

A Heart Cleansed by Faith (Acts 15:9)

by Ernest O'Neill

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of faith in Jesus and the Holy Spirit for a truly cleansed heart and transformation from sin.

Scripture: Romans 7:15

Topics: "Heart Cleansing", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Ernest O'Neill preaches about the struggle with sin and the realization that our inability to do what is right is a result of rebellion against God. He emphasizes the need to move from the Old Covenant of seeking forgiveness for sins to the New Covenant of being baptized with the Holy Spirit for a transformed heart. O'Neill highlights the importance of fully surrendering to God, allowing the Holy Spirit to cleanse our hearts by faith, and experiencing victory over sin through a complete dependence on God's Spirit.

Transcript

Two of the most tragic words in many of the lives and probably of your own life, two of the most tragic words are these: "I can't, I can't, I can't stop being angry. I can't stop taking tranquilizers. I can't stop losing my temper. I can't stop these lustful unclean thoughts. I can't stop being critical. I can't! I want to, but I can't!"

Now, then many of those who have been in that position begin to understand a little about God and then begin to realize that this is more than a just a personal problem, it is sin. Now when we say "I can't do what I know I should do" assumes utterly different proportions because we begin to realize that if you knew what to do and you don't do it, that's sin. That what's James 4:27 says "who ever knows what is right to do and fails to do it for him it is sin". Then the Holy Spirit begins to bear in upon us and convict us and show us "Look this isn't just a little personal difficulty you're having, this is sin against your Maker, this is rebellion against your God, this is the reason why you will spend eternity in lonely dark Hell of selfishness!"

We begin to realize that death is the result of sin and it is there and it's then that we start to try other remedies. Then we start trying to go to church or we start reading our Bible. We start trying to be better people and we try to substitute all kinds of other cures besides the one that God said is the only cure. We try to substitute other cures for are sin. We'll do our best or we'll try harder or we'll try positive thinking or we'll try to be better people, or we'll attend church or we'll give money to missions. Now, none of those things can take away the guilt that is laying on our hearts or really cure our sinful heart. Then God's Spirit lights up different words of Scripture to us and we see why we're getting no relief, we see that by the

works of the law shall no man be justified. It doesn't matter how hard you try, doesn't matter how much you work at it by the works of the law shall no man be justified. You know that verse in the Old Testament: "All your righteousness, all the things you think are so good about you, you try to top up the good things and win them against the bad the things all your righteousness is as filthy rags". That is when most of us sink into despair and helplessness. We see this thing is to big for me. There is no way in which I can make things right with God, there's no way in which I can make Him accept me. He has every right to destroy me eternally. There is no way in which I can help myself.

It's in that position of helpless despair that the Holy Spirit then brings home the truths of the Gospel to us: God commended His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us and to Him that works not but believes in Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. When we see this, we sink in relaxation and peace at last into the arms of Jesus. We see that God has made it right, that Jesus has died for us and that God accepts us as his own children. We sink in faith into Jesus. Most of us at that point in the evangelical atmosphere in which we now live, most of us at that point enter into the Gospel that was preached by a Jewish preacher called John the Baptist. You remember how it's described: John the Baptist came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. That's the Old Covenant, that's before Jesus ever died. That's the Old Covenant. Now, most of us in that situation and in this evangelical atmosphere enter into... believe it or not, the Old Covenant. That's right! You know that is true, you know that the primary truth that you grabbed hold of when you became a Christian was repentance for the forgiveness of my sins. That's the Old Covenant.

If you say to me "now, pastor that's what's preached throughout the churches in America, but no, that isn't the Old Covenant, why do you say it's the Old Covenant?" "I'll tell you why! Because you still, six months or two years after you're born again, you still cry the original cry of frustration that was expressed not by a Christian, but by a Jew... trying to live under the Law and up to the Law. You still cry out his cry and Romans 7:15 "I don't understand my own actions, because I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate". For many of us who are born of God that's still the cry of frustration, the cry of frustration that every Jew cried under the Old Covenant.

Now, maybe you say... "That's insane, that's where I started! That's why I first felt guilt, because I couldn't do what I knew I should do. That's when I first sought Jesus as my Savior, because I was unable to deal with this power of evil within me. Do you mean I'm back where I started?" "Well, actually... you know you're not. You know you're not back where you started. You know that you have experienced God's gracious acceptance of you because of Jesus. You know that you've sensed a relief from guilt and you know that you've experienced forgiveness of sins. Moreover, even though you often resist God's Spirit in your life, yet you know also that at times you're able to obey His Spirit. You know that there is at times within you a sense of Jesus' spirit urging you to obey God and to love Him and to want to serve Him. So you know you're not in the position you used be in. You know you're aware of God in a way that you weren't before you first gave your life to Jesus or received His Spirit.

