

The Life of Faith 4

Genesis 3

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, you remember that statement of Jesus, "Look at the birds of the air. They don't sow and they don't gather in the barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And why do you take thought for your life. You cannot add one cubit to your stature. Look at the lilies of the field; they don't toil or reap, and yet your Heavenly Father has clothed them. Will he not much more clothe you, oh ye of little faith? So, take no thought for tomorrow for what you shall eat or what you shall drink for your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. Seek first His kingdom and all these things will be added unto you." [Matthew 6:25-33]

That's the way we're meant to live Monday through Friday, Saturday, Sunday, year in year out: we're meant to live a life of faith, a life of relief, of rest and peace. We're not meant to be popping the valium, we're not meant to be glaring at the TV set to try and hypnotize ourselves out of our problems. We're not meant to be looking forward to the next vacation to escape from the pressure. We're meant to live, brothers and sisters, day by day in peace and rest -- that's it. And, if you say to me "Brother even in this hectic world?" Yes loved ones, the plan is for this world.

Jesus has so arranged that by his death and resurrection that it is possible for us to live like that in this hectic world, and that's what we're trying to talk about these Sunday evenings. I'm hoping that we go right through the Bible, chapter by chapter. If we keep going its only 25 years! But, I'm hoping that we'll do that in order to see how you and I can live the life of faith -- live in rest and peace in our Father. Not constantly worrying about what the boss is going to do. Not constantly worrying about what our friends our going to do. Not worrying about what the politicians are going to do or the economy is going to do, but resting in God, in peace and in faith, and in quiet, and in healing strength. That's it.

We've covered Genesis 1, which describes how God made the heavens and the earth, and then we covered Genesis 2, which talks about man and his creation and his relationship to God and what his response to God was. And now, in Genesis 3, we've been discussing the great catastrophe that destroyed the whole plan that God had made. Genesis 3, loved ones, is the historical record of the fall, we call it -- or man's rejection of trusting God and his decision to trust himself. So, maybe you'll look at that in Genesis 3 then. You remember in the first seven verses, God outlines to us the nature of the fall. Delorian [the auto maker] probably exemplifies it well. God presented it to us as a tree of knowledge of good and evil and a tree of life. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is not just knowing what is good and knowing what is evil, God wants us to know that through trusting him and listening to him. But the tree of the knowledge of good and evil stands for us using our own know-how to make it the way we want to make it as opposed to trusting God for his life. Delorian gets into trouble and uses his knowledge of good and evil to deliver the old Delorian motor company out of trouble any way he could. So he gets in touch with the people who bring the heroin into the country or the drugs, and he determines, "I'll lift myself out of this by my own boot strings and by my own knowledge of what is good and what is evil. Indeed, I'll determine what is good and what is evil for myself." Now that's it, you see: whether you live that way or whether you live trusting God for the strength and the life and the direction that you need.

So, let's turn away from Delorian, he's just such an obvious example. But what about all we saintly people here; what about the way we tackle the whole marriage thing? What about the way we tackle meeting the right girl or the right guy -- we despise the computer systems, and we despise the old wives tales about getting yourself into the right place where you'll meet some nice guys or you'll meet some nice girls, but still we end up playing the game, instead of trusting God. Or, we trust him until 30, 35, 40 years old, and then you get desperate, then you begin to try the old knowledge of good and evil. Loved ones, there are thousands of us who have worked ourselves into marriages that we should never have been in because we decided, "forget it, God, you obviously have not got this part organized. I'm going to use my own knowledge of good and evil to get in here."

Same with jobs, isn't it? See, it's not that you don't use your knowledge to do the job, you do. If you're a computer expert you have to use your knowledge. But it's this business of using our own knowledge of good and evil to get a certain job. We determine, "I want this kind of lifestyle, therefore, I need this kind of job, and the only way to do that is to get this kind of qualification, that's what I'll do," and we end up with our own closed little universe that ends up in a perfect hell. Instead of trusting God, being ourselves, doing what he has given us the abilities to do with all our heart whether it pays well or not, and allowing him to lead us on from that. Those of us who have found our way in life know that we have to come back to that. I certainly know it in my own life.

