

This is the last Sunday evening we'll spend talking about communion. And by communion we mean communion with God. That is, talking with God, being able to get life from God and hearing God speak to you. And when we started this subject I was tempted to go the old route of teaching you methods of prayer, how to pray, and when do you pray, and good books on prayer, and all that kind of thing. And then God just spoke to me and said, "You know, a lot of your brothers and sisters experience no real communion with me not because they haven't enough books on prayer, or because they don't know methods of prayer, but because their own spirits are not right." And that's why during these weeks we've spent so much time on what you might call just basics.

You know how we've talked about the fact that communion with God takes place not through our eyes, or our ears, but through our spirits. And that it was vital for us to have spirits therefore that were alive. And you remember, that God prompted me just to go after all of us on the issue of whether we were born of the spirit or not. Because sometimes I would talk to some of you and you would talk about God not as a dear Father, not as somebody who was a dear person, but some God way up there whom you were trying to get through to. And it just didn't gel with what I had experienced when I entered into Jesus.

Because, when you enter into Jesus in a New Birth it's like being carried up with him. You know, he's having a great conversation with his Father at this moment and so is everybody in him. You're just carried up with him. And it's what one brother or sister prayed in the prayer, your spirit just lifts, it rises up to God. And I sometimes feel that some of you loved ones don't feel that lifting and have never felt that lifting and to you prayer is the old burden that it was to C. S. Lewis. You remember, it was a long series of attempts to have mental realizations of the presence of God in your mind, or in your emotions. And you were so preoccupied with the inner experience that you had no sense of God being there at all.

And you remember, that's why we spent so much time on what the New Birth really was. That the New Birth was turning around your whole life. It was turning it completely around, that that's what repentance meant. It meant "metanoia", it meant I am walking this way to what man can give me, and what things can give me, and what circumstances can give me and I turn right away from that and I say no to the love of the world because that's the love of the world.

I think we so often talk about the love of the world as if we're all budding Howard Hughes' [a millionaire] with millions in front of us when most of us haven't that problem. The love of the world for us is not all that millions of dollars but it is trying to get from the world's happy events, the world's good circumstances, the happiness and excitement that we want. It's trying to get from the world's people a sense of being somebody, being somebody. "They think of me as something important and therefore I am significant." It's trying to get from people that sense; it's trying to get from the world's possessions a sense of security, "They can't knock me down however much they try. I have now got enough in the bank to see me through to the end."

That's what living off the love of the world is -- and becoming a Christian or being born of the Spirit is turning from that and turning to God and saying, "Lord, I'm going to live like Jesus

lived. As he had nowhere to lay his head so I'm taking my place in him and Lord I'm willing to live that way too. I'm willing to trust you to give me as much home as I need, as much clothing as I need, as much shelter. I'm willing for you to give me as much sense of importance as I need and if everybody thinks I'm unimportant that's good as long as you know me and you know what I'm here for, that's enough. And I'm willing Lord to receive as much happiness in my emotions as you choose to give me and if you don't choose to give me any, that's all right."

Now, when a person turns like that, loved ones, then God sends the spirit of Jesus into him and the spirit becomes alive. And what I'm afraid with some of us is, that we heard about receiving Jesus but we didn't hear about all that at all, and so we went through a kind of little mental gymnastic, "I pray to receive Jesus." And what we did was just a little intellectual and emotional contortion game and we weren't really born of the Spirit. And so we've never known a time when God was dear to us in prayer.

So I'd ask you that. Apart from the times when you discovered your mum was dying, or you discovered you'd lost your job, or you discovered that you had some disease that you didn't think you had -- that is, apart from those foxhole prayers, because God is very gracious to us in those times because he lovingly gives us a sense of communion with him. Because of course, you see what we're doing; we're turning completely to him for once in our lives. But apart from those foxhole prayers which for so many of us are just temporary experiences of God, apart from those have you ever had a sense of closeness to God in prayer?

You see, I'd ask you that. Have you ever sensed that it was easy to pray or has prayer always been a struggle for you? Now, if it's always been a struggle, if there's never been a time when you sensed a closeness to God in prayer, then maybe you should honestly look at the need to pray the sinners' prayer and to be born of God's Spirit, and to turn completely from the love of the world, and of the people, and things, and events, and turn to God and become born of his Spirit. And of course, when you're born of the Spirit you begin to sense God is your father.

