

The Christian Will – Introduction

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

You can live one way or the other in regard to the whole business that all of us face sometime in our lives, of trying to arrange our matrimonial existence. You can live, either feeling that it's up to you to try to hook the right one, or the one that you want, or the one you 'think' will make you happy. Or you can live in real peace, and relaxation, and rest, and confidence that your Father who made you has certainly plans for that very important side of your life; and he is going to lead you to the right girl or the right guy. So I think all of us here this evening can see that you can live either one way or the other.

Now loved ones, I don't think it's a question of, do you get your salary check from God or do you get it from the employer? Obviously God uses the world in which we move to give us food. And to give us a great deal of happiness. But the real issue is, is this world or these instruments -- are they in God's control? And are they his servants? Or are they pieces of inanimate and intractable substance that you and I have to kind of try to wrestle into some shape to get them to give us what we want? So do you see that's the issue? The issue is not do I kneel down, instead of going out to work, and pray, "Lord, send me a salary check! Send me a salary check, Lord; I'm waiting! I'm waiting! I'm waiting!" It's not that. God will presumably use many of the normal channels of this world to give us a salary check. He will probably not send us an angel wife! 'Though they do exist?!? But he will probably not send us an angel to marry. He will probably send us some human being like ourselves. But he will do it by his own desire and determination. And we have to decide, "Will he do that? And can we trust him? Or have we somehow to wrestle what we need out of this world ourselves?"

Loved ones, that's the issue really! There is only one issue in life: Do you live in inner trust that your father that who has made you and put you here has everything organized and will supply what you need? And therefore do you live as a 'care free' child -- as we used to live when we were four year old, you remember? We didn't have to work out where our next meal was coming from; we knew our father and our mother had it organized. Do you live that way? Or do you live worried and anxious, because you really do depend on the throw of the dice? On the way the economy turns out? On whether your job allows you to have promotion? On whether somebody smiles at you or doesn't smile at you? On whether the circumstances that you're looking forward to turn out as you hoped? You either live dependent on the Father, or you live dependent on us here in this room and on hundreds of other people that you're dependent upon in work and school. And that is the question in this life. On whom you depend?

And I think those of you who have been here for years know that, I've so often shared, that most of us have been brought up -- even, it seems, by godly parents who have tried to tell us the right way -- most of us have been brought up through it -- especially the influence of our schools and the environment in which we live -- we've been brought up to depend on people; to depend on people's opinions, for our good feelings about ourselves. And I think all of you would agree with that.

I would say that probably many of you sitting in these seats tonight are still very dependent on other people's opinion for you're feeling good about yourself. And I would just suspect that many of you feel very down, when somebody criticizes you. And you feel very up, when somebody whom you

respect says something good about you.

Now loved ones, it seems that all of us have been born into the world like that. I don't know whether we came out of our mom's womb like that. We probably did according to the bible. We came out with a tendency to depend on people's opinions, for our feeling about ourselves.

I think it's the same with this whole business of feeling that we're safe. You know it. It's just so much easier, it seems, to feel your safe if you have 20,000 in the bank; and if your car is only two years old; and if you are beginning to put money into some kind of savings in a house or real estate or into stocks and shares. It seems so much easier somehow to feel safe in that situation, than when you have absolutely not a penny to your name.

And so many of us are really slaves to what we own, or to what we don't own. It's interesting to think of it that way isn't it? They are not our servants at all. We actually are often slaves and servants of our possessions. And we're slaves to the things we own, for our sense of security and safety.

And it's the same thing with this happiness thing. Well I just ask you, what makes you happy? And I mean most of us have probably got over, "Well three gallons of whiskey!" Most of us have got past that. Most of us got past, "Well I -- being promiscuous, or jumping in and out of bed. That makes me happy." Most of us are kind of more sophisticated than that. And we have risen above that.

