

Is Victory Possible?

Ezekiel 36:24-28

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved Ones, I thought I would continue being realistic with you by reading a good letter that I found on the windshield of my car about a week ago. I think it's good because it expresses some of the feelings of maybe many of our hearts. It also gives me an excuse to play the record over again. I suppose I'm an incorrigible school teacher which you probably realize by now, and as a school teacher you realize that half the class have got it and half of them haven't a clue what you've said. And, we were always taught to try to go at the speed of the slowest student. So I feel that we should try to do that with each other in something that is as vital as eternal life. And, of course, something that is as dear and precious as victory in this life. So, that's why I'd like to just mention again, is victory possible? And, yes, it is. I'd like to point out to all of you that there are some of us that are still asking those old questions so it gives me a good excuse to go over the record again.

"Dear Pastor, last Sunday evening at the service you asked for questions at the end of the service. And, I wanted to ask something but also felt embarrassed to admit perhaps my sinfulness which will be implicit in the question I pose." I don't know who this is. Maybe I should encourage all of you to say, as far as you can, just put questions to me. We're all in the same miserable boat and we all love each other because we're all facing the same things. "I also was surprised that no one else there was asking what I found to be a common concern in talking with brothers and sisters at church. So, I thought to ask you this way perhaps as I am embarrassed, perhaps because I know others are thinking the same thing. But, too, even if they're not, I know that I am. And, it seems to be such a central issue in our walk with God. I hope that you might deal with this during the evening service. Please do. Because I'm sure I'm not the only one wondering about this."

And, then he gets into it, or she, I don't know why I think he. "My question has to do with our will. It has to do with our choosing between the old man and the new man with the struggle within us. I find within me a deep desire for God and a strong desire for ways that I know are not of God, such as lust or gluttony. I think the question simply is, how do I choose something that I don't want? Or, that I don't want enough? Or, how do I choose to surrender to God when I am fighting tooth and nail not to? And, I am afraid to as well." So, you see what he's saying. The question is this, how do I choose something that I don't want or that I don't want enough? "It's like when you said last week that you came to a realization years ago that you weren't obeying God. You were agreeing with God when it was convenient for you. Well, how did you find the desire or the strength or the will power to choose to obey God? And how does one -- how do I -- find the 'whatever' to want to do something that I don't really want to do? I don't really want to give in to God, to obey Him always, or even once sometimes. To give up my own ways even though I know that that will separate me from God. What I know and what I act on are two different things." And, so that you don't get too buried with the questions, I should point out that I think that was exactly my difficulty.

I found within myself that there was a desire beyond the desire for God. There was a desire also not to want God, even a desire not to be like God. And, not to want to obey God. And, so I find within

me almost like another person inside. Which, of course, I think most of us call the "old man" or we, because of the old Revised Standard Version translation, call the "old self". And, now, I was a child of God like this dear one and I knew that my sins were forgiven and I knew that Jesus had died for me. I came to church and I was a Christian and I was converted and I was born of God but I could sit where you're sitting and I could find that alongside my desires to obey God there would be a strong, stubborn desire to get my own way.

And of course, that would break out at times in my ordinary witnessing life. And, so, I'm with the brother or the sister that says this. I think that's the classic example of all of us who have found that there is something within us that doesn't want God. And our question is, how do we overcome that thing? And, I could share with you all that I was at my wits' end, you know. I just could not work out, how do you overcome it. And I think I've shared with you often before it was things like pride, you know, i.e. somebody would criticize the sermon and I would feel what do they know about preaching? And I would feel I know more about preaching than they do and the pride would rise up and go out and I didn't know how to control it.

And if you said to me, oh, but at least you wanted to control it. You know, I was like the brother here. At times I did and at times I didn't. I remember with self pity and, I'm sorry, but I can only talk about my own experience. You'll have to fill yours in for yourself. But I remember with self pity, you kind of got used to enjoying feeling sorry for yourself. I think we men are big cry babies so often and you kind of get used to enjoying self pity. So there was in a way a kind of a masochistic satisfaction in feeling that everybody was down on you and poor old you -- nobody had to take out as much garbage as you had to take out. Or, nobody had to take as much garbage as you had to take. And, so there were some desires that I didn't want rid of. And, that was when I myself began to realize, boy, there is an enemy within that isn't under my control.

And, that was when I felt, maybe even more than at my conversion, that there was some power inside me that seemed to be part of me that I couldn't control and couldn't overcome. And, for me, loved ones, that actually -- even though I didn't know it at the time -- that was the beginning of hope for me. Because everybody else was telling me, oh, grow in grace, pray more, read the Bible more, be at more meetings, get more fellowship, and exercise your will more. And I felt, no, no, I've done all these things. I've done them for years. But, there's something in me that I cannot affect by doing all those things. There's something in me that -- and then it kind of came to me -- God has to do something about it. If God doesn't do something about this or he hasn't done something about it, I'm lost. And, so, I got to the same point as this dear brother and I felt that God had to have done something. But, of course, I didn't know that he had. And I had never been told that he had. I had been told that Jesus died for my sins. I didn't know that he had done anything else really.

