

Our Perverted Nature

ROMANS 7:15

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I think you'll agree that there are some words and phrases, which find an answering response in all of our hearts when they're used. And it's the job of songs and poems, and of plays and novels to find those phrases and use them, because, more than anything else, they take away the feeling that we have, at times, of loneliness, and the feeling that we are on our own, and we only experience these things.

So these phrases and words are good, because they convince us that we're all the same. We all face the same thing. And so even if these phrases express bad things, at least they take away the terrible feeling of isolation that we have, with some of our greatest problems. More than any other phrase, it seems to me, that's used, in all the literature of the whole world, more than any other phrase or clause, this one that we're going to look at does just this. It makes us all feel immediately, we have been at that place. That speaks for me.

Now maybe you'd look at it, dear ones. It's Romans 7:15. "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate". Really, is there anybody here this morning, who has not, at some time, experienced that in their own heart? Is there any of us here this morning who have not wanted desperately to do something that we knew was right, and we could not do it? Is there anybody here this morning, who has not almost been bewildered at the words that have come from your own lips, at times?

Is there one of us here who has not looked with panic and amazement at sensing what we've just done? We wanted to be patient, but the impatience burst out of us. We wanted to keep our temper, but we lost our temper. We wanted to have clean, pure thoughts, but we found ourselves filling our minds with all kinds of wild, pornographic imagining. We wanted to be kind and generous to the people that we were living with, but we found ourselves breaking out in all kinds of selfishness, and all kinds of critical, sarcastic expressions, that just did the very opposite to what we really intended to do.

Really, loved ones, I think all of us have been in that position. I think you would agree with me that the things that come out of you, at times, are so utterly opposite to what you want; they're so absolutely the things, that you hate, that you can hardly believe that they're yours, at all. It almost seems that they come from something other than you, that they're not really you, yourself, at all.

And this is what old Paul really says there. The Greek translation of that verse actually brings out this kind of literal meaning, "What I am working out, I do not recognize as belonging to me at all." In other words, "The things that I am working out through my mouth, or through my mind, or through my hands, I can't even recognize them as belonging to me at all;" because the word he uses there, you see, for 'I do not understand my own action', that word is the Greek word for 'know'. And it's the same word that Jesus uses when he says, "I know my sheep." And it's almost as if Paul was saying, "I don't recognize these, as sheep that have come out of my heart. They're so alien and foreign to me. They're so opposite to the very thing I want to do, that I can't even call them my own." And that's of course, why, so often, we just don't understand them.

It's really as if there's somebody else inside you losing your temper, isn't it? It's almost as if there's some petty little narrow-minded, sarcastic creature inside you, that is full of those harsh things at home, or to your roommate. It seems as if it isn't you at all. It seems as if it's just some other nature. It's some miserable Mr. Hyde who is hiding underneath that respectable 'Dr. Jekyll' of me outside.

That's, you know, what some people have taken as the explanation. They've said, "That's right." It's kind of schizophrenia. It's really spiritual schizophrenia. It's as if there are two people inside you instead of one. And you know there are a lot of people, who think of themselves as Christian, who believe that. They believe, "That's right. That's the answer. There are two natures inside me. And one is fighting the other. The good nature is fighting the bad nature. And that goes on forever until we meet Jesus face-to-face." And there are a lot of people, I think, in our churches, as well as in philosophical circles, who believes that's the explanation.

We're schizophrenics. There's a good nature inside us, and there's a bad nature. And one battles against the other, and will continue to do so for the rest of our lives. And of course we've been saying, over the past few weeks, that though many of us have been brought up with that teaching in our own churches. Yet that's not what Paul believes.

Paul says, "Look, you're bluffing yourself. You're either one or the other. You're not kind of half black and half white. You're either one or the other. You've either one nature or the other. You can't pretend that you have a little of a good nature and a little of a bad nature, just to make yourself feel better. No, you're either a bad nature, with a little cosmetic from the good nature on the outside, to make you look better, or you're a truly good nature."