Now, you remember the way Paul put it, "The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and the spirit within cries, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15-16) So there's a spirit inside us that seems to call up to God and treat him as our Father. And I'd just ask you to be really honest. It's better to be honest now. We're not trying to judge each other. It's better to be honest about it now; you can be honest here quietly before God. And it's better to be honest now and get the thing right. Have you ever felt that sense of nearness to God? Or, have you real trouble calling God "Father". Is He kind of "God"?

Now, there's no harm in saying God in prayer as long as you feel that he's your Father. But have you trouble with that idea of him as your Father? Or, to put it another way, have you real trouble with finding where Jesus fits in? You know, some of us I think have real trouble with that. We have a sense of God as the great Father of all who looks after the birds, and the animals, and the fish, and the waters, and the lake, and of course me as well because I'm a part of it all. We have a sense that God is a great eternal Father but not as our own personal Father because we have no sense of Jesus as our own personal Savior without whom we would not be God's children.

So I'd put that to you, do you know Jesus as your own savior? Or, another way, do you know Jesus? And then a better way, because I think a lot of us say, "Oh yeah, I know Jesus. I know about him, he healed the leper and he told the lame man to rise up and walk. Yeah, I know about Jesus." And a lot of us have real trouble distinguishing between knowing the concept of Jesus, or the historical

figure of Jesus and knowing Jesus personally ourselves. So to put it another way, do you know that Jesus knows you?

See, do you know that Jesus knows you? As you sit there tonight, can you say, "Yes, certainly he knows me, certainly. He talks to me often, he knows me. Yeah, if you ask him, if you ask him my name he knows it." Do you respond that way or do you say, "Well, do I know that Jesus knows me? Well, I believe that he's supposed to. He made me and he's supposed to know me." But how do you answer that question, you see? Do you know that Jesus knows you? In other words, are you born of God's Spirit?

Now, when you're born of his Spirit then it's vital to continue to walk according to the guidance of his Spirit. And you remember last Sunday we shared that some of the difficulties some of us had in communing with God was because we stop walking according to our spirits and we began to walk according to our souls -- that is, our minds and emotions. And I see at least some mums and dads here who maybe are here for the first time this evening and so you won't smile at my diagram. All the rest will smile because it's emblazoned in their minds by now. [Pastor O'Neill is pointing to a diagram of the Body, Soul and Spirit. The soul = mind, will, emotions. The spirit = conscience, communion, intuition]

But loved ones, that's the way the Bible seems to outline our inside lives, you see, our inner lives. The Bible talks about us having spirits. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may he keep your spirit," you see there, "And your soul and your body blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus." And most of us know our body because you can see it plainly, and many of us know our souls -- the psychological part of us -- because we've talked often of our minds, and our emotions, and our will.

But our spirit we don't talk too much about and our spirit is the innermost part of us. And of course, God communes with our spirits. You see, communion is one of the functions of our spirits. And so God calls us into the New Birth so that we will begin to live off him through our spirits. You can see what he wants us to do: to receive his Holy Spirit by communion into our spirits so that we'll know in our intuition what we ought to do each day and what we ought to do from time-to-time in our lives. Then our conscience constrains our will to obey that and our will directs our mind and it understands and expresses to our body what we should do in order to fulfill God's plan, and our emotions express the joy of our fellowship with God and that feeds out to the world.

Now, what many of us do is, many of us -- instead of walking by our spirits -- we walk by our souls. And indeed, we walk by our souls in a bad way because what happened when we rebelled against God was the whole personality backed up you see, and the majority of men and woman live as the green arrow shows. They live from the outside in. They don't live from the inside out. They don't live getting their love from God; their security, and their significance, and their happiness from him. They live the other way around -- getting their security, and their significance, and their happiness from things, from people, and from circumstances.

They live that way and the tragedy that we discussed last day was that many loved ones who are born of God's Spirit still allow their souls to operate in the old way. In other words, their minds instead of understanding God's word manipulates. You understand, that's the way the unregenerate man operates. He uses his mind to manipulate things in the world for his own security. He juggles the stocks on this side, checks up the Dow Jones Averages, and then juggles them over to the other

side, and he buys a car that costs this amount and he trades up.

