

VIII.

THE HEIRS OF GOD¹

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children of God, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom. 8:14-17)

The passage of Scripture which head's this page is one which ought to raise within us great searchings of heart. It summons us to consider the solemn question, Am I an heir of God? Am I an heir of glory?

Reader, mark well what I say. I am not speaking of any earthly inheritance. I am not writing of matters which only concern the rich, the great, and the noble. I do not ask whether you are an heir to money or lands. I only want you to consider seriously whether you are an heir of God, and an heir of glory?

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance *really worth having*. All others are unsatisfying and disappointing. They bring with them many cares. They cannot cure an aching heart. They cannot lighten a heavy conscience. They cannot keep off family troubles. They cannot prevent sicknesses, bereavements, separations, and deaths. But there is no disappointment among the heirs of glory.

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance *which can be kept for ever*. All others must be left in the hour of death, if they have not been taken away before. The owners of millions of pounds can carry nothing with them beyond the grave. But it is not so with the heirs of glory. Their inheritance is eternal.

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance *which is within everybody's grasp*. Most men can never obtain riches and greatness, though they labor hard for them all their lives. But glory, honor, and eternal life, are offered to every man freely, who is willing to accept them on God's terms. "Whosoever will," may be an heir of glory.

Reader, if you wish to have a portion of this inheritance, you must be a member of the one family on earth to which it belongs, and that is the family of all true Christians. You must become one of God's children on earth, if you desire to have glory in heaven. I write to persuade you to become a child of God this day, if you are not one already. I write to persuade you to make sure work that you are one, if at present you have only a vague hope and nothing more. None but true Christians are the children of God. None but the children of God are heirs of glory. Give me your attention,

¹ A large part of this sermon is undoubtedly not of a prophetic character. But I feel that it may form a fitting conclusion to the whole volume, and therefore insert it unabridged.

while I try to unfold to you these things, and to show you the lessons which the verses you have already read contain.

1. Let me show you *the relation of all true Christians to God. They are "sons of God."*

2. Let me show you *the special evidences of this relation. True Christians are "led by the Spirit." They have "the Spirit of adoption" They have the "witness of the Spirit." They "suffer with Christ."*

3. Let me show you *the special privileges of this relation. True Christians are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."*

1. First, let me show you *the relation of all true Christians to God. They are God's Sons.*

I know no higher and more comfortable word that could have been chosen. To be servants of God, to be subjects, soldiers, disciples, friends, all these are excellent titles. But to be the sons of God is a step higher still. What says the Scripture? "The servant abides not in the house for ever, but the Son abides for ever" (John 8: 35).

To be son of the rich and noble in this world, to be son of the princes and kings of the earth, this is reckoned a privilege. But to be a son of the King of kings, and Lord of lords, to be a son of the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, this is something higher still. And yet this is the portion of every true Christian.

The son of an earthly parent looks naturally to his father for affection, maintenance, provision, and education. There is a home always open to him. There is a love which no bad conduct can completely extinguish. All these are things belonging even to the sonship of this world. Think then how great is the privilege of that poor

sinner of mankind, who can say of God, "He is my Father."

But HOW can sinful men like you and me become sons of God? When do we enter into this glorious relationship? We are not the sons of God by nature. We are not born so when we come into the world. No man has a natural right to look to God as his Father. It is a vile heresy to say that he has. Men are said to be born poets and painters, but we are never born sons of God. The Epistle to the Ephesians tells us, "You were by nature children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3). The Epistle of St. John says, "the children of God are manifest [evident], and the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God" (1 John 3:10). The Catechism of the Church of England wisely follows the doctrine of the Bible, and teaches us to say, "We are by nature born in sin, and children of wrath." Yes we are rather children of the devil, than children of God! Sin is indeed is hereditary, and holy men have not, as a matter of course, holy sons. How then and when does this mighty change and translation come upon men? When and in what manner do sinners become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty?

Men become sons of God in the day that the Spirit leads them to believe on Jesus Christ for salvation and not before. What says the Epistle to the Galatians? "You are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:26). What does the Epistle to the Corinthians say? "Of him [God] are you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:30). What does the Gospel of John say? "As many as received [welcomed] Christ, to them He gave power (or privilege) to become the sons of God,

even [that is] to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). Faith unites the sinner to the Son of God, and makes him one of His members. Faith makes him one of those in whom the Father sees no spot [blemish], and is well pleased. Faith marries him to the beloved Son of God, and entitles him to be reckoned among the sons. Faith gives him fellowship with the Father and the Son. Faith grafts him into the Father's family, and opens up to him a room in the Father's house. Faith gives him life instead of death, and makes him, instead of being a servant, a son. Show me a man that has this faith, and whatever be his Church or denomination, I say that he is a son of God.

