

Communion with God No. 1

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we would sit at your feet as Mary did and listen to your word. And Lord we ask you now to speak to each one of us just the right word for us, for your glory. Amen.

What we'd like to talk a little about this evening is communion. And communion, you remember, is one of the functions of our spirit. And what we've been doing is talking about our spirits in these evening services.

And you remember, we have said, that our spirit is the innermost part of us and the part of us that normally the outside world does not think much about except when it talks about the occult, or when it begins to deal in the Ouija board, or begins to deal with fortune telling. Then in some sense even a secular world communicates with the evil spirit world. But apart from that, most of us don't bother with our spirits at all. We're very aware of our bodies, we play sports with our bodies, we eat, we dress our bodies. Most people know us simply by the appearance of our bodies.

And many of us also know the reality of our souls -- which is not really our spirits. A lot of us think, "Oh the soul is the same as the spirit," but it's not. The soul is the psychological part of us -- our mind, and our emotions that we normally talk about as our heart. And many of us are aware of our souls. Those of us who are very intellectually alive spend a lot of our life in our minds. We love stimulating books and we love stimulating conversation and we tend therefore to be drawn towards people who have active minds.

Those of us who are very emotional like people who are very emotional and we're very aware of feelings. We can feel an atmosphere in a group like this very quickly. We're very elated on a bright sunny morning such as this morning was. And many of us have very alive wills. The will is part of our souls and we're very willful people, and very determined people, and we're the kind of people that can keep on driving at a thing, beating our head against a brick wall for 30 years and we just keep wheeling in at the same time, and we're willing all the time.

But there are few of us who have any awareness of our spirits until we become connected with Jesus in some way. Now loved ones, it's the spirit that has communion with God. So if your spirit isn't alive you won't be able to have communion with God. This may be good for you to remember, that verse you remember in John that says, "They that worship must worship him in spirit and in truth." Now, the only way to actually commune or converse with God who made us is through our spirits, not through any other part of us.

And what I felt a burden to share with you tonight is, I think many of you go to endless teachings on prayer and how to pray and you read multiple books on how to pray, and all you're trying to do is produce by your own efforts something that is very natural to you if you're alive in your spirit. Now I know that may seem hard but I think when I look around, and see that all the audio tapes that circulate, including my tapes, and all the books that circulate, and all the endless conferences we have, and all the Bible study groups we have, and all the talk, talk, talk about little methods of prayer I just wonder how Isaiah ever got through to God when he didn't have all these things to listen to and to share in.

And honestly, what really came to my heart even though I expressed it like that as a joke, what came to my heart was that communion is very easy if you're alive in your spirit. And if you're not alive in your spirit no amount of gimmicks, no amount of little tricks or techniques are going to produce anything else but a psychic imitation of prayer. But prayer itself comes very naturally from a spirit that is alive.

Now, the key loved ones, to the whole doctrine that God gives us of communion is in 1 Corinthians 2, and really that's what God says. 1 Corinthians 2:9, "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,' God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 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," or has communion you see, with the thoughts of God, "Except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God."

And if you could go back to that Verse 9, you see how plainly God states, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard." And one of the important things that many of us need to do in order to have real communion with God is to stop depending so much on what our eyes are filled with and what our ears are filled with. And you know, that really does include each other. Sometimes I think one of the greatest discouragements and one of the greatest distractions to you and me communing with God is each other -- and I know that's not fashionable because I know what we all like to talk up is fellowship brother, fellowship.

One great massive jamboree with us all gabbling to each other about Jesus and about what he has done. It's so contradictory you know, to the old saints in this dear Book. And sometimes, loved ones, I think that we're too busy looking at each other with our eyes, and we're too busy listening to each other with our ears. And, you know, I include me in that. It's good that God has given us preachers, but they're not God and they're not meant to be in the place of God for us. But, I think that many of us are too busy looking at books with our eyes, and listening to what somebody says with our ears and all we're doing is passing on little thoughts that other people have got.

And God plainly says, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard." And I really do believe that some of us need to spend a little more time away from the crowds of Christians. I think that some of us need to spend a little more time on our own in quietness and in our own rooms with our eyes closed for once. It's lovely to see God's nature but it's easy to slip into just pantheism if you're involved in just the elation that nature brings. And sometimes I feel that we need to close our eyes, close out the outside world, put our fingers over our ears and spend more time with our dear Father.

And you alone know if that's necessary for you. But I do believe that many of us are substituting the church, or the body, or the teachers in the body for God. And it's not what your eye sees or what your ear hears that will give you communion with God. That's why many of us are very dissatisfied deep down. We've apparently gone through all the experiences we're supposed to have gone through -- we've been born of the Spirit, we've been baptized with the Spirit, we're walking with the Spirit -- and yet we're still discontented and dissatisfied.

