

Original Sin #2

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, it's good to clarify again that on these Sunday evenings we're talking about the problem that many of us have who are children of God. That is the problem that we have with inward sin. Outwardly we manage to obey God in most things and even when temper rises, we manage often to hold it down. Or, when we do something, we at least have the sense to repent and to stop it. But often what hampers our steps is the feeling that this inward sin is still inside. It's still writhing about and wriggling and trying to get out.

That's often what causes many of us as Christians to walk with strain and often in defeat because repeatedly this inward sin breaks out. What we're talking about these Sunday evenings is the possibility of being delivered from that, being freed from it, so that you are able to walk in obedience from your heart, naturally, by the power of God within you.

What we have said up to now is that there are two problems involved. Or, there are two reasons for this inward sin. I could give an example from my own experience as a European coming to America. In Britain, we drive on the left hand side of the road, which is the right hand side; no, it's not. It's the wrong side. But, we drive on the left hand side of the road and our steering wheels are therefore on the right hand side of the car.

If you take and you bring that car to America and you have to then start driving on the right hand side of the road, you find yourself with your steering wheel next to the pedestrians on the sidewalk and it actually is quite difficult. It will surprise you. I know because we would do the same. We would take the Irish car to France and there they drive on the same side of the road as America. You find yourself with your right hand wheel driving on the right hand side of the road. And you think of trying to pass a semi when you're on the inside like that. It is impossible. You go inside and you try to look up the inside and then you whip right out but half of your car is out on the other side of the road before you can tell whether anybody is coming the other way or not.

So, you can see, you have a real problem with equipment there. You have the wrong kind of equipment. You need a left hand wheel car for right hand roads, or right hand side of the road, and you need a right hand wheel car for driving on the left side of the road. If you ever mix those up, it really is very, very hard going. Not impossible. But, it is very hard going.

It's the wrong kind of equipment. That's what we've been saying. We find ourselves with what the Bible calls a body of sin---minds, emotions, and personalities, even bodies that are used to depending on people and things and circumstances. Now that God's Spirit has come into our hearts, he wants us to depend on him. But, we have a personality that has been trained and disciplined and, indeed, we would say perverted through depending on men and circumstances and things for the things we were meant to get from God.

One of the needs we have is to take the right hand wheel car back to the manufacturer and get him to change the wheel to the other side. In other words, he has to take out what is there and he has to put back in what is needed. We have shared often that that's what God did in Jesus on Calvary. That

we have an old self here that is perverted through having depended on people and things and circumstances for what we should get from God and what we need is to take that back in and have it absolutely melted down and remade.

That's what we've been sharing happened in Jesus. When Paul says in Romans 6:6, "Our old self was crucified with Christ." He means that. Our old self that was brought up to depend on the world that was crucified with Christ so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

However, the second step is I can bring the car over here and I can take it back to Ford, if it's Ford, and they can put the wheel on the proper side of the car and then I have a matter of will that I have to decide. Am I going to join you or am I going to try to beat you? That is, am I going to drive on the left hand side of the road or am I going to drive on the right hand side of the road? I think overall the sheer weight of numbers eventually forces you onto the right hand side of the road. You do see that even though you've got the right equipment, you have to decide am I going to use it the way it was meant to be used.

That's the second factor that we have to deal with in coming into the fullness of the Spirit. Are you actually willing to live dependent on God? God Himself has already destroyed you and remade you in Jesus so that you are able to do it. But, are you actually willing to do it? That, I think, is what takes up a lot of the time in seeking the fullness of the Spirit. It is pretty easy to see Romans 6:6, "Our old self was crucified with Christ." But, the issue is do we want to live dependent on God and not on people and circumstances and things.

Loved ones, that is the issue of original sin. Original sin was Adam and Eve's original decision to live independent of God. Sin is the power of Satan that manages to pervert the world so that you can live in some fashion apart from God. Original sin was the original moment when our great forefather resolved that he would depend on that independent life and he would live dependent on Satan's perversion of the world instead of on God.