Reader, this is one of those points you should never forget. You and I know nothing of a man's sonship *until he believes*. No doubt the sons of God are foreknown and chosen from all eternity, and predestinated to adoption. But, remember, it is not till they are called in due time, and believe, it is not till then that you and I can be certain they are sons. It is not till they repent and believe, that the angels of God rejoice over them. The angels cannot read the book of God's election. They know not who are His "hidden ones" in the earth. They rejoice over no man till he believes. But when they see some poor sinner repenting and believing, then there is joy among them, joy that one more brand is plucked from the burning, and one more son and heir born again to the Father in heaven. But once more I say, you and I know nothing certain about a man's sonship to God, until *he believes on Christ*.

I solemnly warn every one to beware of the delusive notion, that all men and

women are alike children of God, whether they have faith in Christ or not. It is a wild theory which many are clinging to in these days, but one which cannot be proved out of the Word of God. It is a perilous dream, with which many are trying to soothe themselves,² but one from which there will be a fearful waking up at the last day.

That God in a certain sense is the universal Father of all mankind, I do not pretend to deny. He is the Great First Cause of all things. He is the Creator of all mankind, and in Him alone, all men, whether Christians or heathens, "live and move and have their being." All this is unquestionably true. In this sense Paul told the Athenians, a poet of their own had truly said, "*we are His offspring*" (Acts 17:28). But this sonship gives no man a title to heaven. The sonship which we have by creation is one which belongs to stones, trees, beasts, or even to the devils, as much as to us.

That God loves all mankind with a love of pity and compassion, I do not deny. "His tender mercies are over all His works." He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He "has no pleasure in the death of him that dies." All this I admit to the full. In this sense our Lord Jesus tells us, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

But that God is a reconciled and pardoning Father to any but the members

² The reader will of course understand that I am not speaking now of children who die in infancy, or of persons who live and die idiots.

of His Son Jesus Christ, and that they are members of Jesus Christ who do not believe on Him for salvation, this is a doctrine which I utterly deny. The holiness and justice of God are both against the doctrine. They make it impossible for sinful men to approach God, excepting through a mediator. They tell us that God, outside of Christ, is a consuming fire. The whole system of the New Testament is against the doctrine. That system teaches that no man can claim interest in Christ, unless he will receive Him as his Mediator, and believe on Him as Savior. Where there is no faith in Christ, it is driveling folly to say that a man may take comfort in God as his Father. God is a reconciled Father to none but the members of Christ!

It is nonsense to talk of the view I am now upholding as narrow minded and harsh. The Gospel sets an open door before every man. Its promises are wide and full. Its invitations are earnest and tender. Its requirements are simple and clear. "Only believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and, whoever you are, you shall be saved." But to say that proud men, who will not bow their necks to the easy yoke of Christ, and worldly men, who are determined to have their own way and their sins, to say that such men have a right to claim an interest in Christ, and a right to call themselves sons of God, is absurdity indeed. God offers to be their Father; but He does it on certain distinct terms: they must draw near to Him through Christ. Christ offers to be their Savior; but in doing it He makes one simple requirement; they must commit their souls to Him, and give Him their hearts. They refuse the terms, and yet dare to call God their Father! They scorn the

requirement, and yet dare to hope that Christ will save them! God is to be their Father, but on their own terms! Christ is to be their Savior, but on their own conditions! What can be more unreasonable? What can be more proud? What can be more unholy than such a doctrine as this? Beware of it, reader, for it is a common doctrine in these latter days. Beware of it, for it is often speciously put forward, and sounds beautiful and charitable in the mouths of poets, novelists, sentimentalists, and tender hearted women. Beware of it, unless you mean to throw aside your Bible altogether, and set up yourself to be wiser than God. Stand fast on the old Scriptural ground. *No sonship to God without Christ! No interest in Christ without faith!*

I would to God there was not so much cause for giving warnings of this kind. I have reason to think they need to be given clearly and unmistakably. There is a school of theology rising up in this day, which appears to me most eminently calculated to promote infidelity, to help the devil, and to ruin souls. It comes to us, like Joab to Amasa, with the highest professions of charity, liberality, and love. God is all mercy and love, according to this theology. His holiness and justice are completely left out of sight! Hell is never spoken of in this theology. Its talk is all of heaven! Damnation is never mentioned. It is treated as an impossible thing. All men and women are to be saved! Faith and the work of the Spirit are refined away into nothing at all! Everybody who believes anything has faith! Everybody who thinks anything has the Spirit! Everybody is right! Nobody is wrong! Nobody is to blame for any action he may commit! He is not accountable for

his opinions, any more that the color of his skin! He must be what he is! The Bible of course is a very imperfect book! It is old fashioned! It is obsolete! We may believe just as much of it as we please, and no more! Reader, of all this theology I warn you solemnly to beware. In spite of big swelling words about "liberality," and "charity," and "broad views," and "new lights," and "freedom from bigotry," and so forth. I do believe it to be a theology that leads to hell rather than heaven.