Well, the truth is you can't be. I mean, you can't have been baptized with the Spirit and be walking in the Spirit and still have a sense of emptiness in your relationship with God. The truth

is we're not all those things but we think we are -- but really we are now involved in living on the superficial surface of the body. And you see, it's easy to do it because the body is filled with words that have originally come from God. So the body is filled with words that were originally revelation to somebody. They originally came as truth to someone but somebody passed them on because there was a lull in the conversation and they wanted to maintain their spiritual witness and so they passed on a revelation that was for them alone but it came over to you as dead words.

But then you get hold of it because it has a truth in it and you pass it on to somebody else – as knowledge and not as life. And then before you know it everybody is eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And so there are many of us that are passing on truths that are true but they are not life because we have not got them from God or we have not got them through somebody else while they were still alive and warm. By the time they came to us they were cold and therefore they didn't come as life to us.

And loved ones, many of us are involved in sharing those kinds of truths and it's dead, dead, dead. You just know it's dead. Sometimes it's so good when a loved one shares something about prophecy or the last days, sometimes it's so good. But, so much of it is just dead knowledge that we just pass on to each other to keep the air waves busy but it's not life. And sometimes I think what we need to do is learn to just shut up and just be quiet before God, and be content to be with each other even if we're not passing on brilliant little insights that we've got from God.

Sometimes I think we just need to rest in Jesus, rest where we are. What does it matter if they think I'm spiritual or not, what does it matter whether I do them some good or not? What matters most is that I'm honest with God inside of my heart. And so loved ones, that's what that dear verse says, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard," and you have to deal with whether you spend too much time in "the madding crowd".

I don't know if you've ever read "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas a Kempis. But, most people say that next to the Bible it's the most inspired book that was ever written. And Thomas a Kempis was a monastic. He lived really in a monastery, separated from the ordinary world. But he's so good because he brings home to you so strongly that in order to be deep in God, you need to spend time alone, quiet with God by yourself. And he says unless you do that you'll end up living off the consolation of men.

And he has one chapter on seeking consolation from God alone. And when I think really of how much of our time is spent trying to build each other up, trying to comfort each other, trying to console each other, trying to encourage each other, sometimes I think we'd just be better leaving each other alone. Because if we were left alone we might at last seek the only one who can really help us and that is the dear Holy Spirit.

I'd just mention one other example of it. Do you remember how Watchman Nee in "The Normal Christian Church Life" (which is a book you shouldn't read, no it is a tricky book) but you remember he says that -- what was the practice of the early church? Well, the practice was this: Paul went out preaching to Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. It took him about maybe five to six weeks to go through to the last town. Then, he turned around and he came back through Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and at each place he met with the people who had been born of God under his preaching.

And by discernment of the Holy Spirit he chose the ones that were furthest on spiritually, the elder, the people that were older than the others spiritually, that had matured more quickly and he

appointed them elders. Then he got on a boat and he didn't see them again for months, for years, and sometimes not at all. Then Nee says, "The elders and the new church had to depend on the Holy Spirit because they had nobody else to depend on." And you know, when you compare that with the massive supply of tapes, and books, and teachings, and television, and movies, and people who are around us all the time to encourage us, you can see how a person can very easily do without the Holy Spirit if he moves enough in Christian circles.

Now loved ones, is God saying to you, "Back off a wee bit. Stop running around all the time among people and spend a little time with me. And what you do, do well instead of spreading yourself so thin in all kinds of meetings." So what no eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor the heart of man conceived. The heart of man is the deepest part of man, and man as man, the deepest part of man untouched by the spirit is his soul -- his mind, his emotions, and his will. And normally I believe that's what the heart means in the Bible.

The heart of a spiritual man would be his spirit, it's the deepest part of him. But the heart of an ordinary man untouched by the spirit is just his mind, and emotions, and his will. And God is saying, "Your mind cannot receive things from me, and your emotions cannot receive things from me, and your will cannot receive things from me." And I think many of us are too busy running around trying to get hold of it. We think somehow we can get hold of it. "Say it again, say it again. If I could read the book you read I'd get it, I know I would. "

And we tend to feel, if I could just grasp the thing in my mind I would understand it. Do you see it's a miracle? Do you see it's utterly in your Father's hands? Do you see that spiritual life is absolutely God's gift to you, that it's God that you must go to for that. It's God alone that can give you it. It's God alone that can work a miracle in your heart. You can't create it by the grasping of it through your own mind. You can't, loved ones. It doesn't matter how you wrestle that dear mind; that dear mind is not fitted to get spiritual life and communion from God. And I think some of us get preoccupied at times with maybe this old diagram, or the way we explain things, or certain truths.