But I push you a little, what does make you happy? And isn't it true that so often it seems to come back to, "Well I have a -- boy if you saw the trip I have planned for this vacation. Ah I'm so looking forward to it!" Or, "I'm so looking forward to the theatre next week." Or, "I'm so looking forward to this movie that I've been waiting to come to Minneapolis." Or, "I'm so looking forward to going out with this group of guys, because, boy, they are fun." Or, "I'm so looking forward to this person speaking to you, when you're having a conversation with me."

And isn't it true that many of us, even here in this room, probably depend very much for our happiness on what 'happens' to us. That's what makes us happy. It's, "The right circumstances fall out, we're happy." And yet you know that it makes you a dreadful slave to the throw of a dice. It really does, because if the circumstances don't turn out that way, it seems life is very empty, and everything is flat. And even when the circumstances do turn out right, you're happy and up there while they are good. But then you drop down, so often, into depression, after the circumstances change.

Now loved ones, that's what this dear book [Pastor holds up a Bible] talks about when it says living "according to the world," or living "off the world," you see, or living "according to the flesh." It's living from the outside in.

And in fact there is a different life that can be lived. And I know we're not all Saint Theresa's here; or we're not all used to 20 hours of prayer; or we haven't all experienced the stigmata of Jesus' wounds in our hands.

But the fact is, that the heart of happiness -- after you've analyzed everything to do with sexual intercourse, after you've analyzed everything to do with exciting circumstances -- the 'heart of happiness' is, knowing that somebody else who is very important and significant in your life, actually knows you, through and through, and through, and still loves you. That's actually the

'heart of happiness'. And many of us who are married realize that that's it. It's not the intercourse; it's not all the other things. It's knowing that somebody else who is very important to you knows you through, and through, and through and still loves you. And that's the deepest happiness that any human being can have. When you're even just sitting across from another person like that. And you look into their eyes, and they look into your eyes. And you know that they know everything about you, and still they love you, and accept you completely, as themselves. That's the heart of happiness.

Now loved ones, that is God's plan for us, in our relationship with him. Now I know -- you don't need to tell me -- I know many of us are not at that place with God. But that is what real happiness is. It's a little bit of what was in that hymn: it is beginning to walk through the world with the owner of the world right at your side. It's knowing that he's there, and him beginning to point out to you, "That tree! See I made that. Look at the way I made that mountain, and look at the way I made that river." That's happiness! And that is the happiness that God actually wants us to experience.

And it's the same with this business of security. Loved ones, you've been through it enough to know that there are many jobs that you've been in that you thought were absolutely secure, and you were like a 'fiddler on a roof'. It was just teeter, totter. The whole company was actually bankrupt, when you felt, "Oh, this was a solid job." And the truth is that the security does not depend on those things. Security depends on whether the Maker, who has made you, knows what you need, and is going to be faithful in supplying it to you. And there is a bit to that truth, "I don't know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future." That's where real security comes from: knowing that the Father who has everything in his control, knows you, and is not going to let you down.

Now there's a possible trust there between you and him that brings a deeper security than owning all the stocks and shares in the world. Now that's the way God wants us to live, loved ones.

Now I think what many of us here, say is, "I know that, Pastor. I know that. And I do try to live that way. I do! But I cannot! I tell you, I have made up my mind a thousand times, that when I see that red ink turning up in my bank account, I will not worry. I have made my mind up a thousand times, that whether this person likes me or not I'm going to rest in the fact that my Father loves me. But I find myself unable to do it. And loved ones, that's because we are just turned inside out. You are!

And that's what the Bible really means when it says we're born in sin. Each one of us here has been born into a world that has depended on itself for centuries. And that attitude has been passed down to us by generations and generations of human beings, until you, actually, have a personality that works inside out, and is born upside down, and cannot live the way it was meant to live.

And loved ones, that's why Jesus died. God took you and me, hundreds and thousands of years ago, having foreseen every one of us that would ever live. Do you realize that? Do you realize that God, the Creator, was able to foresee your life before you were ever born? I mean, that shouldn't be difficult for us, when we think of the computers and their ability to calculate probability, and permutations. It should be possible for us to realize that if we can create computers that can compute what is likely to be the situation in America in 20 years' time, it is surely possible for the Creator of the universe to have foreseen every one of us here in this room, to have foreseen even the color of our hair, and to have foreseen the way we would develop.