Facts are directly against the teachers of this theology. Let them walk around the wards of hospitals, and note the many diseases which rack man's frame. Let them go to the shores of the Dead Sea, and look down into its mysterious bitter waters [that lap over the burial ground of Sodom and Gomorrah]. Let them observe the wandering Jews, scattered over the face of the world. And then let them tell us, if they dare, that God is so entirely a God of mercy and love, that He never does, and never will, punish sin.

The *conscience of man* is directly against these teachers. Let them go to the bedside of some dying child of the world, and try to comfort him with their doctrines. Let them see if their vaunted theories will calm his gnawing, restless anxiety about the future, and enable him to depart in peace. Let them show us, if they can, a few well-authenticated cases of joy and happiness in death without Bible promises, without conversion, and without that faith in the blood of Christ, which old fashioned theology enjoins. Alas! when men are leaving the world, conscience makes sad work of these new systems. Conscience is

not easily satisfied in a dying hour that there is no such thing as hell.

Every reasonable conception that we can form of a future state is directly against these teachers. Fancy a heaven which should contain all mankind! Fancy a heaven in which holy and unholy, pure and impure, good and bad would be all gathered together in one confused mass! What point of union would there be in such a company? What common bond of harmony and brotherhood? What common delight in a common service? What concord, what harmony, what peace, what oneness of spirit could exist? Surely the mind revolts from the idea of a heaven in which there would be no distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between Pharaoh and Moses, between Abraham and the Sodomites, between Paul and Nero, between Peter and Judas Iscariot, between the man who dies in the act of murder or drunkenness and men like Baxter, Wilberforce, and M'Cheyne! Surely an eternity in such a miserably confused crowd would be worse than annihilation itself! Surely such a heaven would be no better than hell!

The *interests of all holiness and morality* are directly against these teachers. If all men and women alike are God's children, whatever is the difference between them in their lives, and all alike going to heaven, however different they may be from one another here in the world, where is the use of laboring after holiness at all? What motive remains for "living soberly, righteously, and godly"? What does it matter how men conduct themselves, if all go to heaven, and nobody goes to hell? Surely the very heathen of Greece and Rome

could tell us something better and wiser than this! Surely a doctrine which is subversive of holiness and morality, and takes away all of the motives to exertion, carries on the face of it the stamp of its origin. It is of earth, and not of heaven. It is of the devil and not of God.

The Bible is against these teachers from beginning to end. Hundreds of texts might be quoted which are diametrically opposed to their theories. These texts must be rejected summarily, if the Bible is to square with their views. There may be no valid reason why they should be rejected; but to suit the theology I speak of, they must be thrown away. At this rate the authority of the whole Bible is soon at an end. And what do they give us in place of God's Word, when they have taken it out of our hands? Nothing, nothing at all! They rob us of the bread of life, and do not give us in its stead so much as a stone.

Reader, once more I warn you to beware of this theology. I charge you to hold fast the doctrine which I have been endeavoring to uphold in this address. Remember what I have said, and never let it go. No inheritance of glory without sonship to God! No sonship to God without an interest in Christ! No interest in Christ without your own personal faith! This is God's truth. Never forsake it.

Who now among the readers of this address, *desires to know whether he is a son of God?* Ask yourself this day, and ask it as in God's sight, whether you have repented and believed. Ask yourself whether you are experientially acquainted with Christ, and united to Him in heart. If not, you may be very sure you are no son of God. You are not yet born again. You are in your

sins. In creation, God may be your Father, but in terms of reconciliation and pardon from sin, God is not your Father! Yes! though church and world may agree to tell you the contrary, though clergy and laity unite in flattering you, your sonship is worth little or nothing in the sight of God. Let God be true and every man a liar. Without faith in Christ you are no son of God, you are not born again.

Who is there among the readers of this address, *who desires to become a son of God?* Let that person see his sins, and flee to Christ for salvation, and this day he shall be placed among the children. Only acknowledge your iniquity, and lay hold on the hand that Jesus holds out to you this day, and sonship, with all its privileges, is your own. Only confess your sins, and bring them unto Christ, and "God is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness." This very day old things shall pass away, and all things become new. This very day you shall be forgiven, pardoned, accepted in the beloved. This very day you shall have a new name given to you in heaven. You took up this address as a child of wrath. You shall lie down tonight as a child of God. Mark this; if your professed desire after sonship is sincere, if you are truly weary of your sins, and have really something more than a lazy wish to be free, there is real comfort for you. It is all true. It is all written in Scripture, even as I have put it down. I dare not raise barriers between you and God. This day I say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be a son, and be saved."

