

What is Sonship?

Romans 9:4b

Second Title: What Does It Mean to be a Son?

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

The being that made you is really a dear person. He designed you to live a certain way. And really, loved ones, you are only going to be happy if you live that way. It's a way in which you and I would depend on him consciously every day of our lives for all of our directions and all of our needs. It's a way in which we would treat him as a dear father, a father who knows our names and who will give us everything good for us. That's the way he is. But you know that we believe so many lies about him and so many lies about ourselves and each other. We believe so many lies about the powers of other people to destroy our lives that we at times don't know whether we are living the way he wants us to or not. At times we think we are and then we realize we are just spewing out a lot of religious phrases. Other times, when we don't think we are living the way he wants us, we feel closer to him than we realize. That is the value of this dear book, the Bible. We cannot tell what our real motives are. At times, we cannot tell who we really trust.

This dear book has a way of exposing us to ourselves. It really is supernatural. It's the best psycho-analyst we could get, it really is. It's like a sword as it says in Hebrews 4:12. For many of us we thought of this book as an old book. In Ireland we used it to hold up a vase of flowers or an aspidistra. For others of us it just gathers dust. It is amazing to think that it is alive, it really is, loved ones. Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

It is because of the power of this book that we all have been coming together here. Some of us have been coming here as long as 7 years. They come not to hear me or some of the rest of us, because all we can share is our own blindness and darkness with each other. I certainly have come here and this dear book has said something deep down in our subconscious, deeper down than any other person can get to, and it has allowed us to see a whole attitude of distrust towards God -- a whole attitude and set of thoughts that we had which were not consistent with thinking of him as our dear Father. Many of us have turned from those attitudes and been delivered from that worry-ridden, egotist that we were. This is why we gather together, loved ones.

Where we have got to in this book, is the book called Romans in the New Testament. The part we have reached in it is where Paul (the author of Romans) is talking about the Jewish nation, the Israelites of the Old Testament. Paul begins to outline the kind of relationships that they had with God. What we have been looking at is not how we are different from them but asking ourselves whether we are different than them. We are supposed to be but really are we?

You remember several weeks ago many of us saw that we were wilful in anachronisms. In other words, we were wilfully and deliberately living as if we were back in Old Testament times. We were living lives that the Jews, themselves, lived. We were living as if all we had was the Old Testament. As if all we had was the revelation of God that they had. You know, loved ones, if you live as if God is doing today only the things that he did yesterday, you will have no real relationship with him.

I think that's why many of you loved ones have a vagueness in your sense of God--- because you are living as if you're Jews. You are living as if all that happened is what happened up to the Dispensation. You know you wouldn't have a relationship with your son or wife or your mother if you were dealing with them as they were 20 years ago. You'd be lost, really. You'd be absolutely lost if you started to treat your father as if he were a 5 year old. Or if you started to treat your mother as if she were a 15 year old, because she is a different person entirely from those days. If you treat her as she was then, you have no relationship with her at all. You know that you wouldn't have any interaction between you and her.

That is the same with God. God's inner nature does not change but he varies his ways of dealing with people according to the knowledge they have. If you keep dealing with God with the knowledge that the Jews had then, loved ones, you are really worshipping an idol that you made in your own image. Honestly, I believe that is why many of you who are very conscientious about your Christianity and those of us who aren't Christians but are conscientious in our search for truth, have a vagueness and unreality in our life with God because we are dealing with him as if we are Jews.

You remember what we talked about 2 weeks ago. Many of us are dealing with God as if we are Jews in the regard of sin. Many of us here think that the highest achievement of Jesus on Calvary was to cover our sins. That's it. Many of us believe the highest achievement of Jesus on Calvary was to cover our sins. So that when God came and looked he was kind of a little slow and he looked and said, "No, it's not there." Many of us, loved ones, believe that the greatest achievement of Jesus on Calvary was to cover our sins. Jesus on Calvary bore the punishment of our sins so that now we don't need to bear that punishment and we don't need to suffer the death that other people have to suffer.

Brothers and sisters, the Jews believed that. Even the dear old Jews had got that far. They had got as far as seeing that something miraculous happened in the heart of God which enabled them to exist in this world without any respite or punishment. They knew that. You remember it's there in Psalm 32:1 "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Verse 5: "I acknowledged my sin to thee, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin." Now, loved ones, the Jews could experience the forgiveness of sins and they could experience the covering of their sin.

