

# Jesus' Death Reconciles-Jesus' Life Saves (Romans 5:10)

by Ernest O'Neill

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*The sermon explores the problem of hypocrisy and the need for transformation through dying to self and being crucified with Jesus, leading to experiencing the power of Jesus' life and being saved.*

**Duration:** 28:38

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:24, John 12:24, Romans 5:10, Romans 6:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:10

**Topics:** "Reconciliation With God", "Victorious Christian Living"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of coming to faith in God at a young age. He emphasizes that the Christian life is not one of defeat, but rather a life of victory and real transformation. The speaker highlights the importance of living out one's faith and not just talking about it. He references Romans 5:10, which speaks about being reconciled to God through the death of Jesus and being saved by his life. The speaker encourages believers to truly embrace this truth and allow Jesus' life to flow through them.

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## Transcript

The verse that we're really studying this morning states what is the heart of the truth that God has shown us over the past, oh two, and some of us really almost five years here on campus at the University of Minnesota. And so it might be good, brothers and sisters, if you'd look at that verse, it's Romans 5 and verse 10, Romans 5 and 10. It's page 980 in that Black Bible.

980 and Romans 5 and verse 10. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life. And what made us in our churches was that we believed in the first part of the verse, you see the bit, while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, but the second part of the verse we had little experience of that in our own lives, of being saved by Jesus' life.

And so many of us really felt we were children of God, but we weren't like children of God inside in our own lives. And maybe the simplest way to express it is to tell you how it worked in my own life. I was brought up in an ordinary Methodist church in Ireland, in Belfast, and they shared, you know, again and again the truth that Jesus had died for us.

And really when I was about 13 at Sunday school one day I kind of thought I gave my life to God. Really all I did was I became a believer in God. I began to believe that there was a God, and I would ask him to help me, you know, when things were difficult.

And this will date me, I'm 38 so that you won't have to date me, okay? But during, it was a shipyard city, and so the old Germans, you know, got as far as Belfast for the sake of the oil tankers that were being built there. And so when the old bombs would come over and my father would be down, you know, he was an electrician in the shipyard taking care of his job, I would pray that God would help him. And I would pray that God would help me in my classes and in my schoolwork.

And when my mother was sick I would pray that God would heal her. I believed in God, you know. But that was really about it, and that's the way it went through high school.

Until about 17 I really felt I was a Christian, but all I was was a believer. I believed that there was a God, and that he was a loving God and a kind God. And then at 17 I began to come up against some of the old problems of sex that many of us come into guilt over.

And I began to feel, you know, that I was not fit to stand before God at all. And I had real trouble fitting Jesus into my Christian life. Now that's corny.

But I really couldn't quite see how important Jesus was, you know. I saw that he showed us what God was like, but he was not vitally important or precious to me. And I remember a fellow that was training in Presbyterian seminary, and I was going to go into the Methodist ministry, saying to me, do you really believe that Jesus has died for you? And if you were the only person in the whole world, he would have died for you.

Well, not once. I really didn't believe that, you know. I believed that Jesus had died for the whole world to make it all a better world, but I didn't feel a personal obligation at all to Jesus.

And so though I acted in many ways like a Christian, because I was brought up in a kind of Christian environment, yet inside in my own heart I hadn't a real burning love of Jesus. And yet this old guilt, you know, of the moral failings was lying heavy on my heart, because I saw quite plainly that if you sinned, the wages of sin were death, and I saw that God, a holy God, was committed to destroy all people who weren't holy. And that began to weigh on me, and I began to really realize that I wasn't fit to stand before God at all.

And you know, each time I'd fail, the old guilt would come in more and more, until the guilt became debilitating itself, so that I began to lack even the motivation to be good. And I began to realize that there must be something better in Christianity than this. And so I really began, I suppose, to do what many Catholics do.

I began to dwell on the fact of Jesus' death. And I stopped my prayer times where I prayed for everybody, you know, all the missionaries all over the world and everybody, and I started just to concentrate on Jesus' death. And I began to try to settle in my mind, had this really taken place? Was there really a spot in Palestine somewhere where this cross had actually been stuck in the ground? And I started to read the historical documents that lie behind the New Testament, and I began to think of this fact.

