

The Will and the Fall

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

We talked a little, loved ones, last Sunday about one of the problems that many of us come into. And that is, accusations from Satan that we are not God's children, or we are not walking in his will. And we shared together last Sunday that the answer to that always is, what God has already done to us in his Son, Jesus. And you remember, how we shared that strange idea and concept for many of us -- that we're maybe just beginning to get a hold of -- that in fact God did foresee that you would disobey him, and that you would make a mess of your lives, and of my life, and that he put us all in his Son from before the foundation of the world.

And I think it was Art Owens was talking to me during the week again about it. And it is good to see that verse again. It's Revelation 13:8. And it's good just to almost have it memorized, so that you know that it is a fact. "And all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name 'has' not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain."

Even that means the same thing, that the names have been written before the foundation of the world. But actually, the translation, as we've often said, is wrong. Actually, "before the foundation of the world" follows the verb "slain" in the Greek. And so the sentence reads, "Every one whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world."

And of course it's the same truth you get, you remember, in Ephesians 1 where God emphasizes that we were "in Christ" from away before the foundation of the world. It's Ephesians 1:3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him."

And I remember one of the things Art said was, "But that isn't predestination is it? It doesn't mean that we're all saved whatever we do?" It means loved ones, that everything that needed to be done, has been done by God, in Jesus, and all we have to do is believe that. And the effects of it begin to be made real in our lives. But the importance of it is, when Satan comes accusing you -- as is his want; the Bible says that Satan's job is to accuse the brethren -- when he accuses you, your answer is, "I have been crucified with Christ. I was included in the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. God has already destroyed me in his Son and raised me up and made me new. You have nothing to charge me with. You're dead right. All those things you say are true. But God has already destroyed me in his Son Jesus."

And so, always loved ones, we answer by the testimony of the "blood of the Lamb," of the death of Jesus. And that's the way we deal with Satan. And it's important for you to deal with him that way. And you don't get into the business: "You're right, you're right. I'm bad; I'm bad; I'm bad." Of course you're bad. You're so bad that God had to destroy you in his Son. But, he's destroyed you once. And he's not going to take anything out on you a second time. And so God does not destroy twice for one life of sin. He has destroyed us in his Son. And we talked of standing on that place.

And then, you remember, I shared with you that the purpose of exercising our wills, is to allow the

power of that victory to come into the world. Because some of us get into the position where we say, "Oh yeah, but I'm not letting that happen. I'm not letting it happen. So does that mean I am not destroyed?"

You can't change that. God has destroyed you in his Son. And he gives you these 70 years to allow the victory of that to exercise itself in your life, in the world. After that 70 years is over, then you will have to tell him, "I rejected your offer. And I'm glad I rejected it. And I'm determined to stay in the deceiving, lying life that I'm now in." That's what you'll have to say. But you'll have to say to God, "I rejected the change that you wrought in me."

But loved ones, you can't say to him, "I didn't change." All you can do is say, "I rejected the change which you wrought in me in Jesus your Son." And so it's important to see that. It's not us climbing up the ladder trying to change. It's us accepting or rejecting the change that God has wrought upon us in his Son Jesus.

Now, what I'd love to share with you, a little this evening, is the connection that that has with exercising your will, in this life; because many of us have real troubles exercising our wills. We have real trouble doing what we know is right. And we don't understand why we have a weak will. And we don't understand how to have victory over a weak will. And that's what I'd like to share a little tonight.

Loved ones, would you go back to Genesis to the record of the fall. Most of you, I think, know that the fall is a concept that is presented in the Bible right from the earliest chapters. That is, that we men and women fell from a position of holy innocence that we had with God at the very beginning of the world. And the account of that, you begin to find in Genesis 2:9. "And out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." And then you get God's command to us in a few verses. Verse 16, "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'"

It would seem loved ones, that the tree of life is what God talks about when he says that "the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life." It would seem that God set before our forefathers, a tree of life that was in fact, the Holy Spirit, because always, in the Bible, the Holy Spirit is the one who gives life. The Holy Spirit, or Jesus -- you remember, he said, "I am come so that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly." And it would seem that God was saying to us men and women, "Look, trust me; depend on me; love me, and look to me for your needs. And I will give you life that will turn into the fulfillment of those needs." And it would seem that that life became whatever we needed it to be.

So Jesus demonstrated that when he took the loaves and the fishes. And the life that he was receiving from his Maker touched those loaves and fishes, and resurrected them, and enlarged them, and multiplied them into enough for 5,000. It would seem that that 'life', in the faith of Elijah, turned into fire that fell from heaven onto an altar on which Elijah had poured water, you remember. And that 'life' turned into fire that was more powerful than the fire that had been created by the Prophets of Baal.

