

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, we're dealing with the central problem of the Christian life for everyone who has been born of God. That is the contrast between their inner life and their outer life. That's what we've been talking about for many Sundays.

The fact that many of us feel good desires within us that Jesus puts there because his Spirit has come into us. But, we find that within us, also, are evil desires that remind us of our old life. So, it seems as if there are two people in one body and we feel very much like Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde. There is a Dr. Jekyll that outwardly, in church, is very respectable and looks like a Christian and sounds like a Christian. But inside there is a Mr. Hyde that from time to time bursts out and takes over from the Jekyll and gives the game away. Even when he doesn't burst out, we feel the strain of him dwelling there within us.

There are times when we can, like Oliver Goldsmith [Author, 1730-1774], be in church and be worshiping and be filled with the most noble and dignified thoughts and yet we are thinking at that moment of how, as he says, to get into bed with some woman or to do something that is utterly different and is an absolute insult to Jesus and an insult to any pretense that we are making of holiness of life. Now, that's what we're talking about, loved ones.

We're talking about the problem of carnality in the Christian. The problem of wanting to do what God wants you to do but not being able to do it. There are many chapters in the Bible that express that but one is found in Galatians, if you'd like to look at it and we could begin there. Galatians 5:17, "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would." Many of us quote that verse as many of us probably quoted Romans 7.

We quote this verse as proof -- there it is. That's the normal Christian life. "The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would." All of us have very easy examples of that. We say the desires of the flesh for people's approval, for the popularity that we can have at the office or in our class, that is against the Spirit and the desire of the Spirit is to speak out for Jesus and to say what we believe. The desire of the flesh is to be approved of by other people and so one desire fights against the other desire. And "the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would." Many of us would testify that's exactly what happens.

We know that we should speak out. We should say that joke is not even funny. That joke is just dirty and it does nothing but destroy our own opinion of each other. We know we should speak out and say that but the desire of the flesh is to retain this person as a friend and we rationalize it in all kinds of ways. We decide we won't do anything. So, they are opposed to each other to prevent us from doing what we would.

Instead we walk away from situation after situation having failed to do what we ought to do. Now,

loved ones, that isn't the normal Christian life as the rest of the context shows us. But, only Satan, you know, can so blind us to these verses that are so plain in scripture. He blinds us to things like Romans 7 because you go on in Galatians, verse 18, "But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like." The plain statement that these things are not the things that are in the normal Christian. "I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." [Gal. 5:21]

Even if we lay emphasis on the drunkenness and carousing and we say, well, we don't do that. Yet, parts of the works of the flesh are envy and enmity and anger and selfishness. Of course, if we find anger and envy rising up in our hearts after we're born of God. Well, this word applies to us. "I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." [Gal. 5:22-24]

Now, I just point out to you the logic of that verse, alongside verse 17, you see. So, you read verse 17, "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would," and then verse 24, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." That's the normal Christian life.

The normal Christian has crucified the flesh with its passions and desires and does not live in the midst of that dichotomy or that hypocrisy. He's freed from it. He's freed from it because those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Of course, many of us here read that and those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. We say, yes, that's what we've to do. We've to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires.

But we know that we shouldn't beat our bodies as the old monks did. We know we shouldn't walk on beds of nails as the Middle Eastern practitioners' do. But, yet, is it not true that most of us have the idea, yes, but there it says it there? Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh. That's it. I have to crucify that envy in me. I have to crucify that anger in me. I have to crucify that strife and that uncleanness in me. That's the battle that I'm involved in and I'm going to crucify it because I want to get into heaven.

So, most of us walk in that dreadful, dissatisfying life where we have to confess repeatedly, well, you know, the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh and they do prevent me from doing what I would. But, I belong to Christ Jesus and I'm in process of crucifying these things.

We go to our books and we read the temperament adjustment books. We read other good books that tell us about what true discipleship is and we attend more Bible studies and we go to more people who preach victory over this kind of thing. Above it all we exercise our will power mightily and powerfully. At times, we think we are winning a little ground. Then, something crops up and we are laid flat on our ears again and we realize we've crucified little or nothing. These things are just as bad as they were and indeed they seem to be a little worse than they used to be.

Now, loved ones, the truth is, you don't crucify the flesh. What we've been sharing these Sunday evenings is that that flesh was crucified. Just go over one page, you know, and just see that. It's Galatians 6:14, "But far be it from me to glory except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." It has been done.