We saw it with Jesus, you know. He kept laying them down upon us. It's amazing how we ignore him. He said, "Can a good tree bring forth bad fruit and can a bad tree bring forth good fruit?"

We keep on saying, "No, no Lord, you're right. You know that. But I have a little bit of a good tree in me, and a little bit of a bad tree". We are dumb, really, you know. You must admit it. When we want a thing to be, we make it be--whether the center of all truth tells us that or not. We believe what we want to believe, really.

And you remember loved ones that Paul came right down the same line. If you want to look at it, it's 1 Corinthians 3:1. Paul didn't play around with saying, "Oh, you have a little bit of carnality in you and a little bit of spirituality. And you just have to let the one overcome the other by habit, and by suppression, and by autosuggestion". He said, "You are either one or the other." People who believe in God are either in one group or in the other group. "But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh..." And the King James Version says 'carnal'. The Greek word you remember is 'Sarkinos'. "But I could not address you as spiritual men, but as carnal men..." "Babes in Christ," admittedly, but carnal.

So, loved ones, Paul divides the whole of those who are in Jesus, into either spiritual people or carnal people. In other words, when you say you're carnal, it means that, now and again, you do what you know God really wants you to do. But really, that isn't the expression of your true nature. It's just the Spirit of Jesus having his way at that time. But loved ones, if you're still producing envy and anger and sarcasm, we'd better get straight and be honest about it, "Okay, we're carnal. That's our problem. Let's get to dealing with it".

God is so good you know. He strips away all the rationalization and all the pretences that we put forward. That's really good that he does, because, loved ones, while we are involved in self-defense, while we're saying to the surgeon, "No, no, I haven't got cancer. Keep your knife away. I haven't got cancer. I haven't got cancer." The surgeon can do nothing for it. But when we once come straight before God and say, "Lord, we're giving up all this play-acting that 'I have a little good in me, and a little bad in me.' I am going to admit, Lord, that I am carnal. And from time-to-time you get your way in my life just by the power of your Holy Spirit but usually I resist successfully. I am carnal, and I need something done about it."

Loved ones, it's really important you know, to see that. It really is, because if you keep bluffing yourself that there's a good nature and a bad nature warring inside you, you can go along like that for the rest of your life. You know we do that. You know we do that. Some good comes out of us and we say, "Well there's some real pure good inside. So I am not too bad."

But it's when we begin to see that all our good is tinged with some of that old self and some of that selfishness. It's when you begin to see that the whole operation has to be overhauled, then God begins to be able to do something with it.

Let me give you an example that I think will come home to you, because we've all sat in a classroom. Let's imagine the poor soul is up there in front chalking on the board and we are flying the paper airplanes like mad, and sticking pins in the girl in front and all that kind of thing. And he turns around and tells us to shut up. And, okay, we shut up. And while he is watching us, we shut up, but as soon as he turns round, away it goes again.

Now you can't call that obedience. You know we can't. You know not for a minute do we think we're obeying him. Not for a minute do we think he's the master of that situation. He is only the master as long as we let him be. When we let him tell us something, and we do it, then he's the master. But loved ones, he isn't really the master. The one who has the power to let him tell us or not, that's the master. The ones who have power to disobey, they're the master.

In other words, loved ones, you can't really say that Jesus is Lord at all unless he is Lord of all. You can't say that God rules your life if he only rules it when you let him. Then you actually rule your life. All you do is, you let him have an odd say now and again, but you actually rule your life. So do you see that you're either carnal or you're spiritual. You don't have a little bit of one nature and a little bit of another. You're either a carnal nature which at times does good and has some cosmetics that makes it look spiritual at times, or you're a spiritual nature and out of you flows the love of Jesus.

Really important to see--it's really important to see that the problem is what Paul says. The problem is not the angry words. The problem isn't the bit of envy that you feel. The problem isn't the irritability. The problem isn't the sarcastic expression. The problem isn't a little bit of greed. The problem isn't the petty little feeling that somebody is getting one up on you. That isn't the problem. The problem is what we are. We are carnal. It's our nature that is wrong.

