

# Condemned of Justified? (Romans 5:16)

by Ernest O'Neill

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*The world is condemned, but we are not, because God has given us the gift of justification through the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 23:00

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:22, Matthew 16:26, Acts 2:40, Romans 5:16, Romans 8:22, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 1 John 2:15

**Topics:** "Original Sin", "Gods Judgment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the presence of evil and suffering in the world and how it challenges the belief in a perfect future. He highlights the destruction, violence, and injustice that occur, causing a strain on the spirit. The speaker also mentions the control humans have over nature, yet the occurrence of natural disasters suggests that something is wrong in the world. He emphasizes that people from different parts of the world acknowledge the sickness and trauma present in the world. The speaker refers to Romans 8:22, which states that the entire creation is groaning and in travail, indicating God's displeasure with the world.

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## Transcript

Would you support the death penalty? You remember during the elections they asked California to vote on the death penalty and I think at a ratio of 2 to 1 they demanded the death penalty. You remember that the nation really is split on the whole deal because I think there are 35 states who are required to rule on the Supreme Court's decision about the death penalty and perhaps 17 of them have agreed with the Supreme Court that the death penalty is unconstitutional. But there are still about 18 of them that have not made any decision and some of them, like California, seem to be going in the other direction.

You know probably if we were to ask each of us here in the theatre we'd differ very much because Christians have finite minds and some of them will interpret God's way one way and some of them another. Some of us will say, well punishment should be remedial and therefore the death penalty is not right or some of us will say but punishment needs to be retributive and therefore the death penalty is right. I think whether we differ on the death penalty or not we'd all agree on this that it is a shame to inflict uncertainty like that on about 607 men in death row.

We would agree upon that that it's terrible, you know, to keep men hanging not knowing whether they're going to be executed or not month after month after month. And yet do you see that it's that position that most of the world lives in itself. Most of the world and most of the people in it have a sense that something

terrible is going to happen to them and they're very unsure about whether they'll escape it or not.

Most of the world really feels that it is condemned. People will try to laugh it off and first sort of pretend it isn't true but most people live under this terrible threat of condemnation or final execution. And this, dear ones, is the source of all our ills.

Really it is. It's the source of all the neurotic behavior in the world. It's the source of all our lack of full complete joy.

This terrible uncertainty we have that something is wrong in the world and something bad is going to happen to it and to us too. You can see it right throughout the world of nature. You know that.

Lake Superior looks beautiful from the scenic drive but the mud and the dirt and the destruction that came with those floods this year and all the heartache that was caused by it reminded us that water can look very beautiful but just as often as not in our world it has not been tamed and it can destroy. And we see beauty in one part of nature but we see something wrong in the other part and we see a terrible trauma in nature that suggests that something is wrong in the world and that in some way it must be a world condemned. Probably here in the States we have more control of nature than any other nation and yet you know there's no forecast goes by but we hear reports of flooding or of hurricanes or tornadoes.

We've done our very best to tame nature and to bring it into order and to make it a world that is good and happy and yet there seems to be something in nature that brings about this trauma and this strain that suggests to us that all is not as right as we think it is. There are beautiful parts in the world but there are these parts that are ugly and make us feel that somehow the world is out of control and that's in the States here but if you go to the rest of the world they're in no doubt. The rest of the world is in no doubt that we live in a sick world.

If you go to India, Africa they've never had a season, a rainy season that hasn't flooded thousands out of their homes and destroyed thousands of their cattle. They've never had a dry season when the drought has not dried up the lives of many of their babies. If you go anywhere in the world you'll find that people in the world generally say yeah, yeah, there's something wrong with our world that's obvious.

Bombay and Calcutta has streets filled with people who live and sleep in the streets because the natural resources have never been sufficient to provide enough life for every man and woman in those countries. And people there will have no doubt about it. They'll say yeah, yeah there are beautiful things in our world but there's something wrong with it.

And of course many of them will say there's no doubt in our minds that the displeasure of the gods is upon this world otherwise why this? And of course brothers and sisters we live in the midst of it. The San Andreas Fault is just an outstanding example of the Dulce Vita being lived in the midst of what geologists say is just going to be a tremendous disaster that's going to come upon us. And it seems you have that combination, you know.

Many of us will say oh no brother, the world is a beautiful place. Yes, but brothers and sisters all around the world you can see that it is a world that is not at home with itself. That a strain inside it that is filled with trauma that seems to have the gods displeasure upon it in many ways.

Now that's really what Paul says in Romans 8 and 22 if you look at it there. Because it might help you to see the thinking that God has presented in the Bible as a whole if you do look up verses like that and see

where they fit in. Romans 8 and 22.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning and travail together until now. And that's what God means there you see when he says that through Paul. We know that the whole creation has been groaning and travel together until now.

And there are actually parts of the world where you can almost hear the groaning and the crunching of the rocks and the falling apart of the tremendous pressures that are in it. Now here's the strange thing. There isn't one primitive people in the whole world who do not tie this trauma that the world experiences to man's behavior.

