

Satan

Romans 8:31b

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

All the fears that you have, loved ones -- and probably most of us have some fears or have had some fears -- and all the anxieties that you experience can be traced to one attitude inside you. And that is the refusal to believe that the Person who made you is really your loving Father and will not let go of you. And it's true with all your frustrations, all the frustrations that you have. Even things like greed and covetousness that you have. Even things like hostility and resentment, all those attitudes can be traced back to one misconception you have. You keep thinking that you're here to make it alone and if you don't make it alone you're not going to make it.

And so everything that we suffer in this life and every shortcoming that we feel can be traced back to the fact that we deep, deep down don't really believe that the one who holds the sky up, and the one who holds this planet in space is our loving Father and knows each one of us by name. And that is what we've been talking about for a few Sundays. It's all based on that verse and maybe you'd like to look at it and see it for yourself. It's Romans 8:31. "What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us?"

Probably there isn't one of us here in this auditorium who do not hear that and still tend to say, "Well, yeah, yeah I know he is for some people but he can't be for me. I know he can be for Billy Graham or he could have been for Luther, or maybe he is for this church the way it's being blessed, maybe he's for this church. But me, I'm not good enough. I'm not good enough. He can't possibly be satisfied with me enough to be for me. So I'm afraid he's for everybody, but not for me." And of course loved ones, the unequivocal answer to that is a verse in the New Testament that says that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

And you're going to have a hard time excluding yourself from the world. Maybe if you jump up high enough you can say you're off the world for a moment and therefore he didn't reconcile you to himself but the verse says plainly that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. In other words, God is reconciled to you because it doesn't say, "God was in Christ reconciling moral men to himself," or, "God was in Christ reconciling good men and women to himself." It says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."

That includes the fellow in New York that has just murdered someone. This last moment someone was murdered in New York and God reconciled and is reconciled to that murderer at this moment. The woman in Calcutta who has just this morning abandoned her new born baby on a doorstep, God is reconciled to that woman. In other words, God took the envenomed sting of all us miserable poisonous snakes and he put that sting into Jesus and destroyed it there. And at that very moment he made us no longer lethal enemies of himself. And so he has nothing more in us that he wants to destroy. He has nothing more against us.

As far as he is concerned he has taken this miserable, selfish, carnal will, and this miserable reversed personality and put it into his Son, destroyed it there, and he isn't after anything else in us. So God is reconciled with us, loved ones. God is for you. Now, the heresy of universalism is that whether we receive his Holy Spirit or not which he is now offering to us so freely, whether we receive it or not we're going to live with him forever. Well, that's not true. God is for us

during these 70 years. He's given us a reprieve. He's given us respite. He said, "Look, I have destroyed you in my son Jesus and now I'm offering you the Holy Spirit of my uncreated life. For these 70 years you have a second chance to receive this Spirit."

But you remember the Bible says, "Then comes death and then the judgment." So after death loved ones, the second opportunity is lost. But during this life time, God is nothing but for us. And loved ones, that's true for you. God is for you at this moment. He has nothing against you. He's offering you the Spirit of his own life that can make you like his son Jesus and he has nothing against you. Now, when this life ends then if you have not received that uncreated life then because you're only a temporal being you will die eternally. But up to that point, God is nothing but for us, loved ones. And that's really what this verse says.

You remember the verse says, "Well who then is against us if God is for us?" And two weeks ago you remember that we shared our own misconceptions, they're against us. Our own misconceptions of God, that's what's against us. We believe lies about God being against us. And it's those lies that are against us. It's those lies that make us feel so abandoned. It's those lies that separate us from the Creator who is our loving Father. If God be for us who is against us? Our misconceptions of him, the lies that we believe about him, the lies that we spread to others about him, that's what's against us.

But, the kind of double whammy that we do on ourselves is we not only believe lies about God but we believe lies about those lies. In other words, many of us here have not a sense of closeness to our Father who is the Creator of the universe because we believe he couldn't be bothered with somebody as unimportant as us, or because he couldn't have any time for somebody as bad as us. So we believe all kinds of lies about him. But on top of that, we believe a lie about the source of those lies. We believe that we invented those lies. So of course, many of us can get ourselves into a terrible sense of depression because we think, "Well he's right, I mean he says that God is a loving Father. I certainly don't believe that. I don't live like that. I live according to lies I suppose but I don't only do that but I've invented these lies."

And we get into a tremendous sense of depression and hopelessness. We feel, "Yeah, I'm not only believing lies, but I've invented the lies. I'm the one that has originated the evil." And perhaps that's the greatest lie that the originator of the lies practices upon us. The greatest lie that he practices upon us is that he himself doesn't exist. And that's true, loved ones.

I think many of us here are convinced that the lies we believe about our Creator we have invented ourselves because we have become convinced that there is no such thing as Satan. And so we believe that the lies were not originated by him but were originated by us. And if we are even evil enough to invent the lies that we believe, then what hope is there for us? That's exactly what Satan wants us to believe. Satan's greatest lie is that he doesn't exist. And I suspect that many of us here this morning believe that. I labored under that for years. And if you ask me, "Well, why did you?" Well I'll tell you. Satan, in my mind, was always associated with spooky things of the imagination.