It's not just that we have some little bad things in our lives. It's we that are wrong. It's the nature that has to be dealt with. And that's what we've been sharing. How often have you done the same thing brothers, as I have done? At stupid points in our lives we do it, when we think we're saving money. The car won't start. Okay, so, well, may be it's the battery lead. Okay, it's the

battery lead. So we buy the new battery lead. Well, maybe it's the battery posts. So we clean the battery posts, okay. Well, maybe it's the points. So we buy the points, okay. Now, maybe it's the plugs. So we clean the plugs. And we fight and we struggle for weeks and weeks, until finally we do admit it that we need a new battery, and we'd better buy it.

That's a bit the same with us. We think, "Well, if we can just curb the impatience a little bit there, or if we just can control the temper a little bit there, or we can just overcome this narrow-minded, petty, critical attitude towards our friends there, we'll be okay.

Loved ones, it's the whole center of the thing that's wrong. Or you cut a dress out. And you start stitching and you pin, and you pin, and you fold, and you restitch. And you pin, and you fold. And you hope somehow you'll get it right. And eventually you give up, and you say, "The pattern is wrong or I have read it wrong. That's the problem." And you start all over.

Loved ones, that's what God is trying to get through to you, that if you have trouble with some things in your life that you don't want to do, but you find yourself doing them--if you have some things that you hate but you actually find yourself producing them in your life, then the problem is in what you 'are'. It's in your being. It's not in your doing. It's in your whole nature. That's what has to be changed.

Loved ones, there's only one that can do that. The one who made you has to remake you. He has to recreate you. You have to stop the patching, and the trying to make the thing better by little improvements. And you have to come to him and say, "Father, I am a Christian. I know you've forgiven me my sin, but I don't live like a Christian. My wife knows I don't act like Jesus. My friends and my roommates know I don't speak like Jesus to them, when things go wrong. So Father, there's something wrong with what I am. Now will you deal with that?"

Loved ones, that's what we have been talking about in the past couple of weeks: that our whole nature is perverted. And it's what needs to be changed. And that can only be done by the person who originally made it good at the beginning. He is the only one who can make it good again. The remedy is so radical that I'd ask you to just bear with me, if I show you again what God's dream for our personality was. And then maybe you'll see why the remedy has to be so radical.

You remember, loved ones, at the beginning--and I think I have all the references here, so that you won't have to fight your way between the wall [projecting a diagram on the wall] and the bible. You remember at the beginning, God made us, really first of all, with a body. The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground. That's the part of us that is 'world conscious'. I see you with the eyes of my body. You hear me with the ears of your body, that's the part of it that links up with the world.

You know the Greek words for body is 'sarx'. And that's the word you Greek scholars will know that it's 'sarkinos' that is called carnal. So the body is not wrong in itself. That's one of the mistakes, you remember, the Gnostics made, that the body was evil in itself. The body isn't evil in itself. It's only wrong when our lives become 'flesh dominated'. And that's what carnal means.

Now dear ones, first of all God made us a body. Then you remember, the rest of Genesis 2:7 goes on, "Then the Lord God formed man out of the dust from the ground, and breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life." That's really spirit--spirit capacity. "And man became a living soul." Now the old RSV is not so hot there because it says a man became a living being. But the Hebrew word is

'nephesh' and it really means soul. And so God breathed into us the breath of his life and he gave us soul.

Maybe it's good to be very clear what the soul is. The soul--the Greek word for soul is 'psuche'. Now you can see that there was no 'y' in the Greek 'psuche'. And so the 'u' in 'psuche' became a 'y', that's where we get 'psyche logos', psychology. So where the bible talks about soul, it normally means the psychological part of it. If you follow the word soul out through the Old and New Testament, you find that it's used to mean at times the mind, at times the emotion and at times the will. So God made us at least on two levels.

Now then you may remember that verse there that we used last day, which outlines biblical psychology. "I pray God, your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless." And God made us not only a body and a soul, but he did breathe his own breath into us. And he gave us a spirit. And just as the soul is conscious of the self, so the spirit is the part of us that is God conscious, that makes us aware of God.