It would seem that when Joshua needed the wells of Jericho to crumble, that 'life' turned into dynamite that worked silently, and invisibly, and quietly, and destroyed the walls of Jericho. And

so it would seem, you see, that that 'life' that we would normally have received from our Maker would run the world via our faith. And when we see the great servants of God in the Old Testament apparently doing miracles, all they were doing was trusting God for that 'life' that became what they needed at that time. And then when the apostles began to heal lepers and raise people from the dead, it was the same experience. And that was the way God wanted us to live, in trust for him for all that we needed.

He also pointed out that there was another way to live and he made a tree that he called the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil'. And it was pretty plain to every man and woman that you could live by trusting your God for miraculous life, or you could use your knowledge of 'precedence', or your knowledge of 'good and evil' to, in some way, make the world work for you by your own reason and by your own power. In other words, it was possible for Adam to observe what God told him to do and to see that certain results followed from that. And then it was possible for him to sink that into his own memory. And every time he needed that he would work it himself. And so it was possible to either run life by your own manipulation of the forces of nature, or it was possible to run it by trusting in God and doing what he told us.

So, for instance, it would come out most forcibly, as you know, in family situations. I don't know if you've been in the same spot that I was often in. My mother and my brother were often rather noisy and rather anxious for battle, and for disagreement, and argument. My dad and I had been touched by Jesus and were kind of quieter. And of course, my mother would say something, and I would determine, "I can answer that. And I can show her exactly where she is wrong." And I would get into using the old 'knowledge of good and evil'. Well, I mean, the roof blew off the house! It was just – after an hour of my so-called use of 'knowledge of good and evil' it was hell. I realized I should not have spoken.

My dad was always, "No, you be quiet. You trust God. You be quiet and 'the Lord is at hand;' and, 'Let your forbearance be known unto all men.'" And isn't it true? You can see that in your own relationships. You can either trust God to bring life into the situation, or you can get in and get your own 'sleeves up'; and boy, "The last state of the house is worse than the first." Now, that's the difference loved ones. That's an illustration of the difference between trusting God for that life, and manipulating the world in your own way to bring about the necessary results.

Now, the fall consisted of us men and women choosing the second alternative. And you find that, you see, in Genesis 3. And you remember, Satan was the one of course, who suggested it. Genesis 3:1, "Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat of any tree of the garden"?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'""

Just in passing, it's worthwhile seeing Satan's method, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden? Was that God's word to you? Is that what you heard?'" Now, I don't know how often you have been tripped up in that way, where Satan has said, "Was it your thoughts or was it God? Was it your own mind thought that? Sounds pretty impractical to me. Did you not think that up?" And really, the fact is that Jesus is within each one of us. And everything that is at all in keeping with scripture, we can be sure that when it occurs in our minds, it is him speaking. But Satan loves to get us to make doubly sure, "Now, was it God spoke that or was it your own thoughts?"

Now when you think, it's the dumbest thing in the world. I mean, if the thing is any – I mean, as long as it isn't, "Go and kill your mother,"-- if it is something that is in line with scripture, then why don't we immediately walk by faith and assume, "That's right. God's word says that there's a "light that lightens every man that comes into the world." We know that God has put us into Jesus and destroyed us with him and raised us up with him. So it's likely that, if he's all around about us and inside us, then the things that we're thinking are his words, if they're in keeping with his Father's word in scripture." So loved ones, it really is very illogical to rise to Satan's bait like this.

But, this is Satan's method with us, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" Well then you see the second step is, he traps you into changing God's word a little, "And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"" Now God didn't say that at all, because if you look back to Genesis 2:9, you will find that there were two trees in the midst of the garden, and one of them as the 'tree of life' also in the midst of the garden. And that's the one that God wanted them to eat of. But Satan of course, traps you with, "Did God say this?" And then persuades you into switching what God said a little.

And so it often happens with us, really. That's the way all of us get into our difficulties of course, where we fall into unclean thoughts or unclean actions. It's always that way. It's Satan says, "Did God tell you not to do it?" And you say, "Well, he didn't quite not tell me – he told me not to do it, but thinking about it, it is maybe possible." And we switch it slightly. And we will not abide by God's raw command.

So, that's Satan's approach here.

"You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' But the Serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die.'" And that's always his method, "You won't suffer any break in your relationship with God because of this. You won't lose any peace over this. This is a little thing, you will not die." "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate."

