

Lack of Faith Is Sin

Romans 14:23c

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Most of us know these words from Revelation 3. They've been repeated often to us since we were children. Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with me." Most of us know that verse from either a Billy Graham evangelistic crusade or probably from hearing it at some evangelistic service in our home church.

We all know that it's the verse that's quoted to indicate that God is willing to come into your heart and to take over your life and to give you a sense of his favor and his love in your own personal heart. You probably, like me, have felt, "That's what I need. Religion -- I believe in it. I believe in Christianity. I believe in the sense of going to church and I believe in this Bible but it isn't real to me inside. It isn't warm and real in my own heart. And I don't know how to get it real." Maybe you've often come up at evangelistic crusades or evangelistic services and you've repeated those words even to yourself.

"Lord, I know that you're saying to me, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me.' Then you have gone through all kinds of contortions to try to open the door of your heart.

I don't know what you've gone through but I know I myself went through all kinds of what I thought were mystical experiences. I tried to imagine in my own mind, "The Lord Jesus is here in this room. He is at this altar. He is in this room where I am seeking him and he is right here and he is willing to come into my heart and all I have to do is ask him." I tried to imagine him coming into my heart and I was unable.

Or you tried singing the verse of a hymn because you thought, "If I can get the atmosphere of that meeting that I was at where I felt God stirring me, if I can recapture that feeling that I had, then I'll know the warmth of God in my heart." Yet it has never come real for you. It has never really taken place and you may have actually come to this body for years and yet still it isn't real to you.

I would appeal to two groups of you actually. One group is very intellectual and might have to work out everything in the mind. You might be in the position where you're saying, "It's just not for me, that kind of closeness that other people talk about. I happen to be more cold-blooded than other people. I am just coldly intellectual. I think things through, so I can't expect the reality of Jesus in my life that other people have who aren't quite as intellectual."

Indeed, if you're like some of us, you might think, "Actually it's rather embarrassing to have anything too emotional or warm inside." And you might have decided, "I am an intellectual Christian, that's what I am. No, I don't feel God particularly close to me. I don't feel very great warmth of his presence in my life. I don't feel he is personally showing his favor to me but I believe all the things that this Book says and I believe that he is not against me." And you might be in that position of many of us who are intellectuals where we feel, "Well what we have is enough, admittedly it doesn't seem to be exactly what other people have who are real with God but it seems to me

enough."

I speak also to those of you who are emotional and who think to yourself, "Well, if I can only get an emotional experience of Jesus in my heart, that's what I need." So you go from church to church to church, to atmosphere to atmosphere, trying to get that emotional experience that will convince you that God is in your heart, that the Savior has come in to take over your life and to dwell there.

Brothers and sisters, none of that is right. None of that is right. None of those things are right. That's not where Jesus coming into your heart is at, at all. It has nothing to do with that stuff. It has nothing to do with your emotionalism, nothing to do with your intellectualism. It has nothing to do with mystical experiences. It's nothing to do with kind of a momentary experience. It isn't, loved ones.

It's on a far more down-to-earth level than that. The reality that loved ones feel of Jesus in their heart does not come from an emotional experience or from an intellectual experience or from a mystical experience. It comes from a spiritual experience. A spiritual experience is real and down-to-earth and plain and simple. It's the one that the dear old Jew, Wayne Schwartz had. He is a dear fellow. You'd love him, you know.

It was during a job or meeting in Mexico. He is a New Yorker and just a happy old New York Jew. Just so outgoing and so happy and he wears his heart on his sleeve. He is the dearest guy and I hope he'll come up some day and spend some time with us here. It's where Wayne Schwartz's experience is, that's it.

My wife is very different from Wayne Schwartz and yet she came through the same experience. I am very different from Wayne Schwartz. I came through the same experience. Anybody who comes to the point where they're asking Jesus in their heart and finally finds out that the reason they can't experience the witness of the Spirit -- it's the witness of the Spirit that counts -- it's not emotionalism that counts, it's not intellectualism that counts, it's the witness of the Spirit. The reason they don't experience the witness of the Spirit that Jesus has come in, is because Jesus hasn't come in, because there's something in their heart that won't let him in. That something is very plain, loved ones, and I'd just ask you to look at it in that newsletter.

Old Wayne puts it so plainly and so straight that I couldn't put it any better and I don't think any of us could. You see where he says, "So Jews could and should believe in Jesus", that's it. So, "Jews could and should believe in Jesus. The only thing I needed to see there, it was another Jewish Christian to really see that everything was true. I was then convicted as far as I could be. One night, it finally happened. I met a girl from the States who was Jewish as I was and she told me about how 11 years ago she gave her life to Jesus. That was all I needed. That night, I asked the Lord to come into my life. I am not exactly sure of what I thought would happen but I knew that nothing did happen." That's what happens with a lot of us.

"I am not sure of what I thought would happen but I knew that nothing did happen. A few days later, I was sleeping at about 5 or 6:00 a.m. and heard a voice telling me that if I would stop sinning, I would have what I wanted." That's it. "If I would stop sinning, I would have what I wanted. It was so loud, so clear that it woke me up. Finally it became clear as to why nothing happened that first time I invited him in, I was still planning on sinning."

