

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

by Ernest O'Neill

The sermon explores the problem of human nature, the struggle between good and evil, and the solution of death and resurrection through Christ, which delivers us from sin and gives us new life.

Duration: 37:03

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 6:1-6, Romans 6:14, Romans 6:23, Romans 7:15

Topics: "Inner Struggle", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal experience of witnessing a disturbing incident on the streets of London. He then connects this experience to the biblical passage in Romans 7:15, where the apostle Paul expresses his struggle with doing what he knows is right. The preacher acknowledges that many of us have tried various methods to improve our behavior and control our inner struggles, but ultimately find them ineffective. He emphasizes that the root problem lies in the presence of another self within us, a darkness that we cannot control. The sermon highlights the universal human struggle with this inner conflict and points to the need for a solution beyond our own efforts.

Transcript

I think all of us have probably at least heard of Treasure Island or we've read it at school and it's the story of one-legged, one-eyed sailors, you remember, and pirates and doubloons and buried treasure and revenue men and all that kind of thing. And it's written by a man called Robert Louis Stevenson and he was a Scotsman who was a very famous author and lived actually most of his life in the island of Samoa in the South Pacific. Probably if you ever spent a winter in Scotland you would want to live on the island of Samoa too, so that's probably why he went there.

And one of the other novels he wrote has become a classic in Western literature. It's a classic because it deals with the basic problem in human nature. It's a problem that is much deeper and much more serious than the problem of guilt.

And he called the novel The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. And he starts the story this way. Well, it was this way.

I was coming home from some place at the end of the world about three o'clock of a black winter morning in London. And my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street and all the folks asleep.

Street after street. All lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church. Till at last I got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman.

All at once I saw two figures. One, a little man who was stumping along eastward at a good walk and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was coming along the opposite street. Well, the two ran into one another at the corner.

And then came the horrible part of the thing. For the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear but it was hellish to see.

It wasn't like a man. It was some like some juggernaut. I gave a loud shout, took to my heels, caught the man and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child.

He was perfectly cool and made no resistance but gave me one look so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me. This creature promised immediately that he would pay the little girl's family a hundred pounds compensation. And then he disappeared into a house just close by and came out a few moments later and presented a check to the girl's family and the name on the bottom of the check was the name of a famous Dr. Jekyll who was a well-known philanthropist in the city who was known everywhere for his kindness to the poor and the needy.

And of course Stevenson says that he doesn't know how this brutal, crude, grotesque creature who trampled over the little girl would have anything to do with the respected Dr. Jekyll unless there was some kind of blackmail involved. Well in the ensuing months that creature became more and more known in the poorer parts of London because he was repeatedly involved in assaults and attacks on poor defenseless people. And he had so many brushes with the law that people began to know who he was.

He was a man known as Mr. Hyde. At the end of the novel Dr. Jekyll writes a note, a suicide note, and in it he explains the origin of Mr. Hyde. I was born in the year 1863 to a large fortune, Dr. Jekyll writes, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow men.

And thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honorable and distinguished future. And then he explains, I had in me many generous desires to help the poor and the downtrodden of the large city into which I was born. And I loved to go out and be kind to them and help them both medically and financially.

But along with these good motives and impulses within me, these generous desires that I had, I found another set of impulses utterly different and absolutely contradictory. I found that would rise up from within me at times, not just generous desires and desires to be loving and kind to those who were less fortunate than myself. I would find rising within me grotesque desires of anger and desire for self-gratification.

I would find within me strong desires to hate people and get my own back on people. And he explains, you couldn't even call me a hypocrite. Because a hypocrite is one who pretends to be what he isn't.

But I found to my dismay that I was both of these people. I was completely the generous, kind, philanthropic, loving Dr. Jekyll. And at other times, I was the grotesque, hateful, self-gratifying, dominating Mr. Hyde.

Gradually, the character of Mr. Hyde wore me down so much that as Dr. Jekyll, I became utterly wearied with the battle of trying to keep the good part of me on top. And I longed to find out if there was any

solution. If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable.

The unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin. And the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots were bound together, that in the agonized womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling.

How then could they ever be separated? It was then, when he was fiddling around in this laboratory one evening, that he discovered a drug. A drug that enabled him to give one body to the kind, generous, loving part of his own nature. And that same drug would give a different body to the other grotesque, hateful, selfish, cruel part of his nature.

So that the Dr. Jekyll character would have a physical body that would express his own heart. And the Mr. Hyde character would have a physical body that would express his heart. And so the one could be itself wholly without hindering the other.