There isn't. There isn't a primitive people however uneducated they are however unsophisticated they are that doesn't say this is coming upon the world because of us men and us women and the way we have acted. Whether you say they are right or wrong they do make sacrifices of all kinds to try to appease the gods that are obviously so angry with them and that try to destroy their crops with storms and with earthquakes.

All primitive peoples believe that the groaning of the natural creation is in some way tied to the way we men and women have behaved towards the creator. We may say that's ridiculous but even in our sophisticated western civilization we believe the same thing. We ourselves are at the moment involved in trying to do something about the way we're polluting our world.

We tie much of the lung disease and much of the ill health and much of the problems we have with our food now to the way we men and women have polluted our natural world. There's never a forecast that we don't come out now with a pollution index. Well obviously because we believe in some way our behavior is almost about to destroy our world.

We too, even though we're not primitive tribes and don't try to appease the gods we do see that our behavior reacts upon our natural world. That's why we have all the argument over supersonic airliners. We're now concerned about is it worth getting a person across the Atlantic in three and a half hours if it's going to cause all the trauma and all the pain here to the people on the surface of the earth.

You know the Rand Corporation has come out with a report in California and they've said that if they don't cut their electricity consumption by 60% over the next 25 years there'll be tremendous electrical shortages in California. And we're beginning to see that the way we men and women behave reacts upon the world itself in some way brothers and sisters we're bound up with the world. And that's what I mean by many of us feeling we're condemned with the world.

There are many men and women today who say yeah you're right that's the way the world's going the world is condemned and we're condemned with it. And loved ones there are many of us that live under that kind of just pain and hopelessness as the years pass. Now it runs through you know it just runs through all our literature.

You know that. We no longer have that sort of bright eyed, open eyed optimism. We no longer have that kind of naivety that this is going to be a wonderful world sir.

We had it, we gave that up maybe 30 years ago. No longer you know do we say with Swinburne glory to man in the highest for man is the master of things. No longer do we feel man is the master of things.

You know our particular generation looks just a little wanly even on the idea of the American dream. We no longer have that kind of happy-go-lucky, naive optimism that it's all going to be wonderful. Through our life and through our literature there runs this same kind of consciousness that we're a world condemned.

You know there's the loneliness of the condemned man isn't there in death row. There's that about our lives today. Old Tennessee Williams you remember said in the preface to *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and I've quoted it before.

We all have been condemned to solitary confinement within our own skins. You know that what he has said in writing you and I have often felt. I mean it is true isn't it that as we've squeezed together in cities to be closer to each other we've locked more and more doors against each other.

It's strange that we're a people that acts like condemned people. We have the loneliness of condemned people. We part from each other like condemned people.

We are alienated from one another like condemned people. And it runs through even people like H.G. Wells. He was really the prophet of that optimism at the beginning of the century.

And even he wrote in a book called *The Fate of Homo Sapiens*. This is how he stated it if you just listen. But quite apart from any bodily depression.

And Wells was a man who believed the world was going to be perfect someday. Until near the end of his life in *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* he wrote this. But quite apart from any bodily depression.

The spectacle of evil in the world. The wanton destruction of homes. The ruthless hounding of decent folk into exile.

The bombings of open cities. The cold blooded massacres and mutilations of children and defenseless gentle folk. The rapes and filthy humiliations.

And above all the return of deliberate and organized torture. Mental torment and fear to a world from which such things had seemed well now banished. Has come near to breaking my spirit altogether.

And that's the kind of atmosphere the ones whether you're a Christian or not that runs through our literature today. Our philosophers you know share that same terrible hopelessness. Every psychologist knows that if he writes a book about psychology he has to deal with the one great mark of a condemned world.

Guilt. Because that's what fills our psych wards today. People who have tremendous guilt that they can't get rid of.

Guilt is so persistent that after the electric shocks have worn off the guilt still comes back. When the division between the memory and the conscience has been at last restored after the shock has worn off the guilt is so persistent it comes back. And so whether you go to philosophers you know or psychologists they all will agree on that same thing.

Churchill you remember talked to Graham near the end of Churchill's life and he said well do you see any hope? And Graham of course talked about Jesus and Churchill said well if that's the hope that's the only hope. Because I only see no hope. I see nothing but hopelessness and despair and international politics for the rest of our century.

And old Monod did the same thing you know. Monod in France today. I heard him on a TV program I think I referred to it in London in the summertime saying well if there is no hope there is no hope.

And that is the decision of even the foremost of our scientists. You get the same thing running through you know. An old Bertrand Russell.

All we can do is take up a position of unyielding despair. Now that really is the situation if you live in this world without any other message. Now why I share it all with you today is that it seems to me there's a reason for all that.

And you see it Romans 8 and 20 there where that's indicated. Romans 8 and 20. For the creation was subjected to futility not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope.

You see what God tries to tell us. I've subjected the creation to this kind of futility. As a result of your actions and your independence of me I've subjected it in hope.