Now, loved ones, you know fine well that there is also a coming up from deep, deep down inside you... a fountain of filth and dirt and sarcasm and anger and bad temper that you are not able to control! It is if your spirit is alive to God and you're regenerate and your spirit is born again, this is if even your conscience is alive to God and knows what it ought to do, this is if even your will wants to do it and you're conscience tries to constrain your will to do what you know you should. So there's this stream of evil that comes up from deep, deep down inside you... a stream that opposes both your conscience and your will and feeds your will such a powerful stream of filth that the will finds itself unable at times to hold it in! Even when it

does hold it in, it holds it in by a powerful repression and great strain in your own life. The problem is that sometimes you are not able to hold it in and against your will and conscience you will have to let that stream forth and you loose your temper. You know that there's something inside you that is not Jesus if your are sarcastic with somebody or you are dishonest and lie to somebody. The same is true if you are absolutely dishonest to somebody or you give a wrong impression to somebody else or you get proud of something you've done,

Loved ones the truth is that stuff comes from your heart. Your heart is still as unclean as it was when you were first born of God, that's what's wrong. Your spirit is alive to God, even your mind and your will and your conscience, but your heart... the deepest part of you, the place you really live, your own deepest self is still as unclean as it was when you first heard of Jesus. That's the problem. The heart needs to be cleansed. Now, how do you get your heart cleansed? The same way you got your sins forgiven, same way. Same way you got your sins forgiven... by faith. That's it!

That's the way it happened in the New Testament. Cornelius you remember, asked one of the Apostles to come and preach at his house. The people in that house had never heard the Gospel before and the Apostles came and preached it and as they were listening the Holy Spirit come up on them and the Apostle looking back to that day said "God gave the Holy Spirit to them as He did to us and made no distinction between them and us, but cleansed their heart by faith" that's the way it happened in the New Testament. People who would hear of Jesus and they would believe and they would give themselves all or nothing to Him and the Holy Spirit would cleanse their hearts by faith and they'd walk in a never increasing victory in their own life until they met Jesus face to face.

Now if you say "well, why did it not happen that way with me when I became a Christian? That didn't happen with me, I'm in this situation that you're talking about. I do the very thing I hate and I can't do the things that I want, I don't understand my own actions anymore. Why did that not happen with me?" Well first, because on the whole the Gospel that you and I listen to, here in our society is an Old Testament Gospel. It's not the New Testament Gospel. On the whole that's the situation loved ones. People preach at us the same thing as the Jews listened to, the forgiveness of sins. That's on the whole the Gospel that we hear, so you can't enter into anything more than you believe. So that's one reason. We were told that Jesus died for us, so that God could forgive our sins and could take away our guilt. Now we think that we have to deal with the power of sin ourselves by works of law. That's one reason why many of us are in the situation we're into day.

Another reason is that many of us do not see how exceedingly sinful and powerful sin is, until the Spirit of Jesus begins to influence part of our lives. That's true. Many of us don't really see how absolutely intractable the power of sin is until we can set it against something pure and beautiful like the Spirit of Jesus. Now, the third reason, is the most important. The reason you did not enter into a clean heart by faith and the reason you haven't entered into a clean heart by faith since, is because you don't want a clean heart. that's right. Then you may say "What do you mean, don't want a clean heart? That's what I want! That's what I want. I want to be rid of this stream of filth that comes from inside me, I want to be able to look a friend in the eyes and think all the way through loving thoughts about them, not have those kind a critical thoughts inside me that I don't let them see. I want to be able to look my wife or my husband or my children in the eyes and for them to see outwardly all that is inside me. I want to be real! I want to be rid of this! I want to be rid of this unclean heart, all this sarcasm that spews up from inside me, this envy and jealousy that makes me feel a creep, I want to be rid of it! I want the stream of Jesus pure and gentle sentiments coming up from inside my heart. That's what I want more than anything in the world."

Well, loved ones, you want it... that's true. You want it in the sense that you desire it... for all kinds of motives you desire it, but you're not willing to face the consequences and implications of having a clean heart. That's it. That's true. That's what it was with me, that's what it is with all of us who haven't a clean heart. God gives to us readily and freely, He's more anxious to give to us a clean heart than we are to receive it. The problem is that we cannot receive it because we're not willing to face the implications and consequences of having a clean heart like Jesus.