And loved ones, really that Verse 6 is important because it outlines how we men and women began to turn from trusting God to trying to use the world for our advantage. Because you see, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food," that by manipulating the world, that by manipulating the money in the world, the jobs in the world, by our own knowledge of good and evil we could get food; we could get our security; we could establish our security; we could keep ourselves safe and alive. "And that it was a delight to the eyes," by using the experiences in the world, by skiing down the snow slopes fast enough, by using other human beings in the world to get excitement in our relationships, we could actually have delight in our lives. We could ensure our own happiness. "And that the tree was to be desired to make one wise," and people who are wise are looked up to, and are important, and are significant. We began to see that we could make ourselves important in other's eyes, and establish our own value in the eyes of the world and forget 'that God'. And if he didn't want to supply us with food, if he didn't want to make us happy, if he didn't want to regard

us as important, "Good! We can do without him."

And that was the fall of mankind loved ones. And I think what we all need to see in this room, is we live in a fallen world, and we have inherited from our parents who inherited from their parents, a fallen nature. And that's our tendency to operate that way now. And we tend to live 'off the world'.

Let me show you what that does. [Pastor turns on the overhead projector and shows a diagram of the personality.] Will you be patient? I tend to make a joke of this thing myself. [He knows some in the audience have seen it many times.] But I see that there are loved ones who haven't -- believe it or not, haven't seen it. You'd think the world had seen it.

Why I think it's good, in a sense, is it clarifies for all of us exactly what has gone wrong. It's not the only way to do it; you could do it all kinds of other ways. But it shows us what has gone wrong. Those of you who haven't seen it loved ones, if you look into Bible psychology, you find that the Bible, in a verse like 1 Thessalonians 5:23, says, "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 so the Bible says that we consist -- our personalities -- of spirit, soul, and body. [The diagram consists of 3 concentric rectangles. The outer rectangle is the 'body'. The next smaller one is the 'soul'. The smallest one inside is the 'spirit'.]

And then if you follow through the term spirit in the New and Old Testaments, you begin to find that your spirit has the ability to commune with God. [The diagram is actually more detailed. Inside the 'spirit' are 'Communion', 'Intuition' and 'Conscience'. Then the 'soul' is similarly divided into 'Will', 'Mind', and 'Emotions'.] It has the ability to know by intuition what he wants you to do, and it has the ability to judge whether you're doing that or not. And then your soul is the psychological part of you. And it contains the ability to make decisions, and to determine what you're going to do. It enables you to think, and judge, and understand things through your mind, and enables you to feel, and desire things in your emotions. And then your body of course, is the part of you that relates to the world.

Now in fact, in the Garden of Eden, God's desire was for us to trust him for his life and through our trust in him to receive direction through his Spirit in communion with him. [Here Pastor adds an overlay with an arrow from the Holy Spirit, outside above the personality rectangles, to 'Communion', from there to 'Intuition', and from there to 'Conscience'.] To receive direction so that we would know by intuition what he wanted us to do. Then, our conscience would constrain our will to obey that, and our will would direct our mind to understand what God wished us to do. [The overlay also has an arrow from the 'Conscience' in the 'spirit' to the 'Will' in the 'soul', with a note "Obey". The arrows in the 'soul', then, are from 'Will' to 'Mind', and from 'Mind' to 'Emotions', and from there out to the 'body'.]

That's a little what you get when Einstein, you remember, would waken up in the morning and say, "God showed me," and he would see the thing clearly and see it by intuition. That was part of the way God intended us to operate. And then our emotions would express the joy of our fellowship with God through our bodies to the world.

Now in fact, instead of doing that we turned the whole system upside down. [Pastor shows the diagram again, but with an overlay that shows the arrows going in the opposite direction, from the 'world'

into the 'body' and from the 'body' to the 'Emotions', to the 'Mind', and to the 'Will'.] And we began to look to the world to try and get from it, and to trust it for what we were meant to get from God.

Now loved ones, here's what I want you to see. Do you see what happened to our 'wills'? As fallen men and women who have been used to depending on the world for what we were meant to get from God, our 'wills' have fallen virtually into disuse. And instead of our 'wills' obeying our conscience, now that is wiped out and our 'wills' obey our 'minds', which obey our 'emotions', which obey our 'bodies'.

And that's why so many of us have real trouble exercising our wills. And you know it, you see. You know how close we all are to little dogs, to little animals. We feel tired this morning, so our emotions are kind of depressed and down; and so our mind is kind of sleepy and can't get itself together. And so there's no 'will' in it! In fact, many of us loved ones, operate only down at that level. [On the diagram Pastor covers the 'spirit' and 'soul' and only shows the 'body'.]

