

Life-Source Determines Sonship

Romans 9:26

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Many of us here have had happy childhoods and many of us here have had unhappy childhoods. But probably all of us can think of somebody who conjures up for us an image of love and kindness. Most of us have in the twilight zone of our memory somewhere an image of a mother or a dad who once did give us a tremendous sense of safety and happiness by the love and care that they gave us.

Maybe it wasn't a dad or mom, maybe it was an uncle or an aunt or maybe it was a foster parent or maybe it was a grandfather or grandmother but most of us can cast our minds back to some person who conjures up for us a whole picture of safety and happiness just by the love and care that they gave us. And we can think of some situation or some set of circumstances in which they either used to tuck us into bed at night when we were little or they used to kiss us good night or they just used to share something that was theirs.

When we cast our minds back to that--it gives us that old feeling of safety and just security. Of course it's kind of sharp and sophisticated today to look askance at that kind of fond memory and contemptuously say it's trying to get back to the womb or it's expressing our need for a father figure but you know that in our discussions here together, we've seen that that isn't what it is at all. Actually that vague sense we have that we need some kind of significant other, with whom we can have a loving, intimate, dependent relationship, that sense is there simply because our Creator planned for us to have that kind of relationship with Him. So that for us that need for a father figure is not just an illusion of God that we have created in our own imaginations to satisfy our needs.

For us, the very fact that God planned for us to be His dear children whom He would love and take care of, is confirmed by the fact that inside we feel the need for such a person. So you know that in our discussions, we've been seeing that's not an illusion that we have in our minds, that we just need some big father figure -- it's not an illusion. It's a testimony within us that reality provides for that. That there is a plan in the mind of the Creator of the universe that we would all have that kind of experience with Him.

Yet loved ones, isn't it true that many of us here this morning believe that? We believe that with all our heads anyway. We try to believe it with our hearts but there are many of us who do not get that intimate relationship from God. In fact, the reason in hard times we lie in bed at night and try to think of that dear old grandmother or that dear dad that used to kiss us good night -- the reason we do that when times are hard -- is because we don't have that relationship with the dear person who made us.

We don't have an intimate, loving closeness to our Father and I think many of you come here Sunday after Sunday and you feel something of it here, you know. You feel He is warm, He is kind, He is dear and yet through the week, it seems that that image of Him fades and fades and you have to go back to your memories of childhood or you have to depend on people to give you that sense of closeness and security. So many of us believe that that's really what God planned us to experience and we believe a lot about Him but somehow we aren't in that experience ourselves.

Loved ones, that experience is what the Bible calls being a son of the living God. Now I know that many of you think, "Oh no, being a son of the living God is believing a whole lot of things and having a certain attitude to things." No, loved ones. Being a son of the living God is knowing your Creator as your dear, kind, understanding Father and as someone who gives you tremendous security and comfort and consolation and encouragement in the day-to-day life that you live. That's what being a son of the living God is.

You know, some of you may say, "Well, I mean that's what the Jews experienced, isn't it?" Well you know actually, they didn't. They didn't experience that. In 722 B.C., God allowed them to be deported into Assyria and He said, "You who were once My people, I have called not My people". And, actually, God regarded them as distant and separate from himself and as a result, in their own hearts they felt that. They felt alienated from God. They felt far from him. They felt no sense of closeness to him.

Now some of you may say, "Oh listen, with all their privileges, they had to feel close to Him", and you know the privileges are listed there in Romans 9:4. We looked at them about a year ago, maybe, and you remember Paul lists the privileges.

Romans 9:4, "They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ." And you know, you may say, "Look, even the first privilege there, 'They are Israelites and to them belong the sonship' -- they must have known they were sons" -- and yet, you remember when we dealt with that verse, we found the Greek word was 'euphasisia', it means not so much sonship but adoption. Adoption is an action of the parent even in our own society. It's primarily an action of the parent. It refers to the action of the parent, not the experience of the child.

It's a parent extending to a certain child all the rights and privileges that he would to his own son and it's that child feeling it has a legal right to that protection and care. The Israelites felt that. They felt that. They felt that God had covenanted with them to be their God if they obeyed Him. They themselves had seen Him provide manna, and provide water -- that's His glory, His power in tangible ways that they could understand.

They understood all that. They knew that God had committed Himself to being their God but somehow the individual Israelite did not have a personal experience of God's love and care in His own life. That's true, loved ones. They knew that God regarded Israel as His Son. You remember God said, "I have called you Israel, My Son, out of Egypt", they knew that.

They knew that God regarded Israel, the nation, as a collective son and that He was extending to that collective son the rights of His protection and His care. But the individual Israelite had no warm personal intimate sense that God was their dear Father, that God was that dear grandfather that tucked them into bed at night, that God was that dear mom that kissed them good night.

