

Original Sin #1

Sermon Transcript by Reverend Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, I will speak a little and then maybe, if we have time, we'll be able to seek God a little for our own lives. The subject that we're talking about tonight is original sin. The connection original sin has with what we've been talking about these past Sunday evenings is that most of us here are concerned because we are Christians. We do believe that our sins are forgiven. We do know God. But, many of us here have found that we're unable to be what we believe he wants us to be. So, we have come against that experience that that dear old Jew, Paul, came against when he said, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." [Romans 7:15] Even though he was speaking as a Jew under the law, I think many of us here who are just old carnal Christians have found we are in the same position.

You remember that we've shared in past weeks that we attribute that to a personality that seems to have a law of its own going. You remember old Paul says that, too. He says, boy, I know what is good and I approve of it but I find another law at work in my members, he calls it, and he doesn't mean just the members of his body, you know, his arms and his legs, but he means his whole personality. I find another law at work in my whole personality and my mind and my emotions and my little eyes and my ears. That law is at work to make me obey the law of sin that seems to dwell there. [Romans 7:16-20]

We've shared in previous Sundays that that seems to be the problem with those of us who are carnal Christians. We do want to obey Jesus with all our hearts but we find that there seems to be another force at work inside our personalities. Of course, we have all shared that as the human nature inside us that has been so often used by this power of sin that it has become sinful itself. It's almost like an automobile that you're trying to put gasoline into and some guy came along and he converted it into a diesel engine and you don't know that. So, you're pouring the old gas in and you can't get any action out of it. You don't realize that the thing has been changed over into a diesel engine and it seems as if that's what's happened to us.

We have beautiful desires that Jesus' spirit has put in us since we were born of God and we want to express them through our minds and our emotions but we somehow find these minds and emotions wanting to do the very opposite. When we think we should be kind or patient with somebody, we find these minds and emotions doing the very opposite and losing their temper. It's like another law at work inside us and we have shared together in previous Sundays how that is just our sinful nature.

It's a nature that has been bred into us over the years and down through the centuries when Adam first rebelled against God. And it has become more and more subtle as it has passed down to us until now you and I have a human nature that is used to looking at the world as God, used to looking at each other as God. You know the struggle we all have over that one great concept that is so well known here in American society. You know the battle you have all had over this business, "Oh, I want people to like me." You know, it's kind of basic that we're meant to get our approval from God and to kiss good-bye to what everybody else thinks of us and yet you know how bound many of us, if not all of us, are here to this business that we want our friends to like us. We want our peers to like us. You want me to like you. We all want other people to like us. Now, that's part of the sinful nature, loved ones.

I know it. It may seem terrible, you know, to you to say that because we've learned in psychology, I learned it in educational psychology and in pastoral psychology, all this business of trying to get people to like you, but actually it's part of our sinful nature. It's our sinful nature that is, I've used the illustration to you before, you know, but it's like that little dog that we have and I'm sure you have them, too, and he's just delighted if I like him, you know. He'll do anything to get me to like him and we're so often like that, all of us with our tongues out like a dog. I'll do anything if you'll just like me. Praise me. Do you like me? I'll beg. I'll jump over. I'll roll over backwards. Then, of course, eventually, I'll deny my beliefs. I'll do anything to get you to like me. That's the sinful nature, you see. The sinful nature is all kinds of other trends inside it but basically the sinful nature is our personality working from the outside in, treating the world as God, treating things as God, treating other people as God, so that they become all important to us.

You can trace it through all kinds of examples. I won't draw it out but it's why some of us have such agony over marriage, you know. It's why we have such agony over marriage, both guys and girls. Because we are taught, marriage is the vital thing, the vital thing is having a husband or the vital thing is having a wife or having a wife that continues to like you or having a husband that continues to bow down to you. We're bound by that. So many of us, you know, both girls and guys, have real trouble obeying God because it might mean that we wouldn't marry at all or we wouldn't marry the one that we want to marry or that we enjoy being married to. That's part of the sinful nature, you see. It's this putting marriage in place of God instead of something that God may want us to do or may not want us to do to use as a ministry with another person. The sinful nature takes the things that are God's good gifts and puts them in place of God. That's what we mean by sinful nature, loved ones. We've said that the only answer to that sinful nature is what God did to it in Jesus. That's that great verse, Romans 6:6, "We know that our old self [sinful nature] was crucified with him." That is a revelation, you know. I know you know it and I am glad you know it and I know you know it there [mentally] and you will know it there [heart] when you have it all on the altar.