Had Jesus, this man who says he was the Son of God, at one time hung on the cross and actually thought of me at that moment? And brothers and sisters, after nights and nights of doing that in my prayer times,

gradually it came home to my own spirit, I don't know how, that when Jesus looked down at the Roman soldiers and said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, he was actually looking right down the centuries at me. And he was saying, Father, forgive him, for he doesn't know what he's doing. Now, it was after that, loved ones, that I began to see that it was because Jesus bore the death penalty, that the just and holy God was then free to forgive an unholy person like me.

But at that particular moment, all I sensed was that Jesus miraculously was actually interested in me at the moment he died, and that he actually died in my place, and that my God was not demanding my death from me, but that he actually was willing to receive me as a child of his own. And so, there and then, you know, just faith sprang up in my heart to receive Jesus into my life. And I reckon I really became a Christian when I was 17.

And I entered into the first part of that verse, you know. I really felt I'm reconciled to God. If you'd asked me, are you afraid of dying, I'd have said, no, I'm not afraid of dying.

If you'd said to me, oh, is God really your Father? I'd have said, yes, he's really my Father. If you'd asked me, do you really know Jesus personally? I would say, yes, yes, I really know Jesus personally. And so I went to university there in Ireland for three or four years and trained as a teacher, English teacher.

And then felt God calling me into the Methodist ministry, and I taught for two years at my old high school, and then went into seminary for three years. And during all that time, you know, leading up to 26, when I was ordained in the Irish Methodist ministry, all that time I had one particular problem in my life. I could pray to Jesus and really sense that he was there in my room with me, and then I could deliberately sin.

Now that was it. I could actually see him and sense his presence, and then I could turn around and just sin, either in act or in thought or in word. And that just developed more and more in my life from the years 17 to 26.

I just found it more and more impossible to live the way a Christian was supposed to live. And you know, at the beginning it took place just deep down inside me. It was a kind of inward sin that nobody else would have seen.

It was present in my motives. You know, the way all the churches try to encourage us bright young Christians, and so they would ask you to read the lesson or to do something in the service, and you'd do it, you know, and you'd do it for God's glory, and then people would come up and praise you, and the old doubt would creep in. Well, for God's glory? Well, yeah, sort of 75 percent for his glory, 25 for mine.

And really as the years went on, it didn't get easier. It seemed to get worse, you know. The double motive life began to get worse inside me, and it would show itself in attitudes.

I really knew that a Christian shouldn't worry. I knew that you shouldn't worry. You should cast your care completely on the Father, and you should walk joyful and peaceful and in utter contentment, whatever your circumstances were like.

But, brothers and sisters, I spent hours and hours worrying about the examination the next day, or worrying about what was going to happen to my finances six months from then, or worrying what I was going to do when I grew up, what I was going to do for a career, or worrying what I was going to do when tomorrow's problem came up. And I found that in my attitudes, I did not have the attitude of a Christian. I would want, you know, to love people, because Christians are supposed to love people, and I would want

to love people, but I would come up against somebody who had criticized me, and there would come up from inside me a sharp, satirical, caustic attitude of hostility towards them that I couldn't control.

And it showed itself really in responses, you know. I was okay when I was all prepared and prayed up to meet somebody, but if the wrong person came along, or if something happened that I wasn't... I had a motorbike in Ireland, and that motorbike, oh, it was the bane of my life. But the motorbike, you know, you'd be changing the oil, and you couldn't get the bolt on properly, and there'd be a mixture of blood and oil flowing down both hands.

And at that moment, I was not Christian at all, you know. The old reaction was out immediately. The irritability was out.

The bad temper was out just immediately. Outside, I was the preacher, you know, or the budding Methodist minister, but when I'd go home with my parents, I was just that miserable little person who caused continual fighting and disagreement in the home. And so that was the problem.

Outwardly, I knew that Jesus had died for me. Not once you couldn't have shaken me in that. I knew I was a Christian, but inside, I was an absolute mess.

