

Sanctification

Romans 6:22

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Would you look please at Romans 6:22, because I know some of you wonder where I ever started. Romans 6:22, "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life." We've really been talking about the agony that a lot of us go through really, whether we're Christians or not, the agony that we go through over feelings inside that we can't control.

You come into the theater this morning and you really do want to be interested in everybody else. You really do want to be outgoing and you're anxious to talk to them about their things but the conversation doesn't get going long, before that something inside you that wants to draw attention to you takes over -- and before you know it, you're on to something that you're good at or that they are bound to admire you in. You find that all the time.

It's more obvious in things like losing your temper and getting angry. Then it's plain to you that there are things you can't control but it shows itself all the time. We've been talking a lot about those feelings inside that most psychologists tell us are just natural parts of our human nature and that you can't do anything with them, you just have to work with them.

We've been sharing how it is possible to come clear of those things and it is possible actually to begin to live like God himself and it is possible to be people who are like Jesus. And we've shared this all, I don't know how many months. You remember that we've shared very much one side of it. We've shared everything connected with in a sense what you and I have to do.

We've shared how we really need to enter into a real freedom from sin inside, that's what those things are inside that we feel. Anger is sin or self-assertion is sin or independence of God, that's sin, a desire to be proud, that's sin, a desire to criticize the other person and tear him apart, that's sin. And we've seen that in order to be freed from that power inside you that seems to grab hold of you and make you do what you don't want to do, the only way to come free of that is to really be willing to accept what was done with us in Jesus.

You know that we've read repeatedly that our old self was crucified with Christ, and probably some of you have a dinning in your head and you know it off by heart. And yet it still maybe isn't real in you but at least you know, that's what I have to enter into. I was crucified with Christ. My old self with all its rights to be proud and rights to be jealous and angry, that was destroyed in Jesus. And the moment I am willing to reckon myself dead indeed unto sin, then that moment I will really have Jesus' death actualized inside me and it'll be a miracle.

We've talked a great deal about that side of it. You might say that that's a negative side in a sense. That's the sense, brothers and sisters, in which you can sanctify yourself because that's what you mean when you say "living like Jesus" or "becoming like God". You mean being sanctified. "Sanctus" is a Latin word for "holy" and "Facio" is a Latin word for "manufacture"; you can see it "Facio", "to make" and sanctification is to make you holy or make you like God.

In order to be made like God, there's one thing you can do, you can do what we've shared over these

past few months. You can be willing to be dead to self with Jesus and to be crucified with him. Now loved ones, that's only a part of it really. That's the part for instance you get in a verse like John 17:19, "And for their sake I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified in truth," that's the way the King James Version runs. The Greek word actually means what it is translated in the RSV, "And for their sake I consecrate myself that they also may be consecrated in truth."

Now, the first part of being sanctified or becoming like God or being delivered completely from your miserable selfishness and my miserable selfishness, the first part of it is to be willing to consecrate yourself, to be willing to put yourself on the Cross with Jesus. If you're not willing to do that, then nothing happens, but what I want to share this morning is, that's only part of it, brothers and sisters.

You will never become like God unless God touches you, and the fact is that being willing to be crucified with Christ is of no value on its own unless God touches you with his own life. And there are lots of us who say, "Yeah, I am willing to be crucified with Christ. Yeah, I am willing not to get angry. I am willing not to be proud. I am willing to be walked over. I am willing to be a failure for Jesus' sake." And we kind of get a self-will grip on ourselves and we say, "I am willing, I am willing. Okay, am I like Jesus?" No you're uptight; you know that's all you are. You're not like Jesus at all. You're just an uptight legalistic Christian trying to walk right.

That's what happens if you entered only into the negative side of what you can call sanctification. The positive side, brothers and sisters, is that the moment you're willing to be crucified with Christ, the moment you're really willing deep down in your heart to be dead to self, Jesus is able to touch you with the Holy Spirit. He is able to give you a supernatural life that is utterly different from your old selfish life and that transforms you completely and miraculously and that's what makes people Christ-like, that's what makes you like God.