We had a great cupboard under the stairway at home in Belfast. And there's where, I was a little child you know, I was taught there was a boogieman. And then when I got a little bigger, 21, and my mom and dad laughed at the whole idea, there's no such thing. So in my mind the devil was connected up with childhood fantasies that I used to have. And so, when I got away from my childhood fantasies, I, of course, thought I got away from believing in the devil. And I felt the devil was

just one of those fantasies and really doesn't exist. And I began to feel, you were really pretty dumb if you believed in anything as silly as the devil. So I think that's one of the reasons I was reluctant to believe there was a devil at all. I think another reason was because of the ludicrous visual images that were presented to me of the devil. He had horns and he had a huge tail, spiked tail, and he had a great three pronged fork, and he had always a malevolent grin on his face. And I kind of thought, "Aw, that's just silly. That's dumb. There can't be that kind of a person. And anyway though it's pretty evil looking that's not the most evil thing I've ever experienced in the world."

And when that was coupled with a very physical idea of hell with real physical flames and kind of other combustible material I kind of felt the whole thing was a silly invention. There's no such thing as the devil, there's no such thing as hell. And I don't know, but you might have found yourself in the same position. I suppose what got me away from the idea of the devil particularly was Flip Wilson's [American comedian] joke, "The devil made me do it." And I felt, "Yeah, that is what poor weak human beings say when they want to escape from their own moral responsibility for their lives. They say, 'The devil made me do it.' The devil is just a projection of their own evil nature. It's an attempt of mankind to separate himself from his own basic immorality and he tries therefore to personalize it in some form that he can hate and detest."

And so for all those reasons I gave up the idea of Satan completely. And of course, I was left in the position that Satan wanted me to be in. He wanted me to be in the position where every time I resisted one of his lies I felt I was resisting myself. He wanted me to think that it was me that invented the lies so that every time I resisted one of those lies about my Maker or my Creator being my loving Father I would feel I was resisting a production of myself and I was resisting myself. And he wanted me to eventually come to the place where I could not separate myself from those lies. I saw that those lies are me and I cannot separate myself from me. And I would come into a position of absolute hopelessness and despair.

And that's in fact what I did do. I came to a place where I felt, "The evil is me, the lies are me. And I cannot get rid of them. So I just have to live this way for the rest of my life." Loved ones, Satan does exist. There is a Satan, there is. If you believe Jesus is really the son of our Maker and that he is speaking the truth about reality, then you're forced to adopt his belief about Satan. And it's just very clear and unmistakable, loved ones.

And the first thing of course Jesus brings home is that Satan's only power is that of deception. I think a lot of us talk about Satan as if he has tremendous powers. Well, if you talk about a person taking the power in the universe and using it to destroy millions of people instead of producing electricity with the nuclear energy, then yes they have power. But all they have done really is pervert power that is in the universe. Now, that's what Satan does. He perverts power that is already in the universe. He himself has no power and his only ability is that of deception and lying.

Now, would you look at it with me, loved ones? It's John 8:44. And I think it is important to see that he exists and yet to nail him down very clearly for what he is. And Jesus tells us this plainly. "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

So loved ones, every time Satan tries to exercise power over any of us, it is through lies. Now,

Jesus repeatedly treats Satan as a real person. Luke 10:18. And you remember he sent 70 disciples out. "The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!' And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'" And for Jesus Satan was a very real person.

And during the temptation you remember, he spoke to Satan and treated him as a person. And maybe that's the most important thing we should grasp this morning. Don't get all preoccupied with the origin of Satan but take Jesus' very pragmatic attitude to him that he does exist and that he lies and deceives and is to be resisted and can be resisted. Maybe that's a very important thing for some of you that have been involved at times in spiritualism.

Loved ones, Satan does not have any power but that of perverting the power that is latent in the universe. And the only other ability he has is to lie and all you have to do with the lie is to reject it. And you can reject it as long as you see that it comes from outside you and not from you yourself. You can refuse to acquiesce in Satan's lies.

So if someone here this morning is all preoccupied with Satan, loved ones, it is not necessary. You simply look away from him. You look to Jesus, and you resist Satan. And he flees from you, because his only power is that of lying. So if you're tending to think, "Oh, he has terrible power. You should see the things that he's done in my life, or the things that he's done in my friend's life." Loved ones, he has no power except to pervert the power in the universe and to misuse it and to lie to you about his power.

Now, where did Satan come from? Did God make him? Yes, it does seem that God made Satan originally, not as he is today. But God did make angels, loved ones. There are angels that are talked about in the Bible -- spirits -- an angel is a spirit. You have to get away from your mind all the wings and all that business you know, because that's just bad. Satan loves us to think of heaven in that kind of way and it's not right. It's alright when we're children but when we're grownup at this age we need to see the thing right.

And "angelos" in Greek means "a messenger". It's the word you use for messenger. If you send messengers you're sending "angelos". You send messengers to a place. So the word angel means a messenger. And they are spirits. That is, beings that do not have bodies like ours. And God did make spirits. They're mentioned often. If you look in Revelation 7:11-12 you see that the angels are part of that group around God at this very moment that love him, and praise him, and worship him. "And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.'"

