

The Lordship of the Holy Spirit

Sermon Transcript by Reverend Ernest O'Neill

I'd just like to share a few things, loved ones, about the Holy Spirit and his lordship and then we can all go home and look forward to tomorrow. I called it the study the lordship of the Holy Spirit because it's obvious to any of us who have anything to do with the Holy Spirit that unless he is Lord, it seems, of everything in your life, you can't know him at all. It's that old saying that people use that sounds kind of clever but it seems true that if he's not Lord of all, he isn't Lord at all. The Holy Spirit is, as he was pictured at Jesus' baptism, as gentle as a little dove.

You're tired hearing of my little dog, I'm sure, but he's a little Yorkshire Terrier. This one is different from the one we had before. The first one died after ten years and he was a little fighter. This one is a little gentle, timid fellow. It's funny because you cannot do things with him that you did with the other one, but this little fellow scuttles into the corner and is scared so you have to learn to be gentle with him.

It seems the same with the Holy Spirit. It seems easy to grieve him. I wonder if you've had the same experience as me where you've thought, well, I really don't know too much about the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and to tell the truth I don't know that I've ever heard his voice clearly. I don't know how to get on with him too well.

Well, often, it's because we've never, never really had done with sin. Often, it's because we don't really take that sequence of chapter seriously in Romans where Paul doesn't even dream of going on to the great Romans 8 which is life under the Holy Spirit until he's brought us through Romans 6 which is absolute finishing with sin in your life.

I think that a lot of us have real trouble hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit because we do still live a very mixed life and we are just very coarse about this business of sin in our lives. We keep on thinking that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit still tolerating some known sin.

What I'm beginning to see more and more in my life is, forget the known sin, you have no chance with known sin but even coarseness in your relationships with each other drives the Holy Spirit from your breast. He is like a little dove or like a little timid dog and, boy; he can be easily frightened out of your life. It does seem, loved ones, that unless you deal with all known sin, you won't even begin to know the Holy Spirit. I think that's maybe where a lot of us still fall and all we know is Romans 7, the old law, law, law.

That's the only thing that keeps us from toppling into absolute disaster in our lives. That's a hard and a strong voice. Sunday after Sunday we come and that strong voice of the Bible hits us and kind of knocks us back and we get ourselves gathered together and we kind of go at it for the next week and that's our Christian life. It's kind of a mixing in with known sin and then the Word of God's law comes at us on a Sunday and we get knocked back and we deal with some of it and then we go at it again and we know nothing of the quiet peace of life in the Spirit.

We hear that the kingdom of God, the rule of the King, that's King Dominus, Dominus in Latin, you know, the domain of the King, the rule of the King, the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. We hear that, but we don't know anything about the rule of the King as peace and joy in the Holy Spirit in our own lives. We really lack it. It's often, I think, with many of us because we haven't even begun to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. We're still fiddling about with known conscious disobedience to God.

I would testify from my own life again, that you can't, loved ones, you can't, honestly. You can't know the Holy Spirit at all. You can't even hear His voice. You can't discern between Him and yourself until you've really put aside all known sin. That's even, somebody testified in some meeting recently, that's the things especially that you're not sure of. I think we should just stop playing around and fooling ourselves. Whatever is not of faith, is sin.

If the thing's doubtful, it doesn't matter it seems to me, as I see, Ram, and I see others of us who are married and then I see others of us, Steve, who aren't married, it doesn't seem to matter, married or unmarried, there are things that we are doubtful about. We are just doubtful about them. And, those you ought not to touch. Whatever is not of faith, is sin and certainly doubt is not of faith so don't touch it. Or, some of us have fiddled with sinful things in our old past and then you get to know Jesus a bit and then, before you know it, you're dipping your feet in a little into the river. Well, loved ones, the Holy Spirit, it seems to me, is somehow not even able to touch us when that happens.

I think that's part of what it means, that verse Acts 5:32, "God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey him." I think that God can't give the Holy Spirit to a person who is playing around with known conscious sin. I share that with you not to beat you out of sin or spoil your life for you or make it unhappy for you but I do think that no wonder you don't know the voice of the Holy Spirit because he won't touch you while you're involved in known conscious sin.