And they would no longer be struggling with each other inside. But even if you don't know the story, you can guess what happened. Because the psychologists are wrong.

Anger doesn't disappear the more you express it. The more you express anger, the more it grows. It just becomes more subtle and more shrewd.

And that's what happened inside this poor man's nature. The character of Mr. Hyde did not grow more submissive as it was allowed freedom to be itself. It grew stronger and shrewder and more powerful.

So that Dr. Jekyll would find at the beginning that Mr. Hyde wanted to run through the streets of London and attack the defenseless one night a week. Then he would want to do it two nights a week. Then he would want to do it three nights a week.

Then he would want to take the drug every night. And then you may remember that fateful evening when Jekyll was sitting at his fireside, the quiet, gentle, mild-mannered doctor who helped the churches to distribute money to the poor. And he felt a shudder inside himself.

And you remember how the story goes. He felt a shudder inside himself and suddenly he looked in the mirror at all hours of the day and night. I would be taken with the warning shudder.

And he found that without taking the drug at all, as he looked in the mirror, the mild, gentle features of Dr. Jekyll were beginning to twitch and beginning to change. And suddenly he saw in front of him the grotesque, hateful, angry features of Mr. Hyde. And he began to realize the terrible truth that Mr. Hyde was taking over his life completely and absolutely without any aid of the drug whatever.

And that he was now in the situation where he could not guarantee that the Hyde would stay hidden. He was in the position where he realized this Hyde could break out at any time. Above all, if I slept or even dozed for a moment in my chair, it was always as Hyde that I awakened.

Under the strain of this continually impending doom and by the sleeplessness to which I now condemned myself, I even beyond that I had thought possible to man, I became in my own person a creature eaten up

and emptied by fever, languidly weak both in body and mind and solely occupied by one thought, the horror of my other self. And so he came to the point where he could no longer control the Hyde within him. It had now taken over his whole personality and it was only in a few lucid interludes that he was able to be what he originally had been, the kindly, gentle, mild-mannered Dr. Jekyll.

Then he writes the suicide note. This then is the last time, short of a miracle, that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts or see his own face. Will Hyde die upon the scaffold or will he find the courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows.

I am careless. This is my true hour of death and what is to follow concerns another than myself. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end.

And why it hits us so bluntly in the pit of the stomach is because, is there one of us here who does not know that? We may not have given the name Hyde to our other self, but is there one of us here that has not felt the same kind of shudder? Many of us who have decided that God is real and that he has put us here on earth for a purpose and have started to try to find out what that purpose is and have begun to try to be like him, have discovered that there is within us a grotesque heart of darkness that we are not able to control. And without using the metaphorical terms of Jekyll and Hyde, we have found that we've determined in certain mornings that that day we would not lose our temper with our roommate, that that evening we would give our partner the best evening she has ever had. We have determined that we would not lie in certain situations, and yet we find within us that alongside the desire for purity, there is a desire for lust and for self-gratification that we are not able to keep down at times, and that break out like Mr. Hyde at the most inconvenient moments.

Who of us here has not resolved that we will be happy? We will be happy. We will not worry. We will not be anxious.

We will not let something grip us and tie knots in our stomachs. We will be happy. We will be light-hearted.

And before an hour or two hours has passed, we are worn down and depressed with worry and anxiety. The truth is that all of us know so well that presence of another self that seems to be within us, that all literature outlines and details. There probably is not one great writer that has not referred to that in some form, even though it is not as vivid as Stevenson's.

Because, in fact, the great problem with each one of us human beings is not guilt. The great problem is the problem expressed, you remember, in this book. The good that I would, I cannot do.

And the evil I hate is the very thing I do. You remember, Paul expresses it, if you look at it, in Romans 7 and verse 15 that entry read. It's Romans 7 and 15 and it's page 982.

Romans 7 and verse 15. It's 982, loved ones, in that Revised Standard Version. 982.

Romans 7 and 15. I do not understand my own actions, for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. What is the solution? Well, you know, you've tried the same things as I did.

You've tried the books on how to improve your temperament, and how to renew your emotions, and how to improve your behavior with other people. You've surely been through that circle. I've been through it.

And I've tried them, and tried them, and tried them, and they worked for a little while. And then I realized that it was like trying to stem an avalanche with one little shovel. It was like trying to hold back the whole Atlantic Ocean with just a little picket fence.

I was dealing with something that was so powerful inside me, that it wasn't just a case of knowing how to do little tricks to try to control it. This thing was mighty and powerful within me, and would not stay under control. I don't know if, like some of our colleagues, you have tried the drugs, or you've tried the shock treatments, but they're as temporary as everything else is.