Loved ones, I think you remember me telling you about the old coal man in Belfast, and all he did was drive a coal cart. I'll tell you very quickly but we had bags of coal in Belfast when I was young. We had open fires and we had coal you see, which was delivered on a horse and cart. That makes me feel old. And this dear fellow, his name was Joe and he was in our church and he drove a coal cart.

Now, a coal cart, if you saw one of these big carts, and one of the big horses like Budweiser has, you know, that kind of horse, a big grey horse and you see a guy like that on a rainy Irish day, there is nothing more miserable. Really. The fellow carries the bags of coal on his back so of course he gets covered in coal dust. And then the rain runs down his face and he sits out on the cart and the horse just moves pretty slowly and the rain is blasting down, in Ireland it always rains. And if you see a coal man with the rain running down his face, and running down the black coal dust all over his eyes, and his mouth, and all through his clothes, there is nothing more disreputable looking, nothing more primitive or primeval than that.

And yet that dear man, who had very little education, and had read very few books, and knew really only one book well, that dear man was part of our church in Belfast and he was a saint. When you heard him pray you knew you were in the presence of God. Now, he came into that not through the brilliant grasping of his mind but he came into it through the Spirit of God. So loved ones it will

not come to you however much you can see the thing and understand it with your mind, it won't come to you that way. Especially, this crucifixion with Christ, it will not.

You cannot manipulate it. You have to go before your God and you have to say, "Lord I want that with all my heart and I know only you alone can give it to me." So it's not what your mind has. Some of us feel it's what our emotions can grasp and so in services like this, that's why it's so important to have a good service like last Sunday and be able to estimate it correctly and evaluate it correctly. But some of us can get into a good service like last Sunday and can think, "That's what we need. If we only had more services like that I know I'd get through to God." It's just Satan's excuse, you know.

It's just Satan's excuse, because what you're getting from a service like that is the emotional kick and the emotional thrill. If you were getting from it immediate contact from God you'd know that it didn't matter whether you were in a big service, or a good service, or a successful prayer meeting. God will give you himself if you want him with all your heart irrespective of the emotions of the moment. And loved ones, I can't emphasize that to you enough. It honestly is not an emotionally satisfying service that will bring you to God.

And I'm no fool, I know loved ones are running all around this city looking for an emotional service and an emotional fellowship that will give them a feeling of satisfaction. And that's exactly what they'll get, they'll become part of yet another mutual adulation society that will give them a sense of self esteem and a sense of importance and they won't touch God. Because loved ones, God is not touched through the emotions but he comes to you through your spirit.

And that's what that verse says you see, "What God has prepared for those who love him," that is, fellowship with himself, "God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything even the depths of God." So really, the most important thing for communion with God is to be born of the Spirit. And that's what you need to be clear on. You need to be clear that you're born of the Spirit.

Now, would you just be patient with me as I go back to those first principles very quickly. I think some of us confuse being born of the Spirit with being awakened. That is, I think some of us experience what we shared this morning. We experience in a time of crisis a supernatural power of life that seems to come from beyond us. And it is indeed the power of Jesus' resurrection being graciously given to us by our Father because for that moment we have in desperation yielded and abandoned our lives out of our own control.

And so for that moment we experience a gracious amount or supply of the power of Jesus' resurrection life. And we say, "That's our birth in the Spirit." We say, "Now I know what he's talking about. Oh, thank God I am born of the Spirit." And all that has happened is you've been awakened. You've been a dead sinner and now you're an awakened sinner. You're awakened as you realize there is something more than depending on people, and depending on things. There is something more than depending on myself, there is a power that is greater than myself. There is a God who is alive and he can communicate with me. And that's all you know.

You're just awakened to the reality that there is a spiritual world but you wrongly identify that as the New Birth. And then you're forever after trying to agree with those who talk about the New Birth. And you're constantly trying to lift yourself up and say, "Yeah, yeah, I feel that too." And yet all the time they say things about spiritual life you know it's not what you've felt but

you've had a little touch of it in that moment of crisis and so you keep on hankering after it. It's then you see, that you confuse it with the New Birth. You say, "Now, I must be born of the Spirit but I'm not feeling what they're feeling and I'm not experiencing what they describe so I better produce it." And that's when you begin to sink into mental and emotional fellowship, you see. And you start trying to read the books, and trying to make the things happen the way they say they happen.

Some of us confuse the New Birth with conviction -- conviction of the Holy Spirit. A person is first awakened to the reality of the Spirit and then God begins to convict them. And many of us come under conviction, we sense, "Look, I'm not living right. I should not be promiscuous, I should not be in bed with everybody. I should not be running around like this, faithless to my friends, unfaithful to the people who trust me. I should not be like that. I should not swear. I should stop swearing. I know that that's wrong." And that's because some of the Holy Spirit -- maybe through that crisis experience -- has begun to touch our consciences and we begin to realize, "Yes, we're not right."