The whole approach of unregenerate man is to manipulate. Now, it's not a bad thing to buy a better car, it's not a bad thing to be good with your money, but unregenerate man depends for his security on that, you see. The child of God doesn't. The child of God depends on his Father who provides for the lilies of the field and the sparrows, and he knows his security depends on God and so he's willing to do what God wants with his possessions, to give them away if God wants. So he depends on God for his security.

So when the regenerate man negotiates about the car, or the house, or the job he doesn't do it with iron in his soul, he doesn't do it with fear. He isn't all worked up in case this car doesn't work out right, or in case these stocks or shares go down in value. No, his security isn't built on that. So he tries to behave as wisely as possible but his security isn't built on his actions there. Whereas, the unregenerate man depends completely on that so he uses his mind to manipulate.

Now, what we discussed last Sunday was that many loved ones who are born of the Spirit continue to use their souls in the old way. They let their mind continue to manipulate. Continue to manipulate, this time for God's benefit and for God's glory, but they're manipulating all the time. They're trying to get these people together in this group so that this will result. They're trying to manipulate these events in their lives so they'll get to this position so that they'll be able to do some good for God.

They're manipulating and his service becomes a tremendous burden to them because their mind of course is not concentrating on simply understanding what God is beginning to signal to them and the way he's opening their lives out. Instead they always feel they have the burden to do it. "No, I have to get myself into some place where God can use me and that means that I have to get this settled, and get that settled, and get the other settled."

So they walk as men and woman with great burdens on their backs even though they're born of the Spirit. And of course, once they begin to do that their souls become hyperactive and when your soul becomes hyperactive you begin to depend again on what people think, and what events are taking place around you, and what circumstances are doing to you, and your mind comes off God completely. So it's a wee bit like Peter walking on the lake.

So he's alright while his attention is on Jesus. But, when his soul begins to work the old way receiving his information from the wetness of the water at his feet, and the noise of the waves in his ears and he begins to look down and see that soft liquidy stuff underneath him, then, he begins to sink. Now, that's what happens when you become hyperactive in your soul.

It's the same with our emotions when they work in the old unregenerate way even if we're born of the Spirit. Once the emotions fail to express the joy that we're receiving from God in communion and begin to concentrate on getting joy then our eyes come off God and our life of communion ceases. That's the tremendous danger. And loved ones, I just can't urge you to notice it enough, it's the tremendous danger in the present "charismania". And I thank God that he has given me the gift of tongues, and I thank God I've experienced the gift of prophecy and of healing, and I thank God for the charismatic gifts.

But there's a "charismania", a madness that runs around the country that gets people preoccupied not simply with the gifts but preoccupied with what they're getting out of their worship with God

and so there's a growing tendency in many children of God to concentrate on getting joy. So they roam from place-to-place hoping that they'll get more out of this service than they got out of the last one. And you know it's common among us to say, "Well, I didn't get much out of it." Or, "Well, I'm going to this service because I get a lot out of it." And loved ones, it's dangerous once we begin to do that because what we're trying to do is get joy from each other. We're trying to get emotional joy or mental satisfaction from other people and our eyes are going on to people and off God and our life of communion begins to deteriorate.

So that's what we shared last day. Now loved ones what I want to share briefly is that there is one more terrible disease of the person who is born of God that will steal real communion from them and it's the one that Paul talks about if you'd like to look at it in those verses that we've been using as the basis of the study of communion. Maybe it would be good just to read his word again to see how he reinforces all of what we've shared. It's 1 Corinthians 2:9, "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived,'" -- that is, the things that people try to get through their eyes, through their ears -- "what God has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God."

And that's what that means you see there, the Holy Spirit searches the depths of God and then the Holy Spirit transmits that to us in communion. "For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." As a good school teacher I shouldn't stop but I have to stop because I sense God wants me to say to somebody here this evening that your Father has a plan for your life that is unique, unique. He has a plan for your life that is different from everybody else's.

It is found in the depths of his mind and the only way you will ever receive it is through his Spirit. And there are loved ones here tonight who are going to live boring, stereotype lives following the guidance of everybody else around them instead of following the guidance of God in their own spirits. Now loved ones, it is true, honestly. You were meant to be unique children of God. There's an exciting life in his world for every one of us here in this room but it will only come if you discover it from God. And you can, you can discover it from God. If you seek him with all your heart you will find him. And if you don't seek him, you're going to continue with the same dreary old life, you are. And in the eyes of the world you're going to be reasonably successful except that you will have missed God's plan for your life.