I had no experience of being saved by Jesus' life. I was just the same miserable old person inside that I had been before I ever met Jesus. Now, that's how it worked out in my life, and I walked like that, walked like that through ordination, served churches in Ireland, Methodist churches, came to London, had a church in London, then came to Minneapolis and had churches, Methodist churches here, and all the time, still that old problem inside, you know.

Just a hypocritical life, just a double life. I tried on the outside to be like Jesus, but inside, I just was not like Jesus at all. And, loved ones, that continued until, really, until I was 31, and came to the States, was about six months here, and then began to see I cannot continue in the ministry with this kind of bluff in my life.

And it was about then, God is so good to us, you know. He either arranges you to come to this service this morning, or He arranges me to go to a little place in North Minneapolis where they asked me to speak. And I spoke and talked of what I thought a victorious life could be.

Old John Wesley founded Methodism, and old Wesley preached, you see, that you could live a victorious life, above irritability and above sin and above impatience and anger. And I used to read those glowing sermons of his and wonder how you got up there. And I shared the kind of victory that I thought was possible.

And a fellow at the back, who must have been about maybe 42 at that time, came up to me afterwards. He was a pastor of the church, and he explained, I was in Bolivia for four years as a missionary, and I lived the same kind of miserable life as you lived, and a year ago, God delivered me from it. Now, that was the first time I'd ever met anybody who claimed to live inside the way they appeared to live outside.

It was the first time I'd met anybody that suggested that the life could actually be utterly victorious. And so he told me, you know, what had happened to him. Then he gave me an old book by an old Methodist bishop called Possibilities of Grace.

And I read it and got to work, you know. By that time, I was, I had been on the Christian way for, I don't know, 14 years, and I was fed up, ready for suicide, fed up with the whole thing. And so I began to work,

and this is the way it worked, you know.

I began to see that all my introspection had taken me as deep as didn't matter. I saw some of the bad things that were inside me, but I didn't see what the cause of all that evil inside was. And so I gave up the introspection.

I gave up examining my own mind and my own attitudes, and instead I started to speak to the Holy Spirit. Now you may say, you were a fool, you were ordained, you had two degrees, you had theology training, you must know the Holy Spirit as a person. Yeah, I knew it in my head, but I never treated the Holy Spirit as a real counselor in my life.

And so I began to speak to the Holy Spirit and say, Holy Spirit, will you show me why I'm in this mess that I'm in? Will you show me why I'm not like Jesus at all inside, and why it's beginning to burst out into my outer life? And I just began to pray to the Holy Spirit. That seemed heretical to me, you see. I was brought up as just a Methodist, an ordinary Methodist.

I knew nothing about the Holy Spirit, and it seemed heretical to pray to anybody but God the Father or God the Son. But I started to ask the Holy Spirit to do what Jesus said he ought to do. He said, the Holy Spirit will counsel you and will lead you into all truth.

And the Holy Spirit began to counsel me. And he began to show me that there was a degree of egotism inside me that I had never dreamed of before. And he began to show me verses like, we were crucified with Christ, and he began to show me, you aren't crucified with Christ.

You're ready to be born of the Spirit and to come alive with God, but you're not ready to die, and that's why you're not saved by Jesus' life. You see, because Jesus died, we can live. But unless we die, he cannot live.

And I had never died. I had come alive, all right, but I had taken with me all the dirt and the egotism that was still inside. And the Holy Spirit started to show me, look, you must be willing to die with Christ.

And I asked the Holy Spirit, what do you mean? And he said, well look, when you get angry, you get angry because you want to keep things under your control. Now Jesus, as he was walking down the Calvary Road, sensed that things were no longer in his control, that they were in the control of only God his Father, and he couldn't change anything. It was only God that could change it.

Now that's what it means to die with Jesus. It means to be willing for him to let things run as he wants them to run. For you not to call uncle before God wants to stop it, but to let him stop things when he wants to.

And dying to self means giving up the right to control your own life. And loved ones, I just felt that it was every educated man's right to control his own life, and to control his career, and control the amount of money he made, and control his circumstances and his vacations. And it was just new to me that I was expected to die with Jesus, to controlling my own circumstances and my own life.