What the Holy Spirit is in fact doing is saying, "Look, these are some of the things that your Father destroyed in Jesus and these are some of the things that you have to let go of." But we take the conviction and we say, "Ah, I'm born of God. This means I'm just walking in the spirit. I'm being convicted, I know I shouldn't swear. I do swear, I know it's wrong but the Holy Spirit is obviously communicating with me." And so this is the battle that Paul and those others talk about when they say, "The good that I would I cannot do." And we say, "Well now, I can't stop swearing, and I haven't stopped completely the promiscuity, and I haven't stopped completely the unclean thoughts, but I'm born of God because I do have some feel for him. And besides, I am obviously coming under conviction and the Holy Spirit is telling me what is right and what is wrong."

And we confuse conviction of the Holy Spirit with the New Birth. And so we walk on in that kind of uncertainty. And that's why we fight intensely the victorious life message. We hate it, we hate it with all that we've got -- because here's this fella talking about anger, and jealousy, and pride -- things inside -- and I'm still having trouble with my outer life. And so that's when we begin to gather the verses of scripture to us that will defend our sinning Christian life.

Now loved ones, the truth is we're under the law like anything. We're just under the law like the old Jews. We're under deep conviction of sin, we have not forsaken our sin, we're still committing it, but we're trying to grab at Jesus as well. And I would submit to you that there is a lot of that going on in this general "charismania" that is taking hold in our land. There is a lot of sinning Christianity. There are a lot of loved ones who are under conviction of sin who have not confessed the sin and have not forsaken it.

Now, some of us go another step. We're awakened, we're convicted and we actually take the first of the three steps towards the New Birth: we confess our sins. Now, confessing our sin is first of all acknowledging it towards God and secondly it's agreeing that it's wrong. So there are many of us that do confess our sins. We go to God day-after-day and we have a list of sins. Sometimes it's the same sin, sometimes they differ slightly, but we have a list and we feel that that's a good part of our ordinary everyday prayer life and we believe that's a good part of Paul's prayer life and everybody's prayer life.

And so we have a list of sins that we confess. And we agree with these to God. In fact, some of us get real satisfaction out of confessing them. We feel, "Well, I've confessed it so that's putting

it away. That's letting it go." Indeed, some of us will say it that way. We'll say, "We told the Lord, 'Take it, it's yours. Just take it.'" And many of us use those words. We say, "Lord just take this away from me I don't want it." And we don't understand why it seems to be sticking to our fingers. "Take it. Take it. Lord?" And we'll say that to each other, "Well, I asked the Lord to take it. He knows that I want him to take it."

And you somehow feel, "God is letting himself down here because here's a person that's asking him to take anger away and he won't take it. What's wrong with him?" And yet you feel, let God be true and every man a liar. At the end of the day God is not at fault but some of us will confess sins and we get a kind of satisfaction out of confessing them and we feel in some way we've let them go. Some of us will actually agree with God about the sins. We'll agree, "Lord, I know that's wrong, I really do." And then we feel that the tremendous remorse that we have and the regrets is repentance. And so we'll think that our confession and the emotional regret and remorse that we feel with it is actually turning from the sins, except, the sins are still in our lives. But some of us confuse confession with the New Birth. Confession is only the first step.

The second step is repentance. And some of us confuse self pity with repentance. Some of us think, "Oh, I'm terrible, I'm terrible, I'm hopeless. And look at that other person I saw on Sunday, they seem to be so victorious and I am miserable. I'm just in a miserable state. Lord, help me, help me." And we're crying out, "Help me Lord, help me." And we interpret that as repentance. Or, we feel great sorrow or remorse and we interpret that as repentance, or we have tears of frustration and desperation instead of pity and we feel that's repentance.

Loved ones, it might interest you to know that repentance is simply one thing, it's what Jesus said to the dear one that was caught in adultery. He said, "They don't condemn you, neither do I. Go and sin no more." That's repentance. Repentance is stopping doing what God has convicted you of as wrong. That's repentance.

Now, I know some of you come back and say, "But brother I do have this besetting sin. I have this besetting sin that I cannot get rid of." Well, first of all I'd say to you have you got rid of all the other ones? Have you got rid of all the others that you've been dealt with on? Are you really being honest and saying, "I have just this one besetting sin." Because, that is a special situation, if you have just one besetting sin because then "thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven" as far as victory is concerned.

But, are you being honest in saying, "Well, I've just this one besetting sin." Or, now I'd press you on this -- are you walking with a number of sins that you haven't turned from? Are you walking with a number of sins in your life that you have no victory over? Indeed, when you say you've truly repented do you mean that, "There are a lot of things that I've stopped doing. I didn't miss them too much actually and it wasn't too hard to stop them. But I can say that I have repented of a lot of sins, I have. I have one or two maybe that I can't get rid of."