And loved ones, the fact is, that God foresaw you like that. He is able, in one great eternal moment, to see all of life laid out before him. And what he did was, when he saw that, he was able to take us, as yet unborn, and put them into his Son -- put all of us into his Son -- and change us.

And that's the meaning of Calvary. And that's the meaning of that incredible verse, you remember, in Revelation, where it talks about "the lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world." And then you remember that remarkable verse in 2 Corinthians 5, which says, "If Christ died then all died."

Now, can you put those two together? "The lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world." And if the lamb died, then all died. All of us died. And that's what the Bible means when it says, "Our old self was crucified with Christ." A million billion years ago, before the world was ever created, God completely remade you and me in his Son. And actually the 'remade person' is the only one that actually exists. And the one that you're living by at this moment -- that self that needs people's opinions and praises, that self that needs the security of money and stocks and shares, that self that needs circumstances and experiences to make it happy -- that actually has been destroyed by God in his Son, Jesus. And when you live by that self, you're living by a mirage that actually has been destroyed in eternity, billions of years ago. And that's why so often the security or the happiness that you tried to get from that disappears like a mirage, because it's all unreal! It's been destroyed and wiped out!

And that's why God says to you, "Believe this gospel!" That's the first step. The first step is not, "Exercise your will, to change your whole tendency to depend on people, instead of on God." That's not the first word. The first word is to believe the gospel; to believe that that personality of yours that seems so intractable, that little eye, that looks out, once it enters the office door to see, "Is he smiling at me? Is he smiling at me?" To believe that that little eye was destroyed by God in his son Jesus. And that that whole being of yours was destroyed and remade completely. And what God is saying to you is, "Believe that! Believe that!"

Do you see why it's so silly when some of you think, "Oh, I just don't think God has forgiven me?" Forgiven you? Not only has he forgiven you, he's destroyed you in his Son and remade you. And when he looks at you tonight, he doesn't see anything to forgive, because he sees the new person that's he's made in his Son.

And if you say to me, "Oh no! But look what I am; look what I am here on earth," that's the 'self' that God destroyed in his son. And he sees things according to what he's done to you in his son Jesus. In other words -- let me show you it on this old miserable diagram again. God doesn't deal with us according to our sins. God deals with us as if we're like that.

[Pastor shows a diagram of the personality that consists of 3 concentric rectangles. The outer rectangle is the 'body'. The next smaller one is the 'soul'. The smallest one inside is the 'spirit'. The basic diagram shows God's Holy Spirit above the 3 rectangles, and an arrow from the Holy Spirit into our 'spirit', and then an arrow from our spirit to our 'soul', and then an arrow from our 'soul' to our 'body' and finally an arrow from our 'body' out to the 'world', shown on the diagram as below the 'body' outer rectangle.]

[The diagram is actually more detailed than that. Inside the 'spirit' are 'Communion', 'Intuition' and 'Conscience', and the arrow from the Holy Spirit goes first to 'Communion', from there to 'Intuition', and from there to 'Conscience'. Then the 'soul' is similarly divided into 'Will',

'Mind', and 'Emotions', and the arrow from the 'spirit' to the 'soul' is actually from 'Conscience' to 'Will', with a note "Obeys". The sequence in the 'soul', then, is from 'Will' to 'Mind', and from 'Mind' to 'Emotions', and from there out to the 'body'.]

That's the way we were meant to live. And God deals with us as if we're like that. That's what Psalm 103 and verse 10 means. "God does not deal with us according to our sins..." [Pastor shows the diagram again, but with an overlay that shows the arrows going in the opposite direction, from the 'world' into the 'body' and from the 'body' to the 'Emotions', to the 'Mind', and to the 'Will'.]