It isn't the matter of gripping hold of a Cross and trying to be like Him yourself. It's just being willing to be dead to self and then trusting Jesus to baptize you with his Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit makes you absolutely and utterly different. Now that's the kind of emphasis you'd get if you want to look at it in First Thessalonians 5:23, where there's a sense in which you cannot sanctify yourself. There's a sense in which only God can do that.

First Thessalonians 5:23, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly;" and Paul is praying that God will sanctify you "and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." So I think a lot of you often probably in the morning say, "Well, I want to be the way you describe but I have kind of gone through all the motions and yet I am still my old miserable self," Dear ones, it's because only the touch of God's Holy Spirit can make you really like Jesus and you need to believe for that.

There's a verse in Romans 15:16, if you look at it -- and it shows really that one who makes you like God or who makes you like Jesus is the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:16, "To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Now, that was why Moses brought Aaron up and said, "Okay, you put this breastplate up, you put this Urim on, this Thummim on, you put this thing on your head, you wash yourself with water", then he took oil and he put oil on Aaron and his sons and he said, "This oil sanctifies you."

Now dear ones, in the New Testament the oil is the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament the oil means

the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is a supernatural uncreated life of God that is different from your mental and your physical and your emotional life. And it's something that will change you inside and takes the qualities of Jesus and imparts them to you. Now without the baptism of the Holy Spirit, if you like to call it that or without being filled with the Holy Spirit, all the talk that we're doing about being crucified with Christ is meaningless. All it does is end up in a lot of uptight neurotics who are trying to die to themselves unless you really begin to trust the Holy Spirit to come down upon you and make Jesus alive and real inside you.

In other words, if you're willing to die to self but don't believe God to baptize you with the Holy Spirit, you end up a miserable ghost because that's what you are when you're crucified with Christ. There's just nothingness and unless there's a life to come in and give character and personality to you again, you'll just be almost a Christian automaton and it's that side of the Holy Spirit that I'd like to share a wee bit with you.

Do you see that Bronovski, I don't know if you know him, he is really quite an outstanding scientist and literary critic from England who now is in California. A fellow like Bronovski can stand up here and outline to you as I remember him doing at our university in Belfast 15-20 years ago. I remember him outlining clearly the connection between Blake's poetry and the latest developments in science and he was an expert on doing it. I remember the whole university was gathered with a massive hall that held the whole university and he was in front and just did the whole thing without notes and everything was crystal clear, perfect. Even I could understand and I was not a scientist but I could understand the relations that he was making. Now you know the same thing can happen when you get any of the brilliant men up in front of us. A brilliant intellectual who really sees things clearly and therefore simply, can make it absolutely crystal clear to all of us so that we understand it completely.

Now loved ones, if I had that kind of ability, I could make everything in Jesus and the death in Jesus, absolutely clear to all of you and you could understand it perfectly with your mind -- but unless the Holy Spirit acts upon you, it'll always be dead knowledge, honestly. The Holy Spirit is the one who makes these things real in your life. It's as if before you came in here this morning, I flew in, in 707 airplanes, all the great paintings of the world. If I went to the art gallery in London, got the greatest paintings in the Louvre in Paris, went into the art galleries in Rome to get the greatest paintings, and I put them all round the walls. Then, I brought you all in and set you down and switched all the lights off and said to you, "Isn't it beautiful?"

It wouldn't matter. It wouldn't matter what was round the wall. It wouldn't matter how beautiful the things were in this room. If there was no light, you wouldn't be able to see any of it. It wouldn't matter what I described to you, you wouldn't be able to enjoy it. Now that's what the Holy Spirit does for us in relationship to beginning to live like God. Brothers and sisters, it is not just a human dedication. It is not just a disciplined willpower. It is the touch of the Holy Spirit in your life, really. It is just miraculous. The Holy Spirit just does amazing things in you.