Now, I'd press you, is it one or two? Or, is it three, or four, or five, or six, or indeed, is the situation what we mentioned -- that you've got rid of the things that didn't cost you too much to get rid of? The things that you weren't terribly connected with or attached to anyway and are you in fact, walking through a morass of sins day-by-day? Now loved ones, I say that lovingly to you, not to bring you into condemnation but to show you, you couldn't have communion with God if that's the way you're walking. You can't have. God is light and he has no fellowship with darkness. And those that are to have fellowship with him must walk in the light and those that walk in darkness

have no fellowship with God and the life is not in them.

And what I'm afraid with many of us is we're walking with a clatter of sins around us day-by-day. We're walking with 10, or 12 sins around us day-by-day and we have not truly turned from our self directed life at all. We have many of the sins in it that we had when we first heard of Jesus and we haven't truly turned from those at all. Now loved ones, honestly it's entirely different with the one besetting sin. You and I have shared often how after a person is born of the Spirit the Holy Spirit brings a new and deeper conviction of sin that drives them into the inward sin in their lives -- the anger, and jealousy, and pride -- and finally drives them to the very heart of self. And when a person comes to that place and says, "I cannot get rid of that," they can only get rid of it by coming through the death with Jesus that we share about so often.

But that is a different situation. That is a need for freedom from carnality, a need for sanctification, a need for being filled and baptized with the Spirit. But do you see what we're sharing about tonight? We're sharing about walking with enough sins to fill a box that size and still claiming that you're a Christian. Now loved ones, you know nothing of God unless you have turned from the bulk of your sinning and certainly from all outward sins so that the only thing that you deal with in your life are involuntary sins. Things that you have done before you know, things that you've stumbled into and suddenly you realize it's wrong, or those besetting sins that are few in number that you are fighting with all your heart and you know about, and you're dealing with Christ on the cross about.

But, if your life has many sins in it then the first thing you have to do is not only confess but repent and stop confusing repentance with New Birth. And then the last step in the New Birth is seeing that the only way you can be freed from those sins is if God has destroyed them in his son Jesus and that you are utterly at the mercy and utterly dependant on that Figure on Calvary. And that unless that Jesus has done something for your sins nothing can be done about them at all and you are going to go to hell for them.

And loved ones, that's the vital step to take in the New Birth where you look and you see, "my Lord and my God". You at last see, "Lord Jesus, you died for me, you allowed my sin to be placed into you and destroyed there and that's why my Father is willing at all to receive me to himself." And you come to the place where Jesus is obviously your only hope, your last and your only hope, and you grab at his dear feet and you see that only he can save you, only his death can enable your sins to be taken away.

And loved ones, that's the third vital step and I would just share from my own experience that when I came to that place and I saw that it was either hell or it was my Savior, I was in a desperate state and I grabbed at his dear feet and said, "Lord Jesus, you have done this for me, you can have my whole life and whatever you want that's what I want to do." And your whole heart surges out and you are utterly ready to do anything that this Jesus asks you.

Now loved ones, the New Birth is an absolute abandonment of yourself to Jesus, an absolute lifting of yourself out of yourself and into his hands that the Holy Spirit alone can do. And he does it in a heart that sees Jesus as its only hope. While that heart still has hope of saving itself it cannot be born of God. And then the Holy Spirit comes in and makes you alive, and makes Jesus alive to you and suddenly -- I remember John Wesley says, "It is a recumbence upon Christ," a laying back into Christ, a falling into Christ, a desperate grabbing for Christ, an embracing of Christ, a readiness to do anything that Christ wants, a sense that the whole of life is Christ. A sense that

you're inside the womb of Christ as inside your mother's womb, that only he can give you life.

It is an absolute surrender to Jesus. Such that Jesus is the one and only that you care about. He is the one that you're interested in above all others. It is his commands that you obey, it is him that you love and him that you please. It is him that gives you delight at the beginning of each day and it is to him that you commit yourself at the end of each day. It is his opinion alone that matters to you. You go out into the world thinking it is all filled with Jesus.

Now, that's the New Birth. It is nothing less than that. It is nothing less than an absolute consecration, and worship, and abandonment of yourself to Jesus. Everything is Jesus. Jesus is your whole life. That is what happens in the New Birth because what the Holy Spirit does is he grafts you into Jesus miraculously and so the Spirit of Jesus fills your spirit and you become utterly taken up with Jesus' Spirit.

Now loved ones, it is that. It is a falling in love with Jesus that is complete and absolute and it is only later on that carnality begins to show its ugly head. But at the moment of the New Birth it is an absolute victorious surrender to our Lord. And I don't know if you noticed this but even those of us who have been baptized with the Spirit or have been filled with the Spirit or whatever you want to call it, it's really nothing but a renewal of our first love of Jesus.

