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Substance of Three Sermons

preached by our Pastor

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on June 16, 1974.

Morning Lesson. Ephesians 1.

But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

Jeremiah 3. 19.

Let us say immediately, this blessed Scripture in all its sublime, glorious concentration is the quintessence and acme of all holy, heavenly desire and longing in the souls of all who are born again of the Spirit. I am conscious that even in this congregation there are those who find this by grace to be their priority. It would be a cup full of joy to their souls to really receive the assurance that God Almighty had put them among His children. Nothing else, nothing less can ever satisfy a quickened sinner. We have drawn your attention to the anticipated sentence to be uttered by the spendthrift son as he returned to his dear father and his father's house. He found himself there, and there was the omission of one of the sentences. He contemplated saying; "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son, - thy son." Take the two words: Thy son; God; Thy son. How many of us are sons and daughters of God? "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." He contemplated using the next sentence. "Make me as one of thy hired servants." Knowing the irresistible drawing of divine grace and the infinite compassion of his Father, this is omitted. There is no mention of "make me as one of thy hired servants." Why? Because nothing less than sonship will do.

So we have a truly remarkable, divine, glorious subject before us. It is one of the cardinal, principle, holy doctrines of the faith of Jesus Christ; a glorious doctrine divine that is so impossible for human sagacity to contemplate, - the doctrine of adoption. I must try to spell

it out in terms you will appreciate and understand.

Adoption. I wonder why the term 'adoption' arises in the Bible? in the economy of God? You may say; "Surely God created Adam in His own image and he was therefore a son of God, and Eve, created to be an help meet for him was a daughter of God, so how does the term arise?" In a certain sense the whole human race has relationship to God. Every baby born,- I do not know how many are born every second round the world; probably thousands will be born to day, - who gave them life, existence? God. Life is a miracle; a supreme miracle. Probably I have said to you before, when I was in London and going to the Royal College of Surgeons I well remember looking with great astonishment, admiration and awe at a skeleton of an embryo that would fill a matchbox. We all started like that. So we are obviously related to God; He our Creator and we His creatures, accountable to Him. Sadly, solemnly we lost His image. The vast race of mankind is God's human race: He who gave life and breath and all things. You will find yourself plunging into depths that cannot be fathomed, and that your mind can never penetrate.

So I do not propose to extend these remarks, only to feel the miracle and wonder of life, and God gives it, and for what purpose? Babies do not ask to be born into the world. They had no hand in it. I am sure you are often asking; "Why was I born? why am I here? what is the purpose of my existence?" If this is a genuine inquiry I hope it will lead you to; "Lord, I want to be living to Thy praise and glory, a new creature in Christ Jesus." O the awesomeness of life! and to know we occupy a unique position in Creation. We have an intelligent mind and an immortal soul. So think of the issue; of heaven and hell; the penalty for sin; and of that which flows to His adopted children through the merits of Christ, of everlasting felicity, a goodly heritage.

I will answer the question posed: how does adoption arise in the economy of God? If we are His creatures we are His offspring in that sense;- all nations are, so how does adoption arise? It is considered and undertaken by some: it is known in life. There are those who long for a child, and ultimately adopt a child. We have seen tragedies and great blessings in this. There no tragedies in this adoption. When I say tragedies, some of you knew and felt a great affection, as I did, for the Reverend Chapman,

the late vicar of Hailsham, a godly man. He adopted a son, poor Hugh, a promising boy, and stricken and dying around twenty with cancer. O the sorrow of it to those gracious people! There are no tragedies with this adoption: all go to glory, and I hope that lad did. He was contemporary with some of ours.

Why does adoption arise? For this specific, basic reason. Adam fell, he succumbed, his wife and himself to the temptation of Satan, and sinned against God, and their fall was complete. There was no residuum left of righteousness. It was complete, utter ruin. It meant they completely lost the image of God and fell to the image of Satan. If you said to me; "I am doubtful of the doctrine that the fall was complete." what about the state of the human race to day? And I will come closer: if you are taught of God and convinced of sin you have only to look at self. You will not doubt because you have it in your own heart and nature.

"That we're unholy needs no proof;  
We sorely feel the fall;

Blessed be God for the other side!

But Christ has holiness enough  
To sanctify us all." (181)

Can you doubt really that doctrine of the fall when you see the potential of man, and not only those who make no profession of religion? Violence, vandalism, murder, all the list of evils: - you shudder. Blessed be God! it is not here. We are not in Ulster here. When you think of it all and pray for the brave police force, you have to realise, if you are taught of God, that you have got it all in your nature. You are not a whit better as to your nature and wicked heart. None can really cast a stone at another. Christ said concerning the woman; "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." (John 8.7) They all went out. If you can say; "I am without sin." you can start with a stone.