Who is there among the readers of this address that *is a son of God indeed?* Rejoice, I

say, and be exceeding glad of your privileges. Rejoice, for you have good cause to be thankful. Remember the words of the beloved apostle: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). How wonderful that heaven should look down on earth, that the holy God should set His affections on sinful man, and admit him into His family! What though the world does not understand you! What though the men of this world laugh at you, and cast out your name as evil! Let them laugh if they will. God is your Father. You have no need to be ashamed. The Queen can create a nobleman. The bishops can ordain clergymen. But Queen, Lords, and Commons, bishops, priests, and deacons, all together cannot, of their own power, make one son of God, or one of greater dignity than a son of God. The man that can call God his Father, and Christ his elder Brother, that man may be poor and lowly, yet he never need be ashamed.

2. Let me show you, in the second place, *the special evidences of the true Christian's relation to God.*

How shall a man make sure work of his own sonship? How shall he find out whether he is one that has come to Christ by faith and been born again? What are the marks, and signs, and tokens, by which the sons of God may be known? This is a question which all who love eternal life ought to ask. This is a question to which the verses of Scripture I am asking you to consider, like many others, supply an answer.

1. The sons of God, for one thing, are all *led by His Spirit.* "What says the Scripture? "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom.8:14).

They are all under the leading and teaching of a power which is Almighty, though unseen, even the power of the Holy Spirit. They no longer turn every man to his own way, and walk every man in the light of his own eyes, and follow every man his own natural heart's desire. The Spirit leads them. The Spirit guides them. There is a movement in their hearts, lives, and affections, which they feel, though they may not be able to explain, and a movement which is always more or less in the same direction.

They are led away from sin, away from self-righteousness, away from the world. This is the road by which the Spirit leads God's children. Those whom God adopts He teaches and trains. He shows them their own hearts. He makes them weary of their own ways. He makes them long for inward peace.

They are led to Christ. They are led to the Bible. They are led to prayer. They are led to holiness. This is the beaten path along which the Spirit makes them to travel. Those whom God adopts He always sanctifies. He makes sin very bitter to them. He makes holiness very sweet.

It is the Spirit who leads them to Sinai, and first shows them the law, that their hearts may be broken. It is He who leads them to Calvary, and shows them the cross, that their hearts may be bound up and healed. It is He who leads them to Pisgah, and gives them distant views of the Promised Land, that their hearts may be cheered. When they are taken into the

wilderness, and taught to see their own emptiness, it is the leading of the Spirit. When they are carried up to Tabor, and lifted up with glimpses of the glory to come, it is the leading of the Spirit. Each and all of God's sons is the subject of these leadings. Each and all yields himself willingly to them. And each and all is led by the right way, to bring him to a city of habitation.

Reader, settle this down in your heart, and do not let it go. The sons of God are a people led by the Spirit of God, and always led more or less in the same way. Their experience will tally wonderfully when they compare notes in heaven. This is one mark of sonship.

2. Furthermore, all the sons of God *have the feelings of adopted children towards their Father in heaven*. What says the Scripture? "You have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15).

The sons of God are delivered from that slavish fear of God, which sin begets in the natural heart. They are redeemed from that feeling of guilt, which made Adam hide himself in the trees of the garden, and Cain flee from the presence of the Lord. They are no longer afraid of God's holiness, and justice, and majesty. They no longer feel as if there was a great gulf and barrier between themselves and God, and as if God was angry with them, and must be angry with them, because of their sins. From these chains and fetters of soul the sons of God are delivered.

Their feelings towards God are now those of peace and confidence. They see Him as a Father reconciled in Christ Jesus.

They look on Him as a God whose attributes are all satisfied by their great Mediator and Peacemaker, the Lord Jesus, as a God who is just and yet the Justifier of every one who believes in Jesus. As a Father, they draw near to Him with boldness. As a Father, they can speak to Him with freedom. They have exchanged the spirit of bondage for that of liberty, and the spirit of fear for that of love. They know that God is holy, but they are not afraid. They know that they are sinners, but they are not afraid. Though God is holy, they believe that He is completely reconciled. Though they are sinners, they believe they are clothed all over with Jesus Christ. Such is the feeling of the sons of God.

I allow that some of them have this feeling more vividly than others. Some of them carry about scraps and remnants of the old spirit of bondage to their dying day. Many of them have fits and paroxysms of the old man's complaint of fear returning upon them at intervals. But very few of the sons of God could be found who would not say, if cross-examined, that since they knew Christ they have had very different feelings towards God, from what they ever had before. They feel as if something like the old Roman form of adoption had taken place between themselves and their Father in heaven. They feel as if He had said to each one of them, "Will you be my son?" and as if their hearts had replied, "I will."