"Much of what you say, Pastor O'Neill, is to people on the other side of the Cross." I think that's true. These evening services tend to be for those of us who have come through to victory and I tend often to be talking about how to let this flow through the whole of our personalities and out to others. But, yet, I'd say to this brother or sister, loved ones, I do realize that many of us here are not on the other side of the Cross. And you will notice that I try to keep skipping back every so often. I'll either give my testimony or I kind of go back on ourselves and try to refer to how to come through the Cross. But, I do agree that the evening services tend to be for those of us who are walking in the Spirit.

"I know you've come through to a place of Second Rest with God where you have a desire to please God but I hope you realize you're speaking to people, if only me, who have such a stubbornness against

God, to whom the Cross and dying with Christ are abhorrent and frightening." Yeah, I do know that. And, that's why I keep trying to preach Christ and him crucified. I know, loved ones, I know that what is inside you, if it's what was inside me, hates the Cross, hates Christ crucified, hates it with all its heart because that thing that is inside you, does not want that Cross. It detests it. That thing inside me, that old self, it loved religion, loved a bit of Bible study, loved a good discussion about religion, but it hated Christ and him crucified.

And, loved ones, that's why I keep preaching Christ and him crucified. Because I know we'll listen to everything else, we religious people. We love a little bit of uplift, we love a little bit of "bless me" stuff, a little bit of encouragement, but we hate that Cross. I know we do. And, Loved ones, I'm just determined, I don't care if I preach myself out of church, I don't care if I preach myself out of America, I'm going to stick with the eternal gospel that Paul talked about. "I decided to know nothing among you except Christ and him crucified. [I Corinthians 2:2] Because that is the only key, loved ones.

"I feel like I'm addicted to sin, like an alcoholic." So did I. "Like an alcoholic is addicted to alcohol, I know it's bad for me but I don't want to stop." And, that was me. Romans 7:15: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." And verse 18: "For I do not do the good that I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." That's the very thing I do. And, I do it because at times I want to do it. If you said to me when I got irritable with my wife or I lost my temper with my brother, did I want to do it? Oh, at the time that I was doing it, I couldn't care less. Sure. I mean, if you had caught me the moment before I did it, I would say, I don't, that's the last thing I want to do. But loved ones, we have to just see, when you actually do the thing, it's because you're willing to do it. It's because you're wanting to do it.

"How do I find the desire to stop? How do I find the desire to ask God to give me the desire to stop? I hope you realize that's not double talk," he says. "How do I find it in me to surrender?" I found that, if you just agree with me to call it the "old self", I found that my old self did not want to surrender. I never found a way to make my old self surrender. I didn't. That was the first light to me that I mentioned to you. That whatever it was inside me was part of Satan himself. That was a big step for me. I kind of thought, well, it's part of me that isn't as good as the other part of me. Or, it's part of Ernest O'Neill that just isn't up to snuff. But, if I work at it, I'll get there.

A big step for me was realizing this old self is rotten. It is rotten. It is part of hell itself. This part of me that doesn't want God is not even under my control. It made sense to me, you remember, when Paul said, "Well, listen, if I do the thing that I don't want to do then it's not me that's doing it. It's sin that dwells within me." And, that was a help to me. When I began to see, wait a minute, in a way it is me, in a way it's inextricably part of me and yet, praise God, in a way it's different from me. In a way, it's a power that seems to take hold of me. And, I could see that in temper. Or, you could see it in lust. You kind of realize, boy, this is like a power from outside. It's like something that is bigger than me that takes hold of me and just rushes me along with it. And, that was good, when I started to see, yeah, it's sin. It's a power of evil, independent rebellious life against God. It's part of Satan himself that is in me.

And, that was some hope. Boy, maybe this is something that can be separated from me. And, yet, I knew that it was pretty close to me because I saw how Paul said, "The good that I WOULD, I DO NOT!" And, I saw that he used "I" in both cases and he couldn't even make a distinction there. It was as

if he was saying, boy, there are two "I"s inside me and there's one "I" that wants to do good but there's another "I" that doesn't do it. And, I saw the difficulty in even Galatians 2:20, where he said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." And that's the way I felt. I felt there was a Jekyll and a Hyde situation. I wanted to do good, yet in some way it was the "I" that didn't do good.