You know the way you respond to someone when you get down to breakfast and somebody says, "Hi, how are you?" And you say, "Terrible!" And that's about as far as you get. And you know that. Some of us, unless we get coffee and a cigarette -- I mean, we're no use to anybody. And even then, when we get a coffee and a cigarette, we're into the car, and out, and not a word to anybody! And we're like little animals. If things aren't good with our bodies, if things don't feel right outside, our emotions catch that from our bodies, because they operate so closely to our bodies.

And then our mind is absolutely suppressed by our emotions. And you know how that goes. You know how you'll say, "My mind -- I can hardly think. Oh, I can't think at all until 10:30 in the morning. Don't talk to me. I can't do anything until 10:30 -- till I waken up." And really, many of us pass our lives like that. And that's why we're really in a way, suckers for anything that Satan wants us to do, because, our wills are rarely ever exercised.

And loved ones, that's because our whole personality is now utterly dependent on the world. That's why, when you try to get out of it by exercising your wills, you're facing an impossible task; because, you believe that you were not crucified with Christ. And you believe that this nature that you have inherited, is the nature that you got from your mother, and your father, and from your grandparents, and from Adam; and that that nature is tied and enslaved to the world. And you live that way.

You live that way. When somebody criticizes you, you're utterly cast down. You're just uncomfortable and you feel you're worthless. When somebody praises you, you feel wonderful. When circumstances are good, you feel happy. When circumstances are bad, you feel miserable. So you live that way, and you believe that that's the way your nature is.

Loved ones, your will hasn't a dog's chance. It hasn't, because you're believing the lie that you haven't been crucified with Christ; you're believing the lie that you're tied to the world; and you've tied to people, and things, and events for all that you need, and you live that way. And your poor little will is absolutely and utterly suppressed by your body, and your mind, and your emotions. And it hasn't strength to do anything. And that's why we cry out, "The good that I would I cannot do."

And that's why loved ones, I say to you respectfully, "Don't start with your will!" Don't start

with your will! See, I think that's where you get into trouble. I think you start with your will and you think to yourself, "Well, I have to move against this." And so you get into all kinds of tricks. And so, "Yeah you think you'll do it with showers." Or you think you'll do it by not having a cigarette; or you think you'll do it by cutting the coffee out and maybe adding orange juice; or you think you'll do it by getting to bed earlier at night; or you think you'll do it by reading more books on how to control your temper.

Don't start with your will! Start with the mighty fact that God has declared in his dear word, that "Our old self was crucified with Christ;" that when "the Lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world," your whole miserable personality was crucified in him; and when he was resurrected, you were resurrected up new; and you have been changed; and you have a personality that operates that way and is able to operate that way. [Pastor shows the overlay on the diagram with the arrows coming from the Holy Spirit to our 'spirit' and out to our 'soul' and out to the 'body' and to the 'world'.] So that you get into the middle of the situation in the office and somebody sidles up to you and says, "I was talking to so-and-so, you know, and do you know what they said about you?" Well, I needn't tell you, you know how it goes from that.

At that moment, none of the, "Umm! So, they said that about me, did they? Well, I'm a Christian and I'm not going to say anything." [Pastor does a little acting of putting on a determined face and strutting and grabbing the podium. "I'm not. I'm not. I love them. I do, I love them."

Don't! Don't! Stand on his dear word, "Lord, I thank you;" Romans 6:6, "I thank you that my old self was crucified with Christ and Lord, I thank you that I have been crucified as far as what they can do to me is concerned. Lord, I thank you that the old Ernest O'Neill -- thank you that the old Steve -- thank you that the old George -- thank you that the old Joan -- was crucified with Christ. Thank you Lord, that that being is dead and gone. And thank you Father, that I have a personality here that has been given to me by you and it is dependent on you. And Lord, it cares only for your good opinion. It cares for only what you think of me. Father, I thank you for that. I thank you for that." And then loved ones, by faith, through the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body.

That's the way, you see. Not, by the sleeves up, and the will power trying to suffocate or strangle the deeds of the body! But, by faith in what God said is true, through the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body, because, I'll tell you, when you take that stand, the dear Holy Spirit comes in and gently brings into your heart, a fragrance and a sweetness. And your place is not to produce that sweetness or that fragrance; your place is to take your stand in faith on the fact that you have been changed and transformed.

Now loved ones, it's the same in regard to the business after the benediction. Everybody is going home with friends. Everybody seems to have friends but you. You're the only one. You're going home to your own miserable room on your own. You haven't even a bird to talk to! You're on your own and everybody else has somebody. And Satan gets right in there and says, "You poor, poor, lonely, bewildered thing. You have no friends, of course. It's because the color of your hair. I mean, who would have friends with hair like yours." And the old self-pity begins to sink.