And you notice that we don't change too much in the tune that we play. We sing the same song whether we're baptized with the Spirit or just born of the Spirit, Jesus is everything to us. And you find that we're preoccupied with Jesus. We're not preoccupied with the gifts, we're not preoccupied with how to pray, we're not preoccupied with the problems of prophecy, we're preoccupied with Jesus. He is everything to us.

Now loved ones, unless you've come into that place, you have not experienced the New Birth and therefore you will have impossible trouble communing with God. But if you have been born of God you find that Jesus' Spirit inside you continues to talk with his Father as he has been talking for generations and for billions of centuries. And so he comes into your heart and you find there rises up from within you a voice that seems to know God. And the Spirit himself bears witness with your spirit that you're a child of God and you find yourself crying, "Abba, Father." And it comes from inside you and it's like a dear familiar dad whom you know, and the voice rises again, and again inside you when you don't even want it to rise.

That's real prayer. When the prayer comes up from the inner depths because it's Jesus' Spirit inside you talking to his dear Father. And that's what happens you know, it's what I could have done when my dad was alive. I could have brought Rob along and put my arm around him and said, "Dad, this is my friend Rob." And my dad would have accepted him utterly because he saw that I loved him. So it is what Jesus does. Jesus puts his arm around us -- except he puts his whole body around us -- and then he walks into his Father's presence and says, "Father, this is one of the ones you gave me. I didn't lose him. Here he is, here she is, and she's my dear body, part of me and I know you love them because you love me." And that's what the New Birth is and that's how communion occurs, loved ones.

So I'd just say that one of the most necessary things among us to experience communion is first of all a New Birth. Now, there are more things, these dear verses go into deeper things that I'd like to touch on in the next Sundays. But first of all, you will not experience any communion with God unless you've been born of God. Now, maybe you say, "I once knew that stuff. I once had experience

of that but there's something gone dead inside me." Then you're a backslider; come back to God.

It's not complex, come back to God. Don't think reading books will do it, don't think you need the baptism with the Holy Spirit, what you need is to get back to God. Get back to where you lost him. And maybe I could tell you just a little story that would illustrate it and might help you. If your life has gone cold and dead inside, remember what happened when Joseph and Mary were on the way away from Jerusalem, you remember. And they found that Jesus was no longer with them, they found they had lost him. You remember what they did? They went back to the place that they lost him. They went back to the temple and there they found him talking with the others in the temple.

Now, that's what you should do. If you sense that you've lost something of the warmth of Jesus in your life, go back to where you lost that. The Holy Spirit will help you. He'll help you to know where you began to do something that you knew was wrong and you persisted in it and gradually you lost the immediate sense of Jesus as your friend and as your Savior. Do that. It will be maybe some act, or maybe some attitude that you adopted, or maybe some person that you began to keep company with. Go back to whatever it was and deal with Jesus on that issue and there you'll find him again. And then begin to walk with him.

So loved ones, do you see it? It's nothing less than. So don't sit there and say, "Well, brother the way you describe it, it does sound good. But, I think I'm a little different." No loved ones, it's very simple, it's very simple. Do you know that that dear coal man that I told you about, he never knew about the baptism with the Holy Spirit. He didn't. We didn't talk about that in our church, we didn't know about it. We didn't talk about the baptism with the Holy Spirit. He didn't know about walking in the spirit, and spirit, soul, and body and all these brilliant diagrams. He didn't know anything of that. But, he was born of God and Jesus' Spirit dwelled in his spirit. And so of course, he's in heaven at this moment because he walked in the light that had been given to him.

Now loved ones, I know sometimes you don't like questions and okay, if you don't want to ask any don't -- but let me just give you the opportunity at least. Does anybody want to ask?

Question from Audience:

Isn't it true that books, and tapes, and other people can be used by God as an instrument of his Spirit?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

And there's no question they can. I think that Watchman Nee was very wise. He was very reluctant, if you know about him, he actually only wrote "The Spiritual Man". He didn't write any other books. He wrote only The Spiritual Man and after five years of publishing it he suppressed it. And all the other books that are by Watchman Nee are taken from shorthand accounts or stenographers' accounts of his sermons in England and in China.

But Nee often emphasized be careful as you read books, be careful that you look to the Holy Spirit to give you revelation and to make these truths alive again to you so that they don't come to you as knowledge. And so that's what I'm trying to emphasize, that we look to books, and to tapes the same way as we should to preachers, through the Holy Spirit's mediation, listening to the Holy Spirit, depending on the Holy Spirit to give us what we need to receive. And then it's life I think. But

any other way, it brings you into dictatorship and into the authority of man, you see.