I think that's a difficulty that many of us got into with what we call the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There were many of us that in the big days of the charismatic movement, we came into something, we spoke in tongues or we had some kind of uplift in the Holy Spirit but we had sin in our lives. What we were getting was all that God could give us of some taste of Heaven. All that God could give us of some appetizer to draw us on. But, there's no question, you can't hear the voice of the Holy Spirit unless you have done with known conscious sin.

I'm not preaching the sermon I meant to preach so I am just going as he guides me. There's a little illustration that was used how across Japan, which isn't a very large country at all, but across Japan there was a telegraph wire that carried all the messages from one town to another. Of course, they discovered the messages had stopped and they went along back and forward, back and forward, and could get nothing. Eventually, they discovered where the wire dipped through the woods and a spider's web had made a connection between one of the electrical contacts and the ground and had ground the thing out. It was only a spider's web.

It seems that it can be the littlest sin as we would call it, but it grounds out the voice of the Holy Spirit. So it's very important to deal even with what you think is the littlest thing. If you're sitting there tonight and the Holy Spirit has tapped you on the shoulder and has said, well,

you know that thing, you know it. And, you've said, well, yeah, but it's not that, it's not that. I've dealt with God about that. But, if you're still practicing it, it is that that's keeping you from even being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Then, I've thought it was important to say, too, that the littlest things after that then can grieve the Holy Spirit in your heart. Some of us have dealt with all known sin and we have believed for the fullness of the Holy Spirit and we have known something of him. But then we notice that he doesn't seem as real.

Now, that's because, brothers and sisters, obedience for him is not just a negative putting away disobedience. But, it is a positive obedience, too. So often we are so crude in our life before God that we think obedience is just avoiding getting drunk or avoiding committing adultery or avoiding swearing or avoiding stealing or avoiding dishonesty or maybe we get a little further in avoiding being sarcastic. But really obedience is positive listening to the Holy Spirit. I think that's where we grieve him out of our lives. A hard spirit. A hard and a harsh spirit.

Those of us who live together, whether we are husbands or wives or friends or roommates, it doesn't matter, because most of us really face the same thing and we get harsh with each other. We have harsh ways of speaking or we have hard ways of dealing with each other. That grieves the Holy Spirit away so that we can't sense him. He's still, due to his graciousness, working in our conscience but we're not aware of his voice. I think it's often because we get hard and harsh ways. That would be one reason.

On TV, I'm sure we watch as much of it as any of you at home but there's no question one of the disadvantages of the old television is you get so used to seeing those deal souls knock each other around and yell at each other and shout at each other, that it's very easy subtly and unconsciously to almost think, oh, that's the way husbands and wives or that's the way friends do. Before we know it, we're into that kind of harshness with each other and we begin to sense a lack of the Holy Spirit's presence within us.

It does seem that he is a very gentle little dove. You remember the book by Roy Hession's *The Calvary Road* and he talks so well in that chapter. I think I've read it to you before at times, that the dove will only light on a lamb, not a big sheep, but a little kind of gentle, skittish lamb that at the first sound of a breeze will feel its little coat rippling and will move. The dove of the Holy Spirit can land only on a lamb, only on somebody as gentle as that and sensitive as that.

So often you and I lack the voice of the Holy Spirit because we get a hardness. I don't know. Loved ones, I just know that Dr. Ingerbritsen, for instance, in the old dental office, some of us who are in sales, you all are in different jobs and businesses, it seems that you can be tricked into a kind of a hard way or a professional way of dealing with people that is right, actually. I mean it's what the profession almost requires.

The salesman almost requires a certain aggressiveness, but we need to watch that we never lose the touch of the Holy Spirit in our jobs and in our professions. We need to watch that we don't kind of grind him out of our hearts by adopting some of the attitudes and some of the ways that the world wouldn't particularly call sinful but we realize it does not have the kindness or the gentleness of the Spirit of Jesus in it. So, it does seem that when you talk of the lordship of the Holy Spirit, you're talking of something more than simply abstaining from known or conscious sin.