No, don't -- do not exercise the will, "No, that isn't so. No, I'm going to be happy. I'm h-a-p-p-y. I'm h-a-p-p-y." No. No, not that. Don't do that. Take your stand in faith on what has happened to you, "Lord, I thank you. I thank you that the old self, that I used to have, would be like that and would feel this, and would feel lonely, and left out. But Lord I thank you that that old self was put to death -- not only on Calvary, but even before that. Before the foundation

of the world it's been wiped out! It doesn't exist. Lord, thank you for this new personality that you've given me here, that is content with you, and you alone, and that is happy when it has you. And you are enough for it. And you are more than everything else to it. Lord, I take my stand there and I thank you."

Loved ones, that's it: "By faith, through the spirit, putting to death the deeds of the body," but standing in faith on that fact. Now, if you say to me, "Well brother, I mean, it doesn't seem real to me at this time." Loved ones, it becomes real as you exercise your faith. You exercise your faith again, and again, and gradually God begins to get you to live like that. I'll show you the chapter where that's described. It's in 2 Corinthians 5, and we've looked at it often in regard to other truths. Of course, it's one of those chapters that again states the old truth, that God has already changed us in Jesus. Verse 14, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view."

And that's it you see, "From now on, therefore." Gradually you begin to regard no one from the old human point of view. "Even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, I any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come." And you no longer regard anybody from a human point of view.

And loved ones, if you continue to exercise faith in what has happened to you in Jesus, gradually the Holy Spirit begins to change your dear mind. And your mind begins to understand, and your mind begins to think in those terms. And gradually you begin to find that somebody calls you over and says, "Do you know what so-and-so said about you?" And you couldn't care less what they said about you. And you don't mind if it was the worst thing you had ever heard, because you live in the kingdom of God's dear Son. And that's what God says.

God says, "We have been translated out of this world of relationships into the kingdom of his dear Son." And that's where you and I are this evening. We're in the kingdom of his dear Son. And you know, loved ones, if you say, "Oh Pastor, if you knew me you wouldn't say that." Loved ones, do you realize that when God said, "He has reconciled the world to himself," do you realize that however terrible this may seem, the dear guy that killed Anwar Sadat [Muhammad Anwar El Sadat was the third President of Egypt, serving from 15 October 1970 until his assassination by a fundamentalist army officer on 6 October 1981.] was put into Jesus by God, and was crucified, and was resurrected. And that's a fact. And if that dear guy for one moment believed that, all the power and the reality of that would become real in his life. That's true.

The dear girl in New York at this moment, who has just now committed intercourse and immorality for the 70th time -- that dear girl has been put by God into his dear Son Jesus. And Jesus has borne all the pain of destroying her nature and renewing her in himself. And if she believes that this very moment, the whole world of Jesus rushes in upon her and changes her completely. So don't sit there and say, "Oh but, if you knew my life you couldn't say that of me." Loved ones, that's true of all of us.

So faith, is not the creation of some reality, faith is the acceptance of a reality that has already been created. Faith is seeing what is true. Faith is not trying to believe yourself into something. Faith is seeing that what God has said in his word is true, that all of us have been crucified with Christ, and have been completely renewed and changed. And loved ones, your

personality is as able to live in peace as Martin Luther's was, when he was hounded by all the people in Germany. And yet he knew God was his fortress and his strength. Loved ones, your personality is as able to operate that way as his, because yours has been changed.

But loved ones, it's by faith. And I'll tell you, I remember the delight I had when I really grasped that that old Earnest O'Neill that I so hated in so many ways, that was so mean and so self-pitying, and so paranoid, had been crucified with Christ -- no longer even existed. He no longer even existed! And it's such a delight to get up every morning and thank God, "Lord, I thank you that the being that wore these clothes yesterday, has been crucified with Christ, right up to this present moment. And all that he was yesterday has been destroyed, and I'm a new creation this morning. Holy Spirit, thank you for that." And loved ones, that's how "the just shall live by faith." It's living by faith in that.

And then if you say to me, "Well, what about the exercise of the will?" Well, it's a kind of natural thing. You do have to exercise it, but it's a kind of natural thing to do. As you see it is. When your nature operates like that, [Pastor shows on the diagram again the overlay of the personality with arrows from God's Holy Spirit to our 'spirit', to our 'soul', to our 'body', to the 'world'.] it's just natural, your will obeys your conscience. Whether your mind completely understands the thing or not, your will does what God has told it to do. And so that's his will for us.