It's translated from there, from intellectual knowing, to spiritual experiential knowing by the willingness of the will to let go of that sinful nature. I know that sounds terrible. You'll think, oh, brother, I want rid of that sinful nature. But, loved ones, the fact is a lot of that sinful nature we have got used to and we quite like it and we hang on to it and some of it is absolutely deceiving to us. We can't recognize it. Now, what I would love to do this evening, I think it might help some of us and it might help me to hear God's voice a little better, if I'll just share with you that that depraved nature is what you and I inherited. That's what we were born with.

You know there's a verse that says we were born in sin, in sin did my mother conceive me. [Psalm 51:5] That's what it means. We inherited depravity, a totally depraved nature. Not totally depraved in that there was no goodness there at all because the Holy Spirit, because of Jesus' death, entered us and spoke to us through our consciences. But, as far as our whole human nature was concerned, it was totally depraved. There was depravity running all through it. Touch your mind, it's in some way depraved. Touch your emotions; they are in some way depraved. That's what we inherited from Adam.

Now, what produced that sinful nature? It is original sin. That's it. Original sin. So, some people say we inherited original sin. Well, in fact, we didn't. We inherited the depraved nature

that original sin produced. But, here's the interesting thing. Probably the same things that created the sinful nature in Adam originally are some of the things that prevent God delivering us from it in this present life. So, the fact is that, even though we do not inherit Adam's original sin, we do inherit his depraved nature and we probably are guilty of much of the same sins as he was guilty of in the beginning. That's what I'd like to share with you.

Would you like to look, loved ones, back then to that tragic day in the world as it's recorded there in Genesis. It's Genesis 2:9, "And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden." And, that is most likely the Holy Spirit. God gave to Adam and Eve the Holy Spirit, unconditionally. He gave the Holy Spirit to them. That's how they were able to communicate with God because they had the Holy Spirit within them. They were alive. "The tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Now, it seems that God made available the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. But, his desire was that Adam would live by eating of the tree of life. In other words, that Adam would live by the guidance and the intuition of the Holy Spirit and that he would not live by his own knowledge of good and evil.

Now, the meaning of those trees is given all kinds of interpretations. But, it does seem, loved ones, that what God wanted Adam to do, was to live by God's friendship. To live his life by the guidance that Adam got from God in the communion together. In other words, Adam would live by the life that came from God himself, by his whole spirit. So that Adam would walk along and he would just enjoy being with his God as he was in the garden, you remember, in the cool of the day and they would just talk together and, as they talked, Adam would know what God had in mind. As they talked and they fellowshiped together, Adam would become more like God because, just as husband and wife become more like each other, so Adam and God would share each other's qualities and each other's characteristics. That would be eating of the tree of life.

But, what Adam determined to do was to start managing his life by knowing what was good and what was evil himself. By starting to decide, "Hmmm, that would be good for me so I'll do that." "Hmmm, that would be evil for me so I'm going to avoid that." "Yeah, now, I'd like to do that. To do that, I'd need to know how to get this and how to avoid that. Yes, so I'll do that." In other words, he began to live by his own knowledge, by his own ability to manipulate the things in the world or people or circumstances so that he could get what he wanted. Do you see that by doing that he subtly changed the kind of person he was? He ceased to be a little child who was depending on his God and he in a way became a kind of god himself. He became a kind of manipulating and managing person who made things happen. A great part of original sin was that failure to simply have faith in God and to start putting faith in himself and his own ability to do what was good for him and avoid what was evil. Not realizing that there were a million things working through the power of Satan in the world that he would not be able to recognize we're evil at all.