You're talking even about the way we have of dealing with each other that there is in a sense a wooing, you remember. That word is used in the Bible. How God woos the nation of Israel and it seems as if the Holy Spirit woos us. He courts us and draws us gently towards Jesus. In return he expects us to have that same softness and kindness towards him.

It would be a good little test for those of us who are married. Do you remember when we first fell in love? You remember how delightful it was and how wonderful it seemed that this girl, I speak as the man in this situation though you ladies presumably had the same experience we hope, but you remember how we thought how wonderful it was that this girl cared for us, that she cared for us and wanted to spend her life with us. Remember how intent we were on making everything good in the relationship and with what care we planned which theater we'd go to or which theater we wouldn't go to or which place we'd go out for a picnic or which car we'd go in. We took great care in making the plans and then we were so perfect in those early days. We took such care over the things we talked about and over the way we talked about and conversation was pretty important for any of us who maybe weren't fluent in conversation. We really had to plan it out but we did it with great care because we didn't want to frighten her away.

It seems that that's nice. It seems that there's something beautiful about that. Then, I push you, husbands and wives or us friends, it's easy to get away from that. It is Easy to make it all kind of pedestrian and ordinary and pretty crude and pretty hard. And you get used to not only criticizing each other but to out-and-out disagreement and arguing. Something goes, doesn't it? Some beauty does seem to disappear. So often, of course, in our marriages that's what we miss. We miss something but we don't know what it is. But it's just we've got a little cruder about it and a little harsher.

It seems that the Holy Spirit whenever he faces that kind of thing in us either in our marriages or, in our friendships with each other, he's grieved and he withdraws a little to let us know that things are not right. The tragedy is that what happens to us is what happened to some loved ones who entered into the full baptism of the Holy Spirit and then grieved him. Then they kept on with the tongues, they kept on and they kept on with the gifts that the Holy Spirit had given them but now they did it either by the flesh or by the inspiration of evil spirits. That's the tragedy with many of us. So often we don't sense the Holy Spirit's guiding and directing but we keep on going through the motions.

Then, of course, we get into a desperate state where we don't even know that we don't know. That's the tragedy of real deception. The deceiver himself is honestly deceived and he thinks he's all right. I would just say to you, "Well, do you know the presence of the Holy Spirit? If you say to me, well, how would you know? Well, I think he makes you walk gently.

I forget which poet but it might have been old William Blake; I'm not sure that it is, but he said, "Tread softly because you tread on my dreams." Tread softly because you tread on my dreams. It seems that that's the situation when the Holy Spirit is real and you have a relationship with him, you tread softly. You walk gently. You're aware of him. Not of fear. Not a fear, oh, I'm afraid I might grieve him out with knowing but a gentle awareness of him and, because he's there, a walking gently with him.

If Jesus was to appear and, I mean, we know what Holy Ground we're on now, because he's here. But, if Jesus were to appear here, would you know how we'd all be? The reality is that that's the way we all ought to be because he's here. Somehow, that's part of the reality of the Holy Spirit in your

life. You walk gently because of his presence. It's not a fear, a fear of punishment, it's a sensitivity to him, a fear of offending, a sense of the beauty of his Spirit and his feeling and a feeling that's what I want to be.

It's the feeling you get when you meet the clean saints. Or, did you every have an old dear grandmother that was very godly? You went into her house, we used to visit an old grandmother who was a Salvation Army officer and we used to go and visit her on Sunday. Really I mean you walk gently because there was kind of a holy cleanness about her that made you want to do everything right. Not in a fearful way but just you wanted to be that way yourself. Now, that's what the Holy Spirit does and that kind of life is a life of beauty and peace.

That's well above crude sin. That's even above the kind of expedient human traits that we have like hard voices or harsh tone in our voice or even, being funny at the wrong time. Somehow the Holy Spirit gives us wisdom about that. So, he is a beautiful person, Loved Ones. He can bring a beauty into your life as you get to know him and get to respect him. If you say to me, well, how, I only know, I can't tell you how. Who are we to tell each other? All I know is God says he will give the Holy Spirit to those who obey.