Those of us who have ever come to any reality in our lives eventually give up trying to maneuver ourselves into this spot that we thought was good. We said "Forget it, we're never going to make anything but a mess of our lives if we do that. I'm going to do what you give me to do Lord, and it's up to you. Leave me here in this corner, unknown and unsuccessful and a failure, financially and professionally if you want, but Lord I'm going to trust you. I'm going to trust your life." So that, loved ones, that's the nature of the fall. It's not to do with sex -- there's no apple mentioned anyway, but it's not you eat of the tree of knowledge and then all the business of the fig leaves means it must have been sexual intercourse -- that's silliness. Sexual intercourse is God's good plan for those of us who are meant to be man and wife together in his will, but it's not something evil that caused the fall. The fall was that independence of God -- the thing that you and I deal with day by day.

There are always two ways to go in every decision. Do I use my own knowledge of what is good and evil to get what I want? Or do I trust God and trust his life to come through me? One brings about an uptight life that you have to maintain by you own cleverness and shrewdness. The other brings a life of rest and peace, so they are very different.

Now, maybe you'd look at the consequences of the fall and you find it there in verse 8 of Genesis 3. I've tried to title that "Man's Own Guilty Response." "And they heard the sound of the Lord, God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." So when there's furtiveness in your own life about anything, or when you're trying to evade God on some issue, or you're trying to hide from something that comes through your conscious, or something that you read in a book or something that some speaker says to you or some friend says to you and you know that's a touchy subject, that's a sore point, and you start hiding behind the trees of the garden; wherever there's furtiveness in your life, wherever you try to play a little clever with God on some issue, you know that you're involved in what caused the fall of man in the beginning. So you're involved in something that is going to take you out of the joy of the life of faith.

That's it -- so you can know that -- and most of us are pretty sharp that way; we know if there's anything that causes you a little furtiveness and you find yourself skirting around a little tree and hiding behind it, or wherever you're kind of playing fast and loose with the whole thing, or you're playing cutesy with something and God has come right down the line and you're saying "Oh I wonder does it mean this or this", or things that have doubt in them; "I wonder if he means me to smoke or does he not, well, I'm not sure." Well, if you're not sure, that's doubt, and whatever is doubt is not of faith and whatever is not of faith is a sin, so stop smoking.

It's pretty simple; whenever you find yourself playing around with something -- with a Penthouse magazine or with a Playboy magazine or you find yourself watching some TV program and you don't feel quite good about it and you know there's a little furtiveness -- get rid of it because it's the very opposite of faith. Here is faith, it's Hebrews 10:22 and this is the only way to go before God for something in your own life; "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." You see the combination there, "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

Now, how can you have full assurance of faith? Oh, have your hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscious and your body washed with pure water -- have your outward acts clean, have your inner conscious clean and clear from guilt, then faith rises in your heart, that's it. Faith is a glorious, confident approach to God because you're not hiding from him on any issue. That's it. That's why David would ask God to vindicate him according to the integrity of his heart. "God, look at my heart, is there anything that hasn't integrity there? Answer me according to that, I have nothing to hide." So it's good; prayer is not a tricky little thing -- am I praying the right prayers? Am I feeling the right way? Am I using the right words? Prayer is the faith of Jesus rising up within a clean conscious and blasting out to God in full confidence that God is going to answer. That's it -- so keep away from furtiveness.

The problem is not faith, you know. Some of you sit there and think, "I wish I had George Mueller's faith." Even George Mueller hadn't George Mueller's faith; he lived that life by the faith of the Son of God. It was the faith of the Son of God rising up in George Mueller to believe for all that money for those orphanages. It's the same with you -- you don't need George Mueller's faith, but you do need the faith of the Son of God and that faith will come into you if everything's clear between you and God.