Now, what I thought we might do just for the last time this evening is look again at the heart of that original sin as that is the second great factor that determines our ability to enter into the fullness of the Spirit.

Now, maybe you'd glance at it, Loved ones, as we did last Sunday back in Genesis 2. You remember that the two trees were set forth there and I'll just mention this briefly because we've spent so much time on it last Sunday but 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 the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Those were the two trees and God intended us, to live by his life rather than by our knowledge of good and evil.

You can get a very clear illustration of it if you look at Hebrews 11. It's the chapter that we read this morning a little. Hebrews 11:7, "By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household." That's living by life. That's living by depending on God for guidance as to what you should do. He has to use his head to get the nails into the wood and to measure the whole thing up and to make sure that it doesn't flop over once he puts it in the water. He has to use his mind to work the thing out in deductive detail but the actual direction comes from God and he acts by faith in God's inner direction.

Now, that's as opposed to the old knowledge of good and evil. You remember, that Negro spiritual, I

don't know how it goes but, you remember, all his neighbors are supposed to come along and say, wow, you're building that silly ark, you know, the sun is shining, there's no danger of a flood and old Noah says, oh, yeah, there's going to be a flood and the neighbors say, no, no, it won't happen.

Now, that's walking by knowledge of good and evil. You try to work out yourself how to live your life best and how to make what money you need to and how to fulfill yourself and how to be satisfied in this world by your own knowledge of what is good and evil. You determine yourself, oh, yeah, that looks good; oh, no, that looks evil; oh, yeah, I think I'd like to do that job; no, I don't think I'd like to do that job; oh, I think I'd like to live there. That's knowledge of good and evil, you see.

It's not that you don't accumulate a lot of knowledge of good and evil as you go through life. That's why the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was in the garden. You acquire it through your own experience of God's guidance to you in prayer so that you repeatedly move by faith and gradually you begin to understand, "Oh, this is the way God works." You build up a knowledge of the way he works, not a knowledge of the way men and women have manipulated the world.

So, there are two very different kinds of knowledge. One comes through living by God's life. The other comes by trying to manipulate the world without any dependence upon God. Now, Hebrews 11 was full of the same kind of thing because in verse 17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named."

Now, if he had used his own knowledge of good and evil, he would say, now listen I have waited long for this son and this is the son that my Father promised me by which I would be able to people the world. Now, some voice within me is telling me to offer him up as a sacrifice. If he had used his own knowledge of good and evil, he would have said, "No way will I do that!" But, verse 19; he considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead and figuratively speaking he did receive him back. God wants us to walk by his life.

Loved ones, I would just ask you again then to allow the Holy Spirit to search your own heart as to which way you walk in your everyday life. I think many of us feel a deadness and an emptiness in our lives frankly because we walk no different from the rest of the world. We don't. We decide it's cold today so I'll put on this coat and I get out and I get into the car and I drive to work.

Most things we just go by the old knowledge of good and evil that everybody else is going by. Do you not think that's why our witnessing lives are probably so dead? Because we don't really go out in the morning with an attitude of the Father, "Father, I know there's someone that I'm going to meet this day that you're going to open up a conversation with where I can share you." So, there is nothing left to chance in our lives. It's not chance, obviously, it's God's providence. But we leave no room for God. There's a verse that says, "Make no provision for the flesh." Well, we make no provision for the Spirit. We live strictly by our knowledge and understanding of good and evil and we never leave room for this whole realm of faith.

Indeed, we don't go out on the days we work in a spirit of faith in God, in a spirit of kind of excitement. Lord, what are you going to do today? Anything could happen today. I could lose my job today. I could get another job today. I could bring my boss to Jesus today. I could see a miraculous answer to my prayers for finances today.