Now you may say, "Well brother, then why are you sharing all this business about being dead to self?" Well, unless you're willing, unless you're willing to be crucified with Christ, unless you're willing for the Holy Spirit to make you like Jesus -- and that means being willing to face the things that Jesus faced -- the Holy Spirit can't do anything. He won't act against your will.

If you're in a position this morning where you just will not be a doormat, "No, I am not going to be a doormat. I am not going to have that roommate criticize me when I could defend myself, I am not

going to be a doormat", then the Holy Spirit can't make you like Jesus because Jesus was really a doormat, wasn't he? I mean, he knew when to speak up at the time of the cleansing of the temple and the dealing with the moneylenders, but he was prepared to be walked over when it was for his Father's glory. So that's the connection, you see.

You need to be willing to die to self with Jesus to allow the Holy Spirit to make you like Jesus but all the willingness in the world is no use unless you believe Jesus to baptize you with his Holy Spirit. Now what does the Holy Spirit do? Well, he takes the qualities of Jesus as Jesus is at the right hand of God this morning and he imparts them to you. He makes them real in you miraculously.

We're all pretty worn out, aren't we, by the tricky little psychological techniques that are recommended to us in book after book after book for becoming an outgoing integrated personality. We are just worn out. This fellow says, "This way, you're okay, I am okay, you're not okay, I am not okay", and you go round and round in circles.

The tragedy is, I mean dear love him, he is making his money out of it and we'll all suffer and we'll go through the contortion. And then we'll read it, but then there'll be a new man who will come in with the same kind of deal and if there isn't a book that is in the top 20 or a top 12 or the top 10 at this time, then "Readers Digest" does it for you because they always have that kind of article. And you know that we're all pretty worn out trying to make ourselves into outgoing integrated personalities and we're doing our best but we're on our heads half the time.

Now loved ones, you can't do it yourself. It is a miracle, honestly it is. It is a miracle. There is a perfect person called Jesus who is at God's right hand at this moment and he is able through the Holy Spirit to make himself real in your life by a miracle if you're willing for it. So you see, you become good by a miracle. You don't become good by trying hard. You don't even become good by just being willing. You become good by believing that the Holy Spirit will give to you the very qualities and attributes of Jesus.

So, can you produce love that is never jealous or boastful? Can you? No. You and I have tried it. We've tried it, haven't we? We've tried all kinds of tricks to not be jealous or boastful. You know we have. You know we've said, "I am not going to be boastful. I am not going to speak. I am going to let him speak and then I am going to praise him for what he said", and we've tried all kinds of tricks to have a love that is not jealous or boastful but we can't produce it.

Love is not irritable or rude and we've said, "I am not going to be irritable, not today, I am not", and we've tried all kinds of things. We've said, "I'll maintain absolute quietness." Some of us have tried Zen Buddhism. We'll be dead to everything that happens, just ignore it, and we try it and we end up just a dead automaton; we're not alive or human, we're dead. We're not irritable but we're not anything. We're just sitting there and we've tried all those things.

Loved ones, you know fine well and I know it, you cannot produce that love that is never jealous or boastful -- that is, love that is not irritable or resentful. (I Corinthians 13) That love that is not arrogant or rude, that love that does not insist on its own way, that is not easily provoked, that is not glad when others go wrong -- you can't produce that because there's only one person in the world who has it and that's Jesus and he imparts it to you through the Holy Spirit.

Now that's what it means you see, when it says, "You have been freed from sin and become enslaved to God and the return you get for that, is sanctification." You get the return, you don't produce it.

You come to a place where you're willing to be free from sin, where you're willing to be a slave to God. Then the return you get, the Bible says, actually the Greek is "eke karpos", you have the fruit, the fruit that you have. The thing that automatically comes to you as a gift from God is sanctification, that is Christ-likeness and then eternal life, but it's a gift from God through the Holy Spirit.

