

The Frustrated Life

Romans 8:12

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Would you turn dear ones to Romans 8:12 and we could all begin together. Romans 8:12, "So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh." So it's Paul saying, "Therefore brothers and sisters we are debtors not just to the physical and mental powers that we all possess here this morning to live as if we were just a bunch of bodies or animals that act upon one another." We are not to live like that. In other words, he's really challenging one of the basic theories I suppose of the philosophy department of many of the universities, if not of our own, perhaps, that this is a closed mechanistic universe and the only power we have is the mental or physical power that I can exert upon you. Or, the only power you have available is the emotional power you can exert upon me.

Paul is saying, "No, that's not the way it is. It's not a closed universe." Of course, he has a parenthesis in his own mind because he's saying, "Because of course, as I've already pointed out to you all there is a power beyond our own physical and mental powers that is coming to us from outer space." And he said, "I pointed that out to you." In the last verse he said, "If the power by which Jesus was raised from the dead dwells in you then that same power will give life to your mortal bodies." So Paul says, "Therefore, in the light of that fact that there is a power coming to us from beyond, don't let's live as if we had only our mental and emotional powers to exercise upon one another because that's not true."

You may say, "Why should we not live that way?" I think there are two answers, one is because that is not our nature, our nature is not just flesh. That's it, our nature is not just flesh. The behavior psychology fails because of the theory that we are just flesh and that the only way to cure a man of alcoholism is to give him a tablet that makes him sick every time he drinks alcohol. We are not just flesh. There is another reason for him drinking alcohol besides the fact that his body will accept it or will not. And so the first reason for not living as if the only power you had available were the mental and physical powers of each other is we're not just flesh, we're not just bodies.

And secondly, because of the disastrous results that follow in our own lives of living according to the flesh. Now loved ones, what are we? And those of you who know it off by heart just be patient because there are some of us that are here for the first time this morning and it will help just to start at the beginning. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 dear ones, this is what we are. This is what we are 1 Thessalonians 5:23. This is God's description of our personalities. "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And Paul says, "You are the spirit as well as soul and body and you're not to live as if you're only soul and body because you're spirit, soul and body." And you exist on three levels of consciousness. And really those three levels of consciousness Paul would say have three worlds of which they're conscious. So your body is conscious of the world; you can see each other, we can hear each other, we can touch each other. The five senses enable us here through our bodies to know the outside world but if you live as if that's the only reality you're only living a third of your life because you have a soul, a psyche which consists of our mind and emotions which enables us to

be conscious of ourselves.

So I see what my hand is doing with my eyes but if you ask me what I'm thinking at this moment I use my mind and my soul to be conscious of myself and what I'm thinking. And then he says, "You're spirit." And your spirit is the important part because it's the part of you that is conscious of God and connects up with God. Now, if you want to know how that happens you could find it in Romans 8:16. How our spirit is conscious of God, "It is the Spirit," and you see a capital "S" there. "It is the Spirit himself," that is the spirit that belongs to God, "Bearing witness with our spirit," and that's a small "s", "That we are children of God."

And loved ones, the way we are conscious of God through our spirit is God has a spirit himself and his spirit connects up with our spirit and that's how we know anything about God. So Paul says, "Don't live as if you're only a body, or if you're only a soul, as if there's only a psychological part, or you're only a physical part. There's a spirit part and that enables you to be conscious of God." And that's really, in fact, why God regards our bodies as important at all, loved ones. He regards our bodies as important because they're the temple of the Holy Spirit. And so to the Father the big thing is that we have spirits because that's how we receive this power from outer space that he gives to us through our spirits.

In fact you see if you look at Job, at several references dear ones and if you could just be patient and follow them through I think it would be good. Job 33:4 states the truth that all our real life comes from that source. And of course it shows really why so many of us are dissatisfied at times because we're trying to find life apart from this. It's Job 33:4, "The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life." And so the spirit is the part of us that receives life from God and gives life to our whole being. That's why when Jesus came God impressed upon us that the important reason for his coming was to baptize us with the Holy Spirit.