So, take it to heart because I know God wants you to listen to it. It's Verse 12 loved ones, "Who have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit. The unspiritual man," and I'd just point out to you once more that the unspiritual man is "psuchikos". And it becomes "psychos" in English and that becomes "psychological" you remember, and that's the psychological part of us, the soul part of us.

So the soulish man, that is the man whose soul operates in that way will not be able to, "receive the gifts of the God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things." Now, the spiritual man is the man who works from the inside out, you see. Who receives from God and lives out that way -- not who lives inwardly but who lives from the inside out, not from the outside in.

“The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.” And then here is the tragic group that was present even in that day, “But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men,” and it’s only spiritual men and women that will experience communion with God. “But as men of the flesh, 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. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men? For when one says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ and another, ‘I belong to Apollos,’ are you not merely men?” And do you see the last clause there of Verse 3, “For while there is jealousy and strife among you,” the last sentence, “Are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?”

Now loved ones, Paul turns around to the Corinthians and he says, “I couldn’t address you as spiritual men and women who can commune with God because you’re fleshly.” It’s the Greek word “sarkikos”. It reads like that in English letters. It means fleshly, or a better translation is carnal and you can see how it’s defined in the last clause there of Verse 3. It means you’re behaving like ordinary men.

There’s the way ordinary men behave. Ordinary men have spirits that are dead and therefore nobody to go to for a sense of importance except their friends. So ordinary men depend for their sense of significance on the opinion of their peers, and their friends, or their bosses, or their wives, or their children. Ordinary men depend for their sense of security on the amount of dollars they have, on the food, the shelter, or clothing that they can gather around them here in this world. Ordinary men depend on favorable circumstances, exciting events, and thrilling personal relationships for their sense of happiness. Paul says, “You’re carnal if you behave like ordinary men.”

Now you may say, “How on earth would anyone step back from depending on God only to depending on the world?” Well, I could tell you how it happened with me. I sensed that things were wrong in my own life. The Holy Spirit convicted me of that. I knew it was wrong to lie to people. I knew it was wrong to be unclean in my actions. I knew it was wrong to speak sarcastically to people and to criticism them and God’s Spirit convicted me of those things when I was 17. And I sensed that I was not going to be with God after this life was over if I continued to live that way because his word called those things sin and his word said, “The sinful soul it shall die.”

And I knew that I was going to die eternally and I was going to go to a hell of utter loneliness and selfishness if I did not change. And so I began to think about Jesus because that was what the Bible said was the key to being accepted by God. And the Bible said that he would forgive you if you received Jesus as your Savior and I didn’t much know what that meant but I began to think about Jesus and think about his death on the cross. And I began to sense more and more as I thought about it that it wasn’t just a historical event but that in some deep way, Jesus had died the death that I was supposed to die.

I felt of course, that he had died it instead of me. But I did sense that he had done something that enabled God to forgive me. In other words, to forgive me -- to give me before I deserved it a sense of his love and a sense of his presence -- and to give me his Spirit ahead of time, as it were, so that he forgave me. And so of course I confessed my sins and I turned from them, and I gave my life to Jesus, and I did sense a new spirit rising up inside me, and I sensed that God had forgiven me and that I was in a relationship with him that I had never been before.

And then over the next days Jesus was just the greatest person in the whole world to me. He was the one that I looked forward to praying to every day, he was the one I looked forward to finding out more about, he was the one I looked forward to obeying. And his word was what I looked forward to reading each day. And I looked forward to finding out what he wanted to do with my life. And that's the way I walked for a while. And there was a time when the Holy Spirit seemed to be getting something deeper through to me and seemed to be saying, "What would it be like to give your whole life to Jesus? To give everything, to forget this business of your career, and forget the being important, and forget being successful, and just go for what Jesus wants you to do whatever that means."

And I'll tell you I was like many of you, I found myself in a church with a lot of young people around me and we were all beginning to set out on our careers. And I was going to be a teacher, and my friend was going to be a doctor, another friend was going to be a lawyer, and I looked around and I saw all the rest getting about the business of being successful. And I allowed my soul to begin to feed that information to me and I turned slightly away from Jesus and what he might want and I began to look around and think, "Well, listen we shouldn't lose our head over this. The rest are obviously serving Jesus and yet they're getting about the business of being successful, and following their careers, and doing what they think is important."