I can see how even some of those things, godly desires, are a gift that our Father gives us as he puts Jesus into us more and more through the Holy Spirit. So, you know, he sees that. I can see how even some of those things, godly desires, are a gift that our Father gives us as he puts Jesus into us more and more through the Holy Spirit. I know that much of our scrambling toward God can be works of the flesh. I think I saw that myself, that a lot of my attempts to control this old self inside was actually the self trying to control the self. And even that helped me, because I saw that the self was too shrewd. It didn't want to destroy the self. It didn't want to throttle the self.

You might say, did that not drive you to despair? No, it kind of brought hope to me. I saw that if it was up to myself, my self wouldn't destroy the self. There was something in me that protected itself. And, I remember one man pointing out to me that verse in Romans 8:7, "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot." And I identified with that. I saw that whatever it was inside me that so hated God, that it would never allow itself to be destroyed or destroy itself. And it would never allow me to destroy it.

And, I think that's what the brother is saying. I know that much of our scrambling toward God can be works of the flesh and that's why so many of us have real defeat. We try to obey, we try to obey, we try to hold the self down, and we try to hold the envy down, hold the bitterness down, hold the lust down. But, it will not stay down. Why? Because it's the self that is doing the holding and the self has no intention of holding those things down. The self is determined just to do as much as gives a kind of holy impression to us. But as long as it continues to be free, it will only do so much. Actually it's interesting, loved ones, the self will only hold down as much of itself as it's willing to. And, actually when you start looking inside yourself with introspection -- which is just a sin -- when you start looking into yourself and trying to analyze yourself, you'll see as much of yourself as doesn't matter. That's right. Because the self won't let you see the bottom of the pit. Because it knows once you see the bottom of the pit, you'll be willing to face the remedy. A remedy that is so radical that you only face it when you see the bottom of the pit of yourself. And, it won't let you see that.

"But, I know," -- the brother is good -- "but I know that there is somewhere where it is important what I do, such as the act of surrender, the choice, the turning. It seems that if I am honest, much of my obedience is merely pretending, pretending to obey, when I don't really want to. But, I know that I should, which soon becomes legalism with no or little desire to please God."

Kind of like saying to God, all right, I'll do what you say, but please just leave me alone. And, I saw that in myself. Just a kind of form of obedience. Just kind of trying to persuade God that I'm obeying, trying to persuade my peers that I was an obedient disciple but inside all the time a rebellious heart. I didn't love to obey. And, if you'd said to me, "You know God's children, children of a loving Father, should love to obey their Father," -- well, I could see the logic of it. I could agree with you. "Yeah, that's right, he's a dear Father, gives us the sunshine, the lakes, all that. I should love to obey him." But, I knew there was something in me that didn't love to obey him. But, I often obeyed him simply because I was supposed to. And, it was kind of legalism. Well, I'm getting a ways off the track here. But, to summarize, my question is, how do I find or receive

or whatever, the desire to surrender? To obey? To daily follow God?"

"You know, it's almost like you're saying in your evening preaching that you became good enough to surrender to God, good enough to receive the desire to want to obey God." I cannot beat my head over with that, because I'm anxious not to be saying that. So, I'll read it again. "You know, it's almost like you're saying in your evening preaching that you became good enough to surrender to God." And, I'm trying to go into my own heart, and see what happened to me and, to tell the truth, I was in despair. I saw myself so rotten and so hideous as I asked the Holy Spirit to show me that old self, I got so despairing that, boy, the last thing I thought was that I was good enough.

Maybe all I can say is if you all are listening maybe to some of the things that I say about the out-working of this purity, once it comes into our hearts, maybe if you are listening to that maybe that seems like it. Those are things you do. Well, maybe that's it. Maybe if you listen to what happens on the other side of the Cross and you try to make it the way of getting into the Cross, maybe it seems that. But, loved ones, no, I would say, no. There's no way in which you can become good enough to surrender to God. And my idea of surrender has always been, you surrender because you have no power of your own and you're weak and helpless. You surrender to the victor. Now, I've never felt that I'm good enough to surrender. I've just surrendered because I have no power to do anything. Lord, if you don't do it, I'm lost.

So, maybe if you say, well, is there any other way? Well, the only thing I can see, loved ones, is that God does require you to obey in all the areas you can. So, I've seen that. But, he does require you to renounce sin everywhere where you can renounce it. And, I would say that was part of my pilgrimage. Oh, I got caught in a little double summersault. I used to read John Wesley and I saw that he said you should love to obey and I thought to myself -- it's the old self always defending itself -- well, I don't love to obey, so what's the good of obedience? So, I thought, goody goody, I'll just lie back here and just be a miserable, wretched sinner until I have the desire to obey.