But, instead of that, we grind ourselves down to the old knowledge of good and evil. That's why; do you not think so many children of God are so boring and so unexciting that really they walk like the children of this world, pretty dead, pretty worn out? "Yonder see the morning blink; the sun is up, and up must I, to wash and dress and eat and drink and look at things and talk and think and work, and God knows why." [A.E. Houseman, 1859-1936]

That's it. We just feel the same as the children of this world. That's original sin, that's original sin. It's an attitude; it's a subtle attitude, isn't it? Where you live your life by the old knowledge of good and evil and not by this life that's streaming from God today. Lord, you have new life for me today and I'm anxious to receive it and I'm anxious to start going out on limbs for you today by faith.

Maybe I'll just put one more question to you. Do you ever do anything that you don't calculate? Do you? Do you ever do anything that you don't calculate? Do you ever do anything that's unusual? Do you? Well, it is amazing, how many of us would say, "Well, I don't have much time. I have a whole lot of things to do."

So, we live our life doing a whole lot of things but never living by this life that comes from the Father. It's quite interesting how varied nature is. There are a lot of birch trees that look the same until you look close to them and then there's no birch tree the same. The same with a lot of daffodils. They all differ at least the place where they're positioned or the way the leaves are bent or the petals are bent. But, it's amazing how in nature so many things are the same at first glance but there's always a difference.

Except when you come to men and women, they can be so boringly the same because they eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and not of the tree of life. So, loved ones, there's something there I think. I'm not too good at explaining it. I can only give you a hint of it that I have seen in my own life. There is a difference between living by this life that comes from God and this knowledge of good and evil stuff.

The second part of the original sin, loved ones, is seen there in Genesis 2:16-17. It's pretty plain and straight and has no subtleties to it. Genesis 2:16-17, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'" It's a direct command. Plain enough. Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You'll die if you do. Genesis 3:6, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate." Disobedience. Just plain disobedience.

So, the original sin involved just plain disobedience. You need to look and I need to look for plain disobedience in our lives towards God. Then, when you find the disobedience, ask the Holy Spirit to show you why it's there and usually it's there because you don't really trust him in some way. We disobey God because we don't really trust him so he tells you, "Don't worry about marriage, and don't worry about getting the right girl or the right guy. I will lead you. I will be faithful to you. I love you too much to leave this most important part of your life alone so I have it planned."

We believe, but we don't believe. Well, yeah, yeah, well, well, maybe for those great servants of God, or maybe for Isaac and the patriarchs. But, we don't trust him and that's why we disobey.

That's why we start with the little telescopes out looking for the right girl or the right guy or we start trying to maneuver friendships that are good in themselves but we try to turn them into something that they're not. So, we disobey God because we don't trust him.

Loved ones, we need to ask ourselves to what extent original sin exists in us in that way. By disobedience because we don't trust him because there's distrust in us? I would ask you is there distrust in you deep, deep down? Is there a distrustful attitude towards God? A distrustful attitude. A feeling of anxiety when things aren't going well. That's it.

That's just what it is. Some of us here say, oh, well, that's normal, that's natural. If things aren't going well, you get anxious about whether they'll turn out all right. No. No, that's carnal to do that. The fact is you know that God is in charge of the universe and you know that he's everything organized according to the counsel of his will and you either trust him in that or you distrust him.

I just push you a little. We're no dummies. I don't step off this stage unless there's somewhere else to step. I'm not dumb. I don't step out into space there. I only step off this stage if there's somewhere else to step. I don't distrust this stage unless I trust somewhere else. See, that's the other side of disobedience and distrust. We distrust God because we'd rather trust ourselves. We put trust in ourselves.

Loved ones, you need to ask the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit, is there any way in which I trust myself more than.....? It just startles you, doesn't it? More than God? But, that's it. It's unbelievable. You can't, it's so ridiculous, but that's it, loved ones. The only reason you or I ever disobey God is because we trust ourselves more than God. Apart from the whole intellectual stupidity of it, it brings tears to your eyes, that you or I trust ourselves more than we trust God.

Nothing could be a greater insult or more pain to a father's heart than that. He holds up all the planets and then he sees this little fly that we are who trust ourselves more than we trust him. Loved ones, are you distrustful of God? Is there a distrustful attitude in you to things? If you have an area of defeat in your life, it can be because there is some of this attitude of original sin inside you that causes you to be distrustful. Especially, those besetting sins that we talk about, we fall the same thing again and again and again and again.