Because I saw it isn't wrong to follow your career, but of course I got mixed up in the business of why you were following a certain career. And I felt, "Well, they're following it because they want to do this. Well, why shouldn't I do that?" And so I stepped slightly aside from this overwhelming preoccupation with Jesus and I would say that was the beginning for me, really.

I began first of all to let my mind and emotions be ruled not by my spirit but by others' minds and emotions. In Ireland you'd do an examination almost every time you turned around in order to get anywhere and the only way to get to university was to be among the top 5 percent that got scholarships so we were all involved in that kind of academic competition.

So your mind was very alive to it, your emotions were very stirred by it, so my soul began to take in information from all the other people around me and I began to realize, "Well, this is okay. I mean, Jesus is important." But I forgot you see, the first conviction of sin that I felt. I forgot that I was going to go to hell if I turned back to living for myself, and I felt that, "Well, Jesus has died for me so I can go on and get on with my own life." And that's virtually what I did.

I said, "Alright, I have tucked in my back pocket here, Jesus -- and that's my insurance policy and I'll keep it in my hip pocket so that when I get to the end of this life I'll be ready. I'll just hand in my admission ticket to heaven and say, 'Lord, I believe in Jesus Christ my savior,' and he'll just welcome me in." And then I decided to get on with my own life. And that's about the way it happened, loved ones. And I'll tell you, it wasn't long before I began to get preoccupied with how I stood in relationship to other people. How I stood in relationship to the others. Was I being as successful as them?

Not for me was I going to make as much money as them but was I going to be as successful as them? Or, were my parents going to think of me as being as good as somebody else's parents thought of them? And were my friends thinking a lot of me or were they looking down on me? And do you see bit-by-bit I began to fall back into what I had been saved from, almost without knowing it. And isn't that the interesting thing, if you think of it? When you're born of God's Spirit you don't normally see all that stuff, do you -- about reputation, and what people think of you, and your

sense of significance, and your security?

All you see are your sins, your down to earth sins that you do and God convicts you of those and he graciously gives you the whole ball of wax without you ever knowing it. And you don't realize what you've been saved from until bit-by-bit you begin to slip back into it. And bit-by-bit I began to be concerned with what people thought of me, and began to treasure people's praises. And then of course, you know what happens, when they don't praise you when they obviously ought to, then it's not long before you're resenting them. And it's not long after you're resenting them before you're trying to prove to yourself that they should have praised you by criticizing them and pointing out to yourself how much better than them you are and how much more deserving of praise.

And it's not long before you begin to have trouble with inward sin. Outwardly you're a child of God so even if it's just fear of what people think, it kind of keeps you up and at least you don't go to the dogs completely, you kind of keep up an appearance of being a Christian. But inwardly, I began to have trouble with all the things that the Bible talks about as the works of the flesh: envy, jealousy, pride, selfish ambition, anger seething underneath that you kept kind of covered over the best you can. A critical spirit, a feeling of discomfort when other people are praised instead of you, a feeling of discomfort when you aren't getting the position of importance that other people seem to have. Worry and anxiety when things wouldn't go right. When the circumstances wouldn't fall right I found myself getting worried about them.

I didn't realize that I had been saved from this dependence on circumstances for my happiness and on things for my security. I didn't realize I had been saved from that. But now, I began to live dependent on those old things and I began to experience all the worry and anxiety that ordinary men experience and bit-by-bit I began to live a carnal Christian life. And for me the clear sign of it was inward conflict. Tremendous inward conflict, tremendous inward failure, failure to be inside what I knew I was supposed to be.

Great hypocrisy, a great sense of being a hypocrite; great feeling of outwardly I was a child of God and everybody thought I was living up to that -- and inwardly I was a ravening devil and realizing the hypocrisy of it at the same time -- being very more and more judgmental of other people. That's the interesting thing. The way you deal with it is you don't deal with the thing inside yourself, you project it on to other people and you become very judgmental. And I was able to put everybody not only in my own church right but in every other church. And I projected onto them my sins.