Almost getting back to Greg's illustration of the coffee, it's that the coffee was bad for him, not bad for all of us. There's no law in the Bible about not drinking coffee but there are a million coffee things that look okay. There doesn't seem to be any harm in them. Coffee isn't evil and there are a million coffee things in our lives. If you're not walking by faith, listening to the Father and listening to him and obeying him but you're instead working with the old knowledge that you have. "Well, now, wait a minute, there's nothing wrong with coffee. There certainly isn't and I don't see anything wrong with that." It's not long before you're beginning to calculate your own good and evil. Do you see, the issue wasn't, do you notice that, the issue wasn't that there was a tree of good and a tree of evil? The issue wasn't that instead of eating of the tree of good, Adam

ate of the tree of evil. That wasn't the issue. Do you see that?

In a funny way, I don't want to be blasphemous, but in a funny way God isn't interested in good and evil. He isn't actually interested in the guys that wear the black hats and the guys that wear the white hats. He isn't concerned with actually whether you do the good or whether you do the evil. That's the strange thing. He's concerned with do you trust him. Do you trust Him and do you listen to Him and do you live by the life that comes from him to you in your fellowship in your prayer together? Or, do you live a life that is based on your own knowledge of the good and your own knowledge of the evil, on your own ability to avoid what is bad in your opinion for yourself and to get what is good in your opinion for yourself?

Loved ones, that's the heart of the original sin that Adam committed against God. Now, of course, the incredible thing is that you and I have got so used to this. That actually even as we talk about it, you know it's quite difficult for me to make the point clear. Because you and I aren't seeing the real issue. In fact, you know I know exactly the things that you say when you come up here afterwards. Well, you have to know what's good and what's evil, of course, you have. But, that isn't the issue. As we go through life, we certainly find out what is good and what is evil but the fact is that still isn't the basic guide that God wants us to follow because it's not fine enough. It's not true enough. The fact is that once you're born of God and you forsake the plain sins that are talked about in the Bible, you move into a new realm with the Father. A realm where he has a special plan for your life that will bring you into fullness of his Son and the plan that he has for your life is different from the plan he has for my life and different from the plan that he has for the life of the person beside you. So, you may actually have to forsake a thousand coffees and maybe the guy beside you can drink a thousand coffees.

But, the issue is, have you started to discern were that original sin may be something that rules your life? That's the thing that prevents the Holy Spirit coming in his fullness into you. One book that helps in regard to this business of walking by faith as opposed to walking by your own cleverness or your own knowledge is this book, *The Calvary Road* by Roy Hession. Hession puts it another way. He says, "There are things that prevent the Holy Spirit coming upon you in his fullness and his cleansing power to deliver you from your sinful nature. They are probably the things that are the very opposite of what you see in the Lamb that was slain." Or, to put it another way, he says, "If you want the Holy Spirit to come in and fill your heart and cleanse you, if you want to be delivered from your sinful nature, then you have to be willing to abide in the Lamb as he hangs there on the cross." You'll notice that he begins to deal with these things, of the knowledge of good and evil. "How clear then that the Holy Spirit will only come upon us and remain upon us as we are willing to be as the Lamb on each point on which he will convict us. Nothing is so searching and humbling as to look at the Lamb on his way to Calvary and to be shown in how many points we have been unwilling to take the position of the Lamb for him." Because if our old self was crucified with Christ, it can only be crucified in reality in us if we're willing for it to be crucified and willing to be crucified with him.

"Look at him for a moment as the Lamb. He was the simple Lamb. A lamb is the simplest of God's creatures." I don't know if you know that great, dear poem that William Blake wrote. He was the man that wrote *And Did Those Feet in Ancient Times Walk Upon England's Mountains Green*. He wrote a hymn we used to sing as children. "Little lamb, who made thee? Little lamb who made thee?"