When John looked at Jesus he said, "Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world but behold he on whom you see the spirit descend and remain it is he that will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." And so for the early apostolic preachers, the important part of their message was that ordinary people like us who were existing on an only physical level, or on a psychological level could in fact receive this supernatural life through the Holy Spirit that would begin to give life as Job said to our whole being.

That was why in the early church, you remember, there were some people that came up and said, "How do we become Christians?" And Peter said, "Be baptized into the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins." But the big thing is, "And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Loved ones, that was the first criterion of orthodoxy in the New Testament, that you had received the Holy Spirit because that's what transforms you from being an animal or a psychological being into a personality for which you were really made, consisting of the life of God inside you giving you direction.

And so throughout the New Testament you get that kind of emphasis. The boys really did nothing outside the guidance of this Holy Spirit. They received life from God through the spirit and that guided them in their whole lives. You can look at it if you look at Acts 16:6-7 that the leaders in the New Testament church depended utterly on this life that came from them through the Holy Spirit into their spirit and out through their whole personalities. Act 16:6-7, "And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by a telegram sent from Jerusalem." No, "Having been forbidden by," I think my wife will kill me for that so don't laugh too much.

Act 16:6, "And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia." And then it goes on you see, "And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go in to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them." So loved ones, they obviously lived by this supernatural life that they were receiving from God. And that's of course why Paul says, "We're not debtors to live according to the flesh." As if the only directions you were going to get were from telegrams from other people or by the interaction of your minds with each other. No, there's a power that is supernatural that comes from the Creator of the world and it comes to you through your spirit and that power will give you directions.

And really, that's the way our natures were meant to operate. I'll just give you one more example in the magnificat. The magnificat is the hymn of praise that Mary sang, you remember, when she heard that Jesus was going to be born in her. Well, there's an interesting fact linguistically in that verse. Luke 1:46, and dear ones you see how it reads? Luke 1:46, "And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.'" But in actual fact the Greek tense in magnifies is present as it's translated there but the Greek tense for rejoice is the aorist, it is "has rejoiced, or rejoiced". And so in Greek it reads, "And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.'"

And you see the point of it, that your spirit first rejoices in God your Savior and then your soul expresses that rejoicing in magnifying the Lord. In other words, the activity is always from your spirit, and then to your soul, and then out through your body and that is God's plan for us. Now loved ones, the results of that we've often talked about. We've often talked about how God gave us that commission in Genesis 1:28 to be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it. And how he implied to us, "The way that you're going to do that fully and satisfyingly is by receiving from me first of all what you need in your own life."

And so we've talked often, you remember, of communion -- and we've mentioned the parts of the spirit and one of them is communion and the ability to commune with God. And God's plan of course, is that in communion we would experience from him all that transcendental sense of freedom from life's petty particulars that we experience in any full love relationship. But we would experience that with him directly. We would experience with him directly that sense of being fully and intimately known that comes in any real love relationship and that would save us forever from needing the comforts and reassurances of other people. And then filled with the satisfying love that we would experience from him in communion through his spirit, we would begin to come in to the world and share that with others.

So that it would fill the world with all the brightness that a room is filled with when somebody in love comes in to it. You know, when somebody is in love and they come in to the room they just couldn't care if there is somebody there or not -- they're just walking on top of the world. And so it is with God's plan for us. The Father's plan was that we should all come out this morning filled with the joy of his fellowship and his friendship, really enjoying the little dear life that he had given to us and enjoying the sense that he knew us completely and fully and we would have no need for each other's reassurances and each other's expressions of love and you can imagine what 700 or 800 people, all of whom were satisfied coming together would be like.

That would be just beautiful you know, because you're all suddenly giving love, you're not needing love. And so that was the Father's plan. And you remember, we've talked about it in connection really with this gift here of the spirit. Through the Holy Spirit of God we would know what God's

mind was on everything. We would know by intuition how we were to use bleeder reactors so that we would instead of emptying the world refill the world more than we emptied it. Through intuition we would know from Him how to desalinate the sea so the Sahara could be absolutely completely renovated. Through the Holy Spirit of God we would know how to plan cities so that 75 percent of our population lives on 1.5 percent of the land. Do you realize that? 75 percent of us live on 1.5 percent of America.