It's interesting, isn't it? Somebody has to bear your sin. You either bear it yourself, or Jesus bears it, or you force some other people to bear it. And so my life more and more became almost, I would say, that of a schizophrenic. Though I was outwardly a very sane individual, it was like living a double life. I remember my mother used to say to me, "Ernest, if the church people could see you now." And oh, that was the most terrible thought because of course it was linked up with my pride, and my feeling that they ought to think well of me. That I ought to be some kind of golden boy in their eyes.

And it was that kind of realization that you were living two lives: one outwardly, one inwardly. Of course, the interesting thing is it's like having a large dog. And if you have an important visitor come into the living room and you have this huge Alsatian dog and you know he doesn't like dogs and so you have a big chest here and a big door on it and so you put the dog in the chest and then you sit on top and you're talking to the visitor. And from time-to-time you're bumping up and down. It was like that.

It became more and more like that because the sin won't stay down, it won't stay down. I would pray down the anger for a while and have some victory over that. Then I would pray down the envy for a while and have some victory over that. Pray down the jealousy, then pray down the pride, then I ran out of hands and started all over again because it was a temporary correction in each case. And of course I didn't know it, but the reason was because I had turned back to the old outward/inward life. I was living like an ordinary unregenerate man.

I was getting my life again, from people, and things, and circumstances. Not getting it from God. Oh, getting a little from God because I did go to church and I prayed, but the prayer was a struggle. It was hard to get any sense of reality from God because that wasn't the one I really depended upon. I was really depending upon all the things that ordinary people depend upon. And of course, there was that tremendous conflict of the flesh striving against the spirit and the conflict occurs inside and you bear the strain of it and I bore all the strain of a defeated Christian life -- with that grey defeat in the back of the eyes.

It affects your witnessing, because who can witness? You have nothing to witness to. You have no confidence inside. All you're doing is trying to say, "Well, yes that's partly true and that's partly true." But, you can't witness to anything definite because you're not sure of anything because you know yourself you're a hypocrite and there's little sense of salvation in you. It's impossible to give a testimony to what God has done in your heart because it's something that was done years ago.

And I remember so often thinking, "Oh I wish it was the way it used to be. I wish it was the way I experienced Jesus at the beginning." And that for me was the beginning of the carnal Christian life. And for me it went on from I would say age 17 to 18 -- maybe I lived a normal regenerate life -- and then from 18 to 30 I lived a carnal Christian life and just a life of defeat. And it was then that God began to show me that there was a change that he had wrought in me in Jesus that I had never seen. And that I didn't see when I first came to Jesus. And that change was a complete reversal of my life.

It meant completely crucifying and blotting out that perverted carnal personality and it meant bringing the personality back to a spiritual and a spirit filled personality. And of course, I was amazed when I first saw it because the way it first came to me was I began to see that the Bible talked not only about Jesus dying for me in the sense of instead of me, but I began to see verses like we were crucified with Christ. Verses like Paul mentions in Romans 6, "Do you know those of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death."

Well, I had seen that verse, I had studied it in seminary but I had never understood it. I had never really heard that verse before, that you're baptized into Jesus' death. Of course, it didn't mean anything to me. I couldn't see how you could be baptized into a death. But then I looked at more and more verses and of course a few verses later he says, "Our old self was crucified with Christ." Well, I didn't think anything was crucified with Christ except my sins. I certainly didn't think I was crucified with Christ.

And yet, the amazing thing was I discovered another verse in Galatians 2:20 where Paul says that, "That I live -- yet not I, but Christ lives within me." And he talks about dying with Christ. Then I saw a verse in Colossians where Paul spoke to the people in the Colossian church and said, "For we were crucified with Christ. You died with Christ and your life is hid with Christ in God." And I

had no experience of dying with Christ.

I always felt Christ died so that I wouldn't have to die. That was one of the great reliefs I felt when I was born of God. I felt, "Oh, good I don't have to die." And of course it is true I don't have to die and go into outer darkness and loneliness forever into hell but the Bible began to explain to me, "Look the only way to rectify this carnal personality is to have it crucified and completely renewed." And it was then that I began to get little glimpses.

In Romans it says, "If we have died with Christ we shall also rise with him." And then I began to see other verses in Corinthians come together, "The old has passed away and the new has come." And then in that same chapter it says, "Christ died for all therefore all died." And bit-by-bit I began to see that in a way I had experienced part of what God had done for me in Jesus but not the greater part -- and the greater part was that God has actually crucified my carnal personality and had renewed me again in Jesus and that could take place in me in this present life. Because of course, Paul said, "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus so that we might walk in newness of life."

