

Resistance (Romans 5:13)

by Ernest O'Neill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing sin as a resistance or rejection of God's spiritual life, and the need to respond to the Holy Spirit's offer of life to overcome death and futility.

Duration: 29:42

Scripture: Genesis 3:6, Exodus 20:1, Psalm 46:10, Romans 5:13

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Gods Will"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need for real spiritual nourishment in a world filled with distractions. He describes how people often get caught up in the busyness of life, relying on superficial things like TV dinners and entertainment to fill their time. However, he argues that this leads to a dissipated spirit and a wasted evening. The speaker encourages listeners to reject this way of living and instead seek a deeper understanding of God's will and purpose for their lives. He highlights the importance of seeing ourselves as God's companions and striving to become more like Him.

Transcript

Have you ever had a situation in the office or in school out of which you could just see no escape, no way? And you know your thoughts just go round and round and round and round and you get caught up in your little claustrophobic mind and you can't see any way out. And it's almost as if you're thinking it's just bound with iron bands. You think round in your circle and right round again and right round again.

And whether it's physical weakness through a cold or whether it's kind of emotional tightness through an emotional situation at school or whether it's just a kind of mental block that you have in an office job, it seems that we're just tied up in our own little circle of thinking. And really you just wonder how to escape. And the psychologists or the dramatists, the Christian theatre class meets on Thursday and we're trying to find a production that we can do.

And it doesn't matter which of them you look through, you know, Camus, Miller, Pinter, Williams, it doesn't matter who it is. All the dramatists do the same thing, they describe the hopelessness and the futile little circle that most people live in today. And if you go to the philosophers or the psychologists, they're in the same trip, you know.

They're all following more or less old Skinner's implication that we're little rundown machines that are driven by deterministic and fatalistic kind of powers and we can't escape from our karma existence. And

brothers and sisters, really that's one of the exciting things, you know, about this book. It's one of the real exhilarating things about it that we really believe it here on Sundays because Jesus is the best empirical evidence of who the creator is that we've got.

But the book itself is exciting and exhilarating because it does really seem to give you authentic expressions of a great magnanimous mind that is bigger than our own, you know. And it's good when we get caught up in our own little claustrophobic circles of thinking, it's good to come into the old theater on Sundays and get a glimpse of a bigger view of it all, you know, and be blasted out of our little circles, our little vicious circles that we go round and round in. And really, loved ones, some of us just go round and round in those circles for life, and we just instantly becoming greater and bigger and bigger so that at the last day, you know, the old spiritual body transfigures the physical body and we just blast up into God's space.

Instead of that, many of us become wizened and withered and weakened and smaller and smaller as our life goes on. And really, it's God's will that we should begin to see things the way he sees them. And that's why the book is kind of exciting.

And really what we need here on Sunday mornings is what I think Scott prayed for, a spirit of revelation that would break through the little vicious circles that we get into, you know, would split the old atom of our own thoughts and would get us out into a place where there is tremendous energy released when you begin to think and feel the way the Creator does. And that's really what we're trying to do here on Sunday mornings. And you remember that last Sunday, we began to see that God made us and put us here really because he wanted our company.

He really put us here so that we'd become like him and so that we'd be his friends forever. That's the real reason. It's just so good, you know, to get out of that circle where they're treasuring you because of the A grade or the B grade or the C grade, or they're treasuring you because you can move these books from this spot to that spot, or because you can type so many words a minute.

It's so good to get outside that little circle and see, look, it's not even because my husband likes me or my father loves me or because my roommate can tolerate me. I'm here for a bigger reason than all those things. The Creator of the world has made me because he wants me to become like him and he wants me to be his friend forever.

And it's really good to see that. You remember we saw that that was why God made us with certain capacities such as he had himself. He made us, you know, with a spirit like his.

He made us with a mind like his and emotions like his and a will like his and a body, a physical body, just as he has a spiritual body and as we will have a spiritual body when this body dies. And it's good to see that God governed everything to enable this plan to come about, that we would live with him forever as his dear friends. Do you remember the one vital thing that would make us exactly like himself? He left to our personal choice.