You don't crucify the flesh. The flesh has been crucified in Christ. In other words, it's like you coming to your dear Father and saying, Father, I have sinned against you and I'm no more worthy to be called your son and, Lord, I deserve to go to hell for my sins and I confess that to you. And, God says to you, my son, my daughter, my Son Jesus has died for your sins. Even though you should have died, he has died for them and I forgive you and I receive you to myself as my own son and daughter. I forgive you your sins. We rejoice and we thank God.

Then, we come into this part of our lives where we find that there is envy, jealousy, dissension and strife within that we cannot control and we try to crucify it ourselves. Then we come again to God and we say, Lord, you said Jesus has died for me and here I am, I'm doing things that your own Word says, those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God, and you said I was forgiven and I could come in.

Lord God, what did Jesus do for me? Then, the Father, on a night like tonight, draws back a curtain and he shows you this Cross and your eye goes to the feet of it and there are nails on the feet and then you see blood and sweat and water streaming down the legs. You raise your head up to the waist and to the side and to the spear thrust that went through it and you see there the blood and the water still coming. Then, you raise your eyes up and there are the arms and the hands on the Cross and your Father says, now, do you see, and you say, yes, yes, I see that. Then, he says, "Now, lift your eyes higher." You lift your eyes higher and there above the shoulders is your face -- your face.

That's what you face tonight. You're saying to your Father, but, it was Jesus, and your Father saying, that's why I forgive you, it was really you. He bore the pain. He bore the agony that you couldn't have borne. He bore an agony when he cried out that I had forsaken him that you never would have returned from. He went to hell for you. But, he took you with him on the Cross. That's why it's your face. All that you used to be I put into him and I crucified it in him. All that you were before has been crucified with him and it's your face and it's your whole life. Then, what you do, of course, is begin to recognize some of the things that are in your own life and that you can see there crucified. It's then that in a sense you decide whether to enter into full salvation or not.

Now, loved ones, the miracle that I want to tell you about tonight is -- you cannot make that eternal victory real in yourself. You can't. Even by God giving me that vision tonight to share with you, that can't make it real to you. The books can't make it real to you. You can't make it real to yourself by all the meditation that you do nor can I make it real to you by all my preaching.

That is a miracle whereby all that you have been in your past life was put into Jesus in eternity and crucified in him. That's a miracle and the only way that miracle can be made real in you, here, now, this year, here in this country, is by the ministry of the one that Jesus sent to us when he went away. The Holy Spirit. That's right, loved ones.

You cannot make that real to yourself. You cannot. Only the Holy Spirit can make that real to you. That is something that even you cannot do. It has to be all of God. That's why Jesus said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away,

the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And, when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. [John 16:7-8] Then, Jesus said, "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." [John 16:14] Only the Holy Spirit can bring you into what God has done to you in his Son Jesus.

That's why, loved ones, the essential step for you to move into this deliverance from your old sinful nature, the essential step for you to move into sanctification, into cleansing of your heart, is to begin to treat the Holy Spirit the way the disciples treated Jesus. That's the first step.

That was the first step for me. If you say to me, didn't you believe in the Holy Spirit? Yes, of course, I did. I believed that the Holy Spirit was the third person of the Trinity. I'd learned that at seminary. But, I believed in practice that he was a force or an influence that came upon a meeting like this at times or came upon evangelistic services.

But, I did not treat him as a real person. If you say to me, didn't you know that passage in John 16? Yes, but I never took the personal pronoun seriously. When Jesus said, "And when he comes, he will convince the world of sin," I know that it has to be a "he" to do any convincing. I understand that. But, I did not take that seriously. When Jesus said, "When the Holy Spirit comes, he will lead you into all truth", I knew that it was a "he" that was to lead me into all truth but I still felt that "it" would do it through some books that I would read or through the Bible.

I did not take seriously that Jesus was saying, "He" will lead you into all truth. When Jesus said, "It is to your advantage that I go away because, if I do not go away, "he" will not come to you, I thought that was a figure of speech. I thought, well, Jesus is just saying, I'm going to give you another force to help but I didn't take seriously that Jesus was saying, Now, you see, it's to your advantage that I go away because, if I don't go away, he won't come to you. In other words, he's my successor and he can only succeed me when I have gone. But, when I go, he is the one you've to look to. Just as my disciples walked with me, day by day, and treated me with honor and with care and respect so I am going to send to you my Counselor, the Holy Spirit. I want you to treat him the same way the disciples treated me. I want you to treat him as your master and your lord here on earth.