Now, do you remember what sin is? Just that simple definition in James 4:17, "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." That is sin. You know what is right to do but you don't do it, that's sin. The Jews were often in that position. They would do that because they believed God would cover their sin because of his mercy. But many of us are in that same position. If you say to me, "Well, what's wrong with it?" or "What did Jesus come to do?". Well, look at Matthew 1:21. Jesus didn't come to put our sins under the table and tell his Father it's alright, there is no sin there. Matthew 1:21, "she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." The Greek word is "apo" which means "from" -- not "en" which means "in". The Jews only knew salvation in their sins. "I'll accept you despite of your sin." But Jesus came to save us from our sins. That is why Jesus died, loved ones, to save us FROM our sins. In other words, Jesus can enable us to be delivered from our envy and our pride in our everyday lives. The Jews had to walk in an everyday sinning and forgiveness, sinning and forgiveness. But since Jesus died on the cross it is possible for us to live above sin in our everyday life. Now that's good news for wives and good news for husbands -- but probably good news

for all of us. Because it is possible because of Jesus' death to live above sin.

Now could I just point to a remarkable response inside you at this moment? You're saying, "I don't think I like that good news." We are an amazing crowd, aren't we, we human beings? We admire a Bjorn Borg for his near perfect tennis. We admire a pitcher who pitches a perfect game in baseball but we don't like Jesus saying, "Be ye perfect as your father in heaven is perfect." And yet you know how we will run to the attack on that.

Now, loved ones, that's the really important thing we have to deal with: that response within us. Do you see there is in every one of us an ugly rebellion inside us against the possibility that we could live the way God wants us to live? We don't really like that idea too much. There is an ugly self inside us that does not respond to that favourably. There is an ugly self that likes a little bit of laxness. There is an ugly self that is prepared to accept "Lord, forgive me my sins and I'll do my best. I'll do my best -- win some, lose some." That's the way it goes. There's an ugly self inside us that likes that kind of freedom. Loved ones, it's that ugly self that's keeping us in the powerlessness of Jewish Dispensation. I would really encourage you to listen with all your heart to the things that I would share.

Now what is the remedy for that ugly self and why didn't the Jews experience it themselves? Would you remember back with me thousands of years ago? Do you remember the whole world decided to turn against God? Men and women decided "we'll do without him and we will do it our own way. We are not going to put up with directions day after day. We will make our own decisions and work it out our own way. We will do without God. We will establish our own security and our own happiness on our own." Do you remember what happened at that time?

Maybe you'd look at it in Genesis 6:11, "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence." And back in verse 5, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." We like to feel that you can live your life your own way and live it according to your own directions and do things that many people think are bad and yet it will not affect our own nature. But do you see what happened to them? The more they lived for themselves and established their own deity over different sections of the earth, the more they turned into terrible monsters. And yet you know it with the son of Sam, you don't have trouble with that. Isn't that right?

In our own lives we think we can continue on telling lies, being sarcastic, living for ourselves, establish our own reputation and yet somehow it won't affect our natures. Yet, we know when we see a Son of Sam [a serial killer in New York] murdering everywhere around him -- or when we see a Hitler, when we see a Stalin -- we know the actions that you do, do pervert your own nature and do change your own character. Loved ones, that's what happened back there in those days. Men living for themselves, cutting down anyone who got in the way, turned themselves into monsters. They bent the original personality God had given them out of all recognition and they became monsters for which there was only one remedy.

That remedy is there if you'd like to look at it in Genesis 6:12-13, "And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth.'" Brothers and sisters, it is possible to come to that decision where the only answer to sin and disobedience is death. Do you see that is what death is for? Death is not to punish us for our sins -- "you bad child, you should not live without trusting me, don't do that again!" That's not the purpose of death. The purpose of death is to destroy sin

and to destroy a personality that has become hopelessly perverted and twisted by sin. So that all we could cry out is what the normal Jew could cry out, "I don't understand my own actions, I do the very thing I do not want. The thing I want to do, I cannot do." That's a personality that is so twisted and perverted that it no longer makes any sense to itself. It has no longer any control of itself. That was the position of the normal Jew hundreds of years ago. Now, loved ones, the only answer to that kind of perverted personality is death.

Of course, God explained that to us by flooding the whole world in the time of Noah. Really his problem was this: how do you get rid of that perverted personality without destroying the sinner? Because that's what he had to do. The first time he flooded the world, he destroyed everybody but Noah and his family. You know that God did discover a way to destroy that perverted personality without destroying the sinner. You remember he said later on to Noah, "I will never again destroy all flesh upon the earth." The reason for that was because there was a Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. God took the perverted personalities of all of us rebels, he put them into Jesus, and he burned them out with rays of chemotherapy that we ourselves could not have survived. God, as a physician, took the cancerous desire for greed, envy, jealousy, pride, reputation, security and importance that we have developed in our personalities and he put them into Jesus and destroyed them on the cross. For that reason, loved ones, he was able to avoid destroying the whole world again with a flood.

The Jews knew nothing of that action of God. They just knew God was no longer destroying the world. They knew that for some reason God had held back his hand and their conscience witnessed that. They were doing things that they should have received death for and yet, they were still alive and this God was in fact helping them. All they could sense was that there was a merciful heart of God there. They knew nothing of the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. All they could live in was a vague twilight zone of forgiveness and mercy because of some mighty action that they sensed had taken place in some pre-eternal creation. That's all they could experience.