That's usually because there is a whole area where you just are governing it yourself. Where you're not trusting God at all. So, seek that out and then the Holy Spirit wants you, of course, to be willing to move into obedience there. That's another part of it, loved ones. I just want to go through it because I want to touch each of these and let the Holy Spirit apply it to your heart.

Genesis 3:1-3, "Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" Actually that's the beginning of original sin -- listening to the suggestion. Because what the serpent is doing is he's questioning, now is that what God said? It's the old bluff; I didn't hear him quite well. Is that what he said? Except that you know fine well. You heard him very well. But you think now, now did God mean that, I wonder?

Well, that's the beginning of original sin. Do you see that? I mean questioning what God has told you is the beginning of sneaking behind a tree of the garden. It's the beginning of sneaking away

into the possibility of doing it your own way. I would encourage us all to see that the very questioning of God's word to you is the beginning of original sin and it's the thin end of the wedge. If you say to me, "Well, brother, do you mean I should just turn away without -- should I not find out what it's all about? Boy, I'd turn, I'd run fast. I think you should.

I think we all have a fair idea when we're near something questionable and don't you think whatever is not of faith is sin? How can a questionable thing be of faith? If the thing is doubtful, now, such as, should I eat meat or maybe I shouldn't eat meat, or should I drink or should I not drink? If the thing is questionable, why touch it? Why go anywhere near it? Unless you really hope that somehow you might be allowed to do it. That very attitude is a lack of full and complete faith. It's a lack of confidence in the Father's faithfulness and love. That's really what it is. This is what this was, you know. I wonder if there are any other good trees that he's prevented us having. Maybe there are some really good grapefruit trees around that he has not allowed us to use. It's that kind of thing. Yeah, that's right; I wonder did God really mean it? Well, maybe there's something over the fence that's nice.

Loved ones, that's original sin and I think many of us get ourselves into real trouble because it's a chain reaction. It is. It's the old nuclear explosion business. Once the first explosion occurs, you can't stop the rest. So often the only place to stop original sin is right at that moment. Genesis 3:2, "And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden.'" No, he didn't say that. "Neither shall you touch it, lest you die." Because there were two trees in the midst of the garden, you remember. God said specifically, look, it's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden that I don't want you to eat of.

But, Eve became involved in this rationalization and subtlety she changes God's original command. Now, I think that's the tendency of us in original sin. Just switch it a little. Now, do you see, the stupid thing about the whole business is the issue is not what is right or what is wrong? The issue is not which tree to eat of. That's not the issue. The issue is the attempt to rationalize away God's right to tell you exactly what to do and have you trust him to do it exactly and instantaneously. That's the problem, loved ones.

We often get ourselves into trouble, with due respect to lawyers, by taking the old lawyer/attorneys' attitude, "Now, now is this what you said?" The Father is saying, "Look, I told you what to do. Now I expect you to trust me. I love you more than anybody else. I want the very best for you. I expect you to trust me, not to question me."

Loved ones, I think in our own lives, original sin can show itself in that kind of questioning attitude and that uncertainty. Probably it's true, isn't it, behind that again is the feeling, well, I want the best, you know? I want to get the best for myself. I want to get the best. I'm just anxious that God has really given me the best. Well, what right have we to have the best? If God chooses to give us the worst, he has that right. But his worst for us will always be better than our judging of what is best.

What we do is we get back into the judgment of the knowledge of good and evil. That's what this whole argument is about. Now, are you giving us the good and not the evil? Well, God says, you leave that to me. I'm telling you what to do, now do it. No, brothers and sisters, our lives would be much less complex if we would just obey God. Even if it meant we were going to be single for the rest of our lives or if it meant we were going to be poor or if it meant we were going to be unpopular. It

would be far better. Life comes into great simplicity when you start obeying God. That's another part of original sin, loved ones.

