WHAT IS FAITH?

The Problem of “I Can’t”

by Ernest O'Neill Program 55

You're on the freeway and realize suddenly that you should be turning right at the next intersection. But there's somebody on the inside lane. You kind of look over to them trying to nod to them that you want to get there, but they keep right even with you. You try to accelerate, and they accelerate. You slow down, and they slow down. You get more and more mad. You think, "Why don't you let me through?" You suddenly realize that you've become a raving maniac at the wheel, trying to get into that inside lane. You wonder, "Why did I let myself get so worked up over that?"

Or you do the same thing at home. Something occurs that is really in itself quite petty and unimportant, but before you know it, you've worked yourselves up into a frenzied temper over it. After you've cooled down, you wonder, "Was that even me that lost it's temper like that? It seems to be almost an animal that takes over when I get like that."

That's what we're talking about, the problem that so many of us have. indeed, we would say all of us have it. All of us human beings seem to have the problem of not being able to do what we know we ought to do. We cry out again and again, "I can't, I can't, I know I should do it, but I can't do it." The whole situation is exacerbated by the fact that we begin to realize, this is power of things even more powerful than ourselves. It seems to be ourselves, but it seems to be a grotesque self-inside us that we can hardly even recognize. What we have been sharing is of course, that it is a massive power evil that has been breed into

us as a race over the generations. By a human race that has rebelled against its maker and that has wanted its own way for centuries. So, each one of us expresses what the whole race expresses, a desire to control everything for our benefit, except that it is a real problem when there are four billion others trying to do it at the same time.

So, we find within us this kind of corporate self. These old corrupt selves, that is out to destroy us and to prevent us doing what we know is best for us and what we know is best for those whom we love. What we've been saying, of course is that every attempt we do to control that is wrought with failure or with at least just moderate success. Repeatedly, we find that that self still rises inside us. Not the personality, selves. The personality is good, the selves in that sense is right. It's neutral. But the selves in the sense of the self-centered selves, the selves driving selves, the selves exalting selves, the selves gratifying the selves, the defying selves. It's that self that wants to make everybody to bow down and worship us and serve us and suit our convenience. it's that self.

Of course, if you believe in Jesus; if you examine His life, and you examine the history books that tell of Him, examine the 4000 Greek manuscripts that describe His life in detail, and you come to the conclusion that He wasn't a legend, He wasn't a lunatic, and He wasn't a liar, He was really God's Son; and you start taking what He says seriously about this problem of not being able to do what you know you ought to do, you'll find that He and His apostles, people like Paul and Peter, explain vary clearly that that old self of ours was something that we cannot do anything about. That in fact, our Maker has watched it develop, and foresaw its development down through the years in us as a human race. Ha saw that it was something that He had to do all over again. He made us pure, He made us good, He made us unselfish, He made us gentle and loving, kind people.

But as we rebelled against Him, and determined we'd live this life on our own, and we'd get from the world what we wanted without having to ask Him; as we determined that, we corrupted our own nature. Our own nature became more and more corrupted as we had more and more children, and grandchildren, until down through the centuries, there was created a monster compared with the human race that God had created. God saw all that, indeed He foresaw all that.

You can see that, can't you? You can see that if we, with our IBM mainframes, can foresee all kinds of things like where the oil production will be in the year 2000, and where the food production will be in the world by that date, certainly, God is far more complex than our best mainframe computer. He can foresee all these things. He foresaw this. He foresaw that you even would develop within you a self that was utterly out to destroy you. A monstrosity of selfishness that you could not ever control. When He saw that, He arranged that he would recreate us. That's right. That's what Jesus and Paul and the other apostles said, that our Creator saw He would have to recreate us. That's what He did in his Son, Jesus. That's what He did in His Son Jesus!

There's a verse in Romans that says, "Our old self was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin." We might no longer be enslaved to that desire to do what will hurt us and hurt our friends. That old self of ours, that is so corrupt, was actually with Christ. In Jesus, God recreated us new and whole. That's why it says in the Bible, you remember, "If any man is in Christ he is a new creation, old things are passed away, all things have become new."

That's what God actually did in Jesus. If you say to me, "Do you mean He did that in the first century?" Well, really it was

expressed in the first century on Calvary in 29 AD. It was expressed in physical terms, in Jesus' death and His resurrection. Actually, it was something that took place in eternity. It took place in timeless, spaceless eternity. That's really what another amazing verse in the Bible in Revelations says: "That the lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world". In other words, God did all this in eternity and He is able to bring that miracle in timeless, spaceless eternity, down into our lives today. If you say to me how? By faith! By faith, that's it. That miracle of the complete destruction of your old selfish self, and the complete recreation of yourself as it used to be when God first made you is brought about in your life by faith. What is faith? Belief plus obedience. It's believing that that took place in Jesus, and it's acting in the light of that belief.

If you say to me, "How does it work out in everyday life?" Oh, when you lose your temper, instead of starting to try to control it and saying: " I failed again. I failed again.", you say, "God, I thank You that You destroyed that old self and temper in Yourself on Calvary. You destroyed that in Jesus, and You made nothing of that, and You have made me completely new, and I thank you for that. I thank You that I have no need to lose my temper, and I have no need to get angry."

You find yourself being cut across by some other car on the freeway and you're about to say, "Why didn't that guy get out of the way?"; you instead say, "God I know that the self inside me that wants to control that guy, the self that feels that if that fella gets across me I'm ruined, that self was crucified with Christ. I thank You. That's no longer alive inside me. I thank You for that. Now I know that there is a self-inside me that is new and clean and that trusts You absolutely. Father, I thank You for that guy that cut across me, and I hope that he gets to work on time, and I know that you'll organize my life so that I'll get to work on time, too."

That's it! In other words, you live by that faith. Faith is belief on the basis of reasonable evidence that God has done certain things with that selfish self-inside you. Then, you act on the basis of that belief. That's what faith is. As you do that, there is a power of life, actually, a person called the Holy Spirit, that can take that miracle and that event that took place in the timeless, spaceless eternity that even Einstein was able to see, you remember, when he told us that there is a sense in which there is no time and there is no space. The event that took place is made real in your present life by the Holy Spirit, by the power of God's own life.

So how do you overcome the self? How do you overcome this power inside you that stops you doing what you know you ought to do? By faith. By believing it to death. By believing that God did, in fact, destroy it in Jesus and made you a completely new self. That's the self you have and that self is perfectly able to obey God. That's it. You do it by faith.