And then the Holy Spirit would show me, you know, that there was incredible pride in my life, and a great selfish ambition, a great desire. You know, we men seem to all have it, don't we? We seem to have to achieve things, you know? We're brought up with the idea now, you're going out into the world, you're the son, you have to achieve something great. And we lie under that burden of achieving something great.

And it drives us and harms us, you know, the way it makes us walk over other people, just to achieve something worthwhile and establish our own significance in the world. And the Holy Spirit began to show me, you must be willing to die an insignificant nothing, to die as Jesus died, if it is his will for you. And bit by bit, the Holy Spirit started to show me in what way I had never been willing to die to self and be crucified with Jesus, and went into the whole area of lust, you know, and began to show me the lust is there because you own your own body.

You think you have the right to do with your body whatever you want. You think you have the right to get whatever satisfaction you want for it. Now, you must die to your right to controlling your own body.

You must die to the right to any physical satisfaction or any emotional satisfaction. And brothers and sisters, do you see it's because we have not died that we're parasites on everybody else. You know it.

With our girlfriends, we're trying to draw enough affection from them to satisfy us. With our husbands, we're trying to draw enough attention from them to give us a sense of value and well-being. With our friends, we're trying to trample over enough of them to get enough to the top of the heap to persuade ourselves that we've succeeded.

And it's because we really have never died and never accepted that we were crucified 1900 years ago and that there's no self to succeed. It's because we haven't accepted that, that we're filled with so much self and so much self-assertiveness and so much self-defensiveness. And gradually, you know, the Holy Spirit began to take me deep down into areas that I'd never known before.

Just areas that had never been revealed to me before in my life. And I began to go down into a place that I had never seen existed. And there I saw a massive eagle, a great giant of a monster that demanded to be God, not only in my little world, but actually wanted to be God over other people's worlds as well.

And loved ones, don't you see that's why we get irritable with people? We get irritable with people because we think we alone know the way they should behave. And we think that they're opposing us who know the way they should behave. Loved ones, it may be that the way they behave is the right way.

Maybe that our timing is not the right timing. We get impatient with people because we think we have the right for everything to go our way. And brothers and sisters, it's impossible to get life going like that.

Do you see that? You're not going to get everything going your way. And God's plan is that we should accept our position as Jesus accepted his. A real position where we give the control of our lives completely over to him.

And gradually, you know, the Holy Spirit took me down and down. And the ones that didn't get better, it got worse. I got harder to live with.

Just got harder to live with. Got more and more irritable, more and more bad-tempered, and that's the way it goes. It gets worse before it gets better.

The Holy Spirit brings you into more and more situations until you see, unless I go through with this, I can find no deliverance at all. And several times, you know, I thought, oh no, well, I don't need to die. I can go along with a little more of the Holy Spirit and do better than I've been doing.

And the Holy Spirit would allow me to come into a situation where I just go to pieces again. And inside would be a mess. And gradually, you know, he wore me down and pointed out to me, now listen, you were crucified with Jesus.

Now are you willing to accept that? Are you willing, really willing, to die to yourself? To die to your desire for success? Are you willing to be nothing for me if I want you to be? And one Saturday morning, you know, in a parsonage in north Minneapolis, I at last came to the place where I said yes. And brothers and sisters, it was a miracle. I didn't stand up and dance, and I didn't have a lot of emotional effusiveness, but I just had a quiet assurance that the Holy Spirit had come into my life and filled me, and I felt no more envy or anger or jealousy inside.

And brothers and sisters, it was a transformation. Later on, the Holy Spirit gave me experience of gifts of the Spirit and of ministry and power. But at that point, it was a deliverance from that inward defeat that I'd suffered for years.

And I at last began to experience what it meant to be saved by Jesus' life. That Jesus' life was actually able to replace mine completely if I was willing to give up and let God. And that's really the big change that came in my life, oh about, maybe, I suppose about seven years ago, maybe now.

And it just changed everything. It was only then, you know, that you began to get outward conflicts. You thought your life was hard until it came to that point.

But when the Holy Spirit really fills you with Himself, then He leads you into difficulties and trials and problems and conflicts. And it was amazing, you know, to walk through them with absolute peace and absolute contentment. Because at last, I hadn't that old thing on my shoulder saying, Are you going to succeed? Are you going to succeed? At last, a real willingness to be whatever God wanted me to be, you know.