And through the intuition of our spirits, God would have guided us how to plan our cities and plan our living. And the Father's will was that each of us would know intimately where we fitted in to the great plan that he has for this world so that we wouldn't be running around trying to do more ACT tests, and trying to get more people to take us on, and trying to run around the unemployment bureaus and get money. We would really know where God wanted us. Now loved ones, that's what it means to live from the spirit out through the soul and out through the body.

And of course, as a result of this our consciences would be utterly satisfied with our relationship to God. We'd have a great peace and a great sense of our identity in the world. We'd know what we were here to do, we'd know why he made us, we'd be satisfied with it. As a result our wills would be expressing a single minded clear desire within us. You know how our wills are often going in two directions because we're not too sure of what our identity really is. Our wills would begin to take on a single identity and we would begin to multiply and fill the earth.

And so it was by that kind of action that God intended us to be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it. And that was why he gave us that great commission. Now loved ones, that was the Father's plan and you know that really that's all we're obligated to. That's what Paul says. We're obligated to live by the direction of God's spirit -- not obligated to live according to your own flesh. And if you live this way you experience a freedom in your will, you experience a full satisfaction in your emotions, you experience complete fulfillment in your minds, and the Creator of the world is utterly satisfied and delighted.

And if you live that way then life is balanced. And of course, you know that we really have looked at the commission in Genesis 1:28 and we have refused to operate it that way but we still have that commission built in to our characters. And we have started to try to fulfill that by getting that power that we need from the spirit of God, we've tried to get that power from our bodies, from each other, and from the world. And that's why living in the flesh ends up such a frustrating experience, such a miserably limiting and frustrating experience.

Now, I'd like to share with you some of the plain ways we do it so that you see it yourself and see that we are not debtors to live according to the flesh, loved ones. Living according to the flesh is a frustrated life and a frustrating experience. Would you look with me first at the commission so that you fully understand the origin of what psychologists at times have called drives. And I suppose we change the name don't we every decade? But it's a drive, or an impulse in us, or we talk about them as needs. Genesis 1:28 is the source of those drives and needs.

Genesis 1:28, "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.'" And loved ones, God did not only give us that commission verbally, he put drives within us to do that kind of thing. So the reason we want to have children is because he placed that desire to be fruitful within our bodies. The reason we want at times to influence other people is because he placed a drive to do that by that desire to multiply, to influence people and make them the same kind of people as we are. To fill the earth... that's where the drive for any

generosity or any philanthropic endeavor comes from.

And then let's look at just this drive to subdue it. God gave us a desire to bring things into order. He gave us a desire to bring things into order. Loved ones, he didn't just stand in front of Adam and say, "Okay, subdue the world." He actually put in Adam a desire to bring things into order and to bring things under his authority. That was God's plan, that each of us would be agents of his who would bring the whole universe under his will. Now, the educational psychologists you know would call it the desire of every mind to see things whole. That's everyone of us who are teachers depend on that, that the child wants to see the thing whole. If he didn't want an answer to the sum then there's no point in us giving it to him. He'd just say, "No, I'm content just to leave it, thank you."

It's the drive that makes crossword puzzles interesting to all of us. It's the drive that even makes us all read detective novels or even watch those miserable soap operas because we really want to see the thing coming out right. And we have within us a deep desire to exercise authority. Now loved ones, there's the secret; if you operate your life this way you're exercising authority on God's behalf. [Shows a diagram of starting from God's Spirit through ours and our minds and bodies to the world] If you operate this way you operate it on your own behalf. [diagram opposite above] If you operate this way you're exercising authority to please God. [shows again first diagram] If you operate this way, [again the diagram opposite above] you find yourself exercising authority to please yourself.

In other words, if you don't get your power from God you'll have to satisfy that need or that drive from other people and from the world. So loved ones, the mum that dominates her children into the ground so they feel they have no freedom to decide anything and they end up lame people at 21 or 25, that mum is trying to exercise that authority on other people for her own benefit and for her own sake. And loved ones, so are we.