Wayne used to cruise the beaches and pick up the girls. So, he was trying to continue the old life and yet asked Jesus in. "It happened that the first time I invited him, I was still planning a sin. You can't fool God. So what I was going to do was sin. What I wanted was Jesus. Before I had repented -- but not with a heart ready to leave sin behind -- and God knew it. Very shortly after I made my decision to leave sin behind and I prayed once again and this time I received the Lord with the Spirit and all its benefits and truths -- joy, peace, patience, love and everything else that goes with it." [Galatians 5:22]

"For the first time in my life I had real peace. Praise the Lord. I was now a reborn Christian Jew. This happened on June 12, 1982 and now three years later, I am still amazed at the storehouse of blessings and promises I have inherited, along with how many people are in need of Jesus for freedom." That's it. It's not complex at all, it isn't. It's not a complicated thing at all.

If you've asked Jesus to come into your heart and nothing has happened, it's only for one reason. It's not because you're not emotional enough, it's not because you're not intellectual enough, it's not because you're not mystical enough. It's because you still plan on sinning, that's it. God has convicted your heart about something that you should stop doing or something that you should start doing and you are planning on going on doing what he has forbidden or you're planning on going on doing what he has told you not to do. That's it.

I know it sounds hideous and I was offended by the whole thing. I felt I was a kind of intellectual sophisticate in the university and I could not believe that God would be so ridiculous as to tie his presence in my life to something as practical and down-to-earth as stopping being impatient with my mother or stopping being irritable or stopping swearing, but God is disgustingly down-to-earth.

God simply says to you, "Your sins made my Son's death necessary. Your sins killed my Son. I cannot give you my Son in your heart if you're still involved in putting nails in his hands and a spear in his side. That's what you have to stop." You cannot plead the blood of Jesus and shed the blood of Jesus at the same time. That's it.

In other words, you see what you're doing. You're involved in a spiritual impossibility. It's a spiritual impossibility. You can't ask the Savior to save you from sin or to come into your life and you continue to practice sin. So if you want Jesus in your heart and you want God to be real in your life, stop the sins that God has told you are in your life. That's it really.

You must have seen it there. It hits anybody. It's so simple and plain, and the dear guy puts it in such an unsophisticated way. He says, "I am not sure what I thought would happen but I know nothing did happen." He was a Jew. He knew nothing about all the stuff we've been brought up with for years but he did what we said he should do and nothing happened.

God is faithful. God won't let anyone be deceived. Then God spoke to him and told him that he had to stop sinning. When he stopped sinning, he only had to plan to stop sinning. He only had to determine not to sin and the whole thing became real in a moment. That's it.

Wayne Schwartz hasn't been at any evangelistic campaigns. He doesn't know anything about all the stuff we go through. He just knows that God is faithful. If you stop sinning, Jesus really does come into your heart. If you don't stop sinning, you can ask him into your heart but you don't experience anything real. You just experience an emotional thing or a reformation of your life.

So brothers and sisters, I just make no apology for sharing that again. I mean it doesn't seem to matter how long we are on the journey. It always gets back to that, you know. It doesn't matter how long we are or how saintly we all think we are, it gets back to the matter of stop sinning and immediately, there comes a presence of God into your life that you could not believe and it's the same with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes in and fills you when you get rid of the things that God has shown you are there.

So brothers and sisters, I'd encourage you on this Father's Day, this first Sunday on campus in 1985. If you have tried it before and it's been kind of disappointing. Or you've tried it before and it doesn't seem to have worked, would you examine your own life? I'd ask you, is there any sin there that you're planning on continuing? I am saying to you, will you stop it now? Will you just plan not ever more to sin that sin. If you'll be real with your God, he'll be real with you.

Now sooner or later, you'll have to be real with him. Sooner or later, you will meet him and he will expose those sins to you and to the whole world. But then there will be no forgiveness possible. So you have to do it sooner or later. It's just now you can do it to salvation. Then you will do it to eternal damnation.

So loved ones, will you do it now? Will you stop it now? Whatever it is, or whatever it is he has been asking you to start, will you start it now? Will you correct the thing now? Will you change your life to align it with God's will for you? And immediately he will give the witness of his Spirit in your heart in your spirit and you'll know God is there. You'll know he's there, you will.

You know, it's not organized at all. I didn't know I was going to say these things; I was going to preach the ordinary sermon. So there's no communion so there's no work for you to need. You should come. You should do whatever needs to be done. You should come up and you should kneel up here and you should make your commitment to God, you should.

If you have tried before and it hasn't worked and you see now the very sin that you know you have to forsake or you see the very thing that you've to do, you should come up now and just repent of it to God and then just go back to your seat. Trust him for the witness of the Spirit which he will give to you, just when he decides his best way. We should do it. So let's just bow and pray.

We can just keep singing that hymn, 'Search me, O God', and then we'll sing it maybe four or five times and then we'll just close.