Now, I'll keep quiet. Do you want to ask me questions? But it is by faith and not by strangulation. And it's by faith and not by will 'power' in that sense, you see. Now some of you, I think, have discovered, "Well, you do have to exercise your will." Well yes, you do. You do. So some of us have kind of lain back at times and thought, "Oh, I just wallow here like a jellyfish and God moves me." Well no, God doesn't move anybody, Satan moves you. But, God frees you so that you can do what you know is right. So, you do have to exercise your will.

Question from audience:

How many different kinds of discernment could there be in receiving something from God and trying to apply it in your mind, or trying to examine it by your mind?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Well, I think brother that the difficulty is that 'discernment of spirits', for instance, is the Holy Spirit working through our spirits when we're in a state of faith and obedience, working through our spirits and directing us to say certain things.

Now, that's quite interesting, because I think a lot of us think discernment is me talking to Clyde, and the Holy Spirit coming to me and says, "He has a spirit of legalism, because he's a lawyer. And watch out for that."

Well do you see loved ones, if the Holy Spirit gave you discernment like that, first of all there'd be a constant temptation in you to pride. Then it really is a laborious way to operate, isn't it? You'd receive the discernment, "Okay, I got the discernment. Now Lord, what do I do?" So you'd call God up and say, "Now I know how to discern. Now what do I say to him?" Well, God doesn't require that kind of double call stuff.

Discernment is where God gives you, brother, the right words to say, so that you're talking -- I'm talking to Clyde and the Father just prompts me, "Yes, say that." So the discernment is almost together with the action, so that it is a very safe thing in a way, and a very natural thing. So that's the way 'discernment of spirits', I've found, works, when you're trying to talk with a friend or trying to help someone in a difficulty.

Now in regard to our own examination of the commands that God gives us: I'm afraid, brother, that when God gives us a command, it comes through our communion with him by intuition, and our conscience normally immediately constrains our will to obey that. And if we will let that go, that will work straight through. Where we get into difficulty is when our 'will' refuses to obey our conscience. And we try to pass the intuition directly down to our mind. And we use our mind to examine what we think God has said to us in here. [Pastor is pointing to 'Intuition' in our 'spirit' on the diagram.]

Well, the interesting thing is, the moment you reflect on that, probably the original command is immediately perverted, or in some way diluted, even at that moment. So probably the moment you try to examine your spirit, which is a deeper part of you, with your mind or the psychological part of you which is a shallower part, probably even at that moment -- like the scientist, you filter out all the truth that you can measure by your experiments, but that's only a little of the truth. So you probably filter out whatever of the truth is left to the mind's understanding. And that's where the trouble comes, where our mind tries to come in as overdrive and examine what God has said instead of obeying our conscience immediately.

Now, I know the problem. I know we all say, "But brother, if you do that then couldn't you get into dire trouble? If you don't allow your mind to examine what God is directing you to do, couldn't you get out into wild problems?" Not, if God keeps his promise. "As you turn to the right or to the left, you will hear a voice behind you saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'" That's God's promise, that the Holy Spirit would check us; that we can afford to walk out after our conscience without fear. And if we turn to the right or the left -- if we turn off the path, then God's Spirit will speak to us and will check us. And that's it, brother. We do not need to have this kind of burden, "Now, should I examine this first with my mind and see, 'Should I do it?'"

No. You can walk out on it. And then God will constrain you one way or the other. That way, we learn to walk by the Spirit. But the tragedy with the other is we may -- we actually end up walking in the steps of worldly wise men in Bunyan's "Pilgrims Progress". We end up walking in worldly wisdom, religious wisdom. There's a lot of it around. There's a lot of religious wisdom around. And in a sense you have to risk it. That's why at times you loved ones, will come to me and say, "Brother, I think the Lord wants me to do that." Well, I say, "Good. If this is in line with scripture; it's not contradicted in God's word, alright. Try it, ease out on it."

And you've said at times to me, "Do you think it's right?" because, you maybe think I don't think it's right. And I say, "I don't know. You got it from God. Ease out on it. Take a little step. Don't blast on down the aisle. Take a little step, and let God confirm that step or not." And I say that because the important thing is that we learn to walk in the spirit and trust God.

And you see, that's where I think we get into difficulties. I think I walk one way, and then I tell Phyllis, "When I was in that situation I walked that way." And then she begins to get into the business of tot it up -- notching up precedence you see. "Oh now, pastor did it this way, Todd Anderson did it that way, Vern did it that way," and then you get into 'under law' again.

So, I would say that's it brother.

Question from audience:

I think you want to deny us our intellect and make us ignorant puppies maybe.

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Yes, that's the end, really, because then that puts me in control -- that's the last thing!