Satan was one of those originally. He was a spirit being that worshiped God. And then there came a time when he used the free will that the angels share with us human beings. God has given all his creation free will to worship him or reject him. And Satan used that free will sometime in pre creation history to rebel against God. Now loved ones, there are various references to that, but maybe one of the plainest is in Jude, verse 6. "And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day." So there were other angels that rebelled with Satan.

And there's another reference to that in 2 Peter 2:4. "For if God did not spare the angels when they

sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment..." And then Peter goes on with his logic. But there's a reference to Satan and having to cast some angels out that rebelled with him. Now loved ones, there are some references in the Old Testament that it might be good for you to look at. Just two especially, one is in Ezekiel 28. And there Ezekiel is talking about the king of Tyre and then as with all prophecy you know, he goes from the temporal into the eternal realm.

And it's pretty obvious that he's doing that because some of the things he says cannot be attributed to a human king. And you see that God is using Ezekiel to talk about this pre creation rebellion that took place among the angels. Ezekiel 28:12, "Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: 'You were the signet of perfection.'" Well immediately that is said of course, it cannot be a human king. "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom." In other words the king of Tyre was a type of Satan but it's really Satan that is being talked about.

"You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God." Which obviously the king of Tyre was not. "You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, carnelian, topaz, and jasper, chrysolite, beryl, and onyx, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald; and wrought in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. With an anointed guardian cherub I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you."

Then in Verse 17, "Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you." And it seems loved ones, that together with one other reference and then I'll not ask you to look up anymore, Isaiah 14, where again Isaiah is speaking of a physical human king and then moves into that eternal realm as the prophets do. They move from temporal to eternal in their prophesies.

Isaiah 14:12, a lament, really, over this fallen angel. "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit."

And loved ones, Satan's job now is to carry as many of us with him as he can. And he is a spirit being that is not omniscient, he cannot know everything but he does know often what you're thinking. And he is not omnipresent because you remember the Bible said that he has to move to and fro throughout the whole world. And so he does have to move from place-to-place but he does have other spirit beings that he can send into your mind.

And, oh, I would plead with you, for goodness sake get wise enough to see that the lies are not coming from yourselves. The lies are coming from spirit beings that are able to inject them into your mind. But loved ones, everything that comes in from the outside can be rejected, really. So do not sit there and labor under Satan. You need not. His only power is that of lying and deception. And he is continually involved in trying to bring that about.

And so many of you who question, "Is God for me?" Loved ones, if you'd just look at God, if you'd

just look at Jesus, if you just let Jesus tell you what God thinks of you, you'll never have any doubt but that God is for you. And I would plead with you, whenever you begin to doubt and whenever you begin to think, "Oh no, somebody like me I'm not worth it. I'm not important enough."

Loved ones, look into Jesus' face and hear his words, "A sparrow does not fall to the ground but your Father knows. Are you not of much more value than many sparrows?" When you think, "Oh my Father couldn't be for me. I'm so unclean, I'm so dirty, I'm so miserable." Look into Jesus' face and hear him saying to the woman caught in adultery, "Go and sin no more. Neither do I condemn you." And see God for what he is, a dear loving Father who cares for you and who wants you to receive his Holy Spirit. And if you receive that dear Holy Spirit you'll begin to sense a new life coming up from inside you and that life, loved ones, on the final day will transform your body the way it did Jesus and will enable you to live forever with his dear Father.

But loved ones, that is truth. The other stuff is part of the lying bluff that Satan urges upon you day-by-day. And I would encourage you to reject it and resist it.

I'd like next day to talk a wee bit more about the ways in which God is for us and talk a little bit more about some of the lies that I think some of us here believe. But I'd urge you at this point, let's put Satan where he belongs under Jesus' feet and therefore under your feet. Because if you're in Jesus you're at least as high as his big toe, and it puts you above Satan.

And loved ones, I'd encourage you, take Jesus' attitude to him and reject him and be finished with it and don't engage in conversation with him, or don't acquiesce in his lies.

Let us pray. Father, we would pray now for every loved one here who is sitting beside us in this auditorium. And we pray especially for anybody who is just under it. Father, any loved one here who feels lonely, and abandoned, and feels they are just on their own trying to make it alone, oh Father will you come down and show them Jesus' face and show them your own eyes of love, and enable them to lift up their hand and put it in yours and to realize that the Person who made flowers as beautiful as we have, and the Person who made mountains as beautiful as we have must be real, and must be personable, and must be kind, and must love.

And oh Father, we would pray that each loved one here in this auditorium would begin to treat you as their loving Father and would begin to cast away from them all the sin in their lives and all the hatred, and the resentment, and the worry and anxiety and would receive from you the uncreated life of your Holy Spirit; would allow you, Lord Jesus, to come into their hearts and to bring the sunshine in the sky into their lives this day. We pray for each other Father, this coming week that we may have the good sense to reject Satan's lies and believe your truth for your glory.

And 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.