Loved ones, do you see the next verse [9] "But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"" God had a fair idea where Adam was and he didn't need his geographical position outlined on the map, but it was God saying "I'm losing touch with you -- where are you? I used to know exactly where you were, exactly what you were thinking, but I sense there is something a little fuzzy around here. I feel I'm losing touch with you. You're fading out on me. I'm losing you in the midst of all the interference in the atmosphere." God usually indicates that to you -- "I'm losing you." And you know it fine well -- you know it at that moment too. You sense "I'm losing you Lord" and you have a little more trouble getting through in prayer. That all comes from this not trusting God, this disobedience, this guilty consciousness, and this playing furtive with God instead of coming right out in the open and saying "you're right, Lord, that's wrong, I shouldn't have anything to do with it, that's wrong".

Then you see verse 10 "And he said 'I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.'" Really, God wants us in complete faith to be willing to be

naked and to be seen as we are, that's it. Forget all the clothes stuff, that's not where it's at, but it's this business of when you're living in trust of God you don't care who sees you as you really are. I know that changed in my life -- when I was satisfied that I was accepted by God because of Jesus and because of his blood, then I didn't really care what other people thought of me. And I confess now I never think much about what I'm like -- I'm pretty dumb in a lot of ways, but I don't really care what you think of me. I am what I am and I'm going to be that, and it might not be much but I'm going to be that.

It seems that God brings you a great readiness, you know, when everything's clear between you and him and you know you're doing what he wants you to do, and you know you're being what he wants you to be. Then you're willing to be naked and willing for people to make fun of you if necessary, and to be what you are. But that's, of course, the beginning of trust between other people as you begin to see here in verse 11. "He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I've commanded you not to eat?'" That is interesting, loved ones; God immediately knew that the reason Adam was kind of ashamed of himself was because he was beginning to try to establish his own reputation and his own confidence by his knowledge and his understanding of life. If you think of that, that's the same with us; whenever we start trying to take our reputations upon our shoulders; whenever we get into that position where "We're gonna show the boss; we're gonna prove to these people; we're gonna prove to these colleagues and our parents; we're going to live this life successfully." Then suddenly you become very vulnerable to other people telling you, "Well you know, you're not so great." So when you take on the task of running your own life and defending your reputation, you'd better look out for a lot of trouble because that's quite a big task that you're taking on and it won't be long before you'll begin to feel others are saying "Look, the emperor has no clothes. Look, you're naked -- you think you're good but you're not good".

Once you start living by your own cleverness or your own shrewdness or your own abilities, that's quite a treadmill you're stepping on to. You have to keep that baby turning until you die. That's a long time -- that can be 70 years for several of us and 80 years if God gives us strength. That's a long treadmill to be on instead of, of course, the life that God has for us -- be ourselves. Might not be great, might not be wonderful, but we're what he made us and we're doing what he gave us to do. God knew "Now who told you that you were naked?" He knew that the guy wouldn't have felt naked at all if he had just been willing to trust God and be what he wanted him to be. But as soon as you begin to live by your own wits and your own cleverness you begin to compare yourself with other people.

Do you realize that that's not a life of trust? Do you realize that you're all different? I know I keep saying this to all of us, but you're all different. You're not inferior to the person next to you; you're different from the person next to you. You might be inferior in the way you sing, you might be inferior in the color of your hair, but that's according to the way the world thinks. According to what God thinks, everything is beautiful in its own way and you're beautiful. You're an original; there's nobody like you. So if you ever go to God and you say "What do you think of me?" "Think of you? You're the only one of you that I ever created in the whole universe. I think you're the bee's knees. You're the apple of my eye. I love you. There's nobody else like you. I live in you in a way that I live in nobody else in the whole universe, nor will ever live."

It's when you live by the knowledge of good and evil and you start getting into this game of a grade curve which we apply to everything, and we start accepting the opinions of mankind and society it's then that we begin to say "oh, compared with that one, I'm naked". Maybe she's the one that's naked. Maybe it's just the lies in our society that make her appear to be well clothed. Would you

like to be Delorian today? No. But, would you like to have been him a year ago? Well, so you see it's rather silly. There's only one person you should be and that's you and you are not naked: you are different from everybody else and God sees you as that.