Question from Audience:

If something occurs to your mind that you felt you had dealt with and had been cleansed from, and felt clean about in the past, does that mean that you didn't really deal with it or that your mind is playing a trick with you?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

And as you can guess it seems to me only the Holy Spirit could finally tell a person or explain to them which was the situation. But I do agree with you that if a person has really come clean from some sin, and I mean come clean for more than a day or more than a week, but if they've come clean from it and had victory over it, then it's more than likely if they're having trouble with it again, that Satan is succeeding in injecting one of the old thoughts into their minds. And that's why they're having to throw it out again.

Now, if you're not throwing it out then you've yielded more ground in your own will. But, if you're throwing it out immediately it occurs to you, then at least you can tell it's Satan trying to inject it into your mind and in which case you simply reject the fiery darts of the wicked one. Now, if you find that it's finding a second second's existence in your mind, then you need to ask the Holy Spirit, "Will you show me where I have yielded some ground on this issue?"

So I can imagine some loved ones who had trouble with criticism and a critical spirit and they came to a place where they saw, who are they to be critical? They're so miserable themselves, there is no good in them, they deserve utterly to be destroyed with Jesus and they are freed in that death with Jesus from a critical spirit. And then the Holy Spirit guides them to love other people and to give out, and to constantly share themselves with others, and then for some reason -- either through maybe tiredness, or weariness, or not trusting God for the grace, or maybe from just a little thought of self concern -- they step back from that.

Often they will find the old critical spirit coming back. So they've yielded ground by stepping back from the virtue that God planted in them in place of the old vice and they're stepping back from that virtue, if you want to call it that. So usually it's good if it's just in your mind and you reject it again, then it is just Satan and you just continue to do that. But, if it is finding a second second's existence in your mind, or if it is coming repeatedly over years then a person should ask the Holy Spirit, "Will you show me if I yielded ground here?"

Because loved ones, I don't know if you know it but do you realize that the victorious life is not an eternal battle? Do you realize that? I mean, a guy like me doesn't come onto the stage and get whomped up to smile a lot but back there I'm just slugging it out. No, no it's beautiful. It's victory, it's not a battle all the time. You're not constantly fighting the fiery darts of the wicked one, you're not. Yeah, I'm aware there must be plenty of people who hate me and have little effigies and stick pins in -- but the Holy Spirit protects you from that.

You walk in victory. You don't walk in constant battle. And I share that with you so that you can see it; see that there is a beautiful way. There's a highway of holiness. There's a beautiful way

of victory that is true and real. And anything else is the abnormal Christian life.

Question from Audience (inaudible)

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Brother says he's thinking of John Bunyan, who called himself "the chief of sinners". You mentioned also Charles Finney [1792–1875, American evangelist] who seemed to go through some kind of big psychological crisis or turmoil. And brother says, "I'm just a little hesitant about that kind of stuff."

Loved ones, it's a passing from death unto life. It's a passing from darkness into light. It is a traumatic, tremendous change that Jesus could only describe by the words "New Birth". And brother, with all my heart I certainly want to understand you, and sympathize, and empathize with what you're saying but I would have to say that I was brought up in the old liberal theological schools of Britain and in something of the educational psychology and indeed the pastoral psychology of Britain. And I was brought up to read the books that looked a little askance at these apparently sick people who became well mentally, and at these crisis experiences that threw them into turmoil.

And so I was brought up that way and brother I'd have to say it is a traumatic experience. I believe that. I'm sure that sometimes it can be some dear ones who are sick and who overdo it -- but it seems to me it is something that is in control of God alone. And for me it certainly was a traumatic and a crisis experience -- both the New Birth and for me the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The only thing I saw when I got into the middle of it was for a moment I started to look around saying, "Now listen, is this a healthy minded experience that I am having or is this a kind of sick experience?" And then I saw, "Look, I'm not in charge of this. It's God who is in charge of it. It is him who has put me into Jesus, and it's him that has the right to make this real in me in his way." And so I had to give myself to it.

So brother, I'm happy to curtail the word "abandonment". I would defend it as abandonment of self to God rather than just abandonment to any evil spirits. But, it's a word that for me would describe the surrender that I was involved in. I taught for years in Britain, and I always believed that if I could just explain it to you loved ones the way I saw it, then you'd come into it. And when I preached in liberal Methodist churches in Britain and in Ireland, I always believed that loved ones could gradually rise, and rise in knowledge until the light would dawn and then they'd come into God. And it doesn't work because of sin.

Sin, it's rebellion that is our problem. It's not because you're not nice people. You're nice people. I'm a nice person, more or less. It's not because we don't know enough that we don't know God. But loved ones, human beings do not love the truth when they see it. They don't. They don't love the truth when they see it and I thought they would, but they don't. They're like me, they want their own way, they want to be their own God, they don't want to be ruled by their Creator.