I think brother, the issue is, what is the mind to be used for? Is the mind to be used to direct our lives, and if so in the light of what? And normally of course, we all say, "Well, in the light of all the knowledge that we can gather from all possible sources." Well, that wild field of knowledge has so many contradictory opinions in it, that most of our minds end up grabbing the little thing that somebody said to us last, or the thing that was presented most vividly to us, maybe when we were in a most impressionable stage. And so there's a real problem there in the mind directing the life from all the knowledge that it can absorb.

No one can tell, for instance, whether you've absorbed all the knowledge that is necessary, or all the knowledge in the world. And so that results usually, in people being very uncertain about their steps, because they think, "Well, I'm doing -- well, I'm doing what I think is best." And they can't tell if they've considered all of the relevant issues. They can't tell if they understand all the relevant issues. So most of us end up saying, "Well, I don't know if this is the way to go or not, but I'm going to try it." So that's the difficulty with using the mind to direct the life, brother. And all I'm saying is. "No, the life is directed by God's Spirit in prayer, and in communion, giving us little steps to take. And we take a little step. And we take a little step.

Now, one of those little steps may be Einstein's, "Go out on this angle. Consider that things may be moving only relatively to each other." He then gets his mind going with the old elevators up and down, and creating the symbols, and creating the illustrations that he used to work out the theory of relativity. In other words, the mind is used to express in practical ways, the direction that God is giving us through our spirits.

Question from audience:

Then is the mind not a priority?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

It is, in its function, in that particular function. But the mind is not a priority from the point of view of the direction of our lives, and the direction of our jobs, and our marriages. We've all gotten into all kinds of trouble by trying to marry just using the mind. And I remember I was convinced -- I was a Methodist minister so my wife should be able to play the organ, should be able to speak in public, should be able to preside at daffodil teas, and lady's suppers... And you start looking. And most of us guys have done the same. You've gone around with your shopping list. And then the dear, beautiful, wonderful girl you marry is nothing like that at all. And yet, she's the right one for you.

So I think that's it, brother, that the mind is to be used very actively. Again, I think the mind is to be used in this dear Word, to understand the historical background of the writers, to understand the Hebrew. I think it's important for me to go back to the Hebrew and the Greek to understand as well as possible what this says intellectually. Then, to bow down before God and say, "Lord, unless you give me the inner meaning of this, I've got nothing."

So yes, brother. Boy I think the mind has to be kept active and alive. And I think our intellect is a precious gift. But it's given to us to understand what God is giving us through the intuition of our spirits, in order to 'express' it to the world -- not in order to judge it, you see. And I think that's where we get into trouble.

Question from audience:

Well, what if you disobey your conscience? What about that? What I mean by conscience is, the word of God that I have interpreted is the Holy Spirit.

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

It seems brother that when you disobey your conscience God has so built us that obviously, guilt comes upon us. In other words, our conscience, "con scio" in Latin, is to know ourselves and to be aware of what we are doing. Indeed, it is said to be one of the things that distinguishes us from animals, that we can look at ourselves and see what we are doing, and be aware of it. And God gives us that ability to know what we have done. And he allows guilt to come upon our conscience. And so our conscience becomes unclean. And we're aware that it's unclean. And we're aware that we've done something wrong. And the whole purpose of that is saving.

Guilt is a 'saving gift', loved ones. It's important to know that. Guilt is a 'saving gift'. The way putting your finger into a fire -- do you know how lepers, how they lose their limbs? It's not the leprosy itself. But they lose the sensitivity, and so they end up touching hot irons, and they don't know that they're touching them. And that's what burns their fingers, and burns their bodies. Now, that's the value of pain. Pain is a saving factor in our lives. It tells us to draw back our hand.

Guilt is God saying, "Look! Stop! You have rejected me. You have rejected my will. If you keep on doing this, my voice grows fainter and fainter."

And that's the other thing that happens, brother. Guilt comes to our conscience to let us know something is wrong, and God's Spirit begins to grow fainter. Not immediately -- I mean, he's the one who said, "How often will you forgive? Until seventy times seven." And he has no trouble with forgiveness. But gradually, we can block out his voice. Indeed, he talks about people whose consciences are seared, who can no longer hear what God is saying. And so, it's not the one sin that is the problem. And you might say it's not the second sin. But it's the 'getting used to sinning' that eventually sears our conscience.

No brother, I think we need to turn to God. That's what I do. I think we need to turn and repent.

Question from audience:

Will God...? When God's voice is fading will we lose him?

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

You know that Jesus warned us, in John 15 it is, that those branches that do not bear fruit will eventually be cast into the fire if they do not bear fruit. So there is warning in those verses, and verses in Hebrews that you'd better be careful that you don't trample underfoot the blood of Christ. But it's plain that while we are still concerned about whether we have gone that far or not, the one very obvious fact is that we haven't. Otherwise, we wouldn't even be concerned about it.