Look at it like this: I said to you, we at times know that somebody of whom we say "he is a very generous heart", you remember that? And if you every say to that person he is a very generous heart, you know you see that he hasn't the attitude of possessiveness that you have about possessions and your property, he just seems to be free and gives it away whenever anybody needs it, and you see he's different and you maybe say to him sometime "boy, you have a generous heart" and you know that the person will look and say "no, no, I haven't". You know why he says that, he's virtually unconscious of his generosity. He's unconscious of it because he either has an endless supply of possessions and property and so he doesn't miss what he gives away or he has an absolute confidence that he'll always have what he needs. In other words his heart has a different attitude to his resources for life than your heart has. Your heart kind of gets them and feels it has to hold on to them to ensure that you have them tomorrow and the new year. He has just has a different attitude to the resources for his life than you have. That's why your heart is unclean! It has a different attitude about the resources for life that you need.

You still look to money and to a good house and to nice clothes for feeling safe and secure. Your heart really looks to those things, your heart still looks to people's opinions of you for your sense of self-worth or your sense of self-esteem or value. You still look to favorable circumstances, nice looking friends, fast boats, fast cars for happiness. Now Jesus' heart doesn't look to any of those things, he looks to God. That's why your heart is unclean. That's why you're kind of only half converted, you want to obey God, but you want to depend on the world and not on God. You want to depend on the world of people and things and circumstances for all that you need, not God! So your heart sends up pride when somebody cuts you down, you see it? Somebody cuts you down in front of other people, your heart sends up pride. Why? Because your heart looks for those people's opinions for your self-image. That's why your heart sends up anxiety and worry when you lose your job, because your heart, your own inner being, your own inner self, the real you, doesn't look to God for its security. It actually looks for its job and to the company and to the economy of the nation.

So you're kind of half converted. Your nature is still that of a child of Satan actually. This is because your heart looks for those things and those things draw your whole being out so your mind is running that way. I mean you hit the check book, the bank balance is wrong, the mind connects right up with the heart that depends utterly on a bank book and depends utterly on your ability to have money and sends up anxiety. So your heart now has rearranged your whole nature... really not rearranged it that it always had control of it. Your nature, your mind and emotions and the way they work in your body and your will it's still the nature of a child of wrath. It's still actually an unchanged nature, that's the incredible thing, part of why God says He does not deal with us according to our sins, or reward us according to our inequities, because if he did none of us would ever find Him.

You may sit there and say "oh, brother, look that isn't true, I mean I do have the nature of Christ, don't I?" Stop that silliness loved ones, you can't have two natures. Nature is the deepest part of what you are, it's what you really are, that's what we mean by your nature. It's what you really are, you can't really be deep down two things. You can really only be one thing and at times another. The truth is you're basically a

child of wrath, but it depends on the world of people and things and circumstances and from time to time because of the gracious influence of Jesus' Spirit upon you, you want what He wants.

You're really like the disciples. You remember Jesus said to them "the Holy Spirit is with you". That's the situation with us. The Holy Spirit is with you. They Jesus said you remember "He will be in you" and we're not at that place. We're not at the place where the Holy Spirit is permanent, abiding resident within us, He is just a visitor. He is the One who said "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hears My voice and open the door I will come into him" and we've reached that stage, He's come in, He's our guest. We sit and dine we say "oh, we'll obey You now, now we don't obey You, now leave the room please, we want to do this. Oh, come in again now, we want to obey You, oh no leave the room, I want to do this." He's our guest, but we haven't reached the second stage. I will sup with Him and He with me. I will become the host and he will sup with me. The Holy Spirit is not the host, the abiding ruler and master of our hearts and lives. He is a guest.

Now, if you say "how do I change? How do I get changed? What do I do?" Enter into the New Covenant! Enter fully into the New Covenant. That's it. What's the New Covenant? Well you remember John the Baptist pointed that out. He said "I am preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of your sins, but the One who comes after me, will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" That's it. That's the New Covenant.

The New Covenant is not the forgiveness of sins, the New Covenant is the baptism with the Holy Spirit that changes your nature, that does what the Law was not able to do for the Jews over thousands of years. The Holy Spirit changes your nature. If you say to me "oh, what you mean baptized in the Holy Spirit?" The Greek word has the meaning of immersed in it and don't sit you know, and say "oh, what do you mean water immersion?" It doesn't matter about water immersion or not. But it's immersion, it means being immersed in the Holy Spirit, being washed inside and out by the Holy Spirit, being saturated by the Holy Spirit, being permanently surrounded by the Holy Spirit and supported by the Holy Spirit like water, as if you were swimming in the Holy Spirit utterly dependant on the Holy Spirit! That's what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Looking to Him alone for all your real needs, your heart utterly dependant on Him and you knowing your heart is dependant on him. That's what entering into the New Covenant is about!