Actually, you have to admit that Stevenson was seeing the power of the thing when he found the solution he did. I mean, Jekyll realized, I can't tell one from the other any longer. I can't tell Hyde from Jekyll.

I can't tell Jekyll from Hyde. The only way is to kill them both. That's the only way I'll be free.

It's the only way I'll get release. Christendom, of course, has lied to us, the greater part of Christendom. They tell us, oh yeah, that's Romans 7. That's the normal Christian life.

That's the fight of faith, struggling to keep down the evil and keep the good coming out. It utterly ignores the fact that the world doesn't think the Christians have been successful in doing that. The world is always bewildered by the hypocrisy of Christians and by their failure to keep the bad down and show only the good.

But Christendom has kept on saying, that's Romans 7. That's the normal Christian life. It's an absolute lie. Romans 7 doesn't describe the Christian life at all.

I don't know if you realize that. Romans 7 is, well, gently referred to it. It is a great parenthesis.

It is an explanation in brackets that Paul is giving of the way things used to be when he was a Jew under the law. And it's encased within the deliverance that God has provided for us from this old miserable Mr. Hyde within us. You can see that, you know, if you look at Romans 7. A lot of people say, oh yeah, Romans 7, you see, that's Paul.

I mean, he's describing himself exactly. Romans 7.15, I do not understand my own actions, for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. And if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good.

So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me that is in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. So that many of us call as he does, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? And of course we're taught, almost from we first attend Sunday school, that that's the normal Christian life. It isn't a Christian life at all.

Paul is explaining inside that parenthesis the way things used to be when he was a Jew who had no power, who was under the law. What he describes as the normal Christian life is in Romans 6, if you like to

look at it. Romans 6 and verse 1. And it's strange, he explains God's answer which is very close to the answer that Stephenson had.

Stephenson's answer was suicide. It was death. Romans 6 and verse 1. Paul says to those of us who have decided to try to live like God and have found that we cannot do what we want to do and what we know is right, he says what shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? Are we to keep on sinning so that God can give us more and more grace of forgiveness? By no means.

How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been 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 too might walk in newness of life. So Paul says when Jesus died, part of us died with him. In verse 5, for if we have been united with him in a death like his we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

We know that our old self, our Mr. Hyde, we know that our old self, our Mr. Hyde, the part of us that gets angry, that is filled with lust and filled with hatred and filled with irritability and impatience, we know that our old self was crucified with him, with Jesus, so that the sinful body, this body that is used by sin, might be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. That's the normal Christian life. That's the life that lines up with the rest of the Bible that says I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.

That's the normal Christian life. Verse 7, for he who has died is freed from sin. It's amazing isn't it that Stevenson presented the same truth, that the only thing that will deliver us from Hyde is death and that that death has taken place through God's grace in Jesus.

Loved ones, God did a miracle in you in Jesus Christ. Don't fiddle around with time. You know time doesn't exist.

You know that from your own experience. You know how vivid it is to remain, to recover certain experiences that you had with your dad or mom when you were six or seven years of age. You know how you can see that so vividly, far more vividly than other things that took place last year.

Time doesn't exist. This is one great eternal moment. God has allowed time with clocks out of grace and out of concession to our humanity.

But time itself is a non-existent and in fact your old self, your Mr. Hyde was put into Jesus and was crucified with him by your Creator and has already been destroyed. And if you say why are you experiencing it today, you're experiencing it today because you won't believe that that has happened. It's like looking at stars in the sky.

You remember I've shared that with you before. Looking at certain stars in the sky and you say look at that star and you don't realize that that's only the light from that star that is still on its way to you taking millions of light years to get here but the star died millions of years ago. And you see the light coming towards you and you think the star is still alive.

Satan has allowed by God's permission certain things like the impatience and the irritability and the lust and the desire for your own rights and the desire for your own way to continue to manifest themselves in you and you look at those lights and you think the old self is still alive. It's a mirage. The old self was crucified with Christ and the moment you believe that, that moment the reality of it begins to come to you and you cease to have those things rising up within you, that anger and that irritability and that hatred.

The moment you believe what God has done to you in Jesus, that moment you begin to find deliverance from that old self taking place in you through the Holy Spirit. But as long as you believe that you're alive and that you have your rights and you have a right to what you want to do, so long that old self will govern your life and you'll get irritable with anybody that gets in your way. But the normal Christian life is a life that experiences the death of that old Mr. Hyde in Christ and that begins to live above sin.

Verse 8, but if we have died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with him for we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. And so through the rest of that chapter Paul outlines the normal Christian life. He says in verse 19, I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations for just as you once yielded your members to impurity and the greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.