[*The Calvary Road*] "A lamb is a very simple creature. It has no schemes or plans for helping itself -- it exists in helplessness and simplicity." The original sin was Adam's reluctance. No, I'm not

going to suffer that whether you want me to or not. I'm going to use my clever knowledge of good and evil to avoid this. Now, loved ones, there are some things that God can only work in us if we'll trust him, instead of using our own cleverness to shave down the cross until it's light enough for us to carry. When it's light enough for us to carry, it'll no longer take us into the tomb and we'll no longer come into resurrection. "It has no schemes or plans for helping itself. Jesus made Himself as nothing for us and became the simple Lamb. He had no strength of His own or wisdom of His own, no schemes to get Himself out of difficulties."

There are some things you ought to work out and you ought to work out how you're going to pay for certain things. There are plain things you ought to work out but it's not those. No schemes to get himself out of difficulties. Always the old eye to the main chance. How am I going to get myself out of this because I don't really want to get into it? It's more of a commitment than I want. How am I going to get myself out of this? I commit myself to this person, commit myself to...how am I going and how much of our life do we spend with the old knowledge of good and evil trying to manipulate our way out of difficulties? Just simple dependence on the Father all the time. Do you see that? It greatly simplifies your life, of course. All this wasn't certainly what I thought I would get myself into. It wasn't what I intended. But, Lord, I'm not going to play the clever manipulator. I meant it. Lord, I hand it into your hands. That's the Lamb. The Lamb trusts the Father and trusts him to lead him through it. The Son can do nothing of himself but what he sees the Father do.

But, we, how complicated we are. Think why we had such, I suppose, both condemnation and sympathy for Nixon. He just told so many lies he couldn't remember which lie he told last. We feel the same. Sometimes you say so many things that you can't remember, you can't find yourself back through the labyrinthine ways that you had traveled. How complicated we are. "What schemes we have had of helping ourselves and of getting ourselves out of difficulties. What efforts of our own we have resorted to, to live the Christian life and to do God's works." [The Calvary Road] Well, that's original sin.

Starting to be God over even your service of God. Of course, there's a place there that the Holy Spirit is to bring you into. I can describe this and I know you are catching some of it but, do you see, the Holy Spirit, himself, can lay you gently on the Cross. There's a place where you're just to be. It's different from where I have to be. But, it's just right for you. The Holy Spirit just knows exactly where that attitude of original sin exists in you and he can lay you right on the Cross just where that will be crucified. That's the exciting thing, of course, about coming into full consecration. It's not something that you can do yourself. Half the stuff you can't see but the Holy Spirit can show you.

"Willing to be shorn. Then he was the shorn Lamb, willing to be shorn of his rights, his reputation and every human liberty that was due to him. He never resisted. A lamb never does. When He was reviled for our sakes, he reviled not again. When he suffered, he threatened not. He never said, 'You cannot treat me like that. Don't you know that I am the Son of God?'" You see, the sinful nature, it's so much a part of us, it's almost the red-blooded American. You stand up for yourself. It's our dignity. We must stand up. There is a deep way in which we're not to be doormats but we could probably be a lot more a doormat than we are. Actually, the truth is when a person is willing to be, he's exalted. He who is willing to be humbled, God exalts. It's actually those of us who are always fighting to defend ourselves and prevent other people walking over us, we're doing that forever. We're never like Moses, a man meek above every man that was upon the face of the earth because he trusted God. That's part of the sinful nature that we bear. "But, we, on how many

occasions have we been unwilling to be shorn of that which was our right. We were not willing for his sake to lose what was our own. We insisted, too, that we should be treated with the respect due to our position. We resisted and we fought."

"Then further, he was the silent Lamb. 'As a sheep before our shearer's is dumb, so he opened up not his mouth.' Facing the calumnies of men, we read, 'He answered nothing.' He never defended himself nor explained himself. But we have been anything but silent when others have said unkind or untrue things about us. Our voices have been loud in self-defense and self-vindication and there's been anger in our voices. We have excused ourselves when we should have admitted frankly our wrong. On every such occasion the Dove had to take his flight, [the Holy Spirit had to take his flight] and withdraw his peace and blessing from our hearts because we were not willing to be the silent the lamb." So, loved ones, that's it.