That's where I started. I just started with the sin in my life, the known sin, and I started to get rid of that. Even after that it seems to me you need a hunger and you need to want the Holy Spirit with all your heart. Then he does make himself known to you. But, the kind of life then that you live is an abundant life, loved ones. It is. I mean there's life when you are born of God but there's abundant life when you begin to walk not measuring yourself against the law but being prompted and accompanied by this gentle Holy Spirit.

So, it is like that. Somebody started that song which is beautiful and I have never heard it since the young woman on the West Coast sang it, but Gentle Shepherd, you know, that's it. Gentle Shepherd. That's what the Holy Spirit is like. He's a gentle shepherd and you'll frighten him away dead easy, you know. You have to want him with all your heart. But, when he does come in, I can see again tonight, he brings out a kindness and a fineness to your life that no law can bring and no preacher can bring. It is something beautiful.

That's not the sermon that I meant to preach but that's it.

Shall we pray?

Dear Lord, we thank you for this weekend. Lord, I would thank you for each brother and sister here tonight. We thank you for the little treat that you have always got for us. We thank you especially for the sense of the Holy Spirit.

Dear Holy Spirit, even those of us who only vaguely feel a yearning for this, we would ask you to kindly do something with us, kindly work upon us. If we're just so crude and coarse, Holy Spirit, that you can't do anything with us, then convict us deeply of our coarseness or our crudeness.

Dear Holy Spirit, we would not even dare any longer to expect you to be real in us if we're involved in known sin. We know, Lord, we haven't even forsaken killing our Savior so we can hardly expect his Counselor to come to us. But, Lord, if any of us are involved in known or conscious sin, we would turn from it this night. We would not make a fool of you on the Cross, Lord Jesus, or of your Gospel. We would have done with that thing tonight, whatever it is.

Lord, if it's a habit that we've had for years, we would stop it this very moment. We know we're able because it has already been destroyed on Calvary. So, we would forsake all known sin.

But, now, Holy Spirit, we would come to you and ask you will you begin to make yourself known to us and begin to make your voice heard by us so that we can walk this new way and so that we can have a gentle sweetness and a fragrance in our lives. Holy Spirit, we do apologize for critical spirits. We apologize, Holy Spirit, for sarcastic spirits or for harshness. We see that none of those things are of faith. We always produce those because we're afraid things are getting out of control or that we want to control them. So, Lord, we see those things aren't of faith. Holy Spirit, we do apologize.

We want to walk in restfulness, believing you, Lord God, that you are working all things in our lives according to the counsel of your will. So, we see, too, that excessive worry and anxiety and fretfulness drives you from our breast, Holy Spirit. Because where you are there's peace and quiet and confidence. So, we apologize for worry or anxiety. We know that we have some control over these things because at night before we go to bed we can't stop thinking about the thing instead of setting our mind on that fateful course of circling round and round the same worries. So, Holy Spirit, we would apologize for what we've often claimed as something we can't help. We would apologize for thinking that it's something that has victimized us.

Holy Spirit, we see that worry is not faith. Anxiety is not faith. It's believing that we have to be responsible for everything and we see we can't. We're only little human beings. So, Holy Spirit, we apologize for fretfulness or anxiety.

We apologize for walking along the edge of temptation. The way we used to do as children walking along the edge of the frozen lake to see how close we could go without going through the ice. Holy Spirit, we apologize for playing too close to the fire. We see that isn't an obedient heart. That's a reluctantly obedient heart that wants to play around the edges of sin. Holy Spirit, we see that grieves you and drives you from us because you walk right in the middle of the road. You are always pleasing your Father.

Holy Spirit, we apologize for these things and we pray for each other that tonight when we go home and tomorrow on this vacation time, that we will touch you in the mornings and begin to be made gentle by you, Holy Spirit, and no longer drive you from our breasts or grieve you. Holy Spirit, we thank you that you want to be our Lord and our Master and when you are, we will know peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Lord, we thank you for that.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and evermore. Amen