If you say, "well you know what is it and how is it? How do you get baptized with the Holy Spirit?" Well Paul explained it to those who would come for baptism at the side of the river in the first century. He would gather them round and he would say "Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also might walk in newness of life." In other words, being baptized into Jesus is seeing that what happened to Jesus on Calvary happened to us... that Jesus did not die just for the forgiveness of our sins, He did not just die to bear the punishment for our sins! In fact, you have all died with Christ! Our own self was crucified with Christ and you all died to the elemental spirits of the Universe that have enslaved you for so long. Those chains and fetters of greed and anger and desire for position and desire for approval, those all were broken and shattered on Calvary in your life, in Jesus! This is true, because you were in Christ when He died! Your nature was changed in Jesus on Calvary. That's what the Gospel is. It's in that sense that Jesus died for us. Not that God took it out on His Son, like some mad man who couldn't discern who was the real evil person, not that God took it out on His Son! So He put us in His Son, and His Son bore the pain that would otherwise have destroyed us utterly and yet at the same time God with His wrath burned out that all nature of yours and when he raised Jesus from the dead, He raised you up a new creation.

Now, how do you enter into that? Believe it, that's it! Believe that! Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, that is to getting anything from the world of people and things and circumstances, to getting anything good or bad from them. Die to that! Reckon yourselves dead indeed to sin. That's what sin is. It's not just crime, it's not just immorality, it's the whole power of life that operates independent of God. It's the world of things and people and events. Die to that! Reject that! Look to God as you did when you were in Jesus and say into thy hands: "I commit my spirit! I receive what You wish to give me in this life and what You don't wish to give me, I don't want. I depend on You utterly Father! So, now I turn away from this world of people and things and circumstances for anything that I need and I look to you." Then, loved ones, God will fill you with His Holy Spirit and to cleanse your heart by faith, and you simply put off the old nature because it has already been crucified! So you're actually doing something that has already been done in the Spiritual realm, you simply stop doing and stop thinking and stop feeling the things that have burdened you for years.

If you say to me "Brother, if I have difficulty putting off the old nature, what do I do?" Loved ones, the problem is always impartial or a partial surrender. A controlled surrender, an incomplete consecration or an incomplete commitment, that's always the problem. Just go the Holy Spirit and ask Him to reveal to you what you're still depending on world of people and things and circumstances for instead of God, He will show you that. Yours maybe the situation like the dear souls in Los Angeles fifty years ago. You may have to seek God in this pray, you may have to seek Him for hours, you may have to weep before, but the Holy Spirit will show you because that's the only reason He's here on earth, to reveal to you the things that you have in Jesus. The most precious thing that you have in Jesus is a clean heart that the Holy Spirit is able to give you.

So when you come to the very bottom of your heart at last, they'll be a witness of the Holy Spirit, that you're looking only to Him for all that you need and you'll have that witnessing yourself and your faith will rise up, and your heart will be cleansed by faith. Now you'll be a different person inside, out as well, but inside. So that you understand fully, there will no longer be evil rising up from inside us, that's right. It may seem miraculous to you, and it is! It may seem incredible to you, but, loved ones, there will be no evil rising up from inside. You remember I said once before, that's why I say after you've got a clean heart, it's just your own fault of your sin, it mean's you're choosing to. You're not sinning because you have to, you're just choosing to.

The clean heart produces the very sentiments of Jesus, the very fragrance of His own heart within you, and it's easy to be a Christian because you are one inside and you feel like one. I would say to you that you should get down to dealing with God, and I would do it whatever way you think it's best for you. Now, loved ones just get alone with God and get down do business with Him. Find out why He is not able to baptize you with the Holy Spirit this very minute. He will deal with you and He will show you. Now this will take time, take time to be holy. You know, it takes time! It takes time, because you've been listening to everybody else for years! It takes a while to get on the same wavelength as God's Spirit. Now if I were you, I'd do that.

Sooner or later, loved ones, sooner or later you'll have to settle this! Sooner or later you'll have to settle it! I mean there'll never be a convenient time! There'll never be a time that's better than now, there won't often be times that it's clearly presented to you as now. So you'll have to do it sooner or later, or live of life of constant defeat that can easily end up, if you get tired of the confessing and repenting over the years, can easily end up in hell despite what God has already done in your life. So loved ones, it'll never be easy, you know.

It'll never be easy to take time from doing other things, it'll never be easy. It'll take you to give yourself to God and to at least give Him time. There will it be a day, you know, when each one of us will have to face it. We'll have to face the unclean heart, but on that day, the Judgment Day, everybody in the world will see it. We will see that then but it will be late to do anything about it. So I would encourage you and encourage your dear hearts to get down to business with God, loved ones, to come through to the New Covenant and enter real Christianity. Lets leave the Old Covenant behind and lets go on to what God has given us in Jesus.

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