Reader, try to grasp this also, and hold it fast. The sons of God are a people who feel towards God in a way that the children of the world do not. They feel no more slavish fear towards Him. They feel towards Him

as a reconciled parent. This, then, is another mark of sonship.

3. But again, the sons of God *have the witness of the Spirit in their consciences*. What says the Scripture? "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16).

They have all got something within their hearts, which tells them there is a relationship between themselves and God. They feel something which tells them that old things have passed away, and: all things have become new, that guilt is gone, that peace is restored, that heaven's door is open, and hell's door is shut. They have, in short, what the children of the world have not, a felt, positive, reasonable hope. They have what Paul calls the "seal" and the "earnest" of the Spirit (2 Cor.1:22; Eph. 1:13).

Reader, I do not for a moment deny that this witness of the Spirit is exceedingly various in the extent to which the sons of God possess it. With some it is a loud, clear, ringing, distinct testimony of conscience: "I am Christ's, and Christ is mine." With others it is a little, feeble, stammering whisper, which the devil and the flesh often prevent being heard. Some of the children of God speed on their course towards heaven under the full sails of assurance. Others [like Little Faith in *The Pilgrim's Progress*] are tossed to and fro all their voyage, and will scarce believe they have got faith.

But take the least and lowest of the sons of God. Ask him if he will give up the little bit of religious hope which he has attained? Ask him if he will exchange his heart, with all its doubts and conflicts, its fightings and fears, ask him if he will exchange that heart

for the heart of the downright worldly and careless man? Ask him if he would be content to turn around and throw down the things he has got hold of, and go back to the world? Who can doubt what the answer would be? "I cannot do that," he would reply: "I do not know whether I have faith: I do not feel sure I have got grace; but I have got something within me I would not like to part with." And what is that "something"? I will tell you. It is the witness of the Spirit.

Reader, try to understand this also. The sons of God have the "witness of the Spirit" in their consciences. This is another mark of sonship.

4. One thing more let me add. All the sons of God *take part in suffering with Christ*. What says the Scripture? "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him" (Rom 8:17).

All the children of God have a cross to carry. They have trials, troubles, and afflictions to go through for the Gospel's sake. They have trials from the world, trials from the flesh, and trials from the devil. They have trials of feeling from relations and friends, hard words, hard conduct, and hard judgment. They have trials in the matter of character: slander, misrepresentation, mockery, insinuation of false motives, all these often rain thick upon them. They have trials in the matter of worldly interest. They have often to choose whether they will please man and lose glory, or gain glory and offend man. They have trials from their own hearts. They have each generally their own thorn in the flesh, their own home-devil, who is their

worst foe. This is the experience of the sons of God.

Some of them suffer more, and some less. Some of them suffer in one way, and some in another. God measures out their portions like a wise physician, and cannot err. But never, I believe, was there one child of God who reached Paradise without a cross.

Suffering is the diet of the Lord's family. "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens." "If you are without chastisement, then you are bastards [illegitimate], and not sons." "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God." When Bishop Latimer was told by his landlord that he had never had a trouble, "Then," he said, "God cannot be here."

Suffering is part of the process by which the sons of God are sanctified. They are chastened to wean them from the world, and to make them partakers of God's holiness. The Captain of their salvation was made perfect through sufferings, and so are they. There never yet was a great saint who had not either great afflictions or great corruptions. Well said Philip Melancthon, "Where there are no cares, there will generally be no prayers."

Reader, try to settle this down into you heart also. All of the sons of God have to bear a cross. A suffering Savior generally has suffering disciples. The Bridegroom of the Church was "a man of sorrows." The bride must not be a woman of pleasures, and unacquainted with grief. Blessed are they that mourn! Let us not murmur at the cross. This also is a sign of sonship. No cross no crown!

Reader, I warn you never to suppose that you are a son of God except you have

the Scriptural marks of sonship. Beware of a sonship without evidences. Again I say, beware. When a man has no leading of the Spirit to show me, no spirit of adoption to tell of, no witness of the Spirit in his conscience, no cross in his experience, is this man a son of God? God forbid that I should say so! His spot [mark] is not the spot [mark] of God's children. He is no heir of glory.

Tell me not that you have been baptized, and taught the Catechism of the Church of England, and therefore must be a child of God. I tell you that the parish register is not the book of life. I tell you that to be styled a child of God, and called regenerate in infancy by faith and charity of the prayer book is one thing; but to be a child of God in deed is another thing altogether. Go and read that Catechism again. It is the "death unto sin and the new birth unto righteousness," which make men *children of grace*. Except you know these by experience, you are no son of God.