Well, then God came along and beat me over the head and said, no, no, you use your will where you can, use your will. Do everything you can. Don't crucify my Son. Pull the nails out of his hands. Stop losing your temper. Repent every time you lose your temper. Obey. Read the Bible. You miss a day, then get back and read it again. But, do everything. Will with all your will, all you can, realizing that after you've done everything, you're at the end an unprofitable servant and there is a heart of evil inside you that only I can cleanse. And, so, that helped me. I saw that there is a sense in which I have to do everything I can and yet there's a sense in which I cannot touch this evil old self. Only God can. So, that was it.

Then, he says, "And you're encouraging us to become good enough to receive that. Don't get me wrong, I know you're not saying that but when we don't receive something right away it can become a work of the spirit, our spirit, our flesh," he says. So, you see what he's saying, he's saying that if you're trying to become good enough to surrender then you can get tangled up in trying to make the effort yourself. Well, loved ones, the distinction I would try to make in my own life, is it seems to me I have to do everything possible to abstain from the sin that I can see in my life. But, I must realize all the time that the only one who can replace my dirty, evil old self with a clean new self that is hid with Christ in God is God, the Holy Spirit. He alone can do that. So, it's up to me to try to get away from all evil, to try to abstain from all sin, realizing that only he can make me holy. So, maybe that's it, because often the brother is saying, how do I find the desire to be good, how do I find the urge to be good? Well, the truth is the Holy Spirit implants that in your heart but he can only implant it in a heart that is willing to let the old miserable self be done away

with. However, I am jumping ahead a little.

"What would you say to someone who just is not finding it in them to obey God? What did you do before you came into the second rest? I hope you can separate all this and distill it down to its core. I really hope you can deal with this core in evening service." Well, I am. "What would you say to someone who just is not finding it in them to obey God? What did you do before you came into the second rest?" I read this book which is called "Possibilities of Grace" by Asbury Lowrey. And, I turned immediately. I was in real trouble so I didn't want to read the whole of the book, I just wanted to read the bit that told me how to get there. So, I turned to Chapter 8, you see, and I didn't know any of this stuff and I didn't know as much as you know about the Holy Spirit. I had been a liberal as I told you and I was kind of skeptical of the whole thing. But, I was in trouble as I described -- an old hypocritical, double life. So, I turned to this chapter and he says, first of all, renounce sin, renunciation of sin. He says, the Gospel requires as a condition precedent to the attainment of entire sanctification the total abandonment of sin.

So, I just started, I just got down to that. I just started to look at all the sin that I could see in my life and I started to fight that with every fiber of my being. And, yeah, I agree with you, I didn't succeed in it all. But, I never gave up fighting it. I was just desperate for this thing and I determined I'm going to fight this with all my being. I can't touch whatever it is in me that's giving the trouble but I can do what this guy says. You're to renounce sin, "except you repent, you will all likewise perish". I saw it all over. You have to turn from the evil ways. I saw it all through the Old Testament. You're to forsake your evil doings. And, so I started to do that. So, everywhere where I found sin in my life, I just kept on fighting it and fighting it. If you say, did you not get depressed? Sure, I did but I got up and I read that saying --that a saint is not one who never falls but one who gets up each time he falls. I just knew there was victory and I kept fighting that sin. So, renounce sin.

As I started to do that, I saw that there was certain sin that I had got used to and that I wasn't renouncing. So, as you put your will to it, you do begin to find really that there is sin in your life that you actually haven't been renouncing. So, I would encourage you to do it. Loved Ones, I was in such trouble I read the Billy Graham tracts. I read anything to find out how to get clear. I would read the Sunday school material. I just wanted to know how to get through. And, this business renouncing, okay, I started to do it and, as I started to do it, I did see other sin in my life that I kind of rationalized. So, I started to do that.

Then he says, perfect conviction of its attainability. Redemption -- everybody has all kinds of words for it. But before we can attain full redemption, he calls it full redemption, entire sanctification, some people call it being filled with the Spirit, and some people call it full consecration. We tend to call it the victorious life. But, this is what he means. Before we can obtain full redemption, it is necessary that we be fully persuaded that such a blessing lies within our reach. Well, I just read the scripture. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses." [Ezekiel 36:25] I could understand that. That meant I was to be clean. From all your filthiness and from all your idols. All? Yeah, all. Okay, well, I cleanse you. Verse 26: "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

I was an English teacher so I could understand the stuff. So, it was pretty plain to me. "And I will take away the heart of stone," -- that's what I had -- "out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances." [Verses 26-27] So, I just read those bits in Ezekiel. And in I

John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So, yes, I was easily convinced the Bible meant me to be free from outward sins and from inward sins.