They had no sense that God was that close, loving Father to them and so sonship for them was utterly preoccupied with God's action -- what God's attitude was. It had little to do with their own inner attitude. It was dependent completely on what God was doing and what His attitude was but it wasn't mirrored in an attitude of sonship in themselves. And you know, the Father says that, loved ones, if you look at it. It's in Hosea 11:1-2.

Hosea 11:1-2, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." But did that find a son's attitude in their hearts? "The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and burning incense to idols." So, loved ones, the Israelites knew that God has a certain attitude to them but they didn't feel that attitude in their own hearts day-by-day and you may say, "Oh but didn't they have some idea of being born again?"

Yes, you remember Maimonides was one of their outstanding Rabbis and during the last 200 years before Christ, Maimonides described one who was a proselyte this way, he said, "The Gentile that is made a proselyte, that is that becomes a Jew, is like a child newborn and as to all those relations had whilst the Gentile, they now cease." So they had a vague idea of the new birth but it was used in a metaphorical sense to refer to a person who had changed his whole attitude or who had given up his own thought system or his own behavior pattern and had adopted another.

It was used in the same way as the word is used popularly today. You know everybody talks about new birth but by new birth they just mean, "Oh I am adopting a new attitude to life. I am taking a different attitude to my life. I've entered into a whole new set of relationships and a new set of ideas." But new birth for the Jew was not a personal experience of God's love within them and a new birth into a warm, intimate relationship to Him. How many of us are the same?

You know, how many of us here this morning believe that Jesus died for our sins? We really do and we believe that He died for us personally as much as we can in our heads. We believe that God is our Father and that He'll take care of us and we believe that He has a plan for our lives. We believe that we'll go to live with Him forever at the end but yet our relationship with Him is forensic, you know, it's legal.

"Okay, I should have died for my sins. No, now Jesus has died for me therefore I don't need to die, therefore God loves me", and it's primarily a series of logical influences. It's a forensic formal relationship we have to God. So many of the things I share here on Sunday about how God feels towards us -- you know you believe it in your head but it's difficult to feel it in your heart Monday through Friday.

It's difficult to feel that God is your dear loving Father as you begin to come into financial difficulties or you begin to come into conflict in the office. Now loved ones, why is that so? Why were the Jews themselves in that kind of forensic, formal relationship to God, where they believed all the right things but they didn't feel it inside? I'll show you why. It's in Hosea 11:1-2.

Hosea 11:1-2, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and burning incense to idols." The Jews gave a lip service to God on the Sabbath but in their everyday practical work lives, they depended on the idols for all they needed.

So God said, "I will supply everything you need. I will be a Father to you. I love you. I will give you all that you need." They believed it in their head but Monday through Friday or Monday through Saturday, they depended on the idols. Now they were no fools. They knew the idols weren't real gods, they knew that. They had very strong preachers preaching to them as we read there if you like to look at another one. It's in Isaiah 46, and there were servants of God that were pointing out clearly to them, "Look this idol, this wood or stone is not a God."

Isaiah 46:5-7, "To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike?"

Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in the scales, hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship! They lift it upon their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble."

So actually they knew fine well. They knew fine well that if you speak to that chair, it can't do a thing for you. They knew that an inanimate object could not do anything for them. So they did two things. First of all in Isaiah 29, you can see what attitude they continued to God Himself.

Isaiah 29:13, And the Lord said: "Because these people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men learned by rote..." So they continued to look at God as the God of the universe but they paid him just lip service. They knew that he was the real God so they did observe him outwardly but in their day-to-day work you see what they did in Isaiah 65.

Isaiah 65:2, "I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices." They followed their own devices in their Monday to Friday life. In other words, they worshipped the same idols as the Assyrians and they depended on the same powers as the Assyrians depended on for their life day-by-day. That's what the prophets mean when they accuse the Israelites of syncretism. Syncretism means that along with Jehovah, the Jews worshipped the gods of Assyria.

Now they did that not because they thought they were real gods but because they could make those gods into their own image. They couldn't do that with Jehovah. They could treat a piece of stone and make it say anything and that's why they worshipped idols because they could pretend that the idol wanted them to do what they were in fact doing. It's the same with us, you know, when we were children, tossing a coin whether you cut the grass or whether you go swimming. So, heads we go swimming. So you tossed up, tails, "Well I didn't toss it right. Okay toss it up again. Well, I wasn't holding my mouth right. Okay, toss up. Ah!" We get the answer that we want, so we go. That's what they did with the idols.

They could make the idols say what they wanted them to say and actually you can see it in the very name of the idols. One of the idols was Baal and we mentioned it you remember a couple of weeks ago. They worshipped Baal but actually anybody who knows Hebrew knows that 'Ba al' is the Hebrew verb for own or possess. Actually all it means was, they depended day-by-day for their life on the possessions that they had, on the money they could make. That's where they got their security and safety from. Now God prompted one of His servants to say it you know in Isaiah 31:1.