And it seems to me that when we are concerned -- some of us say, "Have I committed the 'unforgivable sin'?" And the truth is, that you've only committed the 'unforgivable sin' when no longer are you concerned about whether you have committed the 'unforgivable sin' or not. Then, you're beyond the touch of God. And what's very important to see loved ones, is, God has already forgiven us. He has already put our sins "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." God has already destroyed us and remade us in his Son. So it's not, from his angle. But from our angle, if we continue to go apart from him, presumably we can come to the place where we're not even worried.

Question from audience:

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life"

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

But again, it's important especially, for brother to see, and for any other loved one, because I think Satan has caught some of us in this, "Ah, have you sinned beyond the place where you can be forgiven?" Well, if that thought has ever occurred to you then you know you haven't, because the fact about people whose consciences are seared is, they couldn't care less. They wouldn't be seen dead in a church; they wouldn't be seen anywhere near God. They don't think of God, they don't consider at all. They're absolutely set in their own way.

Question from audience:

I was always wondering how seriously the warnings in the New Testament are to be taken considering the fact that you never hear mention of them. I take them very seriously.

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

The verse that I think Satan can wrestle against most people is in Hebrews. And maybe you'd look at it loved ones and maybe someone will give me a chapter because I don't know that I can find it. Hebrews 10:26, "For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. A man who has violated the Law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?"

And then you remember -- where is the verse? "It is no longer possible to renew again into

repentance.” Hebrews 6:4, “For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt.” It seems to me, no! You can’t play those verses down!

But, Sister, could I share with you what I know of many of the other 'sheep in God’s flock', that there are loved ones -- I don’t know if they are here tonight -- but I know loved ones here, in our body, who can look at verses like that -- and they’re walking in obedience. And I know them. I know their lives. But Satan can get in on them, accusing them, and being the adversary and saying, “There, you are in that group.” Even though they have difficulty -- they can’t even put their finger on a sin. “That’s right. Oh, that’s right. I don’t feel God’s presence, so I’ve done that. I’ve done that. I’ve trampled under feet...” Even though you can press them and say, “Have you committed a sin?” And they’ll say, “No, no.” And there, I think it’s very important to encourage them to see that God has destroyed us all in Jesus, and that has already been done and we can believe it.

Question from audience:

I've been reading lately. And I read about different saints. Some of them encouraged people to hate and other sinful things.

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

Can I summarize that? She is asking me to defend all the saints and I can’t do it. She says Saint Chrysostom seemed to encourage people to hate, etc., etc., etc.

I would just point out to you Martin Luther said, “When you sin, sin boldly.” Now, you see. You can go at old Luther, and you can say, “There’s Luther!” But the dear guy was saying, “Look, if you sin, be open about it, and see it as sin, and see it plainly as sin, and repent of it. And none of this secret stuff.”

So Sis, I’m always slow to try and explain these dear guys. I am sure that someone could take something out of context here, and could say it in a way -- in fact, I have known it to happen -- and can say it in a way that paints a completely different picture. So, that’s what I’d say.

I mean, maybe, maybe. Those guys were rare. You remember the fellow who said, “The God of the Old Testament is one thing and the God of the New Testament is another.” And somebody like Tertullian, or one of the old saints, was going into the public baths with his disciples, and this other heretic was coming out with his disciples and he said to Tertullian, "Don't you know me?" And Tertullian said, “I do, you’re the first born of Satan.”

Now that, out of context, could seem terrible. But they were guys who lived in a time when the purity of the faith was being established, and was being fought for. And there were times when strong words were needed.

Now, to reinforce what you said, I think loved ones there’s a holy fear that is right for God’s children. A holy fear such as a circus performer would have who blindfolded himself and throws knives around his wife. And he has a holy fear that even one blade should touch that dear one’s

skin. Now, I think there's a holy fear in God's children that one little sin should pierce the flesh of our dear Savior.

So I think, yes. There's a holy fear of hurting our Father that is good. But I would point out to you who believe that Jesus has died for us, that that actually is the only fear we have. That's good. We have no fear of hell, because God has already destroyed us in his Son. So we need not fear hell. And we need not fear God's punishment. He has done it once in his Son. But we should live with the holy fear of hurting that dear Savior. And I think that's right.

Question from audience:

How reliable is our conscience? Because Christians may differ in what they consider wrong.

Response from Pastor O'Neill:

It seems always that God exhorts us, in the Old and New Testament, to be in his dear Word, and to meditate on it day and night, and in places even to eat it -- to take it into ourselves and memorize it and allow our minds to be renewed.