And actually, that's important for you to see. It doesn't matter if you can find a thousand sins in me, Ernest O'Neill. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if I lose my temper every Sunday. It doesn't matter if you can prove me the most wretched hypocrite in the world. It's in this dear Book. It's in this Bible. God has promised that we'll be free from all our sins. It's not this idiot here that's saying it. It doesn't depend on my life, loved ones. It doesn't. My life has to be clean if I am going to stand before God. But remember this. Remember, in case I ever, who knows, maybe I'll divorce and get married again, I won't, but, if I ever do, this thing, this truth doesn't stand on Ernest O'Neill. It isn't on as shaky a basis as that. So, don't go for loved ones and say, that Ernest O'Neill, I heard him. Yeah, who knows? Maybe I sin a thousand times; this truth doesn't depend on my life. This is the dear Word of God. "If you confess your sins, I am faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness." That's pretty plain: "from all unrighteousness." And, "you shall call his name Jesus for he shall save this people from their sins."

Do you see it doesn't matter if there's one creature in the whole world's history who has ever been saved from all their sins? Do you see that? We in America are so mad on this. We think, oh, well, well, show me somebody who has lived above sin. Actually you don't need to find one person. You just need to find God's promises in his Word where He says, "I will cleanse you from all your unrighteousness. My Son has come to save you from all your sins." Loved ones, it's important to see that our faith is based on God's dear Word, not on the unreliable testimony of petty human lives like mine. It's in his Word.

So, yeah, the guy said, you have to be convinced that it's possible. And, I was. I just read God's Word and I saw that's what he says. Even when he says to me, thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and soul and strength and mind, I thought, that's it, that's it. He's not a miserable tyrant. He doesn't command me to do something that he won't give me the grace to do. If he commanded me to love him with all of my heart, soul, strength and mind, then he must be able to enable me to do that. See, I was convinced it was possible. It is important for you to do that. You won't make a move, you won't make a move if you doubt that it's possible to have victory over sin. That's it. If you doubt that verse, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." All things. If you doubt that, you haven't a chance.

And, I saw that. Because I knew the old self inside was looking for any excuse. And I knew the old self just wanted any excuse. For a while I went on that route. Because I did know some people who professed this and for a while I went on the route, "Ah, look at their lives". And, the old self will do that. That old self in you is an enemy. He is the enemy of your soul. He is the enemy of your salvation. He is part of Satan himself. And, if he can find any excuse, he will convince you, look, back off, this isn't really for you.

Loved ones, only God's strong Word and your conviction that that Word means what it says, will enable you to go further. So, first of all renounce sin, first of all be convinced that it is possible to live in victory over sin. Not victory over mistakes. You'll make mistakes. Not even victory over involuntary sins. There are some things, you do them, oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. There's no guilt. You immediately feel, ah, I didn't intend that. But, the big promise that God gives is that you can have victory over the sin mentioned in James 4:17, "Whoever knows what is right to do

and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

You can have victory over conscious sin. That's the sin that drove me crazy. It was the things I knew were wrong and I couldn't avoid them. That's what brought guilt to my conscience. And, that's what God promises -- victory over those sins and increasing victory actually over even mistakes. But, the big thing is, do you see, I would plead with you, do you see it's not a matter of going around with a notebook marking: Art Owens' - one sin today, Jim - one sin, Ernest O'Neill - two sins, John Spaulding - three? That's not it; that's terrible. We're a pack of poor creatures, making all kinds of errors, all kinds of mistakes. Who knows, maybe sinning forty times a day. Who knows?

But, the big thing that God promises is you can come to a place where you can live free from that power that makes it impossible not to sin. That's it. That's what freedom from sin means. It means freedom from having to sin. Whether you sin, that's up to you. But, my trouble was I didn't have the power. Even if I didn't want to sin, even if I wanted not to sin, I couldn't avoid sin. Now, God promises that we can be free from that power that makes it impossible for us not to sin. So, loved ones, that's it.

Thirdly, he said, spiritual hunger is necessary. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." [Matthew 5:6] This might help the brother. He said, "How do I get a hunger?" I asked the same thing. This author just knew the same thing. "The reader may say, I find myself destitute on this indispensable hunger and consequently according to the argument, victory is not attainable to me in my present condition." He said get an appetite. He said think about this subject. Think about it. Think about the possibility of having victory over sin. Attend meetings where they talk about this. Or, in your case, listen to the interminable tapes that are available on this subject. But, attend meetings where they talk about this. Read books, read books by Andrew Murray, read books that talk about this and then pray for God to give you a hunger for it.

So, loved ones, that's what I did. And, you may say, ah, you dumb dumb. But, I just didn't know any more sophisticated way so what I did first was think on the subject. That's what I did. I just started thinking of that night and day. Lord Jesus, it is possible. I know it is possible for you to bring me victory. Then I started to attend meetings where they talked about it. Wherever I heard somebody was going to speak on this, if there was these evening services, I was at these evening services. Yeah, it was cruel. It was like torture chamber for me but I went because I knew, all right, I have to get a hunger for it. So, I thought about it, I attended meetings where they talked about it, I started to read books.