That's why there is that verse in the bible, you see, "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord." Why the 'lamp of the Lord'? Well, it was through the spirit that God intended to fill our souls and our bodies and the whole world with his light and his life. So that's why God calls the spirit the 'lamp of the Lord', that everything would shine from inside out, like that, [draws arrow on projected view] from the Spirit of God.

Now you remember how he was intended to do that. He intended to give us the spirit of his own life. That's why we talk about being borne of the Spirit. That spirit, loved ones--some of you may be interested in this--that spirit was actually spirit capacity. It wasn't that God breathed into us at the beginning his Holy Spirit. He breathed into us the breath of his life and we had a spirit capacity.

That's why it's possible to be spiritual without being Christian. That's why it's possible for psychics and spiritists to contact the evil spiritual world, because they do have spirits. That's why it's not enough to say he is a very spiritual person. He could be a very spiritual person in being contact with the evil spirits of the universe. But God's plan was that we would receive the spirit of his uncreated life from the tree of life, you remember, in the center of the garden, in Genesis 2:9. And we would receive that Spirit into us, and that Spirit would be the lamp of the Lord. And that Spirit would come out through our souls and through our bodies and be expressed to the whole world. And the whole world would be filled with the spirituality and the blessedness and the liberty of God himself.

So, we would actually be used by God to create the whole world in his image and to redeem it all into his plan. And really that was the plan there. It was just a very simple, straightforward thing. That God here, would give us life into our spirits. And we would pass it through our minds, emotions and wills and out into our bodies and out into the world. So man would be the means by which God did that.

Really it was the Father's plan that our natures, our whole personalities, would always be moving in that outward movement, always moving out like that. So we'd receive God's love, and we'd give it out to other people. It contrasts so greatly, we saw last Sunday, with the way we operate, you know, in regard to our wives or our friends, where we get love rather than giving.

You remember we talked about that in connection with our emotions last Sunday. We said that, so often, instead of receiving from God, the love that he has to give us through our spirits and through communion, and then giving that out to our wives and our children and our friends, we, so often, have simply died in here [indicates spirit on projected diagram]. We've simply refused to act that way. And so our spirit has died, as far as its capacity to receive anything from God is concerned. And what we have begun involving ourselves in, is drawing from our wife, from our friend, from anybody that we could get to give us love. We started to draw in, through our body, the love that we should have received from God. That's part of the perversion of our nature, that the whole thing has started to operate the wrong way.

What I'd like to do is just share briefly how this works in relationship to another part of our psychological being, our mind.

This was God's plan. Let's just take it in connection with our energy crisis. God has a plan for the use of energy in our world. He knows how it should be used. He is the one that put the oil there. He is the one that has seen the coal developing. He knows what the whole inner part of the universe is like. So he has a plan for it. And what he wants us to do is to get his plan from him.

Many of us say, "Oh, you can't. Who could know God that way?" Well, loved ones, maybe you'd look at a verse that would just show you that for a moment. It's 1 Corinthians 2:11. There is in fact a person who does know God's mind. "For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." So dear ones, God's plan was that we would spend time before him communing with him, and examining his mind, and we would trust him, through the Holy Spirit who knows his mind, to give his mind to our spirit--in the intuition of our spirit, because your spirit has an ability for intuition.

Now sisters, I know you have intuition too. But it's a natural and a shadowy kind of copy of the pure spiritual intuition that begins to operate within you when you're filled and baptized with the Holy Spirit. And so, you have the ability within you to receive from the Holy Spirit of God, his mind. Then it was God's plan, that we would pass that out to our own mind. And notice loved ones, [indicates "intuition" in the spirit part of projected diagram] our minds would be ruled by the intuition of our spirits. Our minds would not rule, but they would, in fact, be ruled. And they would be used to understand the direction that God was giving us.