And it was then I started to try to do that and went through all the contortions that probably some of you have gone through of how you reckon yourself dead indeed unto sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. And then Jesus was so good, because I went back to him on the cross and I would spend my prayer times dwelling on him and I would say, "Lord Jesus, in what way am I not willing to be crucified with you?" And then he would gradually over weeks and months, he would explain, "Well, you know, when I died my mother was looking at me and she was convinced I was a failure."

Well, my mum was back in Ireland at that time. She was still alive and you who have had any contacts with immigrants know the parents are anxious to know how the children are doing. So of course I knew my mother was concerned about whether I was a success or not and Jesus was saying, "Well, you died with me and that means you must be willing to bear what I bore. Are you willing for your mother to look upon you and see that you're a failure if that is for my glory?"

And then he began to point to the others that had listened to him and had said he would come to no good end and he said, "Do you see those friends and those crowds that came around and listened to me? They feel I'm a failure. Now, what about your friends, and your peers, and your colleagues," I was in the Methodist ministry at that time, "Your colleagues in the Methodist ministry, are you willing to be thought a failure by them?" And I was not brought up to be a failure. I was brought up like most of you, to be a success at all costs.

That's what we're in the world for, to succeed and to have good careers, and be looked up to by our friends, and our peers, and leave the world a better place than we found it. So I never heard of this failure business, but this is what Jesus began to speak to me about. And he pointed out to me, "Until you've died to the worst that men and the world can do to you, you're not safe. You're not safe at all and I cannot raise you up as a man that will depend only on God and on what he thinks of you until you are willing to die to the worst that man may think of you."

And loved ones, bit-by-bit I could go on for an hour explaining to you all the labyrinths of my carnal personality that God's Spirit went through as I looked to Jesus. And at long last there came a moment when the Holy Spirit said to me, and it was three, four weeks after six or seven months of intense seeking, the Holy Spirit at last said, "Are you willing to be nothing if it is for Jesus' glory? Are you willing to be nothing? Are you willing to be a zero? To have your name, Ernest

O'Neill, wiped out as if it's put on a tombstone and never to be thought of as somebody that is worth looking at or acknowledging again? Are you willing to be regarded as never having lived if it is for my glory?"

And then one Saturday morning in October in 1964 I at last said deep, deep down in my spirit, "Yes." And I cannot explain to you in any words the sense of cleanness that I felt for the first time in my life. A sense of cleanness, a sense of a fullness of God's Spirit but most of all a sense of cleanness and victory, and a freedom-- it just amazed me -- a freedom from anger and envy. And even if you got me up against that wall and beat me to death I'd have to still testify that the beauty of it was, anger did not rise. The beauty of it was, pride did not rise.

It was not that you could overcome anger and pride, it was not the old business of sitting on that chest and the old dog jumping up and down. I knew that life -- that life of suppression and repression -- it wasn't that. It was a promise that God gave to us in Acts 15:9, "And God gave the Holy Spirit to them as he did to us and cleansed their hearts by faith." And for me it was the beginning of a spiritual life and the beginning of a life that was dependent on God and him only.

Loved ones, I think that's how we get into the carnal life. I know that's how you get out of it. But, honestly, while there is anger, or envy, or jealousy, or resentment in your life, your communion with God will always be inconstant and periodic. It will. And that was a danger for me; I had a little bit of experience of it but it was temporary and again, and again, Satan would want to satisfy me with that. Loved ones, our communion with God is meant to be constant, and continuous, and unbroken, and uninterrupted, and our love for people is meant to be the same. And it's then that the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in your heart the love of Jesus Christ.

And that's why my heart goes out to all of you that have trouble with criticism. I was like that, I know it. I know why you do it, I justified myself in doing it. But, do you know it's straight from the pit? And do you know that while you make a move on the basis of a critical attitude to anybody -- to me, to others, to anybody-- you have as much chance of acting from Satan's direction as from God's because you're carnal and you should just face it and see that you have to have your carnality crucified and your sin cleansed.