Do you see, loved ones, that unless we do that, we fall unavoidably into sin? Do you see that? Sin is independent action on our behalf and we fall into that if we try to bring ourselves onto the Cross with Christ or we try to bring the mystery of our death with Christ into our own life. It's us doing it. We fall into all the problem of meditating upon the sufferings of Christ, of trying to reproduce the stigmata in our own hands by our meditation and our empathy with Jesus, of trying to feel what he felt and all of that is sin.

All of that is trying to reproduce the death and resurrection of Jesus in you by your own efforts, however subtle they may be. So, the only way to avoid sin is to see that only the Holy Spirit is able to bring us into our death with Jesus and into our resurrection with him.

The first step is to make the acquaintance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not only here in this room but he is in each one of you. Every desire for God that you have is the Holy Spirit taking of the desire that Jesus has for his Father and imparting it to you. That's why you're here tonight. The reason you've come to a meeting like this is because the Holy Spirit is drawing you. The Holy Spirit has already given you many blessings.

Loved ones, the tragedy is, that just as the Jews became a scattered people for thousands of years because they rejected Jesus, so many of us here in this room are like thousands of others in the church of Jesus. We have not acknowledged the Holy Spirit as our master and our lord. We do not walk carefully with him.

We are all caught up in ourselves. We think that everything depends on the way we follow Jesus and the decisions that we are making and the maturity that we are coming into and we ignore the Holy Spirit. That's why the church of Jesus is often as scattered and as weak as the nation of Israel is, compared with what God had planned it to be. So, the Christian church as a whole does not treasure the Holy Spirit. Christians, as a whole, treat him as a force and an influence but not as their master, not as their lord, not as their teacher, not as the only one who can make Jesus' death and resurrection real in them. Now, loved ones, only the Holy Spirit can do that.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth. When you look at Jesus on the Cross and see your own face there, only the Holy Spirit can show you the parts of your old self that God wants you to say yes to crucifixion about. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. You can choose some yourself but they're not the ones that are important. The old self always chooses the parts of itself that it can still get along without. The old self is part of Satan. It is all Satan's deception and trickery at its disposal. It loves religion. It will keep on worshiping Jesus even, as long as it can hold on to part of itself that it never yields to Christ. The Holy Spirit alone can do violence to that old self.

The Holy Spirit alone can show you the parts of the old self that God wants you to be willing to die to. You see, the fact is, there are millions of parts to your old self and there will be millions more parts of it if God will show you through the Holy Spirit later on. But, there are certain parts of it that are the fortress of your selfish will at this moment and no man can tell you that. Do you know that after you got to about 17, I would say in the case of many of us 16, and I speak as an old school teacher in that, we were too complex for any man, father and mother, teacher or counselor or psychologist, ever to track us down?

We are too complex for any other human being to nail us down. We are. We have just passed through a unique set of experiences that nobody else has had. We have corners in our mind that no man understands and no man will ever understand. Loved ones, the only hope for us is if Jesus has sent us a person who can see right to the bottom of our hearts and is able to reveal that to us.

That's why the Holy Spirit is so vital to us and, of course, if you don't treat the dear person as your counselor, you will get as deep in your introspection as doesn't matter. You will get as deep as depresses you and makes you despair of yourself but you won't get deep enough to yield yourself spread-eagled to Christ and to that Cross but the Holy Spirit is able to bring that to you.

In other words, it's a blessing. You see, it's a gospel. The gospel of the Holy Spirit is for many of us like a new gospel. That's why when the disciples came; they asked that man's converts, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? They said, we have never even heard that there was a Holy Spirit. [Acts 19:2]

Well, that's what I could have said. I knew that there was a Holy Spirit but I didn't know that there was "the" Holy Spirit. Many of us are in that situation. We have got so used to treating him as an "it" that, of course, we know him. We know Him enough to put him aside and never treat him as the Counselor that he is. The first step is to believe that the Holy Spirit is in you and is a dear

friend and a counselor and he can bring you into awareness that you do not have at the moment.

If you say to me, well, do you mean we should pray to the Holy Spirit? Well, loved ones, I just have found that a kind of academic question and I don't think I'm over-vague in my theology but it seems to me that what the old church fathers said is true, where the Father is, there is the Holy Spirit and the Son. Where the Son is, there is the Father and the Holy Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit is, there is the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one together.

That's why the Bible says, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you, because they're all equal and they're co-eternal and they're everlasting and they're omniscient and they're omnipresent. So, I think, when you talk to the Holy Spirit, you're talking to Jesus. I don't think it's a big deal what terminology you use if you talk to the Lord Jesus, he is at God's right hand. He is there interceding for you and me.