Then, Genesis 3:4, "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die.'" You will not die. That's part of original sin. The whole world is bent on proving that it's not dying. That's it. The whole world is bent on proving that it's not dying. And if conscience troubles then the tranquilizer is popped in and that tries to get away the feeling of death. Deep conviction of sin comes in, and then you read a book that kind of talks up your self image. At all costs, you try to prove that you're not dying, that you're not going to die and that you're not under sentence of death.

There's an attitude of original sin that is not prepared to die and is not prepared to bear any of the pain of death. In fact, death isn't so bad. Jesus went through it and we'll be called to go through it. Death isn't so bad. But original sin doesn't want death and it won't believe God that you will die if you do this thing. That's another side to it. God says if you do that, if you speak to that person in this way or if you turn the page of that book, or if you buy that book or if you go to that movie or if you don't get up tomorrow morning for prayer, you will die. There will be a death will begin its work in you.

Original sin won't believe that. Original sin believes, no, I can do that thing and not die. In fact, you can't, you can't. You lose out. A little bit of you dies. A little bit of the alive, vivid sense of God dies when you disobey whatever he has told you to do. My heart goes out to you, you know, if you feel, oh, I don't feel the joy of God's presence. I don't feel great praise in my prayer time or I'd love to come to that prayer meeting but it's a quarter of an hour of prayer. That gets kind of boring. It's dead. I can't feel life in it. Well, it's because of all the little times when you've disobeyed you've begun to die inside and you feel no life inside you.

If a man or a woman begins to obey God in every detail, they'll somehow begin to sense a new life coming inside them. What numbers of us are trying to do...we had song, I'm H-A-P-P-Y, I'm H-A-P-P-Y, I know I am, I feel I am. I've never sung it since I was seven but I remember that's the way it went. I think a lot of us are like that. I'm happy, I'm happy, I'm happy, I'm happy, I'm happy, I'm happy, I'm happy and, if I'm not happy I'm going to sing another good hymn to make myself happy and, if I'm not happy then, I'm going to go to another good preacher and I'll hear him and he'll make me happy.

Because there isn't a rising of joy and delight from a conscience that is clean. So often original sin is trying to prove I won't die, I won't die. I can play fast and loose with God's commands and I won't die. You die anyway. He has set it up so that you die as you give vent to this little bit of disobedience.

Just, I think, about one more, loved ones. Genesis 3:5, something more in this original sin, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Original sin has in it a great deal of the attitude I am God. I won't go over a whole lot of illustrations, but the most obvious one, of course, to a husband, but you can do it with your friend, is when you're going out to the store for the Saturday shopping and you've told your wife, now we leave at such and such a time, and you're there in the car and it's running. She is not there yet. You're waiting and you push the accelerator a little but it doesn't make any difference and then, at last, she comes out and you firmly shut the door. Firmly. It's all because you have the feeling, it's silly when you think of it, I know the perfect time this caravan should hit this road. I have set it. I have written it in stone. I am God. You were not here at that proper time and I have the right to take it out on you.

It's the same whether it's with our roommates and where the socks go or where the laundry goes. It's the same attitude. We have the feeling, we have the right to determine what everybody else will do that comes anywhere near us. It's that feeling that we are God and we have the right to have our way and we have the right to be respected.

Loved ones, we aren't God and actually we have no rights. You and I are so evil inside that we have even no right to be on this earth. That's why God took us right off it in his Son, Jesus. The moment, strangely enough, it's not, you know, what so many say. So many say, "Oh, if you treat yourself like that, you'll be all worked up with inferiority complex." No, if you treat yourself as God treats you, suddenly you'll come into reality. If you cease to treat yourself like God and you treat yourself as an ordinary little creature, an ordinary little child of God, who has no rights to anything that he doesn't give us, then there begins to come peace into our hearts.

The last one (I promise this is the last one!) is Genesis 3:6, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate." And, you know how it goes. So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food. We need food, shelter, clothing, housing, and we so often feel that security that we get from those things. We'll get it from the world, we'll get it from our salaries, we'll get it from our bosses, we'll get it from our wives, our husbands, our friends, but we'll get it somehow from the things of this world. We'll get security.