And then if you turn over the page he completes that chapter and he goes on in 7 and he says do you not know brethren, for I'm speaking to those who know the law, that the law is binding on a person only during his life. Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives, but if her husband dies she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly she will be called adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive, but if her husband dies she is free from that law and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Likewise my brethren you have died to the law, you've died to that law of sin and death that made you lose your temper and made you get angry through the body of Christ so then you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear foot for God. While we were living in the flesh our sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear foot for death, but now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit. And then he hops right over to chapter 8 verse 1 and it continues right on.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. That's what he's just said in verse 6 of Romans 7. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive so that we serve not under the old written law but in the new life of the Spirit. Hop over to Romans 8 and verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death for God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

And so he explains in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. And then he says now am I saying that the law itself was bad? And then he does that great parenthesis in chapter 7 verse 7. What shall we say then? That the law is sin? By no means. And he begins to look back to his old life as a Jew.

Yet if it had not been for the law I should not have known sin, should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet. If the law had not said you shall not covet.

But sin finding opportunity and he describes his old life as a Jew under the law. And he says 14 we know that the law is spiritual but I am carnal. I in that situation I'm carnal, sold under sin.

I do not understand my own actions. And he's describing the life of a non-born-again Jew who is living under the power of the law. And of course the proof of it is in his cry in verse 24.

Wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of death? That's not the end of the story. The end of the story is verse 25. Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So on my own I serve the law of God with my mind and with my flesh I serve the law of sin. But in Jesus I am delivered from my Mr. Hyde. Loved ones you can live above it.

You can live above it. But as long as you believe the lie that the society in which we live is urging upon us so long temper, anger, lust, envy, jealousy from within your heart of darkness will continue to ruin your life with your loved one at home, with your roommate in the dormitories, with your friends and colleagues at work. But the moment you believe this dear word and you begin to realize that in Christ you were changed.

That's what it is. It's not in Christ your sins were forgiven. The Jews knew their sins forgiven.

But in Christ you and I were changed. We were changed. All that you were was crucified and destroyed and you have been made completely new.

And the moment you believe that and the moment you commit yourself to that, God's Holy Spirit will make that rail in you. Loved ones we were not made to live a Jekyll and Hyde existence. We weren't.

You know how it goes. I remember with my mom. She used to say before God showed me any of this.

Ernest, I wish the church people could see you now. An Irish mother knows how to get it home to you. But I bet an American wife does too, an American husband.

Because it is true, isn't it? Our loved ones at home, they see the real self. The church people see the nice smiling self on a Sunday. But the ones who live with us and work with us see the real self.

Loved ones, it's not meant to be that way. It does not need to be that way. That's why Jesus died.

When Jesus died on the cross, he knew you personally. He knew you would live. He knew you would be alive today.

But more than that, he knew your anger. He knew where your jealousy and pride comes from. He knew how you would want to have your way, whatever it cost anybody else.

He knew that. And he miraculously took that into himself and allowed his father's wrath to burn that out of existence in him. That's why he cried, my God, my God, why has thou forsaken me? Because he was feeling the forsakenness that God was directing against your old self.

And that is an actual spiritual eternal fact. And your old self actually has been crucified with Christ. And all you have to do is believe that.

And as the Holy Spirit shows to you what that means, you've simply to live in the light of it. And it's God's will that you and I should live inwardly what we appear outwardly. It's God's will that there's to be no admixture of hypocrisy or of deception or of pretense in his children.

Loved ones, it's possible to be Dr. Jekyll the whole way through. It's possible. And it's God's will for you.

And I'll tell you, it takes such a burden off your shoulders. Such a burden, let us pray. Dear Father, this hide within us destroys many of the best moments in our lives.

But more than that, this hide within us makes us feel we're hypocrites. Lord, so often this hide within us has lived more often than the Dr. Jekyll. Father, we see and we know in our hearts that this is not only mankind's greatest problem, this is our problem.

So, Lord God, we come to you this morning to thank you that we do see that this is why Jesus died. And even though we don't understand all the details of it, and it seems beyond our capacity to analyze, we do believe what your word says, that Romans 6 and 6 is truth. We know that our old self was crucified with Christ so that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

And Lord, we commit ourselves now to believing that intellectually and then to begin to know it in experience by beginning to regard our old selves with all our desire for their own rights and their own way as crucified with Christ. And we ask you, dear Father, through the Holy Spirit, to begin to make this real to each of us so that we may live free from self and above sin. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14796.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ernest-o'neill/dr-jekyll-and-mr-hyde/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net