It's rebellion, and there has to become a time when you surrender, and you cease from your rebellion, and you lay your arms down and there is no way at all in which Idi Amin [dictator in Uganda 1971-1979] could be quietly, and gently, and gradually subdued. No way. There is no way in which his troops could be quietly subdued. There had to be a violent meeting of the powers of good with the powers of evil. And so it is in our dear hearts. We are rebels against God. We live for

ourselves, and we live to do our own will, and we don't want to give up, and there's a power over us called Satan that doesn't want us to give up. And so there has to be a mighty conflict, and a violent crisis.

Now, it differs with all of us, brother. And I have to say, if you all were looking on at me as I was born of God, or as I was baptized with the Spirit, would you probably think, "That's a very formal sophisticated way to enter into a New Birth." Because I was brought up in Britain and we didn't express things so much. So all of us will differ in what we express but inside it is a massive turmoil, a violent overthrow of the enemy. It is a passing from darkness into light. It is a massive step, beyond a doubt.

Question from Audience:

Isn't it possible that you could be baptized with the Spirit when you were born again?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Brother, I believe that in the New Testament that is God's will. I believe that it was as simple as that. The people on the day of Pentecost said, "What must we do?" And Peter said, "Be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Now, I believe that the next day when they went down to the river, when they sank into the water, they regarded themselves as baptized into Jesus' death and buried with him and as they came up they believed that the Holy Spirit came upon them as a dove as he came upon Jesus.

And it happened that way with many of them. But, even in the New Testament some of them were obviously born of the Spirit and not baptized with the Spirit. For various reasons, some of them didn't know about it, some of them didn't know about being baptized into Jesus' death, some of them weren't willing. The Corinthians weren't willing, they were carnal and they didn't want to be baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit. They wanted just a little to make them feel good.

So I think brother that many of us have found that because of some of the preaching that was shared with us in the early days, we entered into something of a New Birth experience but not into the fullness of the Spirit. And yet, there's no reason why we can't go in. And many of us have come in – we've all come different ways but I think we've all come through a crisis which we knew was the fullness of the Spirit.

"The Normal Christian Life" by Watchman Nee helps to elaborate on that. Andrew Murray's "Absolute Surrender" is another good book. And I'll try to talk about that in the next few Sundays in connection with communion.

Question from Audience (inaudible)

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Now, Chris is sharing something that I think many of us have heard of and shared before, that she found that there were areas in her life that needed healing in coming into obedience. And she found that when that emphasis was put she had more experience of God's grace and more a sense of freedom from condemnation. Yet you know I have trouble with that one, and it seems to me that the heart of our problem with God is the will and obedience.

I think that I had many reasons, I could share one example, and you could maybe comment back on it. My mother was illegitimate. I didn't know that for years but she was an illegitimate child. And she passed on to my brother and me a tremendous sense, as you can guess, of inferiority. Just a deep inferiority complex and a sense that then she almost reinforced by the way she talked to us when we were children -- that we weren't as good as anybody else, and all that kind of stuff.

I think many of you have had similar experiences, even though your situation wasn't the same as mine. So I came up Chris, with my brother, with a deep sense of inferiority. And I believe that often I would have felt what I needed was healing from that inferiority feeling. "Lord, heal me from that feeling of inferiority."

Now Chris, I know this sounds strange but I didn't -- the Holy Spirit did not show me that at all. The Holy Spirit showed me, "You are inferior or you feel inferior because you're still preoccupied with your relationship to other people and your comparison to other people. And really it's the same problem as if you felt superior. The problem is you're still more interested in how you line up with other people than how you line up with me only. Now, that's because you're still involved in trying to establish your own value around your own self esteem separate from me.

You somehow feel that if you can somehow prove that you are as good as everybody else then you will have some value. I tell you, you have no value. You have no value apart from me at all. And you are inferior -- you should be the lowest thing on the earth because you're so miserably selfish, and so wretchedly rebellious." And the Holy Spirit witnessed that to my heart.

And you may say, "Oh, you poor little soul, it must have broken you." Yes, I'm glad it broke me. That's what I needed. I needed to be broken of that self regard, and self esteem, and pride, and desire for other people to think well of me. I needed to see into the depth of my heart that there was no good in me apart from Jesus at all and that I needed to come to a place where I died utterly to what anybody thought of me, to what my mother thought of me, to what any friends thought of me. And Chris I can only share that God's Spirit answered me in that and cleansed me.

And when I accepted my place of death with Jesus and I accepted, "Lord Jesus, you were spat upon by people who really weren't worthy to wipe your feet, you were insulted, you were treated as the most wretched, rotten, useless creature in the whole world and you've asked me to join you, and to share that with you, and you are the Son of the Creator of the universe. Lord, I'd be glad to join you. I'd be glad to be treated like that in you." And loved ones when you come to that place there is real freedom.