So presumably the Father saw the situation with the fossil fuel. The Father knew fine well that we were going to run into trouble if we continued to depend on the fossil fuels of oil and coal. He knew that those were going to run out and presumably he had a whole plan in his mind not simply for fission but for fusion--the nuclear fusion that would have an endless source of replenishing energy and that would continue to fill the world with light and with life instead of emptying the world. And, presumably, he had all that planned and all that organized. And his desire was to give us that through the intuition of our spirits--then for our minds to work out all the plans that were necessary to make use of this nuclear fusion and the methods of getting it out to all parts of the world where it was needed. And then to pass that out through activity of our bodies and building these plants, and in operating them, and switching the right switches and directing it to the right places. And the result would be that we would have filled the world, and filled it with beauty, you know--not so emptied that poor souls in Houston are afraid their houses are going to cave in because we've taken so much oil and so much water and so much coal out from underneath it--not leaving the countryside stripped by the strip mining. But presumably we would have ended up filling the world and using it instead of abusing it. Now that was God's plan.

The perversion of our nature comes about simply by the fact that we refused to accept this, this whole plan of 'from God, to the inside of us, to the outside of the world.' We refused to accept the whole plan that God had of working from the inside out. And we simply turned the whole thing round. And really what happened was we died inside. And we gave up any ability at all to do anything. And we worked exactly the opposite way. We were left only with our own minds. We could do nothing but use our mind. We cut ourselves off from God so the spirit was dead and the intuition of the spirit did not operate. And we were left with a world that we had to, in some way, manipulate and manage to our advantage. And that's exactly what we've done.

Instead of the mind being ruled by the spirit, the mind began to rule. And the mind looked out and all we could see was what our bodies could see. So the mind had no information from within at all. All it had was the information we got through the eyes. So, of course, we went for the first thing we could see. So we saw the oil; we saw the coal, and we went for it. And we didn't care what the other people were going to suffer for that. We decided, "No, it doesn't matter. There's no one who has an overall plan for the whole operation. So let's get in, and use it, and manipulate it, for our own purposes--to get our own profit and to establish our own greed. That's supreme." And so that's what has happened.

So we've used our minds. We had no direction in them, other than to get enough stuff that we need. "It doesn't matter about the people in Ethiopia, whether they're starving or not, we need gas for the cars. Let's get the gas for the cars. It doesn't matter whether they have houses or not, we need petrochemicals in order to supply the materials that we want for ourselves."

So loved ones, our whole nature works wrong. Do you see that? It's not just [names an oil company]. There's no point in blaming the old oil companies. What we see in them is what is in ourselves. There's no point in looking at the White House and saying, "That alone -- these White House horrors are a picture of what happens when people like this get into control and into power," because we're operating as wrongly as they are operating.

Loved ones, I put it to you. Is it not true that often your old mind is more concerned with how to manipulate things to your advantage and to make your way somehow through life safely, than it is concern to find God's plan, and to mediate that to the rest of the people in the world? I mean, is it not true that when we end up trying to use people or use relationships for our own advantage, it's happening because we don't really believe that God has an overall plan for our relationships, or if he does, we don't want to bother with it? We just want to use our own mind for what we want to use it for.

So our mind, you know, is faced with an impossible task, really. Because, how, if you're one little fly among three and a half billion other little flies, how do you keep yourself on top? I mean, if there's nobody who is feeding to you his plan for you in the universe, boy, it will take you all your time keeping them away from you. And so that's what we do. We spend a lot of our mind's time trying to take someone down in joking or conversation in order to build ourselves up, trying to manipulate people or things or circumstances round to what we need ourselves, trying to criticize others so that they feel inferior to us, and we can feel better than them.

In other words, these beautiful minds that we have, that were made to receive from the intuition of our spirits, God's plans for the world--forgetting ourselves and our own benefits. These minds are now being used so often by us just for our own advantage and for our own purposes. And the reason

is, loved ones, not because the mind at times is critical, not because the mind at times is petty, not because it's at times narrow, but because the whole operation is working in this way, [shows movement on diagram from body to soul (mind), to spirit] in this way [repeats movement].