Tell me not that you are a member of Christ's Church, and so must be a son. I answer that the sons of the Church are not necessarily the sons of God. Such sonship is not the sonship of the eighth of Romans. That is the sonship you must have, if you are to be saved.

And now, I doubt not, some reader of this address will want to know if he may not be saved without the witness of the Spirit.

I answer, if you mean by the witness of the Spirit, the full assurance of hope, you may be so saved without question.

But if you want to know whether a man can be saved without the inward sense, or knowledge, or hope of salvation, I answer

that ordinarily he cannot. I warn you plainly to cast away all indecision as to your state before God, and to make your calling sure. Clear up your position and relationship. Do not think there is anything praiseworthy in always doubting. Leave that to the Papist. Do not fancy it wise to be ever living like the borderers of old time, on the "debatable ground."

"Assurance," said old Dod, the Puritan, "may be attained: and what have we been doing all our lives since we became Christians if we have not attained it?"

I doubt not some true Christians who read this address will think their evidence of sonship is too small to be good, and will write bitter things against themselves. Let me try to cheer them. Who gave you the feelings you possess? Who made you hate sin? Who made you love Christ? Who made you long and labor to be holy? Whence did these feelings come? Did they come from nature? There are no such products in a natural man's heart. Did they come from the devil? He would fain stifle such feelings altogether. Cheer up and take courage. Fear not, neither be cast down. Press forward, and go on. There is hope for you after all. Strive. Labor. Seek. Ask. Knock. Follow on. You shall yet see that you are sons of God.

3. Let me show you, in the last place, the *privileges of the true Christian's relation to God.*

Nothing can be conceived more glorious than the prospects of the sons of God. The words of Scripture which head this address contain a rich mine of good and comfortable things. "If we are children," says Paul, "we are heirs, heirs of God, and

joint heirs with Christ, to be glorified together with Him" (Rom. 8:17).

True Christians then are "heirs." Something is prepared for them all which is yet to be revealed.

They are "heirs of God." To be heirs of the rich on earth is something. How much more then is it to be a son and heir of the King of kings!

They are "joint heirs with Christ." They shall share in His majesty, and take part in His glory. They shall be glorified together with Him.

And this, remember, is for all the children. Abraham took care to provide for all his children, and God takes care to provide for His. None of them are disinherited. None will be cast out. None will be cut off. Each shall stand in his lot, and have a portion, in the day when the Lord brings many sons to glory.

Reader, who can tell the full nature of the inheritance of the saints in light? Who can describe the glory which is yet to be revealed and given to the children of God? Words fail us. Language falls short. Mind cannot conceive fully, and tongue cannot express perfectly, the things which are comprised in the glory yet to come upon the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Oh, it is indeed a true saying of the Apostle John! "It does not yet appear what we shall be" (1 John 3:2).

The very Bible itself only lifts the veil a little which hangs over this subject. How could it do more? We could not thoroughly understand more if more had been told us. Our frame of mind is as yet too earthly, our understanding is as yet too carnal to appreciate more, if we had it. The Bible generally deals with the subject in negative

terms, and not in positive assertions. It describes what there will not be in the glorious inheritance, that thus we may get some faint idea of what there will be. It paints the absence of certain things, in order that we may drink in a little of the blessedness of the things present. It tells us that the inheritance is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away." It tells us that the crown of glory "fadeth not away." It tells us that the devil is to be bound, that there shall be no more night and no more curse, that death shall be cast into the lake of fire, that all tears shall be wiped away, and that the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick." And these are glorious things indeed! No corruption! No fading! No withering! No devil! No curse of sin! No sorrow! No tears! No sickness! No death! Surely the cup of the children of God will indeed run over!

But, reader, there are positive things told us about the glory, yet to come upon the heirs of God, which ought not to be kept back. There are many sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comforts in their future inheritance, which all true Christians would do well to consider. There are cordials for fainting pilgrims in many words and expressions of Scripture, which you and I ought to lay up against time of need.

Is *knowledge* pleasant to us now? Is the little that we know of God, and Christ, and the Bible, precious to our souls, and do we long for more? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? "Then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Blessed be God, in heaven there will be no more disagreements among believers! Episcopalians and Presbyterians,

Calvinists and Arminians, Millennarians and Antimillennarians, friends of Establishments and friends of the voluntary system, advocates of infant baptism and advocates of adult baptism, all will at length see eye to eye. The former ignorance will have passed away. We shall marvel to find how childish and blind we have been.

