WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Program 126
What God Did to Enable Us to Overcome Our Old Nature
by Ernest O'Neill

Have you ever looked at your son or at somebody younger than yourself and thought, if you only knew what I know now? Or have you ever thought about yourself, if I had known at fifteen years of age what I know now at thirty-five, my life would have been entirely different and much wiser. Of course, we all say that with a kind of wishful note in our thoughts, because we feel there's probably no way in which we can ever experience that kind of an advantage.

Because it would be great if you could possibly know beforehand how things were going to turn out. Or if you could see life stretched out before you, and see all of its consequences, and if you chose certain things, and then if you look at another picture of your life and see the consequences if you chose different things. That's what we have been saying the Creator of all of us has managed to do for us.

We've been talking about the evil, selfish part of us that all of us know so well. That part of us that wants to lose its temper, that wants its own way, whatever it costs anybody else, and that constantly opposes the good part of us, the part of us that wants to be kind, wants to be generous, wants to take care of other people before ourselves. We've been saying that those two natures -- the one a good nature, the one an evil nature -- the one a selfish nature, the one an unselfish nature -- comes from two attitudes to life.

The selfish one comes from the attitude that there is no Creator behind the Universe, and that we're on our own. We better grab what we can from all the other four billion people as fast as

possible. Otherwise, we won't have enough food, shelter and clothing. We won't have a sense of value or self-worth. We won't have any happiness unless we grab what we can, whatever it costs anybody else. That produces in us an evil nature, because it has been practiced down through centuries and has been bred into the race from the beginning.

Now, on the other hand, if you believe that there is a Creator, and that He is not only one who knows you and made you, but who is a loving Father and will take care of you and provide for you, and knows why you are here and has a job for you to do, and will look after you while you are doing it, THEN you find a very unselfish, loving, thoughtful, kindly, generous, motivational center created inside you.

You realize because He is going to take care of me, then I have all my life to take care of everybody else. So, those two natures come from two attitudes to life. What we have been saying is, our Creator sees time as one great, eternal, present moment. He doesn't see it as past and present and future. Even you and I don't see it that way. Even you and I know that there is something inside us that is exactly the same as we were thirty years ago.

There is a self-consciousness, a consciousness of ourselves, that is exactly the same as it was when we were six years of age. So even we are able to perceive in some vague sense that there is no such thing as time. There is no such thing as past, present and future. Time is one great eternal moment. Eternity is not going on forever and ever. It is time-less-ness. It is a lack of time. It is just one great, present, eternal summer day.

What we've been saying is the Creator, therefore, sees everything as occurring in one second. The moment He conceived you and me, the moment He created you and me, the

moment He conceived that we would use our free-wills to either acknowledge Him or to ignore Him, the moment He conceived that if we acknowledged Him, we would live in trust in Him and therefore have a motivational center that was filled with unselfishness and kindness,...

... and if we distrusted Him, we would have a motivational nature that was filled with selfishness and preoccupation with our own wishes, the moment He conceived all of that He conceived at the same moment, that He would need to be able to correct the erroneous personality that we would develop as the centuries went on and our forefathers and our grandfathers chose for themselves. He foresaw the kind of perverted personality that we would end up with at the end of centuries of breeding.

That same moment He conceived of the need to destroy us and re-make us. That is, to destroy the nature that we would become if we chose to ignore Him. That's what He did in His Son, Jesus. That's why that verse in the book called Revelation, which is the last book in the New Testament in the Bible, that verse in Romans 11 in verse 22 or 24 says, "The Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world". That is, WE were destroyed in Jesus from before the foundation of the world.

That's why both of us (and by the way, that's Revelation 13:8) that's why all of us have the experience of almost two lives. We do. We have a sense of almost two natures, haven't we? The one nature is the one that the Creator has allowed us to live freely like the rest of the people in the world, as if there was no God, as if we have only ourselves and as if we have to look after ourselves and take care of ourselves because nobody else will.

That nature has developed the evil, selfish, resentment that rises up in us at times and loses its temper with other people. THAT nature He allowed to develop. The other nature, the unselfish

nature, the generous nature that He re-created in His Son, Jesus, from before the foundation of the world, that also shows itself at times. So that there are moments, you know yourself, when on a beautiful spring morning when you smell the cleanness of the air and you see the swallows soaring in the sky with the liberty and freedom of little children,...

...that's why there rises in at times, (if you haven't got drunk the previous night or if you're not filled with cigarette smoke, or if you're not filled with unclean thoughts) there rises in you at times a moment of simplicity and innocence, such as you imagine the first man to have had at the very beginning in the Garden of Eden. You experience for a moment, that bright happiness. There are moments when you rise to that in the light of your children's innocence.

There are moments when you see a movie, or you see a play, and you feel within yourself all those pure and loving and kindly and trusting attitudes that you feel would be heaven itself if you could practice them day after day after day. You experience that because that actually exists. That is the real you. The unreal you is the unselfish, bad-tempered, critical, caustic, lustful nature. That nature has already been destroyed in Jesus. That's why that nature brings you such sadness.

That's why you feel such despair and such guilt about it. It has already been condemned by our Creator in Jesus, His Son, and been destroyed. It is actually a death nature. It is a nature that has ceased to exist, that has been destroyed in the timelessness of eternity. The only nature that actually exists now in God's presence is the new nature that He gave you when He re-created you in His Son. That's why that nature brings such brightness to you and such reassurance to you.

You feel better, don't you, when you're good? You do! You feel better when you're good! You may say, "Oh no, I feel great when I lust." No! You KNOW you feel better when you're good. You feel better when you're good and clean. You feel better when you've had a wonderful time with your wife in purity and innocence, than when you feel when you jumped in bed with somebody else's wife.

You feel better when you're good, because the Creator has made THAT nature the final nature. The other, old nature is the one that He has destroyed in His Son. The amazing thing is, you can choose to live in the real nature that He has re-created you to be in His Son, Jesus. You can do that by simply believing it and acting in the light of it. You can! You can!

Now, I know that there are all sorts of things that cry out inside you that say, "No, I can't! I can't! I've tried a thousand times!" Yeah, you've tried by your own effort. You've tried without faith. You've tried without realizing that the Creator, Himself, has changed you. If you try by your own effort, it's the same old nature that got you into the trouble in the first place. That's why the old nature can never deliver you from the old nature. It's independent of God.

The only nature that can deliver you from the old nature is the new nature, the belief that you have been re-created in Jesus. That is what that verse in Romans 6:6 of the New Testament says. "We know that our old self was crucified with Christ." That's actually true. Your old self, all the old nature that you have been developing over these years has already been crucified in Jesus.

Now you may say, "Why, why does it exist now?" You see why, because of what we said at the beginning of this discussion. The Creator wanted to show you what you would be if you refused

Him, and to show you what you CAN be if you simply believe in Him. He let that old nature work out the consequences that it has done in your life so that you would have a true choice. So that you of all people would be able to say, I SEE what I will become if I choose this, and I see what I CAN become if I choose that.

So, in reality, we have a wonderful opportunity here on earth. We have been given freedom to see what will be the consequences of our choice. You can choose today. Let's talk a little more about how to choose tomorrow.