That is why we are building up to the emergence of the divine wisdom and grace of God. It is awful to contemplate; "Ye are of your father the devil." (John 8.44) This is a tremendous word of solemnity. Every man is a slave to Satan and sin. I remember Joseph Field of Horam saying there

were various things in his heart and he did not know whether it was the devil or Jo Field because they were so alike, and you will get it. You will not be able to blame the devil for everything. This is stern stuff: it is true. So you have man in his fallen state, wretched, undone; at enmity, alienation. What is he in relation to God? A willing slave to Satan: what in respect to God? A foreigner. You have only got to work it out: you do not speak the same language, you have not the same habits, you do not keep the same company. We became aliens. Is it true? - And worse if it is possible: we became enemies to God. Think of it! to be God's enemy: a foe to His truth and Person; fighting against Him. We became rebels who would <sup>do</sup> everything against Him and His cause; with a heart and nature that is enmity against God. This was our state; I hope it is not now.

Let us pause. Do you accept and believe the doctrine concerning the fall of man and his state? Do you realise you were an alien, a foe, a rebel, full of enmity? Your sinful nature still is, and this makes the conflict. That is why it is hard work to live: it is sorrow to live because of what we are. That is why we groan being burdened, because of our nature. I used to think of rebellion as spasmodic until I realised my nature is rebellion. Only grace can subdue it. If you go along with this, you can go further. The amazing love of God, - the amazing heart of God is, He did not look on people who loved Him: He looked on a people who would love Him: not loved Him; a people who hated Him, who were His enemies, and He loved them. Those predestinated, chosen ones He saw in all their enmity, rebellion and sin and He loved them when there was nothing lovable in them. He did not love their sin: He loved their persons. This is a grand doctrine, so sublime, beautiful, wonderful. It will take eternity to praise Him. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5.8) Can you fathom it? The Lord looked on you when you were a foe and loved you. This is the nature of the love of God, and the outworking of the love of God is the incarnation of Christ and His suffering Suretyship and victory. The inworking is when He has accomplished the Text in your soul. That is what adoption is. God puts you among His children.

Let us go further. Adoption means God will be taking, has taken in

eternity, before Adam was created, by effectual grace and vocation He has taken one by one and put them among His children. So let us speak of how it is done: a foe, an alien, a rebel made a child. God asks a question: "But I said, How shall I put thee among the children?" The answer is according to divine wisdom and grace in the gift of His dear Son, and by the gift of the Spirit. "But I said, How shall I put thee among the children?" If you go back, this must be a matter of priority with a number of you. You want the Lord to put you among His children.

Let us name the word 'child'. What is it? It is a son or daughter, an offspring. So to be put among the children is that you are made a son or daughter of God Himself; His offspring. It means your birth is from above it is a new birth divine by the Holy Ghost. It is a new creation and a new creature, and it is brought into filial relationship, union, oneness and communion with God Himself in Christ, and the issue is, He says; "Thou shalt call me, My father." This will be the proof of it. What a blessed way to live, to be brought into full relationship! "Thou shalt call me, My father." He your Father, and you a son or a daughter.

Let us take up the method divine. The chapter deals with the sins of Israel and Judah, and from verse 12 you have the promise of the gospel to the penitent; - the promise and blessing granted to the penitent. How wonderful to have a promise to the penitent! I say to you, there is no limit to the blessing of God to penitent souls. If the Lord favours you with the sweet grace of repentance there is no limit to His blessing. A wonderful favour is a broken spirit, If you said; "Do I know gospel repentance?" "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Psa. 51.17) It does not make any difference as to your age. You may be a young sinner or an old sinner. You may have gone to great lengths. It makes no difference: if you are a chosen vessel, as the Lord favours you with penitence there is no limit to His blessing. It is a thing that so breaks the heart, the love of God to such a rebel. "A foe received a favourite." (792) and you say to yourself; "Is it possible that such a foe is received a favourite? and He makes me know I am a favourite! The erstwhile alien is now a child." This breaks your heart, so that you sing His praise here and you will sing His lasting praise on high. It is so wonderful. You have not been a wonderful person, a paragon of goodness.

You look on yourself and you feel so guilty, vile, wretched, but He has received you as a favourite. I believe as I speak to you I shall get to heaven to sing His praise, and there will be times when you hope it will not be long; the time must soon come. So think of the wonder of it! you within the veil, and seeing the dear Person who was nailed, torn, crucified for you. It is wonderful to feel you are near to Him and to know He has brought you into full relationship.

"But I said, How shall I put thee among the children?" I suppose this will be a question you are asking too. "Is it possible for the Lord to put me among His children?" We shall sing about it shortly.

"But can there, tell me, can there be  
Amongst Thy children room for me?" (447)

Heart breaking, is it not? So how does the Lord accomplish it? There are two parts that form a complete entity; complete and revealed. The part that is hidden from us is the part where God took hold of us in electing love. He put us among His children. That is the hidden part. There was a divine transaction in eternity. He took hold of you by electing love and gave you to His Son in the Covenant of Grace. Amen.