You either operate that way living in the spirit or you have this tremendous drive inside you and you start trying to satisfy it by operating on other people. Instead of bringing the world into God's order you start trying to bring people into your order and you want your own way, and you want them to do it your way. That's why you get irritated with your roommate about the socks. The socks aren't great but there's nothing terribly evil about the socks laying there all the time but it's just you want everything to come under your authority and to be done in your way.

Now loved ones, that's not the way the authority was made to be exercised. And that's why old Paul says, "We're not debtors to live according to the flesh." If you live according to the flesh you're going to end up with a frustrated life because you're not going to be able to bring three and a half billion other little souls under your authority. You're not. Really loved ones, that eventually brings sickness and death into our own bodies.

I'd just like to share with you, oh maybe it would be good to illustrate it. A minister had a church for maybe 15 or 20 years and he gave up the church in order to take up the practice of medicine because he said, "People will pay more money for others to take care of their bodies than for others to take care of their souls." Several years later he had given up the practice of medicine and gone in to the practice of law because he said, "People will pay more to get their own way than either for their bodies or their souls."

You know, that quotation we've used of old, Dostoevsky, that the only reason a man will act against

his own best advantage is to get his own way. And loved ones, that's true. It seems that drive for authority within us will make us act even against our own best advantage and that's why when you live according to the flesh that way, it becomes hideously frustrating because you will do it even if it's against your own best advantage.

Dr. S.I. McMillen wrote a book "None of These Diseases" and he's a medical doctor. "Doctor, my wife and I have driven 30 miles to talk to you. Neither one of us knew a sick day until a few months ago when we developed insomnia. We both take sleeping capsules now, sometimes two or more a night but we don't think that's the answer. I began to develop pains in the pit of my stomach but I had an x-ray and there's no trouble there. My wife started to have pains over her heart but a specialist examined her and said there wasn't anything wrong. We drove over here this afternoon to see if you could help us."

"They were a pleasant looking couple in their 70s. They had retired from teaching school. I had never seen them before. I was very busy that afternoon and was a little nonplussed about helping them in the short time at my disposal. After I had asked the woman a few questions and made a superficial examination without finding anything wrong she pulled a letter out of her pocket." "Doctor you may think I'm foolish but our troubles seemed to start right after we got this letter. Here it is. Read it."

"Dear George," this was to her husband. "I understand you are selling some eggs to Harry Biggerstaff. You people ought to know that I have invested considerable money in the chicken business and I'm able to supply more eggs to the people of this little hamlet than they can eat. You ought to know that my business is hurt by your dabbling around with a few hens and selling eggs to Harry. I think you ought to stop. Manny Casper." "Her eyes were wet with tears when I looked up at her." She continued, "We felt we had a right to sell those eggs to Harry because he preferred our Rhode Island brown eggs to the white ones but from that day Manning Casper has refused to speak to us when we see him in the street. We feel terrible because we never had an experience like this. We've been upset over the whole matter. I think our whole trouble stems from eggs. Just eggs."

"When she suggested they go home and give up their egg business I told her it might be worth a trial. Several months later the couples' daughter told me they had done just that and they had never felt so well in their whole life. They stopped taking sleeping capsules and did not have an ache or a pain. Of course they had a perfect right to continue to sell eggs, perhaps it was a foolish thing for them to give in to Manny Casper, or was it? They had already spent close to \$200 for x-rays and other examinations while their profits from the eggs amounted to only a few dollars. In dollars and cents it wasn't a paying business. Besides, they were losing their piece of mind, the value of which is priceless."

And you know, we think in our own hearts of eggs that we have and loved ones, as long as you continue to operate that way, demanding that "I have a right to my way and I have a right to exercise my authority for my sake and for my benefit," -- you get into that same agony within. I'd ask you yourselves, have you any experience of that dreadful strain of nervous exhaustion because there's something that you won't let go of? Because there's something you want to exercise your authority over, or you want somebody to do something that they will not do? And you know how we're like terriers, we're like little terriers, we worry and worry at the thing and won't let go of it even if it's to our own worst advantage. Really, we'll destroy ourselves just to get our own way.