The life, the very life that runs through the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the very life that makes the Trinity family unique, that makes it eternal, that makes it able to fly through millions of miles of space in a second, the life that enables it to have continual forgiveness and continual gentleness and peace running through it, that life we had to choose for ourselves. You remember it was talked about in Genesis as a tree of life and God's plan was we'd have all the capacities to be like him but we ourselves would have to opt

into his Trinity family by our own free choice. And really it was up to us to be born of his spirit or of his life by our own will and our own choice.

You remember we saw that the first man didn't do it at all. He decided he'd live by his own wits about what was good and what was evil. He decided what was right and wrong for himself and he'd do without this unique uncreated life that God offered him.

And when he decided to do that, God withdrew that life from him, withdrew the offer of that uncreated Holy Spirit from him. And immediately you remember the whole natural environment and man's own personality deteriorated and declined into death. You remember we outlined what that death entailed and I couldn't think of a high enough pressure engine but I thought of a 289 which isn't the highest powered machine you could think of, but I likened it to running a high powered engine on regular gas.

And that's what it was like when the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the world because man decided to go it alone. It was like that. Immediately our minds began to be impaired.

Our emotions began to be unbalanced. The old body became weaker. And then as we lived like that, we began to spread that living for self throughout the world and it became a pro-self world living for itself all the time.

An anti-God world working against God. And then eventually you the Holy Spirit was withdrawn even from the spiritual world, a world filled with evil spirits. And that is what we mean when we say death began to work in us personally and in our environment.

And that was the kind of situation that resulted at that time. Now let's pray that God's Spirit would somehow be able to give you and me insights into that situation now, you know, just this morning. Let's trust Him that He'll be able to do that and bring us into some new insights.

Because brothers and sisters, I think a lot of us are experiencing that death and we don't know why we're experiencing it, you know. The old mind is impaired. The old emotions are unbalanced.

The old body is weak and sick and deteriorating. And we find ourselves fighting an uphill battle against wrong dreams and against wrong thoughts day after day after day. And we don't know why it is.

We seem to be living in death in the midst of life. Now I think there are real reasons for it. And I think sometimes it's because we haven't the same view of sin or of independence of God as God Himself has.

Now would you share with me as we just look a wee bit at that next verse, you know. It's the verse we study this morning. It's Romans 5 and verse 13.

And you find it there on a page, about page 980. Romans 5 and 13. Maybe we could just take that part A of the verse first, that first half of it.

Romans 5 and 13. Sin indeed was in the world before the law was given. Sin indeed was in the world before the law was given.

And that's pretty obvious, isn't it? That's pretty obvious. You read, you remember in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 6. You read how Adam declared his independence of God by going his own way. Genesis 3 and verse 6. And you can see, so when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.

And she also gave some to her husband and he ate. Now that was the sin. Sin entered the world at that moment by Adam declaring, I'd go it alone without your Holy Spirit.

And then you see, look over to Exodus 20 and verse 1. That's the moment that the law was given. Exodus 20, it's about page 63 in that black RSV. Exodus 20 and verse 1. And it's the first time that law came into the world, you see.

Exodus 20 and verse 1. And God spoke all these words saying, I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image.

All right, so that's obvious. Sin was in the world before the law was given. You can see that.

You know, that many pages between the time sin entered the world and the time the law was given. And if you allow for a gap between Genesis 1, you remember? 1, 2 and 1, 3. If you allow for a gap there during which the earth was without form and void, that gap may be thousands of years. And if you allow for the obvious gaps that the Bible details clearly exist in the genealogies, you can see that certainly thousands and maybe millions, but certainly thousands of years existed between the time that the first sin was committed and the time the law entered the world.

And certainly the creation research people would say at least for 5,000 years, wouldn't they? And some of us would say maybe even more than that. But certainly thousands of years at least existed between the time that sin entered the world and law came into the world. Now, brothers and sisters, do you see what that means? That sin is not primarily something connected with the breaking of a known law.

Sin itself is a resistance or a rejection of God's spiritual life. I think a lot of us, you see, get little legalistic, moralistic minds. And we say, oh yes, sin is if I'm a, this is hard, I'm a Baptist.

I like being hard, I'm a Baptist. If you're a Baptist brought up in the right place, and I know all Baptists aren't brought up like this, but if you're a Baptist like that, or if you're a Methodist as I was in Northern Ireland 12, 15 years ago, going to the theater, okay, that's a sin. Okay, don't do that.

Okay, smoking, that's a sin. Okay, don't do that. We are dancing too.

