go through them. There are several instances, remarkable turning points in the first World War, where our armies could have gone on through and there was no opposition there at all but they stopped and it's incomprehensible why they stopped.

So it seems that in human affairs, however tight we are in our organization, we are not three and a half million efficient computers. We are not. And however intent our wills are our wills are not able to control every one of a million individual events or instances. And there are a million gaps in the organization where the providence of God is able to operate and I think that's what happens.

In other words, I think a king can send down a declaration that all the children of a certain age are to be killed and yet his soldiers are not 100% efficient and they do not, in fact, go to every door. And so the will of the ruler is not carried out in absolute efficiency. And there are a million instances therefore in which God can exercise his providence and I suspect that that's one of the ways that God is able to work in, round, and under the wills of even evil leaders.

I think we should stop. Shall we pray? Dear Father, thank you for your love of us and for your great wisdom. And Lord we know that our minds are such puny weak things that we are nothing compared with you. But we thank you that we are your children and you are our dear Father, and you have said that you will not refuse good gifts to your children. And your dear son Jesus has told us how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask.

And so Lord, thank you. Thank you that we only have to submit our lives entirely to you and our wills utterly to you and then ask for what is needed and you will give it to us. And one of the dearest is wisdom, and you will give us wisdom. And we thank you most of all that you will give us the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection in our own lives so that we can be freed from ourselves into your liberty and your joy. Thank you Lord.

We look forward Father to these last few Sundays and I would ask you by your Holy Spirit to guide me so that I will speak about the subjects that will enable some loved one here tonight to come into the fullness of the Holy Spirit for your glory. 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 ever more. Amen.