Isaiah 31:1, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord!" In other words, they depended on the power of their money and the power of their possessions.

In your job situation, every time you curry favor with the guy who has power to promote you, you are depending on your horses and your chariots. You may say, "No, no, I am just being circumspect and prudent". No! You're depending on the same life source for your life as the people who know nothing about God as their loving Father. That's right. Every time you curry favor with the guy or the girl in your work situation who has power to promote you or demote you, you are depending on the chariots and the horses of Egypt.

You're depending on the things that you yourself can control and to that extent loved ones, you're worshipping Baal. To that extent, you're a son of Baal. To that extent, you're not a son of God. To that extent, you're a child of wrath. Actually you know it, when you think of it, you know it, because you know the worry and anxiety that prevents you getting to sleep at night if you're depending on that kind of power for your promotion. You know it.

It's the same in a home situation -- a family situation that is chaotic. The moment you begin to depend on someone else continuing to be nice, in order for you to be happy in that home, that moment, you've begun to worship Baal. You've begun to worship things that you can possess and control and to that extent, you cease to be a child of God and you begin to be a child of wrath and you know it. You know it because there comes a day when they don't behave the way you want them to and suddenly all your happiness is destroyed and you can't sleep that night for worry.

So loved ones, the Jews had no experience of intimate, warm, sonship relationship with God because they worshipped him on the Sabbath but during the days of the week, they depended on the same life source as the people who didn't know anything about Him at all. They depended on their horses and their chariots, on their money and on their possessions. So it's the same every time you get worried -- when the bank balance goes down or the salary didn't come in as you hoped it would or there's more expenditure on the car than you planned.

Every time that tremor of worry comes into your heart, it's a clear indication that you're really in your heart of hearts, depending on the same life source as the children of this world for your reassurance and your security. Really! Because there wouldn't be a tremor or a worry if you really know that your heavenly Father has all the money in the world and will give you whatever you need and that your security is dependant on Him alone. But the more you go to the wrong life source, the more you'll fail to have an experience of intimate, warm, love and care from your Father in heaven. Because the truth is, loved ones, that life source determines sonship, that's right.

For if I want to know whose son Earl is, or I want to know whose daughter Chris is, I go and find out, where did they get their life? Who gave them their life, which mother, which father gave them their life? Where was their life source? That's whose son they are, that's whose daughter they are. Now it's amazing but day-to-day, through the week, you're determining whose son you are and whose daughter you are by this life source that you go to.

Another life source for the Jews was Ashtaroth. Ashtaroth stood for eroticism and lust and they began to worship Ashtaroth, one of the idols in those days. In other words, they didn't look at an image of stone or an image of wood and get their satisfaction or their lust or their happiness from that but they regarded that as standing for the things they depended upon for their happiness and God spoke to them about it you know, in Isaiah 47. You'll see it.

Isaiah 47:8, "Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children". Their whole attitude was: We shall control our own happiness. We will not let anything unpleasant touch us. We will keep away from all unhappy experiences and if anything unpleasant happens, we will resent it and we will get our enjoyment as we want it because there is none beside us and we are the only one that counts.

Loved ones, if you have that attitude to your daily life, you're really a child of this world.

That's why your dear Father can't give you a sense of intimate sonship because actually Monday through Friday you depend on the same life sources as everybody else. If it's a bright day, you're happy. If it's a dull day, you're sad. If the sun shines, you're joyful, if it rains, you're sad. If things go well at work, you're happy. If they go badly, you're miserable.

Really, you're simply worshipping Ashtaroth. You're worshipping the happy experiences or you're fearing the unhappy experiences that come along but you're absolutely at the mercy of what happens to you. That's why you call it happiness. Happiness is a kind of satisfaction with what happens to you and if it doesn't happen right, you're not happy.

Now loved ones, that's what makes you a child of wrath and what makes you experience tremendous depression at times because you're not looking to the same person who gives happiness all the time, which is the Father. You're looking to other things and other people. That's why even when you're water skiing, you need to be careful how much happiness you're getting from the water skiing and how much happiness you get in from the dear Father who made the water and made the skis.

Really, because as you let your heart go out after happiness in that way, then you're a sitting duck for Satan to come right along and bring some unhappy event. Your whole personality is addicted to the thing that's coming in from the outside, so it just launches out to the unhappy thing that comes. But that's what it means, loved ones, to worship idols and that's why many of us here on a Sunday sense the warmth and the intimacy of God's presence and of His love but Monday through Friday we miss it because we do not look to Him.