We're like so many parasites drawing from one another. What God wanted, was us to receive everything from him, so that we'd be giving all the time. I don't know loved ones, I don't think there's anyway out, you know. I think the two are absolutely opposites. I think there's no way out that we can find.

I think the only hope is that God has in fact a power and an ability to wipe that [indicates the diagram above with movement from outside in] right out. And that's what Romans 6:6 says. You know that God has told us, "Look, your old self, your whole nature that operates the wrong way was crucified with My Son Jesus so that you might be able to walk in newness of life." Or loved ones, if you look at it in Romans 6:5, you'd see it just in different words. "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." That's what it means, that the whole personality operates the wrong way. So what needs to be done is for God himself to destroy the whole system, the whole unworkable, miserable system that we have inherited and developed over the years of our lives. Let him destroy it with Jesus and let him raise us with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. And really that's what needs to be done.

If you say to me, "Yes, but how?" Loved ones, if you look at Romans 6:6 it really shows you plainly. "We know that our old self was crucified with him." The first step is to accept, intellectually, that this is what needs to be done. That's what the 'know', the Greek word ['ginosko'] means there. Accept intellectually that that's what needs to be done.

Now loved ones, while you keep playing around with this business of, "No, let me patch it up a little," or, "I can do it all right. I can fix it up by a little, 'if I am okay, you're okay', and a little of autosuggestion, I will fix it Lord. Just keep your hands off. I'll do it without any pain, don't worry." If you keep on at that loved ones -- if you're not ready to face the radical, surgical remedy that God has, you'll go on for the rest of your life as a crippled child of God.

So the first step is to know that that's what needs to be done, and to move intellectually, on the basis of Romans 6:6, that that has been done -- to believe God. Stop that business, loved ones, of saying, "Oh Pastor, you mean I have to start crucifying myself? Okay, bring out the old chains and beat my body. Okay, I have to crucify myself." No, loved ones. It's not that. The truth is that God has crucified you in Jesus. That's a fact. Romans 6:6 says it. Are you going to believe your own experience or God's word? You have to believe God's word that as far as God is concerned, the work has been done. Your whole perverted nature, your whole being has been crucified with Jesus.

And then if you say to me, "Well brother, I mean, why doesn't it work?" Loved ones, it's Romans 6:11. That's the reason it doesn't work. "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." You then have to 'consider' -- or you remember, the word in the King James Version was 'reckon'. You know intellectually. That has no volitional side to it at all. But secondly, you reckon. Now the Greek word for 'reckon' means treat yourself as if you're already crucified. Now that's where the rub is. You need to be prepared to face all the consequences that would follow in your life if God made this real in you.

In other words, the oil companies would have to be prepared to lose their tremendous profit. The White House would have to be prepared to take part in humbling and penitence. You and I would have

to be prepared no longer to use other people, but to be used by the Holy Spirit. We would have to be prepared no longer to rule our own lives, but to be ruled by God. We would have to be prepared no longer always to be at the top of the heap, but at times to be walked over, and to be used as a doormat for Jesus.

In other words, the reckoning is where the rub is with most of us. It's not the knowing. The knowing depends on the simple statement of God's word. But it's the reckoning that is so rough. Would you be prepared for other people to get their way, rather than you to get yours? Would you be prepared for your wife always to determine where you go to eat, if that's was for Jesus' glory? Would you be prepared for your roommate to have the room whatever way they wanted it, if Jesus so designed it? And would you trust him to so design it? Loved ones, that's where it is. Would you be prepared to be married or not to be married if it were for Jesus glory? It's the reckoning. It's the 'are you prepared to face the consequences' of that crucifixion in you?

You know John Pratt this morning, just testified that during this past week he had at last seen it. And he knew he was crucified. And, loved ones, that's it. Then Jesus fills you with the Holy Spirit. And you're at last able to do the things that you want to do, and to reject the things that you hate. I really thank God, it's true. It's true in many of our lives today, and it can be true in yours. Let's pray.