Through his Holy Spirit, he can be present in your life because the Holy Spirit takes of Jesus like the rays of a projector and brings them into your life. You can be sure that when you talk to the Holy Spirit, he isn't going to steal glory from Jesus. Jesus assured us of that. He said the Holy Spirit will not bear witness to himself. He will not glorify himself. He will bear witness to me.

So, you can be safe if you want to pray to the Holy Spirit. I pray to the Holy Spirit. I would say I did it especially because I had ignored him for so long and because I was at the end of my tether trying to introspect myself into sanctification and into the crucifixion and resurrection with Christ. I desperately needed somebody who knew me better than I knew myself who would deliver me from the entanglements of my own subjectivism.

I was just so glad to find that there was such a person as the Holy Spirit and that he was already in me and could deal with me. So, I did. I prayed to the Holy Spirit. But, it isn't a big deal. If you want to pray to the Lord Jesus or to the Spirit of Jesus, it seems to me God's Spirit guides you at different times to speak to the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit. At times, they do different things. The Father is God existing and the Son is God revealing and the Holy Spirit is God communicating. But, they are all one together.

The important thing is that you have sooner or later to begin to treat the Holy Spirit as a person and then to honor him. That means, when the Holy Spirit in your seeking to come into the victory in Jesus, when the Holy Spirit guides you to do something, that's why what Linda did was good. When the Holy Spirit guides you or says something to you, honor him, honor him, honor him. Because then he speaks louder the next time. But, if you don't honor him, if you ignore him, your ear gets thicker and thicker and your sensitivity becomes coarser and coarser until you cannot hear the thundering from the mountain top.

Now, if you go the other way and you honor him and, if you say to me, you could be finding all kinds of silly little actions that weren't really important because you thought it was the Holy Spirit talking to you. He understands. He is a dear person who loves you. He's not out to make a fool of you. He's not out to make a clown of you. He appreciates if you are bending over backwards. What if you are going beyond? It's better to go beyond. You see, he's a person that you please. He's a dear person. He reacts to you. He can be grieved by you. He can rejoice with you and he can understand you. He is the one who is to take of Jesus' resurrection and impart it to you.

Loved ones, it's very, very clear that Jesus gave all those responsibilities to the Holy Spirit. He made it very clear. Now, listen, I'm going to send you a comforter, a counselor and he will be with you and he will lead you into all truth. I have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now, but the Holy Spirit who will come in my name, he will lead you into all truth. He will take of the things that are mine and impart them to you. He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He will glorify me and bear witness to me.

It's the Holy Spirit that will do these things. Stop looking to the second person of the Trinity to do what he specifically said the third person of the Trinity would do. The Holy Spirit will do these things. That's why when you look up to Jesus and you try to pull him down to you by meditation and by thought and by effort of will; you are doing something that is violence to the Godhead. You are not to do that. Jesus said, no, take your hands off me. You cannot pull me down to you. You cannot make me real in you. My Holy Spirit, my counselor, whom I have sent to you, he is going to begin to show you the way in. He's going to make this real in you by a miracle and the first part of your faith is to begin to believe in him.

Loved ones, that saved me I feel from, I suppose I'm not the kind of person to go insane, but it seemed to me at times that I would go insane because of the contradiction in my life between my outward profession and my inward heart, between what people thought I was and what I really was. I often wondered, am I schizophrenic? It was the blessed Holy Spirit that saved me from that and delivered me from that. He will do that for you.

If you are sitting there bound in a life that is an absolute contrast, or if you are sitting there ashamed of things that you have done and are doing even in your life, and you are ashamed that any of us should know about them, do, begin to honor the Holy Spirit. He is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Holiness. He will begin bit by bit to lead you out of that mire that you're in, if you'll obey him. Just do what he tells you. Don't ask. Don't question.

I was tempted at the beginning to think, well, no, what has this to do with my sanctification? What has this to do with my heart being cleansed? But, my mouth was shut and I realized, no, I've to obey him. Get up at this time; I get up at that time. Read the Bible, I read the Bible. Do this for this person, I do it. Obey him. Do not question him. Treat him as your master and your lord and he will bit by bit begin to uncover the sin you have to see and begin bit by bit to lay aside the confusion in your poor, dear mind. The Holy Spirit will begin to do that.

Wherever men and women honor the Holy Spirit, there is clarity and clearness and peace. Wherever men and women try to practice even the great religion of Christianity by their own power, there is confusion and disappointment and half-hearted results. Honor the Holy Spirit. He will make everything real to you.