Now what's the hope? Well brothers and sisters the hope is that we would see where Adam led us in rejecting the Holy Spirit of God's uncreated life. That's it. God is hoping that you and I will look around this creation and see there's something rotten in this whole setup.

We've missed something. And God wants us to see that this is what happens when you live independent of his uncreated life. When you reject the Holy Spirit that was available in the tree of life this is where it takes us.

It takes us east of Eden. It takes us into all the marks of condemnation. But brothers and sisters do you see what God is saying to us this morning? The world itself cannot turn back.

It's going on down that route. Even the second law of thermodynamics says that. That every process has a tendency to run down.

The world is going that way and you can't turn it back. But God has said you each one individually I do not condemn. Because my son has been condemned in your place.

And you each one individually I am ready to deal with apart from this world. The world yes I have condemned but I condemned it so that you would see your own perilous state. But you each one individually I don't condemn you this morning.

My son was condemned in your place. For all your independence and your rebellion against me I condemn my son. You I am willing to receive as if you had never sinned if you will come and trust me.

And loved ones do you see each of us here this morning will not experience eternal death because we have been condemned with the rest of the world. We won't. You and I are not condemned with the rest of the world.

If we experience eternal death it will be because you individually have refused to receive God's Holy Spirit. That's it. You'll die because the lack because of the lack of eternal Holy Spirit.

You won't die because God is out to condemn you this morning. You won't die because He is condemning you at this moment. In other words, you won't die because you're condemned.

You'll die because you haven't taken this opportunity to receive His Holy Spirit into you. So brothers and sisters, really that's what it means if you look at Romans 5 and 16. It's really what that verse means.

Romans 5 and 16. It's page 981. And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin.

For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation. And that's what the world experiences at this moment. But the free gift following many trespasses brings justification.

But the free gift to bring justification in your own life has to be received. And that's the heart of it. You can agree with all that I said this morning because it is pretty logical.

You couldn't go much any other way than interpreting reality as we see it in the world today. But you could listen to it all and agree to it. But do you see that you are not justified until you actually take the step and receive this free gift of the Holy Spirit for yourself.

In other words, you're back in Adam's position. You're in the position that Adam was in. With the Father saying to you, look, I can give you my uncreated life of the Holy Spirit that will enable you to be like me.

It's your choice. Will you take it or will you not? And really, that's the only thing that will bring you into eternal death and alienation from God. Your refusal of that gift.

And do you see how important it is, loved ones, to be able to look at the miserable world and see that you are not condemned along with it. But that the real reason God has allowed this to take place in our world is to show you what happens if you continue to go with it. You'll die in the midst of its pollution and its alienation and its loneliness.

You will. I mean, you'll just go down like that. What you see around you is a picture of your own future.

I just refer again, you know, to that play by Sartre. You remember Jean-Paul Sartre wrote the play No Exit? You see the homosexual and the lesbian, isn't it? Now, forget what the third person is, but somebody in the same kind of psychotic situation. And there's one electric light bulb burning in the room.

And gradually it dawns on them as they burn against each other and wear each other down and tear each other apart by their criticism and their hatred. Gradually it dawns on them that the light never goes out. The light is on all the time.

And gradually they begin to realize this is hell. Being together like this forever with no possibility even of escape into darkness. The loved ones, that's why God has allowed these things to come.

To show you what it's like if we don't receive the life of his Holy Spirit. And that's presumably something of what hell will be like. It'll be a place more polluted than our world.

In greater trauma than our world. In greater alienation and loneliness than ours. But you still have a free will.

That's why you can't say God's forcing me into it. No, you can still choose. You can still choose to your own disadvantage.

Really that's what I'm urging you to think about. Are you really moving in the direction of life in your own life? Or are you moving in the direction of death? Are you really beginning to receive this Holy Spirit that

Jesus sent? Is he beginning to influence your life? Is he beginning to make it like Jesus' life? Or are you in fact becoming more like the world of which you're a part? That's part of what God said, you know, and meant when he said save yourself from this untoward generation. Really, brothers and sisters, you have to step out of it in order to live.

So will you think about it dear ones and pray about it and see, you know, which way are you moving in your own life? Are you moving towards the death that the world is going to experience? Are you moving towards the life that is possible in the midst of death? Father, we know these are important things and vital things. Father, as we think over them and as we pray about them, will you show us individually how we are responding to your gift of the Holy Spirit? And whether we are moving towards it ourselves or making the same choice as our forefather Adam did, whether we're moving into the same kind of savage microcosm inside ourselves or whether we are in fact moving into the great macrocosm of love that exists in your Son Jesus. Father, we would trust you to give us revelation about this so that we may take the action that is necessary and the action that you want us to take, that of receiving your Holy Spirit and allowing him to rule our lives and change them.

We ask you to do this, Lord, whatever it costs us and whatever it costs you to bring us to that place. We ask this in your Son's name. Amen.

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