I read books by men who talked about victory and I continued to do it.

And then I prayed. I just sought God. I just came before him. I prayed, "Lord, there's this old self inside me that I cannot control and I do not know the answer. I know it's somewhere about Romans 6 but I don't know how to interpret that stuff. Those verses mean nothing to me. But, Lord, I ask you to bring me through. I want to be like you. I want to be pleasing to you. I want to be a delight to you. I want to be a satisfaction to Jesus. Lord Jesus, You died for me. I want you to see that you died for something and that you achieved something in my life." And, so, I would go before Jesus and say, "Lord Jesus, I want to be like you. Will you increase in me this desire? Will you increase in me a hatred of sin? Will you increase in me a hatred of this old self? And, will you show me the depths of my old self?" And loved ones, that's what I did.

And, then the author says, "Exercise the faith of trust." Because, of course, the basic question the

brother is saying is, how do you get in by faith? You get in by faith, that's it. It's dead easy. The old self you can do nothing with. But, your old self was crucified with Christ. God destroyed it. And, you receive that by faith. By faith, not by works. Not by trying hard, but by faith. And, he said, exercise faith. He kind of makes you smile because he then says, "There are certain conditions of faith." And, then he just goes right back over the same ground. Of course, he's dead right, you see. Faith is only possible if you pray for spiritual hunger. Faith is only possible if you renounce sin. He says, renunciation of sin is a condition of faith. Submission to God is a prerequisite of faith. So, he just goes back over the same things. And, that's true. Faith springs up in your heart when you hunger after this with all your being. And, when you renounce all the sin you can see in your life, and when you sign yourself over to God, lock stock and barrel.

And, then, what I saw in my own life was that Ernest O'Neill was the problem. That it was me. And, I was really a lout inside, you know. And, a pitiful, miserable rebel against God. And, that there was only one thing to do with such a being. And, I did begin to understand where Isaiah says in Ch. 6:5, you remember, he says those words, "I am a man of unclean lips." And, I used to say, well, maybe I speak some unclean words or maybe I have some unclean thoughts -- but not I am a man of unclean thoughts. I am a man of unclean words and I began to see it is me. It's me that needs to be done away with. And, then, of course, Romans 6:6, lit up for me. "We know that our old self was crucified with him." Then, of course, Romans 6:11, just made it plain, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

I sought God for it, I think, about six months. Well, I got back into grace because I was a miserable, Methodist minister, very holy looking, but I got back into grace and started to at least walk in outward obedience again and thought I could manage without the inward work. And, then, of course, began to slide again. So, it was about nine months later, really, altogether, but six months of hungering and seeking God with all my heart.

Then one morning for me, I had prayed so often, "Lord, I know my old self was crucified with Christ and I've seen some of the depths of it. I am willing to die and I am willing to be whatever you want and I am willing to be nothing for you or to be a failure. I'm willing for anything." I'd often said that, but there was no change in me. So, it was after about six months that, at last, I suppose, if you say, oh, you'd seen everything. No, I suppose God was satisfied that I had seen enough that he could do a work in me and cleanse my heart and so one morning I sensed, at last, that I was willing to be crucified with Christ and to be buried and to have Ernest O'Neill on a tombstone and wiped out. From that moment on, my life would not be my own and I would not have a right to it and I would not be able to determine where I would go but I would be carried by him wherever he wanted to put me.

And, I had a sense of quiet-- that's why they call it the second rest. A quiet sense of rest and peace; thank you, Lord. And, a quiet sense of the dear Holy Spirit coming into my heart. Then, to answer the brother, he cleansed my heart. Cleansed my heart. And, really, I don't want to get into that business of outward sin but I think it does make a difference. I think it does make a difference because he does a work in your heart that cleans you. And, if you sin after it, boy, it's your own fault. Now, when I sinned before I felt, well, it was kind of this power within me. If I sin now, it's my own fault. And, it seems to me that's the change that God works. So, I'll keep quiet for a minute, loved ones, and you push me on anything or on questions.

Question 1: (inaudible)

Response from Rev O'Neill:

That's why I kind of identified with him in as many of those paragraphs as possible because that's exactly where I was. And, now, I think that's the classic way. That's the way God has brought us all, you know. And, I would mention, if you say to me, oh, well, do you have to go through it again after conversion? No, I think some may go through the whole thing and, as you say in America, a whole ball of wax, at once. I think it's possible for people to be born of the Spirit and filled with the Spirit all in one. That isn't the issue. Don't you see that? That's the good thing. It isn't the issue, is it? The way Ernest experienced it, the way Clyde Anderson experienced it or somebody else did.