That's the way so many of us live: trying to get from the world the security, significance and happiness that we need. And so we end up with our 'mind' manipulating instead of understanding; and our 'emotions' trying to get joy from everything we can; and our 'will' absolutely dominated by these things. "God does not deal with us according to our sins," because on Calvary that was crucified. [Pastor adds another overlay of a big cross covering the whole mess.] And God deals with us as if we're like that. [Pastor removes both overlays to get back to the diagram that shows the personality functioning in the normal way, from the Holy Spirit into our 'spirit' and out through our 'soul' and 'body' to the 'world' as detailed above.]

And that's the first step in beginning the Christian life, believing that; believing that God deals with you this evening as if you're like that. [Pastor indicates the diagram again with the arrows coming from the Holy Spirit into our 'spirit' and out through our 'soul' and 'body' to the 'world' as detailed above.]

Now that's incredible! In other words God is willing to give you all that he was willing to give you when you were innocent, and when you were sinless, before the foundation of the world. God doesn't deal with you as if you're like that, [Pastor puts the overlay that shows the arrows going the other direction, from the world to the body to the soul, etc. back over the diagram.] because that, in his mind is a deception and a mirage. But he deals with you as if you're like that. [He again removes that backwards overlay.]

That's why it's so foolish and such a trick of Satan when you sit there this evening, and you say, "But brother you're right. You're right. I'm like that. [Pastor puts the reversed overlay back on.] I'm like that. How on earth do I get to be like that?" [Now he removes the reversed overlay again.] In God's eyes you're like that. The other self that was like that [Puts overlay back.] was crucified and wiped out of existence on Calvary. [Again he removes the reversed overlay.] That's the only self that remains. And God treats you as being like that at this very moment. Because he knows you are like that in reality. And he has given each one of us these 70 years to believe that.

Now if you say to me, "Oh! What happens after the 70 years?" Loved ones, the tragedy is, the deception is able to commit you to a life of deception forever in hell. The deception can work out an eternal life of deception forever in hell! But during these 70 years God has given us an opportunity to actually believe that this [indicates the original diagram with the arrows from the Holy Spirit into our spirits] is the real self that exists. And then loved ones, then you begin to submit your will to that, and live according to that. But the way is first by faith, first by grasping it, first by believing it.

Ok, I'll shut up. Any questions, anybody want a push me?

Question from audience:

We should trust God instead of external situations, but could there be something to be healed, before we're able to trust him?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Marie, I suppose that's -- I'm sure that's true. I'm sure what you say is true. But it will only be healed by faith. It seems that's it, that it has been healed in Jesus. I mean presumably your thinking of someone maybe who was brought up -- I don't know if I can create an example -- but someone who was brought up maybe with an overbearing, dominating, cruel kind of father. So that, that person came up with a very tender, frightened little heart, and came up overwhelmed with pleasing this one 'significant other' in her life, and so began then to fear all such threatening people. And maybe you're thinking, "Well now, wouldn't that little fearful, terrified heart have to be healed?" And I could see how, yes!

But I would answer that the only way to be healed is the way Jesus said, "Your faith has made you whole," your faith that actually that dear little heart was destroyed and crucified and made completely new in Jesus; and that she now had a heart that belonged to Christ; and that it was up to her repeatedly to go back to that. Now maybe she might stumble often. Maybe she might often take that stand and say, "Lord, I know I do not need to be terrified of this person. I know that I have been changed and made whole." And she might stumble a thousand times doing it, but really what I would say is, that is still the basis of eventual healing: taking that position of faith. Instead of saying to her self, "Oh well, I'll just have to try. I'll just have to try, try to will it."

Or I don't know if what you're getting at -- maybe you're wondering, "Well would she not have to have some psychiatric help, or some psychological help?"

And I think the only value of that is, if it's a Christian psychologist who can somehow lead a loved one to see in what way they are not believing this, or they are not having faith in this.

But it seems to me where you would go to the kind of healing that would try to get them, "Alright, now trust this person. Now will you trust this person? Now will you trust that person?" It seems that that's back to the old 'salvation by works'.

Now on the other hand, I can see that a loving a person who had Jesus within them himself, could express Jesus, as a trustworthy person to them. But I still think that sooner or later the only way to healing is by faith in this 'great act' that God has done for us in Jesus.