Is *holiness* pleasant to us now? Is sin the burden and bitterness of our lives? Do we long for entire conformity to the image of God? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? "Christ gave Himself for the Church that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27). Oh, the blessedness of an eternal good-bye to sin! Oh, how little the best of us do at present! Oh, what unutterable corruption sticks, like birdlime, to all our motives, all our thoughts, all our words, all our actions? Oh, how many of us, like Naphtali, are good in our words, but like Reuben, unstable in our 'works! Thank God, all this shall be changed!

Is *rest* pleasant to us now? Do we often feel faint though pursuing? Do we long for a world in which we need not be always watching and warring? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? "There remains a rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). The daily, hourly conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, shall at length be at an end. The enemy shall be bound. The warfare shall be over. The wicked shall at last cease from troubling. The weary shall at length be at rest. There shall be a great calm.

Is *service* pleasant to us now? Do we find it sweet to work for Christ and yet groan, being burdened by a feeble body? Is our

spirit often willing, but hampered and clogged by the poor weak flesh? Have our hearts burned within us, when we have been allowed to give a cup of cold water for Christ's sake, and have we sighed to think what unprofitable servants we are? Let us take comfort. We shall be able to serve perfectly, and without weariness, in glory. What does Scripture say? "They serve Him day and night in His temple" (Rev. 7:15).

Is *satisfaction* pleasant to us now? Do we find the world empty? Do we long for the filling up of every void place and gap in our hearts? We shall have it perfectly in glory. We shall no longer have to mourn over cracks in all our earthen vessels, and thorns in all our roses, and bitter dregs in all our sweet cups. We shall no longer lament with Jonah over withered gourds. We shall no longer say with Solomon, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." We shall no longer cry with aged David, "I have seen an end of all perfection." What do the Scriptures say? "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

Is *communion with the saints* pleasant to us now? Do we feel that we are never so happy as when we are with the excellent of the earth? Are we never so much at home as in their company? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What do the Scriptures say? "The Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and they which work iniquity." "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds" (Matt. 13:41; 24:31). Praise be to God! We shall see all the saints of whom we have read in the Bible, and in

whose steps we have tried to walk. We shall see apostles, prophets, patriarchs, martyrs, reformers, missionaries, and ministers, of whom the world was not worthy. We shall see the faces of those we have known and loved in Christ on earth, and over whose departure we shed bitter tears. We shall see them more bright and glorious than ever they were before. And best of all, we shall see them without hurry and anxiety, and without feeling that we only meet to part again. In glory there is no death, no parting, and no farewell!

Is *communion with Christ* pleasant to us now? Do we find His name precious to us? Do we feel our hearts burn within us at the thought of His dying love? We shall have perfect communion with Him in glory. "We shall be with the Lord forever" (1 Thess 4:17). We shall be with Him in Paradise. We shall see His face in the kingdom. These eyes of ours will behold those hands and feet which were pierced with nails, and that head which was crowned with thorns. Where He is, there will the sons of God be. When he comes, they will come with Him. When He sits down in His glory, they shall sit down by His side. Blessed prospect indeed! I am a dying man in a dying world! All before me is dark! The world to come is a harbor unknown! But Christ is there and that is enough. Surely if there is rest and peace in following Him by faith on earth, there will be far more rest and peace when we see Him face to face. If we have found it good to follow the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, we shall find it a thousand times better to sit down in our eternal inheritance with our Joshua in the Promised Land.

Ah! reader, if you are not yet among the sons and heirs, I do pity you with all my heart. How much you are missing! How little true comfort you are enjoying! There you are struggling on, and toiling in the fire and wearying yourself for mere earthly ends, seeing rest and finding none, chasing shadows and never catching them, wondering why you are not happy, and yet refusing to see the cause, being hungry, and thirsty, and empty, and yet blind to the plenty within your reach. Oh, that you were wise! Oh, that you would hear the voice of Jesus, and learn of Him!

Reader, if you are one of those who are sons and heirs, you may well rejoice and be happy. You may well wait like the boy Patience in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Your best things are yet to come. You may well bear crosses without murmuring. Your light affliction is but for a moment. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which is to be revealed. When Christ our life appears, then you also shall appear with Him in glory. You may well not envy the transgressor and his prosperity. You are the truly rich. Well said a dying believer in my own parish, "I am more rich than I ever was in my life." You may say as Mephibosheth said to David, "Let the world take all, my King is coming again in peace." You may say as Alexander said when he gave all his riches away, and was asked what he kept for himself: "I have hope." You may well not be cast down by sickness. The eternal part of you is safe and provided for, whatever happens to your body. You may well look calmly on death. It opens a door between you and your inheritance. You may well not sorrow

excessively over the things of the world, over partings and bereavements, over losses and crosses. The day of gathering is before you. Your treasure is beyond reach of harm. Heaven is becoming every year more full of those you love, and earth more empty. Glory in your inheritance! It is all yours, if you are a son of God. "If we are children, then we are heirs."