Do you have to speak in tongues, do you have to do this or that? Those aren't the issues. The beauty of it is our dear Savior took not only our sins in his own body, loved ones, but he took ourselves. That's it. This is not something to be downhearted about or depressed about. This is a glorious fact, that just as you were forgiven your sins by faith, you have power over your sins by faith. That's what's so great. That's why I can't understand people getting depressed about it. It seems to be, it's the key to everything. That victory comes by faith as forgiveness came by faith. Whereas, so much of Christendom is saying, "Oh, forgiveness comes by faith but victory is just a hard old slogger for the rest of your life." It isn't.

Question 2: Why did it take you only 6 months to come through, when it took Watchman Nee many years?

Response from Rev. O'Neill:

Here's what I saw when I began to think about that at all. I saw, well, the Holy Spirit was good because he said there is only one thing in you that is concerned with something other than me and that is the old self. And, I saw that it was the old self again kind of trying to justify, or trying to be concerned or conscious, or trying to line up with somebody else. The old self is trying to persuade me that they did it this way, so maybe I can do it this way. Or they did it at this time, maybe I can do it at this time. Suddenly the Holy Spirit showed me, turn your eyes from that, that's the old self. I crucified you in myself and I alone can cleanse you when your eyes are upon me and upon me only.

Sister, I do think it's a matter of looking away from those unimportant issues. I got into that. I think part of the preoccupation with timing, part of the preoccupation with trying to prove that you're there by checking up how you're doing -- all of that is the self. The self is the part of us that is conscious of itself. And then I saw again that mystery, how that was crucified with Christ. There is no self to be conscious of itself. And, that's part of the freedom of it. At last, you're free from that part of yourself that is looking at yourself in the driving mirror and seeing, "How am I doing compared with Watchman Nee, or compared with somebody else?" So, it is a tricky thing. That old self, only the Holy Spirit can track that old self down. It is such a squirrely little thing, you know. He gets around you and you think you've got Him and then He's running behind you. And, oh boy, that helped me when I saw that only the dear Holy Spirit can get that self onto the Cross.

Question 3: If the sin is lodged within, is one truly born again?

Response from Rev. O'Neill:

It seems to me that you'd have to say that Jesus had an affection for Peter even though Peter denied him three times in a most obviously sinful way. It seems to me that Jesus regarded Peter as belonging to him. And, it seems that Paul does the same thing in I Corinthians 3:1. He says, "But I couldn't address you as spiritual men but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ." Verse 3b: "For while there is jealousy and strife among you." So, it seems that even in the New Testament, God regards people who are his children who are still having trouble with sins in their lives. And, I have tried to plow that line that you're suggesting. I have tried to plow that because often that was what drove me. Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin. Often, that kind of drove me on. I felt, boy, a child of God doesn't commit sin and I am committing sin. But, it seems to me we should be sharing this with each other as a glorious privilege that is available to us because of Jesus and that Jesus Himself will forgive us until seventy times seven. As long as we are able to confess and repent our sins.

So, while I am with you in the thrust of your question, yet, I think actually that the Law needs to be preached to us when we are out and out rebellious dirty sinners who hate God and don't care about anything. The Law is often the only thing that brings us to our senses. But, when you get us here, brothers and sisters, who actually want to be free from sin, I think God wants us to share this as a glorious privilege that is available to us. In other words, I think our conviction should be a conviction that comes from not wanting to hurt our Father, rather than from fear of hell. I think that's probably it.

Question 4: (inaudible)

Response from Rev. O'Neill:

Well, I just concluded that He meant I was to turn from sin in every form that I could see it in my life. And, if I found myself falling into it again, I should turn from it again. I should just keep turning from it as opposed to my old system which was a little bit rationalization. "Well, now, I commit this sin because I'm kind of an artistic personality and I'm particularly prone to this kind of thing." Or, "I commit this because I've got so used to it that really it doesn't seem sin to me anymore and, who knows, maybe it isn't sin." I found myself instead being very punctilious, very concerned. Is this sin? Then, I don't want anything to do with it. A great desire to abstain from even appearance of evil. So, it's as if God expects us to weigh everything we have, even though it's not enough, weigh everything we have in on his side. Side with God against self, side with God against self in every way you can, even though you still realize that that will not cleanse self. Only God can.

Question 5: (inaudible)

Response from Rev. O'Neill:

I asked the Holy Spirit to show me where self was hiding in my life. And, so, in dealing with frustration you have to realize that it isn't always instantaneous. It's very interesting that you in America are used to having things instant. You know, if you were in Ireland or in India, you'd realize things take a little longer. That's good and you're great -- you're the greatest nation on the earth and you get things done. But I noticed when it comes to this business of realizing that "the mills of God grind slowly but grind exceeding small". It seems to me when you come to God himself, the great Creator of the universe, there's a little bit of a tendency in you to snap to, [clicking his fingers] and let's have it. And that, of course, is the heart of being God yourself.