You've heard the illustration before. You go into Louvre museum in Paris and there are the magnificent paintings, the great masterpieces all around the walls. You go in but all the lights are out and there's just darkness and you can see nothing. It doesn't matter that millions of dollars of beauty are all around you. It doesn't matter that there are some of the most beautiful things that the world has ever produced are on the walls. You can see nothing because the lights are out.

Then, someone comes in and switches on the lights and everything rushes in upon your eyes and you begin to see beauties that you had never dreamed existed. You begin to see things as real that were not real to you at all before. That's what the Holy Spirit does. Until you begin to honor the Holy

Spirit and listen to him and obey him, you know nothing of what Jesus did for you on the Cross. Yes, even though you know he died for your sins, even though you know your sins are forgiven, you know nothing. You have seen nothing yet. Not until you begin to honor the Holy Spirit and then he begins to take you into the heart of Jesus and he begins to show you what your Savior did for you. He begins to draw you gently onto that Cross yourself.

So, loved ones, that's why it's almost like a new gospel. It was almost like a new gospel to me. Because the gospel is this, not only that Jesus has died for your sins, not only that God has forgiven you, not only that you are therefore born of the Spirit when you repent and commit yourself to him. Now, if you are willing to consecrate your life to him and if you are willing to believe not only that Jesus died for you and you died with him, but, tonight, there is another person, the Holy Spirit is able to make all that real to you. You need to put yourself in his hands tonight and say, Holy Spirit, I do put myself in your hands and I take you as my counselor and I give up listening to men or trying to read the books and, Holy Spirit, I ask you to bring me into my place in Jesus on the Cross so that I come into that place where I have been crucified with Christ and the world has been crucified to me.

Now, loved ones, the Holy Spirit will gently begin to lead you. Of course, as you do that, the body here begins to honor the Holy Spirit and then the Holy Spirit begins to make us the risen body of Jesus and that's different from an ordinary church as they exist today.

So, loved ones, the Holy Spirit is our master here in this room and he can be the master of your life and he can bring you into things that you or I cannot make real for ourselves. You are sanctified by faith in your death with Jesus through your obedience and submission to the Holy Spirit.

That's why the apostles said, God has given the Holy Spirit to them as he did to us and cleansed our hearts by faith. [Acts 15:9] The Holy Spirit is the one who cleanses your heart. So, I would commend you to his care, commend you to his care, and encourage you to honor him and listen to him as he walks through the labyrinths of your own life and begins to unravel it and bring you into the victory that that dear one has won for us on the Cross.

Let us pray.

Dear, Holy Spirit, we thank you. We know that you were the one that brooded upon the waters at the beginning of the world and took the formless mass and brought order into it and made of it this beautiful world that we see around us. Now, Holy Spirit, we see that you are the one that broods upon the new creation, upon the formless mass that is inside so many of us and you alone can bring order out of it. You alone can make real in us the miracle that was wrought in Jesus in eternity.

Holy Spirit, we ask you to begin to counsel us, to begin to lead us. We don't know how to go ourselves. We don't know how to get there. We ask you, Holy Spirit, to begin to show us and we commit ourselves to honoring you and listening to you.

Forgive us that we have grieved you. Forgive us that we have so often pushed you into a back corner of our lives. Forgive us, dear Holy Spirit, that we have so often ignored you, hardly even knowing it was your voice, certainly often pretending that it wasn't your voice. It was just our own thoughts.

Holy Spirit, now, we thank you for the revelation that, of course, if we have been forgiven our sins and if we want God with all our hearts, the thoughts that come are not just our thoughts. There is no good in us. Any good thought that comes is you. We don't produce good thoughts ourselves. We produce the bad thoughts. So, forgive us for thinking that it was just a good thought we had.

Thank you for showing us it was you speaking. We entertained an angel unawares. It was you, the third person of the Godhead, speaking to us with a personal directive that would help to make sense of our lives.

Holy Spirit, we apologize and we commit ourselves to honoring you and treating you as our master here on earth as the disciples had Jesus as their master. So, we thank you we can make your acquaintance, dear Spirit. We thank you that you are such a gentleman that you say, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me." [Revelations 3:20]

Holy Spirit, we welcome you in to look around our house and to rearrange it as you think it needs to be rearranged for Jesus' glory and for our Father's pleasure. We thank you that you're there, thank you that we're delivered from ourselves, thank you that we will not be lost in ourselves and give ourselves to you now and ask you to lead us during the days of this week and we will honor and obey you and immediately repent if we ignore you and we will begin to look for your voice and listen. We ask you to take us all the way to Calvary and out of the grave and on to the other side of Calvary.

Amen