Verse 12, I joke about it, but I think we men are not the only ones that say it, but I know as a husband I have often said it; The man said, "The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate," In other words – "It wasn't me, it wasn't me, it was her." And, that's what happens when you don't trust God, when you don't have faith in him -- you have to look around for somebody to blame, and that's the attitude of the old self, isn't it? The self that exists on its own has to justify itself. When you accept that you have been crucified in Christ, and that everything that needed to be done to you has been done, and you have been raised in him and it doesn't matter what other people think of you it only matters what God thinks of you, then there's great confidence. You have great confidence, and you feel that confidence.

If God comes and says "You did that wrong," you say "You're right, I did". Or if you come to me and say "You did that wrong" I say "That's right". Or if I come to you in that condition and say "Do you know -- that isn't a good thing that you have in your life", you say "Yeah, you're right." There's no self-justifying. There's no self-defense. There's just, "If that's true, let me examine it" or "Yes, you seem to be right, I am wrong. I'm going to change." That's the mark of the sanctified life; the life that is filled with the Holy Spirit. Not so much a life that never makes an error, a life even that never, never sins, but a life that has a penitent, soft heart; that is free from sin within. Sin within is that independent attitude that wants to defend itself and assert itself and prove that it's right. And the sanctified life is a life that is freed from that, because it no longer feels that it needs to prove that it's right. It's happy to say -- oh I remember Stanley Jones used to say -- "if God says you're wrong, you have to say you're right Lord, I'm wrong and when he says you're wrong, never say you're wrong Lord, I'm right." Always agree with God. That's the life of faith. It's a quiet life, but the life that doesn't trust God is always looking for somebody to blame.

It's quite interesting; John Shank shared something with me a week ago that he had read about this. I'm sure he doesn't do this, of course, in his marriage at all! But in verse 12 he read in a book "You notice the man said "The woman who thou gavest to be with me. I mean, it's the one you gave me; she gave me to eat of the tree, big baby that I am. It's the one you gave me, she gave me.'" Loved ones, if you have that blaming attitude in your life, it is probably because you're not filled with the Holy Spirit. It is probably because you haven't really taken your place with Jesus on the cross and reckoned yourself to be dead indeed unto sin, alive to God in Christ Jesus -- it is. If you find within you that tendency to want to find some reason for what you did other than your own sinfulness; if you find yourself saying to God, "Well Lord, if you had given me different circumstances I would be a different person. If you had given me a different nose or a different voice, or if I had been brought up differently, or if I had lived in a different place, or if I had that person's education, or if I had that person's money, or if I were only married like that person is." All that is blame, blame, blame. You see saying, "Lord, the woman that thou gavest to be with me -- the situation that you have given me, the set of circumstances that you have provided me with; they're what causing me to sin and to fall down" God says "You are just excusing yourself and you're not trusting me. You're standing over there against me, trying to prove to me that you're justified in living independently of me, that's what you're doing." He sees right through us.

So loved ones if you find yourself blaming, then see that there's a spirit inside you that is not at rest. I'm not saying you're terrible sinners, you are, but that's not the big issue that you're

terrible sinners or you're going to hell -- though you are if you keep going that way -- but that's not the issue. The issue is you're missing the rest of faith; you're missing the peace of trusting God. If you're still at that business of "The woman that thou gavest to be with me; she gave me of the fruit and I did eat" then you're still saying, "Lord, if you had given me different circumstances, a different wife, different," forget it -- that's not peace -- no wonder you can't sleep at night. That's not rest. Rest is "Lord, thank you. I give thanks to you for all things and all circumstances for this is the will of God for me in Christ Jesus. Lord, thank you I am like I am. Thank you I have this nose with a bump on it. Thank you I have this hair. Thank you that I have this job. Thank you that I have this money. Thank you Lord. Thank you for that. And now, Lord, I'm going to live tomorrow happily and joyfully and trust in you." That's it, see, it's a whole different attitude.