Or have you really learned? Oh it was old Carnegie that I first saw in "How to Stop Worrying and

Start Living". Have you ever learned that secret of cutting your losses? Have you ever learned the secret of saying, "Look I've been trying to make this go my way for years, Lord I want it to go your way whatever way that is. I'm willing to stop living this way from the outside in and I'm willing to live the other way around." Now loved ones, that's why Paul says, "We're debtors not to live according to the flesh but really according to the spirit." And if you don't live this way, dear ones, you're driven into living according to the flesh. You are, you see because you have that drive for authority within you, you have that drive to see things whole within you. And if you can't use it the way God meant it to be used by the Holy Spirit showing you what your place is in his world and showing you in what way you've got to bring in to order...

Maybe he wants you to be a custodian, maybe he wants you to be a custodian in a building and to bring that order into that building and bring the building under his will. Maybe he wants you to be a teacher and bring children's minds into order. Maybe he wants you to be a businessman and bring the accounts into order. But loved ones, it's vital to find out what the Father wants you to do and begin to exercise that authority to bring the universe into submission to his will. If you don't do that be assured of this one thing, the drive is so strong in you that you'll try to do it the other way. Instead of bringing things into God's order you'll start trying to bring people, and things, and other situations into your order. And you'll end up in that frustrating experience. Really, just with more experience of eggs.

Oh, one of the other things that we've shared and I shared a wee bit of it at the beginning, that for instance that's an example of the mind trying to bring things into order but the emotions you can see, the emotions were meant to experience full satisfaction through the spirit with God. They were meant to experience a full love relationship with God so that all of us would come together this morning fully satisfied with the sense of intimacy that we had with God. Fully satisfied with that sense of the eternal moment that comes in a real love relationship and we come in here not miserable frustrated individuals all grabbing for each other's love and attention, all sorry because nobody spoke to us this morning but we come with a fully satisfying love relationship of our own with the Father and we would express that to each other.

That was God's plan, that the emotions would be used to express that love out to the rest of us. Now, when that doesn't happen loved ones, you have to get the satisfaction from somewhere, do you see that? The emotions were meant to experience love and if you don't experience it from God you'll want to experience it from each other and instead of coming filled with love to share with each other, we all come together hoping that somebody will pay attention to me, hoping that somebody will ask me how I was last week, hoping that somebody will take an interest in me. And we are all really like little sponges trying to soak up the love from each other and loved ones eventually it leads to frustration. You know it.

Eventually it leads to the place where you wonder, "Why doesn't he notice me? Why doesn't that person notice me? Why doesn't my boss notice what I'm doing? Why doesn't my wife appreciate me?" And we begin to look at people and become resentful of them and we wonder, "Why don't they like us?" Then we begin to project upon them all kinds of feelings of antagonism to us and the next moment we're saying, "Why don't they like us? Why do they criticize us so much? Why are they so cold towards us?" And loved ones eventually we get into that miserable situation where we find -- that person, good relationship with them, real openness. That person, no I just don't get along with them. That person, well half open. That person, well I don't get along with them.

And we start having many, many significant others in our lives from whom we are cut off. Now loved

ones, how do you deal with it? It's just a corny story but I really think, I really think it would be a blessing to a lot of you because I think a lot of us say, "Yeah, well that's the way I feel but I've good reason for it. Boy, I have a professor if you saw the way he treated that last paper that I did, I have no more respect for him at all because he has no respect for me so I have no respect for him." Or, "That miserable person in my home, they just keep treating me that way and it's not right, it's not fair." And often we say, "Well, no I can't do anything about it because after all you can't change your feelings. You can't will your feelings to change."

And, that's a good argument you see because we all know I can't sit here and say, "I'm going to be angry, I'm going to be angry." You can't. You can't will yourself to feel, but you can change your actions. Now, would you consider this: that is fortunate because actions over which we do have power can change our feelings, so if you change your actions you can affect your feelings. Jesus said, "Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you." Do something good for your enemy and it will surprise you to find how much easier it is to love them.