The sinful nature is something that has become so much part of us. We've defended it in our educational system. We've defended it to each other. We've said that's health and it's not. It's the sinful nature and the fact is when we trust God, when we live off the tree of life, not this knowledge of good and evil that worldly wisdom has produced, then, the Holy Spirit is able to deliver us from this sinful nature and things begin to flow again. Of course, if any of you doubt will God take care of us? You see, you see, where is Jesus now, where is Jesus now? Where is Paul now? Where are the disciples who became the off-scouring and the refuse under men's feet? Where are they now? Of course, God takes care of us.

"No grudges. He was also the spotless Lamb. Not only did nothing escape his lips, but there was nothing in his heart but love for those who had sent him to the Cross. There was no resentment towards them, no grudges, no bitterness. Even as they were putting the nails through his hands, he was murmuring, 'I forgive you,' and he asked his Father to forgive them, too. He was willing to suffer it in meekness for us. But, what resentment and bitterness have not we had in our hearts towards this one and that one and over so much less than what they did to Jesus." So, loved ones, we should ask the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit will you show me how much of this sinful nature I regard as the normal human life? And, how much of this original sin that Adam engaged in when he refused to eat of the tree of life, how much of that attitude have I in my own heart? How much am I eating of the knowledge of good and evil?"

Loved ones, that's why I think many of us do not have victory. I know you want victory but we want it with the old equipment, with the old apparatus, with the old knowledge of what is good and what is evil, with the old cleverness, the old manipulating, still in charge. It's incredible, you know.

We'll be 80 or 90 and we'll still be up there fighting trying to control the thing. Really, God wants us to take our place in Jesus which he has given us and to allow all his attitude to become ours. The Holy Spirit can show you where you are not doing that and he can show me, show us where that attitude of original sin is still operating in us. Only he can do it. Of course, that's only a little of it and the Holy Spirit can search it out in your heart. But, loved ones, it does bring peace at last. What you are is two people in one dear breast, you know, really. Two people in one dear body, that's what you are. Jesus and the old self, still up there fighting. He is saying, "Let's lay it to rest. Let me create a new personality that can do what I want to do in your life." He can do that tonight. He can do it the moment you are willing to let it all go.

Dear Lord Jesus, we are horrified when we see what you are like and what we are like. Lord, we confess that we have defended this stuff. Lord, we have used these very words ourselves. "Well, you have to stand up for yourself. People will walk over you if you don't stand up for yourself."

Lord, we see we've not only stood up for ourselves in places where we should but we've stood up for ourselves against you and against things that you wanted us to bear. At times, we've so stood up for ourselves that we've stood on top of other people. We see how your dear Holy Spirit, you as a Dove, can land only on someone that is as gentle as a lamb. We have been un-lamblike in our attitude. Lord God, we confess that we have eaten of this tree of knowledge of good and evil and we run a great deal of our lives by what we think we should do and what we think we shouldn't do. Often we come in as an advocate into court and we'll have a controversy with you over it. Lord, we see how ridiculous it is. That a tiny creature like us should come in against the Maker of the world and start telling him what is right and what's wrong.

Father, we see that you know things about us that nobody else knows. You have fine distinctions about what are right and wrong for us that we will never see and we can only come into truth if we trust you and if we draw close to you. You have said that if we draw near to God, God will draw near to us. Lord, we would spend more time in our closet with you to discover where this sinful nature is hiding within us. Savior, we would ask you by the Holy Spirit to show us where you want us on that Cross with you. We ask you to take our hands, our feet, our minds and our emotions and lay them in yourself on that Cross just where you destroyed them and renewed them. Lord, we would ask you to do that. It's safe to seek you tonight when we go home, we seek you here after the service, we seek you each day, Lord, until you get us into that right place with yourself on the Cross because we want rid of this sinful nature. We want to be delivered from it and we want to live like you. Lord, we thank you that the best thing each of us can do to help each other is to seek you for ourselves with all our hearts and we would commit ourselves to doing that until every vestige of this sinful nature is exposed to our glance and then we know faith will spring up in our hearts to receive the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection. Lord, we give ourselves to you for this pilgrimage and for this search during this coming week for Jesus' sake. Now the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and ever more. Amen.