The other attitude, "The woman that thou gavest to be with me", causes the ulcers, the tightening of the muscles, the constricting of the blood vessels that bring all the sickness and the headaches. "In headaches and in worry, vaguely, life leaks away" -- all that comes from blaming, blaming, blaming, instead of thanking, thanking, thanking. Do you know that tomorrow, Monday, will be absolutely different if you go to it thanking God; "Thank you for this Monday, Lord, and thank you that I'm me, and thank you that you've made me like this, and thank you that I have this job to do, and thank you I have this car to drive, and thank you I have this house to live in, and this apartment to live in, thank you, Lord. Thank you, and I look forward to this day Lord, and I know you're going to work it to the counsel of your will." Your day will go completely differently than if you get up in the morning wondering how it's going to go. That isn't just neutral; that's unbelief. That's unbelief. That's believing that God is not going to work everything according to his will. So when you get up and you think "what kind of a day is this going to be" there's a little guy that we always picture with horns who jumps right in there and tells you "I'll tell you the kind of day it's going to be." So don't get up like that, get up saying "This is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

God answers faith -- that's not power of positive thinking. Power of positive thinking is "Zippidee do da, zippidee eh, my oh my what a wonderful day," which is pretty good, but it isn't faith. Faith is faith that the Father loves you, has made you especially for himself, and there's a job for you to do that day and he is already planning that day to work according to the counsel of his will. You'll find the day begins to go differently if you live in faith, that's because you open the resources of Heaven into that day, do you see that? But he requires that you do that, he won't do it automatically.

Loved ones, that's verse 12 and the woman was, dear love you ladies were at least better than we men, verse 13; "Then the Lord God said to the woman 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent beguiled me and I ate.'" At least she didn't blame God for giving her the serpent. The man blamed him for giving him this woman, "The woman that thou gavest to be with me." The woman at least was honest, "The serpent deceived me and I ate." The serpent's job is to deceive. Doesn't let you ladies off the hook, but it is true that certainly the man blamed God for what gift he had given him as the cause of his fall, and the woman said "The serpent deceived me." The serpent is about that business every hour of our lives; trying to deceive us. So we need to pray for each other that the Holy Spirit will give us light, because, loved ones, I don't know, some of us may be great sinners here this evening, probably we aren't. Probably we aren't all jumping in and out of bed with all kinds of other people's husbands or wives, and probably we aren't all on heroin and doing all kinds of terrible things. But we still are living in a life of sin in that we're not living a life of open restful faith in God as our Father so we're not living joyfully. In

that sense we're sinners, you know. We're just very respectable and noble sinners, but we're still sinners. Of course the Holy Spirit's task is to undeceive us; to show us where we're hiding behind trees of the garden; to show us where we're blaming other people; to show us where we're not happy with what God has given us. I pray that he will give you light.

Let us pray.

Dear Father, we do see so plainly how we're waking up in the morning thinking just that; "Well, what kind of a day is today going to be?" Oh Father, we see what a down right sin that is right there, because you have promised that you will work all things according to the counsel of your will. You have told us "rejoice in the Lord always and again I will say rejoice." You have told us not to be anxious for tomorrow for tomorrow will take care of itself. You have told us to have faith in you and you have told us "this is the day that the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." So Father, we repent and would turn from that unbelief and doubt and we intend to get up tomorrow morning saying, "Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for myself. Thank you for my life and my job. Thank you that they're ideally suited for me at this time."

Lord, we're going to receive everything by faith instead of receiving some of them and making judgments according to our knowledge of good and evil about the rest. Lord, forgive us. Forgive us for our reservations. Forgive us for our judging of you, our God. Forgive us for our desire to take some of what you have given us and resent some of the rest. Lord, if you're not God of all, you're not God at all. We ask forgiveness, Lord. We intend to take it all as from your hand, lovingly screened through your fingers, the very best that you can give us and Lord, we intend to stop the blaming and to stop finding scapegoats for our own sin. We intend to hide behind no more trees of the garden, but to live out there in open faith in you and trust -- where you can see us and where the faith of Jesus rises up within us, to pray with prayers that are filled with faith and filled with confidence of an answer.

Now, the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and throughout this coming week. Amen.