We look to the same life sources as everybody else is looking to. I'd just like you to look at one other, loved ones. It's actually the Hebrew word for King, it's 'Mallech' and the Hebrew verb is 'Mallaach' and it means to rule or to govern. Of course, 'Moloch' was the idol and he stood for the Jewish attitude towards manipulating people and dominating people and making them do what we want them to do. That's what God spoke to in Isaiah 30:12.

Isaiah 30:12, "Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, 'Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them;". You know many of us were horrified at the book that came out you remember, what was the name of it, "how to manipulate by", I don't know.

You know, how to manipulate people to get what we want. Many of us read it and were horrified and we thought, "No, that's no way to run life and manipulate people and to dominate people." And yet, loved ones, when you get into tight situations, when you respond by bad temper or when you respond by that little half lie that sends the other person in a wrong direction, really, what you're doing is worshipping Moloch. Really what you're doing is somehow committing yourself to being a child of this world.

In personal relationships where you try to get somebody to do what you want them to do, whatever it means for them -- where you try to manipulate them -- really what you're doing is saying to God, "Lord, you're okay on Sundays but in this work-a-day practical world, I can't trust you to take care of my life unless I have my finger in the middle of pies somewhere." And really what we're doing is saying we are children of this world.

Loved ones, God is so good, you know -- He is such a dear person. He doesn't really care too much about the big crisis experiences or about all the things you say you believe. He just sits there and says, "Ho Hum, I'll see who you look to on Monday." And that's it -- God is good. He knows that you

can only be His son, you will only be His daughter if you're getting your life from Him, if you're going to Him as the life source. That's why you remember, Paul talked in Galatians about dying with Christ and about the world being crucified to Him and the only way to leap into intimate sonship with God as your dear Father, in a way that you will know in your own heart is to plunge into Jesus.

Plunge into having the world crucified to you. Really, you can do that in a moment. You can actually take the step this moment. You can say, "Lord Jesus, you obviously got everything you needed from your Father. You were crucified on the Cross. You no longer depended on people for anything you needed.

You no longer depended on people's opinion for how you felt. You no longer depended on the good experiences for how happy you were, "Lord Jesus, thank You that I died with you and was crucified with you and the world was separated from me as it was separated from you. Lord, I accept that. I am going to live that way throughout this week." That's what faith is.

Faith is not a whole lot of mumbo jumbo. It's not a whole series of beliefs, it's living in the reality that you've been crucified with Christ, that the world has been crucified to you and that no longer do you need it for your security and your happiness and your peace and your joy and your significance. That's it, loved ones.

Honestly, I know you'll find this out. As you live in the light of that this week, you'll begin to sense your dear Father in heaven as a warm, intimate, loving, kindly person who knows you by name. You'll sense it, you will. You'll begin to sense that inside and you'll no longer need illusions of some memory of some dear aunt or uncle who was kind to you. You live with a person who owns the universe, and yet whom you know loves you with all His heart, that's what will happen.

In other words, God will send the Spirit of His Son into your heart crying "Abba, Father" and the Greek word 'Abba' is 'Dad'. God will send the Spirit of His Son into your heart so that you'll automatically from the bottom of your heart cry, "Dad, thank You Lord, thank You that You're with me in the midst of this office situation. Thank You that is under your control", and you'll experience that continually if you'll stop worshipping the idols through the week and start looking to God as your life source.

I pray especially, you know, for those of you who have been trying and trying for months, maybe years to make it real inside. I pray that you'll start. Faith is action. Faith is living in the midst of the fact that we have been crucified with Christ and the world has been crucified to us and that God will give us all we need, that's it. I pray that the Holy Spirit will bring it to your mind in the midst of the office next Tuesday. Let's pray.

Dear Father, we've so often used the word 'Father' because it's in the Lord's prayer, because we believe it in our heads. So rarely, dear Lord, have we felt that You were our dear Father because we've been looking to so many other sources for our life besides You. Lord we've pretended that You were our God but we've really made our own gods and in times of difficulty we've really depended on our own ability to manipulate people. We've depended on our own ability to speak the right word to the right person for importance.

We've depended on getting the right physical relationship with someone in order to get thrill and happiness. We've depended on our own possessions and our money to make ourselves feel safe and secure. Lord, we see that these are wells that have run out of water and Father, we see that that's

why You crucified us with Christ so that we were no longer dependent on this world for what we need.

Lord, we would plunge into Jesus this morning by faith and Lord Jesus, if this arrangement was good enough for you, it's good enough for us and we accept it, Lord Jesus. We accept now that circumstances and things and people cannot give us the love and the security and the significance and the happiness that God alone can give us and from henceforth, we look to You, our Father, as our dear Father and intend to live as your practical sons, Monday through Friday, for your glory.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and throughout this coming week. Amen.