1. And now, reader, in concluding this address, *let me ask you*. "Whose child are you?" Are you the child of nature or the child of grace? Are you the child of the devil or the child of God? You cannot be both at once. Which are you?

Settle the question, reader, for you must die at last either one or the other. Settle it, reader, for it can be settled, and it is folly to leave it doubtful. Settle it, for time is short, the world is getting old, and you are fast drawing near to the judgment seat of Christ. Settle it, for death is nigh, the Lord is at hand, and who can tell what a day might bring forth? Oh, that you would never rest till the question is settled! Oh, that you may never feel satisfied till you can say, "I have been born again, I am a son of God."

2. Reader, *if you are not a son and heir of God, let me entreat you to become one without delay*. Would you be rich? There are unsearchable riches in Christ. Would you be noble? Believing in Christ, you shall be a king. Would you be happy? You shall have a peace which passes understanding, and which the world can never give, and never take away. Oh, come out, and take up the cross, and follow Christ! Come out from among the thoughtless and worldly, and hear the word of the Lord: "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and

you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:18).

3. Reader, *if you are a son of God, I beseech you to walk worthy of your Father's house.* I charge you solemnly to honor Him in your life: and above all to honor Him by implicit obedience to all His commands, and hearty love to all His children. Labor to travel through the world like a child of God and heir of glory. Let men be able to trace a family likeness between you and He who gave birth to you. Live a heavenly life. Seek things that are above. Do not seem to be building your nest below. Behave like a man who seeks a city out of sight, whose citizenship is in heaven, and who is willing to put up with many hardships till he gets home.

Labor *to feel like a son of God* in every condition in which you are placed. Never forget you are on your Father's ground so long as you are here on earth. Never forget that a Father's hand sends all your mercies and crosses. Cast every care on Him. Be happy and cheerful in Him. Why indeed are you ever sad if you are the King's son? Why should men ever doubt, when they look at you, whether it is a pleasant thing to be one of God's children?

Labor *to behave towards others like a son of God.* Be blameless and harmless in your day and generation. Be a peacemaker among all you know. Seek for your children sonship to God above everything else. Seek for them an inheritance in heaven, whatever else you do for them. No man

leaves his children so well provided for as he who leaves them sons and heirs of God.

Persevere in your Christian calling, if you are a son of God, and press forward more and more. Be careful to lay aside every weight, and the sin which most easily besets you. Keep your eyes steadily fixed on Jesus. Abide in Him. Remember that without Him you can do nothing, and with Him you can do all things (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13). Watch and pray daily. Be steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. Settle it down in your heart, that not a cup of cold water, given in the name of a disciple, shall lose its reward, and that every year you are so much nearer home.

Yet a little time and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Then shall come about the glorious liberty and the full manifestation of the sons of God. Then shall the world acknowledge that they were the truly wise. Then shall the sons of God at length come of age. Then shall they no longer be heirs of expectancy, but heirs in possession. And then shall they hear with exceeding joy those comfortable words, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt 25:34). Surely that day will make amends for all!

That all who read this address may see the value of the inheritance of glory, and be found at length in possession of it, is my heart's desire and prayer.

COMING EVENTS AND PRESENT DUTIES

REVELATION 22:20

The Church has waited long
Her absent Lord to see;
And still in loneliness she waits,
A friendless stranger she.
Age after age has gone,
Sun after sun has set,
And still, in weeds of widowhood,
She weeps, a mourner yet.

Come, then, Lord Jesus, come!

Saint after saint on earth
Has lived, and loved, and died;
And as they left us one by one,
We laid them side by side.
We laid them down to sleep,
But not in hope forlorn;
We laid them but to ripen there
Till the last glorious morn.

Come, then, Lord Jesus, come!

The serpent' s brood increase,
The powers of hell grow bold,
The conflict thickens, faith is low,
And love is waxing cold.
How long, O Lord our God,
Holy and true and good,
Wilt Thou not judge Thy suffering church,
Her sighs and tears and blood?

Come, then, Lord Jesus, come!

We long to hear Thy voice,
To see Thee face to face,
To share Thy crown and glory then,
As now we share Thy grace.
Should not the loving bride
The absent Bridegroom mourn?
Should she not wear the weeds of grief
Until her Lord return?

THE HEIRS OF GOD

Come, then, Lord Jesus, come!

The whole creation groans,
And waits to hear that voice
Which shall restore her comeliness,
And make her wastes rejoice.
Come, Lord, and wipe away
The curse, the sin, the stain,
And make this blighted world of ours
Thine own fair world again.

Come, then, Lord Jesus, come!

Horatius Bonar