Now it seems to me that that's what we mean by being not only born of the Spirit or reconciled to God by the death of Jesus, but actually being saved by Jesus' life. And the Christian life doesn't really begin in fullness until you come into that deliverance. Now, you know, you may come into it differently from me.

And I have to walk in it. If I don't keep my position in Jesus on the cross, all that miserable pettiness and selfishness just bursts out again. You see, it's not a work that is done once and forever and you never have to have it done again.

It is done day by day by the Holy Spirit. It is maintained in you day by day, but you have to enter into it initially in one definite time of consecration. If you're in a Baptist church, you'll probably call it consecration rather than being filled with the Spirit.

But it is a point where you are really willing to die to yourself and to your own life and really willing to let Jesus live his life through you. And when that moment comes, the Holy Spirit fills you and delivers you from that inward sin. Now that's really what we mean, you know, when we say, if we have been reconciled to God by the death of his Son, now that we are reconciled, how much more shall we be saved by his life? Brothers and sisters, you can actually be saved from today's envy and jealousy and anger and worry and depression by the life of Jesus.

You can be saved from those things by the life of Jesus flowing through you today. And it's not true that the Christian life is one of defeat. It's not true that it's enough a dying life as mine used to be.

It's not true that it's a life fighting anger and fighting envy and fighting jealousy. It's not true that it's a life continually confessing old sins that you've been committing for years. The Christian life, when it's a being saved by Jesus life, is a life of real victory inside.

And that's what God has started to show us, you know, here on the campuses. And you know, that's really what the world wants to see. The world for years has seen a body of people who call themselves the church and talk a lot and do nothing.

The world for years have seen people who preach but don't live as they preach. Now the world needs to see people who live like they say they live. And loved ones, it can only come through that being saved by Jesus life, you know.

Now, I'd ask you really to be honest with yourselves, you know, to stop all this pretending that a Christian who gets angry and gets jealous and gets envious and lies under depression and worry for hours and hours and runs cold wars with his wife or his family, that that kind of a person is the kind of person that God is pleased with and wants. God wants you to be different from that. He's patient with you while you're like that, but he has a deliverance from that, that he can provide for you.

And it's really found in that experience of being ready to die with Christ to yourself and allowing him to fill you completely with his Holy Spirit. And then, you know, he takes you on into the other things and into the ministry of the gifts and into healing and into tongues and into other things. But basically he has to get, first of all, your inside, your heart.

He wants a clean heart. So would you be honest this morning, you know? You know how often we've sat in churches and we've listened to the boy preaching away and we've said, yes, yes, I agree, I agree. And then we walk out and we're nothing like that.

But would you be honest about your own life today? You know, do you have real trouble with the thought life? Do you have problems, you brothers? Do you have problems with the pride, you know, and the old ambition that drives you just relentlessly on? And sisters, you know, do you have trouble with the old cattishness and the sarcasm and tearing the other person down? Well, do you see that all that comes from a person who really is not willing to share everything with her Lord or with his Lord? And loved ones, we cannot share heaven with Jesus if we do not share death with him. That's just it. And there's no resurrection unless there's a death, you know.

Now, it may not come the way mine came, you know. It may come differently. It may come more gently for you.

But it needs to come where you know you are delivered from those things. And it is the Holy Spirit within you that motivates your life. Now, we'll try to share these truths during the next year because Romans 5 on for the next five chapters really deals with the sanctified life, the life that is changed by God's Spirit.

So we'll be sharing them Sunday by Sunday. But you do need to begin to deal with God about it yourself, you know. Let us pray.

Father, we trust you to draw us again to the close place with yourself at the foot of Jesus' cross so that we can begin to see ourselves as we really are in comparison with Jesus. And that we may begin to see that the only way we can ever be like him is for him to come and live inside us freely, unrestrained, uninhibited, with all of our old selves crucified on the cross and with his Spirit alone motivating us. So, Father, we trust

you now to begin to deal with each one of us during this coming year so that we may enter completely into this life that you have planned for us.

For Jesus' sake.

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