Loved ones, I beg of you. Do not live in that vagueness yourselves. They had to live in that vagueness because they thought there was nothing else you could do with the miserable twisted personality that I have which will not obey when I want it to, will not love when I want it to love, will not be patient when I want it to be patient. They could not do anything with that, loved ones, except for an odd man. Noah was blameless in his generation. David, at times, lived above. The normal Jew lived in the middle of that twisted, perverted personality, sensing only that something had happened whereby his Creator did not destroy him and was able to forgive him.

Loved ones, the truth is that the mighty surgery that God works in all of us on Calvary could not be effective in any human being until it was set forth in a way we could understand and perceive. So, even though God had done that in his own heart, in the Lamb that was slain before creation ever occurred, yet, the benefits of that death and that extermination of that twisted personality, it could only be actualized by a person who consciously identified himself with Jesus in his death.

Of course you couldn't do that unless you knew about it. Do you see the Jews had no way of knowing about it? They had no way of being delivered. Loved ones, we know about it. You know that there is nothing in you so bad that God has not already destroyed it in Jesus. There is no habit that you're used to, that's got such a grip on you, that God is not able to actualize the destruction in you that took place in Jesus. That's why he says, "So, you also must consider yourself dead unto sin and alive unto God." Unless you are able to consider yourself dead unto sin and alive unto God, the action cannot be made real in your life.

But now you know it, loved ones, you can be. Do you see the purpose of Jesus' death was the destruction of that -- oh, what does Dostoevsky call it -- that "streak of irrationality" in you. That streak of irrationality that will even destroy you, yourself to get your own way. God put that in his son, Jesus, and destroyed it there on Calvary. That destruction can be made real in you if you are willing to identify yourself with Jesus in his death to his rights. We are dumb, you know. What rights have you? It's silly when you think of it. We fight for 70 years to maintain our rights and at the end of 70 years we have no rights. People trample over the top of us, they plant little flowers in us. And there we are defending our rights madly. We are wanting our own way and we know we look over our life and we don't normally get our own way. There are all kinds of ways we have compromised because we couldn't get our own way.

Really, it is a lie we are hankering after. The amazing thing is there is that thing in us which will hanker after this lie just to get our own way. Loved ones, that desire was crucified with Jesus and was destroyed on Calvary. That is the heart of sin. We have no need to live in the twilight zone of mercy and forgiveness. You can come to a place where you accept what God has done for you in Jesus on Calvary, and you identify yourself with him, and you are willing for all of yourself to die so that a new being could be created. Because that is the amazing truth. There will be no New Birth, unless there is a death of that old self in you.

Really, Jesus said it, Paul said it. If we die with him, we shall also rise with him. But if you don't die with him, there is no resurrection. Do you see that's why many of us are living such powerless Christian lives? We like to think there are two kinds of Christianity -- the victorious one and the defeated one. There isn't. There's the Christian life or the Jewish life. You are living one or the other. If you are living the Jewish life, in continual sinning, mercy and forgiveness, sinning, loved ones, you are dealing with God as he dealt with mankind a thousand years ago

Would you like to question me? I'm not talking about sinless perfection. There are all kinds of sin we don't know about. We will probably go to God with millions of sins inside us that we never knew about. Loved ones, God is talking about the sins we know about. It's perfect obedience, it's not perfection, but perfect obedience.

Question 1: Brother asks, why did the Jews at the time of the Flood or later on not have this or know about it? Loved ones, do you see that Jesus came in the fullness of time and part of that is God had to allow mankind to try everything he wanted to try and see that it wasn't any good. He allowed them to try law and authority, to try organization and order to bring man to the end of himself where he would be ready even to make sense of Jesus at all.

It's interesting, loved ones, if you think of it, there has to be a certain state of order in the world before a person like Jesus could even exist long enough to get his truth over to us. You can conceive of that, I think. You can conceive that there were certain times in the world's history where a man like Jesus would not even live as long as he did live. That's part of it. Part of it is that in order to preserve Jesus long enough to reveal his truth to us, he had to wait that long. The rest of it, brother, is ourselves. We had to be allowed to try everything to come to the end of ourselves and then we were ready to accept what is really a terrible, radical remedy. A remedy where we die by faith to self.

Question 2: Brother asks, what happens to the Jews who were living under this delusion? It does seem that God in that case, you remember, judges by the light that has been given. There is a

parable where he says the servant who knew his master's will but did not act according to his will receives a severe beating, the servant who did not know his master's will does not receive. So, it seems, I think the verse that follows, "Each is judged by the light given." Similarly, brother, in fairness, I think there are many loved ones in the churches who have not grasped this. Now God alone knows whether they have not grasped it because they didn't know about it or because they didn't want it. It does seem even there, my dad died and never heard this kind of thing but was a Christian and lived up to the light that was given.