I'm thinking of those of us who have all kinds of cut off relationships and you're sitting in them and what do you do about it? I really urge you loved ones to do what this dear lady did. This is the scripturally and psychologically sound method of changing our feelings. It will work as many wonders as were ever ascribed to Aladdin's lamp. Do good to them that hate you. Impossible? Not if you follow some easy directions.

The first step in the performance of the impossible is to walk out into your kitchen. Now obviously, we guys will not walk into our kitchen but we'll walk into a plant shop or a book shop. The first step is to walk out into your kitchen. Now, you can do that. Whether you feel you don't want to do it, you can do it. You've done it many times and you can walk there again. Step number two, make up a lemon meringue pie as delicious as one in a magazine cover, or make a pecan pie if that is your forte. Actually the kind isn't too important as long as you dress up that pie as though it were going on exhibition. You've made your pie, so far so good.

By that time you will begin to feel a little better. Give your feet the sternest look they've ever got and inform them in a tone of authority, "Feet, you are going to carry me and this pie to Mrs. Quirks." That's a miserable person who does not like me. "Yes, I know you haven't been there in many a year but you are going today. Off you go." As you begin your adventure to seek the golden fleece of love you feel strangely different. You feel warm behind and a little to the left of your wishbone. You sense something wonderful happening inside. It gives you the same anticipation as the sight of icicles melting in the afternoon sun.

And across the railroad tracks you go because they're always across the railroad tracks those people. And, down the dingy alley, they always live in dingy alleys in our minds. You begin to understand Mrs. Quirks' attitude a little better as a heavy noisy freight train passes shaking houses and sidewalks. As the black soot soils your immaculate white blouse and as dirty boisterous children send shivers up your spine with their shrieks and cursing. "Yes," you say to yourself, "If I had to live here I think I would be irritable too." As you go up the steps you cannot help smiling at the vastly new role you are playing. You rap on the door and wait for Mrs. Quirks' truly surprised look you present your peace offering with a nice smile that you decide to throw in for good measure.

A little chat in the living room, a cordial invitation for her to visit you, then on leaving a mutual hug and kiss -- the fervor and spontaneity of it surprises both of you. You sense that a

divine miracle has happened inside you because the love of God is truly coursing through your whole being. The impossible has happened. And oh, you know it's a corny illustration but oh loved ones, I wonder how many of us need to turn it round you know.

I wonder how many of us, we talk glibly about openness and sensitivity groups, and all kinds of complex ways of trying to feel close to each other without actually loving each other. And I wonder is it not just that we have to see that we're not debtors to live according to the flesh but we're debtors to receive from God all the satisfaction we need in this love relationship with him and to begin to give to each other. Loved ones, apart from anything else we'd live longer but the biggest thing is that's the way we were made to operate.

So I don't know how many of you have strain of some kind. It's incredible how many of us here this morning, even those of us who hardly know we have strain, have strains of all kinds. We have frowns on our faces, or we're tense in some area of our lives, or if somebody mentions a name to you, you tighten up. I wonder how many of us are in that situation? Well, do you not think it's time to change? You're not a debtor to live according to the flesh. It doesn't matter whether Mrs. Quirk likes you or not. Anyway even if she did like me, because she never could satisfy you completely with all the love that you need but I wonder does it matter if people like you if you have a dear Father that owns the universe and is a multimillionaire. And he loves you so much that your dear wife may have once caressed your hair but he's counted every hair. He knows the number of your hairs in your head and he loves you that much.

Would it not be wise to start going to him for this love and begin living the right way around? We're debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh as if we were just a closed mechanistic universe with a bunch of other animals who affected us one way or another. No loved ones, we have a line on a supernatural power that comes from outer space and you really can receive it this morning. If you say how? Be willing to stop living the wrong way round, that's it. Go to God this morning and say, "Father some of those things that he talked about are true in my life. I want to stop living that way. Will you begin to show me how?" And he will.

Let us pray.