What are some of the effects of the Holy Spirit in your life? There are many of them and I suppose we'll have to talk about some more next Sunday because we can't mention them all today but one comes up for instance in John 12:3 if you look at it, at least the illustration of it comes up. The connection is of course, ointment is oil and you remember, Jesus made the connection in that verse etymologically when he said, "The Spirit of God is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel." Anointment, obviously oil and ointment and so this is the connection -- and John 12:3 is only an illustration, it's not a logical proof.

John 12:3, "Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment." So the whole house had a fragrance about it because of the ointment that was used to anoint Jesus' feet. Now, one of the effects of the Holy Spirit anointing you is that he fills your life with the fragrance of Jesus himself. He fills your life with a fragrance, really, and a fragrance that is right. Brothers, don't be afraid -- it's "Brut" for you [a men's cologne], it's the right stuff, but he fills your life with a fragrance, just a fragrance of himself. So that you can be beside a person -- you don't need to talk to him, you don't need to witness to them, you don't need to give them a whole spiel on Christianity -- but there's just a fragrance in your life that is different. There's a sweetness and a gentleness about your life that is supernatural.

Now brothers and sisters, that you can't imitate and you can't produce that and all the books in the world and the psychological techniques in the world, don't produce that kind of fragrance. Only the filling with the Holy Spirit or the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whatever way you like to talk of it, only that will bring about that kind of life. What I have seen is, you need to expect Jesus to fill you with that. That's why I am sharing that this morning.

I think a lot of you, you know I really love you, because you are just dear brothers and sisters and I think we all probably feel that about each other in the theater and I want you to come into all that God has and I think many of you are dead anxious to come, but you're kind of uptight about it and you kind of feel, "Well, I want to die to self. I want to be consecrated, da...da...da...", and you get wrapped up in the whole negative side.

Brothers and sisters, there's only one person who can give to you the qualities of Jesus' life and that's the Holy Spirit and he will do it, if you really begin to look to God and say, "Lord God, I want to be different from what I am but I get caught up in this negativism inside. I get caught up with critical spirit all the time. Sometimes I don't know whether I am ready to die or not to die but God, I want this kind of life. Will you begin to deal with me Holy Spirit? And I know that only you can touch me and make it real in me and will you begin to come upon me and give me this life?"

Loved ones, finally it is a miracle. However logical the whole thing is and however analytically we approach the death of Jesus and however precisely we analyze the Greek and the Hebrew and make comparisons between the manuscripts and between psychology and philosophy and this truth, finally it is a miracle, honestly. It is a miracle of God. This Holy Spirit can make you absolutely a different kind of person, really. And if you see anyone, if there are any of us here that even look

at all like Jesus or have any of the qualities of God at all, it's because of that dear Holy Spirit. And he is just a dear Person dear ones, he really is, not spooky at all, not all that stuff, not spiritism and séances and all that, he is just a dear Person. He is the third person of the Trinity and he is really the very uncreated life of God and he is able to touch you with that same life.

So, I think that some of you need in your prayer times, to begin to look for it. I think some of you need to begin to trust him and obey him and let him produce this life in you and maybe look away a little from yourselves and look away from where you are and where you think you are and begin to look to the Holy Spirit and expect him to touch you. I'd like to share a little more about him next Sunday, but maybe you would just begin this coming week to see that the only One who can really sanctify you or the only one who can really make you like Jesus, is this Person, the Holy Spirit and He does it miraculously by making Jesus' life real inside you. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, we've tried so hard ourselves so often and we feel we're willing really for all that has been shared over these Sundays but somehow it still isn't real in us and we seem to get full of introspection, full of preoccupation with ourselves. Holy Spirit, will you touch us, and if you are able to make Jesus' life real in us, will you begin to do it now inside each one of us?

Holy Spirit, we would gladly obey you moment-by-moment and trust you if you could begin to make us like Jesus. We've tried ourselves and we seem unable to do anything. Holy Spirit, will you touch us and fill our lives with the fragrance of Jesus' life so that we'll be freed from all this pettiness that we have inside and all this self-centeredness. We would ask you to do that, Holy Spirit. Amen.