We have six of them, all of which really, yeah, yeah. I'm not supporting those, but I'm saying that Arminians seem to make life as miserable as we possibly could. Some of those, it's good.

The doctors are catching up with the no smoking now that God has given it to us for so long. But some of us, some of us tend, you know, to think of sin as just breaking one of the six cardinal commandments that we have in the evangelical Christianity. Or some of us think sin is just breaking any one of the ten commandments.

And we get very moralistic and legalistic, as long as we're not breaking any of those things, as long as we're not doing any of the no-no's, then we're okay, we're not sinning. But brothers and sisters, do you see, sin was in the world before there was any law. Sin is something that is broader than just the breaking of laws that you and I line up and list.

You can see that sin for Adam was rejecting God's offer of spiritual life. I think maybe, you know, in our own lives we need to see that sin can be that too for us. I think there are times when we're actually sinning and we don't really realize it.

And death works as a result of that in our lives, but we don't realize that we've sinned. We say, well, we haven't broken one of the ten commandments today, we haven't broken any of the commandments on the Sermon on the Mount today, no, we haven't sinned. But brothers and sisters, do you see that Adam sinned by resisting God's Holy Spirit? God said, look, receive my life into you today, and Adam said, no, I don't want it.

Now, that is sin. Sin is just rejecting God's offer of life through His Holy Spirit. And really, it happens in us again and again, because do you see, since Jesus died, God has been able to replace the Holy Spirit among us in this world.

And so the Holy Spirit is all around us and about us. And He's offering Himself to us again and again every morning and every evening. And if we're resisting that offer, that little movement within us of God's Spirit, that is sin.

That is sin for us. And it will bring about death. Now, if you wanted to look at details, let's take two or three examples.

Some of us get into a disagreement with our roommate or with a friend, and we really do feel that they have not treated us fairly. We find that they've criticized us to somebody else, or they've talked about us behind our back. And the old resentment comes up in our hearts, and we just feel the resentment against them.

And every time we meet them, there's that resentment in the back of our eyes, and you know, they're trying to be open with us and all that, and we're trying to run a little sensitivity tea group with them. But really, at the back of our eyes is the old defeat and the old gray suspicion and the old resentment. And God's Spirit comes into us.

Maybe He doesn't use these words, but He brings home this truth to us. Maybe you'd look at Romans 12 and 19. You see, the Holy Spirit is always involved, day by day and moment by moment, in trying to bring to us God's own attitude.

And in a situation like this, He'll bring home to us this truth. It's about page 987. Romans 12 and 19.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. And the Holy Spirit will come into us, just a little impression deep down inside of us, a little tiny impression, cut the resentment. Just let it be.

Just forgive the person as you want God to forgive you. And brothers and sisters, if we would bow to that movement of God's Spirit within us about the resentment, you'd find that Jesus would flood us with a Holy Spirit of love for that person. But so often instead, we do what Adam did.

We resist that movement of the Holy Spirit within us. Nobody can hit us, you know, with a law. Nobody can say, that's the fifth commandment, you're broke.

Nobody can hit us with a law. But yet, we know we've resisted God's generous Spirit. And to that extent, we grow smaller.

And death begins to work in our relationship with that person, doesn't it? You know, how many of us have death? Life is an interaction with your environment. Death is a lack of that interaction with your

environment. How many of us have ceased to have any interaction with certain friends that we have because we've allowed death to seep in through the resentment, through resenting and rejecting the working of God's generous Spirit in us? So, you see, that's what I mean.

That some of us find death coming in different relationships, and we wonder why. Why is there death here? Why is death working in me? Why can I not be open and loving to this person? And so often it's because we've resisted the offer of the Holy Spirit that has come to us. Dear ones, do you see this morning, the Holy Spirit is working on each one of you and on me to make us more like Jesus.

God's Holy Spirit is flooding throughout the whole world. You remember old manly Hopkins said, the earth is filled with the grandeur of God. It will flame out like shining feng shui foil.

It gathers like the ooze of oil crushed. But all is smeared with clay and wears man's smudge and bears man's toil. And you know, that's it.

The whole world is filled with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit of Jesus is approaching each one of us and trying to get us to respond to him. And again and again, you know, you have the same choice as Adam had in the Garden of Eden. You can respond and go this generous way that is in line with the picture of Jesus that you get in the New Testament or you can resist it and go your own miserable, mean, little way.