So, brother, I would just make that comment, by the by, that I think our society here tends to make us expect everything in a rather instant superficial fashion and maybe even our teachers and our parents actually have done us harm by giving us too many things fast. And we're not used to, therefore, having to do obeisance before the Lord of the universe.

But, what I also found was frustration, which was self. It was self that was frustrated. And, I suddenly realized, but wait -- that's what was crucified with Christ. Now, am I willing, not simply to be frustrated for the rest of my life, but why am I frustrated? Well, because God isn't doing it in my time and I know the right time. And, then I saw. Oh, you know the right time, do you? You're the God of the universe that knows the right time and then I saw that God was saying, "Now, you poor little snail, I alone know the right time. Now, are you willing to accept my timing?"

Brother, that was part of the condition. "Lord, if I'm 95 when this occurs, Lord whenever. If I have to stay here for the rest of my life on my knees, Lord, whatever, whatever. I want what you want for me." And working through all the wrong motives, such as I want this so as not to have so much trouble with myself. I saw that was self. Now, Lord, why should I want this? For my glory. Lord, help me to want it for YOUR glory. Show me why I still want my own glory. Show me if I'm willing never to be glorified. Even if people never look up to me, I'm willing for that. I want you alone.

So, brother, that's it. It's a deep thing. It's a tracking down of an old self that has not simply had years in our life to develop -- it has had centuries. We're dealing with original sin that has been bred into our race for centuries, brother. And, that's why it's such a massive thing. And I suppose that's why I've said to some of you, in fact, I was saying to Tim Fernstall at Jim's wedding yesterday. The Fernstalls, you know, were Catholics and I met them when I was teaching at Benilde High School. I was saying to Tim that, boy, I know there are some bad things about the authority of the Catholic Church and I know there are some ways in which you loved ones who were brought up Catholic felt it was a concrete monolithic structure that almost kept you from Jesus. But, one good thing was that it convinced you that God was always right.

And, I don't know how I got that in Northern Ireland because I was Protestant but somehow I got very clear in my mind that if there was one of us wrong, it wasn't God. And, so, Stanley Jones had that funny way, you know, he was quick with language and he said, "When God says to me, 'You're wrong', I say, 'You're right, Lord, I'm wrong.' I don't say, 'You're wrong, Lord, I'm right.'" And, it seems important that a basic condition of having God cleanse your heart by faith is that he is right. Lord, you are right. All the time, you are right. I can't expect you to snap to with this, Lord. If you're taking time doing this to me, then it must be because you need to take time and there must be stuff that you have to deal with.

So, brother, that was helpful to me, you see. I think, I tell you, loved ones, where I think some of you make an error. I think you think it's a technique that you work. I think you remember C.S. Lewis from his old middle English, you know, he lectured in middle English and he uses the word "maistry" and it's what the old druids used to conjure up spirits. You conjure it up by maistry or magic, mastery, you see. Mastery over the powers of evil and the powers of good. I think sometimes you loved ones think this is a technique to be worked. And I think you get irritated with yourself because you can't work it. And, it's not.

It's the dear Savior who has taken you into himself and has destroyed you with himself and has raised you up with himself and you're saying, Lord, I want to come up with you. I want to rise with you. I want to go down with you and I want to rise with you. Lord, show me, show me what of me you

took down to the tomb and what of me you raised up. It's a personal thing with our Savior, you see. Well, you don't get that by saying, SHOW ME, LORD, SHOW ME! You don't, you see. The attitude of a child of God is a love for their Savior and a realization, "Lord, there's more salvation that I can experience than I have experienced."

So, it's a glorious positive thing. If you get irritated about it, well, I think you're on the wrong track completely. And, if you get depressed over it, don't. Get despairing, certainly, I was despairing, you have to get despairing -- only blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. The Bible is full of that. Only when you have given your own hope up will God's hope come in. But, boy, don't get so irritated, that you give up. It's what Clyde said, if you get to a point where when Jesus speaks of the Cross, you say, I've had enough of that, I'll go to a happier church. You may go to a happier church and the people in that church may go to Heaven but you're putting yourself in a tricky spot. Where you're kind of saying, no, no, I don't want that. So, that's a wee bit hard for me to understand. I kind of feel, listen -- either this is right or it's wrong. Either it's written right through the Scripture and it's for us or it isn't written right through the Scripture and it's not for us. But, if it's right, we ought to go for it with all our hearts, even if we never get there. After all this, you go for truth. Whether you ever get there or not, you go for truth.