Now I pray that you know that's the whole subject that this body is built on, and it is the subject that I hope to die preaching and sharing, and it's the subject that will fit us for heaven. But loved ones, I ask you: where are you in regard to it? Are you carnal? I remember Charles Finney saying, "The greatest step towards being cleansed by the Holy Spirit is your realization that you need to be cleansed." And if you say to me, "Oh well brother how can I admit that these things are inside me and still walk in forgiveness?" Loved ones, I did it for 12 years and I was a minister for most of those 12 years from age 21 to 30.

For nine years I ministered and God did in some sense use what I did, so yes you can because God will forgive until seventy times seven. Yes, you can walk in continual forgiveness. But, do you see that it came home to my heart after those terrible 12 or 13 years that I was becoming callous about sin. I was becoming used to irritability, and anger, and jealousy, and uncleanness and that's when I saw the danger mark.

I saw that I was becoming like a surgeon who maybe felt empathy with the patient the first time he put the knife in but as I put the knife into Jesus more and more, year after year, I found that I was becoming callous about my sin and I was rationalizing it and saying, "Well, this is the way

everybody lives.” And that’s the danger. If you say to me, “Can a person go to heaven if they’re carnal?” If they keep confessing their sins, if they keep repenting and turning from their sins they can.

But the difficulty is continuing to do that, continuing to feel a real hatred for the very thing that you keep on doing again, and again, year after year. That’s why you remember, old Paul says, “Look, you’ve been three years in Jesus and you’re still men of the flesh. You’re babes in Christ.” And he regarded three years as quite long enough. I’d ask you, how long have you been carnal? And I’d tell you that the danger point comes when you cease to be aware that you are carnal and you cease to seek the fullness of God’s Spirit.

There are several things you can do, loved ones. I know none better than to seek God with all your heart. I know none better than that. I asked a man what to do and he gave me a book about how to receive the fullness of the Spirit. I went straight to that chapter and I read the directions and I got started and it took me five, or six months. But I at last ground my way through, through desperation. If you say to me, “Did you not feel you were going to hell?” All the way, every step of the way.

Every step of the way I saw it was either hell or it was all of God. It was either everything for him or it was hell for me. If you say, “Is there any easy way?” I know no easy way; it will cost you everything you’ve got. Everything you’ve got. And, you’re in no position if you’re saying, “Oh, I’ve sought, and I’ve sought and I’ve never found.” You’ve sought and you’ve sought and you’ve never found? There are thousands of us who have sought, and sought, and agonized and we know one thing: that we do not find until we seek him with all our hearts.

It’s never because he doesn’t want to find us; it’s always because we don’t want him enough. And really, the best thing you can do is seek God. I wrote a little tract, “Free to Live Through Death to Self”. Tom has it in the book shop. It might be in that tract rack. You could take that. You could buy Andrew Murray’s “Absolute Surrender”. You could buy Watchman Nee’s “Normal Christian Life”.

Tonight you have more knowledge than I had. You’ve had more plain direction to it tonight than I had. I don’t know that you need more direction. I think you need a hungering in your heart. A desire for a clean heart to be pure before God, to be able to commune with him as friend-to-friend and that’s his will for you.

Let us pray. Father, we know that heaven is filled with pure spirits who love you with all their hearts. Father, we know that’s your will for us and Lord we are ashamed when we think of how little satisfaction you must get from us. So often we come to you with another list of sins. Lord, we know that that is not your will and we know Father that there is an answer. You have said, “He who has died is freed from sin.”

Lord, so often we’ve felt, “Oh, that’s physical death.” But we see that Romans 6 is not physical death, it’s our death with Jesus. That our Savior is asking us, “Will you go all the way with me? Will you enjoy not only heaven with me but, are you willing to endure even the separation of hell from yourself that I endured?” And Lord, we see that that’s what you’re asking us to do, to put ourselves on your side against self. To put ourselves in Jesus even against ourselves.

Lord Jesus, we receive your words to us tonight and Lord, by your Holy Spirit I would pray that this

very night you'll begin works in people's lives that will make them men and woman and not babies. I pray this Lord for your glory Lord Jesus, that there may be no bargain hunters here, no one seeking an easy admission ticket into heaven, no one seeking a resurrection without a crucifixion. Lord, I pray that you'll begin a work in somebody's life tonight that will end up -- however many days, or hours, or weeks, or months hence -- in victory, and cleanness, and fullness of the Holy Spirit, and a life of uninterrupted communion with their God for your glory.

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.