And so many of us, you see, have death working in us because we've resisted this life that God is offering to us. You know, it comes in different situations. I can think of another one, you know, you have a situation in the office and it's just chaos and the whole thing has got utterly complex.

She took your typewriter or she didn't send it for repair or he is really leaning on you. He's having trouble at home and he's your boss and he's really leaning on you, just leaning into the ground, you know, or they're on your back all the time or the school situation and you've had a cross up with the professor and it seems you can't get the line straight again and everything's complicated. And do you see at that moment that the Holy Spirit comes down to you again in a hideous, impossible, difficult, domestic or professional situation and he brings home a truth? And you can see it is Ephesians 2 and 6. Ephesians 2 and 6. And it's page 1017.

Ephesians 2 and 6. And God raised us up with him, with God, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And then Ephesians 1 and 21, where that position is, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And you know the old mind is tossing at night and worrying about the situation in the office or the school the next day and the Holy Spirit comes down to us and says, look, you're in Jesus, above all these things, at the Father's right hand.

Now just thank God that he's going to sort this thing out. And your job is just to take your position in Jesus and love and be like Jesus and let him take care of the thing. And Satan gets in and says nothing is solved by that kind of unearthly behavior.

You get down there and you fight it out and you slog it out and you worry it out. Loved ones, do you see there are two ways to go? You can either receive the life of the Holy Spirit and say, all right, it doesn't make too much sense to me that it'll sort out that way, but I'll receive you and accept you. And if you do that, you release through Jesus a flood of the Holy Spirit to go out and repair the situation in the office or in

the school.

But again, there are two ways to go. And if you resist the Holy Spirit, then death begins to work in your mind at night. You lose the night's sleep.

The next day you're less able to deal with the situation. But it's again a resistance of the Holy Spirit that brings death. In other words, really, sin is resisting God's will for you at that moment.

See, the Father hasn't put us all here to kind of weave in and out each other's lives, whatever way we want to go. The Father hasn't just set us all here and said, okay, you three and a half billion, go, you know, and we just go. The Father has it organized.

He has plans for each of us. He has a beautiful harmony. You remember in classical literature how they used to talk about the music of the spheres? And how even they, you know, in their old pagan minds, had the image way back that God had put inside them.

And they knew that there should be a harmony in the universe. Brothers and sisters, God has plans for each one of our lives. He knows what he wants you to do tomorrow.

He knows what he wants you to do on Tuesday evening. He has plans for us. He has a certain will for each of us at each moment.

It was the same with Adam. There would come a time when it was God's will for him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Otherwise, why put it there? But he wanted him to eat of that tree after he had received of the tree of life.

Then he'd be able to know good by experiencing good, and evil just by seeing and understanding what it was. So it was God's will at that moment for Adam to receive of the tree of life, the Holy Spirit. Sin is resisting God's will for you at that moment.

And that's really what you and I often do, you see. And when we do that, death immediately sets into our lives, you know. An easy instance, you know, that that many of us really face.

You come home at night. The highway was packed. It was just, it was nose to tail all the way.

And people screaming to stop, and they were oversleeping, and all that kind of thing. And you just get home, and you're worn out, and the Holy Spirit comes through to you. And, well, you can see it.

He may not put it in the words of the Bible, but it's there, Psalm 46 and 10. Psalm 46 and 10. The only reason I'm quoting God's word, brothers and sisters, is that that's the way you tell whether it is the Holy Spirit speaking to you or not, you see.

You just check, what did the Holy Spirit write in the Bible? Is this in consistency with what He wrote? And that's the way to keep yourself clear from deceptive spirits. Psalm 46 and 10. It's page 490.

Psalm 46 and 10. And that moment, you know, you come home, you're worn out, and the Holy Spirit comes through. Be still, and know that I am God.

And the Holy Spirit just says to you, sit down, be quiet, just rest. Just know that I am God. Just receive my life into you.

And the old mind works. The assignments to do tonight, I have to get some food, I have to do this, I have to iron some clothes, I have to wash some clothes, and we don't sit. We resist the Holy Spirit, saying, be still and know that I am God.

One gurgle from the old stomach, you know, and we decide, no, no, no, that's not spiritual food we need. We need real food. And we get up, and we hit the old kitchen, and you know, the sparks are flying, we're getting this thing in, and out come the TV dinners, and into the oven, and everything.