Question from audience:

Doesn't it seem like some things can be healed just by the love of other people?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Marie, it seems to me it's that -- I'm sure that's true, if it's the love of Jesus coming through people.

But I think there is a great danger in our present so called 'Christian movement', there is a great danger of substituting a little bit of psychological therapy or manipulation, which lacks complete

honesty. There's a little tendency to say, "Oh now let's just be kind to this person to kind of heal them." And really what they need is a sight of Jesus. And he alone can heal them completely. And that's why it seems to me that many loved ones get 'healed lightly', who experience what they call a 'Christian healing', or experience what they call 'Christian new birth'. It actually is, too often, a kind of modification of a psychological treatment. And I think that's dangerous.

So I sure agree with you, that I think Jesus can love a person through another's eyes, but only when the other person is in love with Jesus, themselves, and is doing the thing just as an expression of Jesus' Spirit, and not with a 'view in end' to try to heal this person.

Question from audience:

Isn't it a growing thing and a developing thing?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Undoubtedly that's true. And undoubtedly part of what God has called us to, as a body, is to encourage one another, gradually to hold steady on our faith that this is so, and gradually to get our wills moving in the same line. And undoubtedly that's true. And undoubtedly that's part of the love that 'builds up'.

Question from audience:

Is it because it's a growing thing, that sometimes at the beginning you seem to slip back into the old self?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

I think so, sister. I think there are a number of pressures that work on us. I think the sheer society itself is constantly brain washing us, in all kinds of subconscious ways, to operate on the same basis as them. So I think we're meeting that every day.

I think as well as that, our old personality has to be 'rerouted'. And so often it keeps going this other way. [Pastor shows the diagram again, with the overlay that shows the arrows going in the opposite direction, from the 'world' into the 'body' and from the 'body' to the 'Emotions', to the 'Mind', and to the 'Will'.] But I think the key to the whole thing -- and that's the heart of what I wanted to share this evening -- is that God has done it! That God 'has' actually 'changed us in Jesus!' And unless we have faith in that, we become overwhelmed by just what you said. We become overwhelmed every time we slip back. It's just -- Satan is the 'accuser of the brethren'. And he just comes along each time and says, "There! You see, you're really just what you thought you were!"

And that's why it's so essential to stand on the basis of God's word, that, "He does not deal with us according to our sins," and that, "Our old self has been crucified, and we've been changed," and that God deals with us like that. And so faith is the only ground to stand on.

And I think often, what Marie is saying; often we get into all kinds of desperate attempts to do something about it, because we somehow have not grasped that. And loved ones, what I saw was -- I saw a lot of us trying to create this [life that runs the way it was intended]. And we're trying to

get into it by our own wills. And what God asks us to do is to believe that 'it has been done'. And if you remember -- I'd show you that verse if I can remember where it is. But it's in Revelation. Yes, it's in Revelation 12:10, "And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation and the power and power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.'" So that is Satan's job, to accuse us 'before our God'. He says, "No, it doesn't matter what you believe; you are a disappointment in your belief." And you see how they answered in verse 11. "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." And it's by the death of Jesus, and by their standing on that death that they overcame Satan.

It seems to me it's the same thing with our own situations. When Satan comes along and says, "Look, you're the same old miserable person that you were three years ago," you stand on the basis of Jesus' death. And you say, "No, God crucified that old self with Christ on Calvary." That, I know, is gone, and 'that' is dead. And he would not allow 'that' to exist in his own universe. And that is why he destroyed it in Jesus. I know that is gone. I know I may still be living by some of the lies and deceptions I've been used to living with over the years. But that has gone. So get away." But it seems to me that is the way to answer, instead of answering him, "Oh, but I'm doing better than I did last week."