You remember, Howard Hughes, the pitiful sight as he even failed to get it despite all his money. And, that it was a delight to the eyes, and we say we want happiness, we want happiness. We'll get it from this world somehow. We'll buy a faster car. We'll go out with a different kind of girl. We'll have more fun somehow or other. We will delight ourselves. We'll use the circumstances of this world. We'll have good vacations. We'll somehow delight ourselves. We'll get happiness.

If the tree was to be desired to make one wise, somehow people are going to treat us as important and we're going to show them that we're important and we're going to manipulate them by our minds to make ourselves seem important in their eyes. Really, that's the heart probably of original sin. Looking to the world for all the things that we're to get from God only.

I would encourage you to do what I did. I asked the Holy Spirit, "Will you show me, Holy Spirit, where original sin still exists in my attitude and will you track this down and will you search it out and expose it to me until I am sick and sore and tired of it? I'm so desperate that I am willing for that terrible remedy that you have provided for my complete destruction in Jesus and my complete recreation as you want me to be."

Loved ones, that's what I did. Some of you have asked, "Well, how long did it take?" Well, really, it's as long as you want it to take. It can take months or it can take just tonight. But, frankly, the heart of it is that a man or a woman finally allows God to be God in their lives and ceases to try to be God themselves. They begin to depend on him and to want nothing more than he will give them.

That's the heart of original sin. It's wanting from the world what you want to have instead of being content to have from God whatever much or whatever little he wants you to have. Loved ones, I pray for you and ask you to pray for yourselves and to seek God's Spirit because those are only the hints

of it. You have to ask him, "Holy Spirit, show me where I am like that -- show me where original sin is still part of my willful attitude. Lord, I want to change it."

I just kept looking at it and I kept using words of scripture to show me how wrong I was. How me and God could not exist in the same universe while I have that attitude. So, do that. Use the words of scripture and the sword of the Spirit to cut into that original sin that is in your heart. Because, loved ones, on the surface, we're nice people but really deep down we are monstrosities. We are. We are just monstrous rivals of God if we could have our way. That's where all the trouble comes from.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, we can see ourselves in some of these things. Oh, blessed Holy Spirit, we know that no man can show us through the labyrinthine complicated ways of our own minds. Lord, any of us here who are even 17 or 18 years of age, let alone 20 or 30, 40 or 50 or 60, Lord, just a few years are enough for us to become too complicated for any psychiatrist to follow us, or for any friend to help us. So, Lord, we would come to you and the Counselor that you have sent us, the Holy Spirit. And Holy Spirit our Lord Jesus promised that you would lead us into all truth and that you would convince us of our sin. We would ask you as we meditate on these verses in Genesis, we would ask you to apply them to our lives and to show us the depths of our own hearts. Take us down that journey that Conrad [Joseph Conrad, 1857-1924] talked about, into the heart of darkness. We would ask you, Holy Spirit, to take us to the ground of our hearts until we can find our feet.

Lord, so often we've thought we had our feet on the ground of our heart but suddenly we found them sinking again into greater depths of complexity and of selfish subtlety. So, Holy Spirit, we ask you, will you take us to the ground of our hearts until we have laid everything before our God and have, at last, sensed the witness of the Spirit? That's the end. That's it all. Now, allow it all to be crucified with Christ and accept God's will for your life. Lord, we know that the moment we say that, in all honesty as the Spirit witnesses to us, that moment, blessed Holy Spirit, you will be able to make real in us the deliverance from self that has taken place in Jesus on Calvary. Lord Jesus, we will be at home with you on your Cross or off it, in the tomb or out of it, wherever you are, we will be content to be there with you. And with that contentment comes joy beyond anything that man has ever felt. Lord, we thank you. Thank you for your blessed plan. Dear Lord, we would give ourselves to you this night to seek the fullness of the Spirit at home and throughout this week for your glory.