And the thing is noisy, then we decide, well, we turn the TV on while we're waiting, you know, and the TV goes on, and you hit all the mess that is in our world. And before you know it, all death settles in on you, you know. And the old spirit becomes utterly dissipated, and you find that the evening is just lost and wasted, because there's no sitting still, and knowing that He is God.

Everything, everything is taking control of you from that moment on. Now, brothers and sisters, do you see, that is rejecting God's will for you at that moment. The Holy Spirit is good to us.

The Holy Spirit will keep us in psychological, and spiritual, and physical balance if we will listen to Him. But sin is resisting the Holy Spirit's will for you at that moment. And all loved ones, you remember, those of you, you know, who are away from home now, you remember home situations, where you got into ridiculous tangles because you spoke just what you thought.

You resisted the Holy Spirit saying, shut up. And you're just out, and you wanted to lay the whole thing out and clear it. Now, loved ones, do you see, that's what we're doing.

And many of us are experiencing death in ourselves, because we're really sinning. Sin always brings death. But just it isn't a sin that can be lined up on the one or ten commandments, but it is sin that is resistance to God's Spirit.

That's the heart of sin. It's independence of God. It's a resistance to His Spirit's will for you at that moment.

I get it in the mornings, you know. You get it again and again in the mornings. We're waking up.

The Holy Spirit comes right through. Whatsoever things are lovely, and true, and of good report, think on these things. The Holy Spirit comes through and says, this is the day that the Lord hath made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it. And we don't go with Him. We resist Him.

And we sink back into our own indolence and our own lethargy, and we sink back into our own emotional and physical depression. And before your fifteen minutes have passed, we're in the depths of degradation, you know. Either in depression, or in just a physical degradation, or we're in an intellectual depression of some kind.

But brothers and sisters, do you see, the Holy Spirit will always come to you at the right moment. And if you'll accept Him, and receive His life, He will take you up the way He's going. The Holy Spirit is only going one way, always only one way.

He's going up to the Father, you see. The Father is there, and Jesus is there, and the Holy Spirit comes through Jesus and goes back up to the Father. And that's what's happening all the time.

And all we need to do is ride Him right up to the Father. But instead of that, you know, so often we let the without Him, and with death working in us. Now brothers and sisters, do you see a wee bit what death is, you know.

And what sin is. Sin is resisting God's Spirit as He comes down to you at a certain moment. Now, you don't need to get all shook up, you know.

You don't need to walk so tentatively. Am I hearing the Holy Spirit? Am I not? Am I hearing? No. Just walk.

Believe that the Father is your loving Father, that He loves you with all His heart, that you can trust Him, and that He'll tell you what to do when you need to do it, and respond to Him immediately. Don't wait for the thing to outwork itself into some sinful act or thought or word. You see, sin is not basically an act or thought or word.

Sin is resisting God's Spirit when His Spirit first comes to you. Then as a result of that, you eventually move into actual sinful thoughts and words. But dear ones, I think really, brother, will you wait till I finish, and then I can share with you.

I think really, a lot of us would escape death if we would really treat the Spirit as our guide. And not so much, you know, by all means look at the laws as a guide to what the Holy Spirit has written in the past, but look to the Holy Spirit as He witnesses God's will to us, and respond to that. So, you know, would you pray that God would give you insight into it? And that He would really, maybe some of the things that I shared are some of the things that you have trouble with.

But you see, that isn't important. It's that the Holy Spirit could show you why you're experiencing death in your life. And He could show you why you are experiencing an emotional death, or a mental death, or a spiritual death.

By pointing out as clearly as He pointed out to Ananias and Sapphira, look, this is the point. Will you stop resisting here? Now brother, I'd love to talk with you okay? Shall we pray? Dear Father, we thank you for your goodness. We thank you for your kindness.

We thank you, Father, that you are a God of order, and a God of harmony. And we thank you that you have a definite plan for our own lives. Father, we trust you now to find a ready heart, and a sensitive spirit that is anxious to go your way.

So, Holy Spirit, when you point out things to us in these coming days of this week, we will tell you we want to respond on the first second. We want to respond to you immediately, and receive you. We want to walk clear of sin and clear.

So, we trust you, Father, for revelation during this week, so that you'll be glorified in us, and love, and death will be driven out. God bless you.

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