Question from audience (inaudible):

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Well Brother, I would agree with you. But I would put it even more strongly than that: God knows how to make this miracle real in us. He knows the timing. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He is able to make real to us the benefits of Jesus' death on Calvary, and resurrection. And we can afford to put ourselves in his hands and say, "Father, I know that has happened. And I thank you for it and I believe it. And I know that you love me. And now, Lord, just bring me into this bit by bit; just bring me into it through your Holy Spirit." Yes, and God does it -- some of it he does like that, and some of it he does gradually. But it is in his hands.

I would agree with you thoroughly; yes, we should be patient with God. But still, that is an understatement. We should be, not only patient with him, we should say to him, "Lord, you alone know how to make this real in me, and I trust you."

But you see, if it hasn't been done on Calvary, then we are in a real difficulty. But if it has been done on Calvary, then we are acceptable before our God. And he is not interested in destroying us anymore. He destroyed us in Jesus on Calvary! If you said to him, "Lord, you don't want to come and destroy me?" he'd say, "I've already done that! That's past!" That is why some of us are so dumb, when we say, "Oh God still wants to punish me." He is not interested in punishment anyway. But the reason that he did destroy us, at all, in Jesus, was so that we'd be able to live in him today. And that all has been done.

Question from audience:

If that is the case then you can't really pray to God to "Give me strength." "Give me strength to stop smoking." "Give me strength to do this or do that." Because actually it all has been done. You've been destroyed and remade. All you can ask God for is light and revelation to see it and move into it more fully.

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Especially, then, if you say, "In what way can you grow?" It is by exercising your will in light of this, you come into more and more power so that God is able to manifest, in the world, through you, more and more of the works that he said we would do, "Much more beyond" what his Son did when he was on the earth.

But that is right, Dan.

But loved ones, it is good to think about it. I'd urge you to do that. I'd urge you to think about it. And if you say to me, "Well, what if I don't want this 'old self' crucified?"

Well, it's been crucified. So you can't do much about it. You can, if you choose, to live by the lie that it is still alive. And if you continue to do that until the end of this life, then you will find yourself in the company of those who live in an eternal deception in hell. Because God has allowed -- he says, "Be it unto you according to your faith." And if you are determined that is what you are going to believe, then actually that will -- has created, indeed, a great world of deception over which Satan rules.

But during this lifetime we live in a period of respite, every one of us. And I'd encourage you, any of you who tend to come under the accusation of Satan, boy, I would encourage you to see that he has no ground for that at all. It's like having a car that was in an accident; it was absolutely smashed to bits. And you take it into an auto body shop, and you get it completely redone so that it looks absolutely like new. And your little brother says, "Yeah, look at your old beat up car!" And you say, "You dumb-dumb! Don't you see that it has all been remade? It has all been completely remade!"

And that is the situation with ourselves. And that is the answer to Satan. But loved ones, the beginning of any place of our wills in our lives, has to be 'faith'. The first step is, "Do you believe that Calvary has taken place and that you have been remade in Jesus? Do you believe that?" That is the first step.

And next Sunday I'd like to then begin to talk about the place of the 'will' in light of that. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we thank you for the miraculous truth that you do not deal with us according to our sins, or reward us according to our transgressions; but that you do treat us in the light of 'reality'. And 'reality' is that all of us were slain with "the Lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world" and completely remade and renewed. And, oh Lord, we thank you for that. And thank you Father that you deal with us according to that. You're so gracious.

And Lord, we thank you. Thank you that all of heaven is open to us tonight, because we've been remade in Jesus. And when you look upon us you see us in your Son. And you will not withhold any good thing from your Son or from those who dwell in him. And, oh Lord, we thank you tonight that we can believe that, and we can live according to that.

And Father we thank you that your Son did not need the approval of the Roman soldiers, or even of his own mother. And we thank you that your Son, Jesus did not need lots and lots of gold and

possessions. But his security and his sense of value was found in his confidence in you and your love. And Father we thank you that that is so for each one of us tonight, that you love each one of us here. You think the world of us! And you are not going to let us want or be in need. Any you yourself are our complete happiness. Father, we thank you for that. We move out tonight in confidence that we have been remade and born again in Jesus.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us tonight and forever more. Amen.