

Sons of God

John 13: 36-38, John 14: 1-11.

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Part Fourth. LATER MINISTRY.

It is a thing of great importance, beloved friends, to remember, and to have fresh upon the mind continually, that our God has said that our ways are not His ways, nor our thoughts His thoughts. It prepares the soul to receive what He may present to it. It enables the soul quietly to lay aside all its own reasonings. Man is antagonistic to thoughts in which God is first. Man refuses to believe that God is a reconciler. That pre-eminence He has in having been *first*, comes out in a way that sets man at utter defiance. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Man is lost *there*.

There is another point in which I see that more strongly still, not in the position of a son being secured to me, but in giving privilege consequent upon that. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." God has chosen according to His own character, His own ways, to do the thing. I have to be taught the A, B, C, by God, and to be simply a receiver, upon the Scripture ground, that it is the Son of God communicating His secret thoughts. I am brought into the relationship in which I am to call His Abba my Abba; and the very abode which by right and title belongs to Him, is the very place to which He is guiding me and to which I shall shortly be brought. John shows me this. It is entirely new ground; it is not creature-ground. This ground I could not be set upon, if He could not quicken me with the eternal life which He had with the Father before the world was. We are in the relationship that involves all the rest, and the burden and right of all things are in Himself.

See John 13. He just sets Himself as recognizing that the door had closed on Israel. He knew that His hour was come. The great point brought out here (v. 3) is His consciousness of being the object of the counsels of the Father. Every action is perfect. No one could have taken His life away. He "came out from God, and He went to God." He set Himself to bring out truth connected with this doctrine. First, we get the cleansing; then the coming to light of a traitor present. He knew it, but there was no check in the flow of His love, the purpose of His heart. There was weakness, too, on the part of the disciples. John was easily influenced, though he lay on the bosom. Peter was uncommonly full of himself, full of thought of his competency to stand on Jewish ground. The Lord brings a little picture of all that was in man, as known to Himself, when He was about to bring out these thoughts of the Father's love — this relationship of sons with Abba.

He brings out the most complete sentence on Peter, and put the flesh entirely aside: "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" No wonder, He was offering Himself; He was about to suffer. He had that upon His soul at the time, and Peter puts in, "Well, I am the man that will lay down my life for you." He cannot but express incredulity. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice;" then instantly He goes on, "Let not your heart be troubled." What He had in His bosom at that time, with regard to Peter and John and the rest, could not be repressed, could not be stopped by the rude interruption of a man, saying, "I will lay down my life for you." The man did not know what he was about; *the Lord* understood it all. The state of Peter's soul could not take these

thoughts in, Peter did not like such thoughts. But the Lord goes on, "Let not your heart be troubled. Everything is failing here; the kingdom going, Israel is denying its Messiah, but you are associated in my heart with the Father, and that is the ground on which I am acting."

I find all His thoughts tend towards this — He was going to give them the stamp of sonship. He could pass on to that which was included in the love: we are to be in the house of the Father. Which of these two things is greater? Surely the first, if I can say the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is our Father. The gyves and fetters of Egypt may be off my hands; I may be weary and footsore, going through the land, but the assurance of Abba's love is keeping my soul above all circumstances. We shall get into circumstances when we get into the Father's house! Now, what was He about to do? If He had listened to them, to Peter, He would have taken another line. He had got His clue from fellowship with the Father's counsels. He saw the whole way from the beginning to the end. "Everything has failed in man, but I do not fail. I shall have a place given Me. I shall not fail you in the least, however long it may be before I shall certainly come and bring you home at the appointed time." There was something much nearer to His heart than the A, B, C, He had to teach them.

I think, beloved, the remark would be well, that we gather up the blessing, the external privileges of sons, and do not rest sufficiently upon the grand thing which is presented here — that this Person come into the world is *Himself* the revelation of the Father. I do not speak of that merely which was unsearchable, God manifested in flesh. "Whither I go ye know, and *the way ye know*." He was here in a simple, quiet way, leading them upon the ground that led them to express their ignorance. His conduct here is just the illustration of His fellowship with the Father, and His competency of apprehending the Father's mind. He *knew* the Father. Talking to the poor woman at the well of Sychar, He could bring *that* home to her heart: "How can we know the way?" He just gave His own self as the answer: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have *seen Him*." (vv. 6, 7.) I believe, to own our shame, we very often read that down, and think very little about *Him*. It is not, as in Peter, "born again," but "You who have followed Me, who know the sort of Person I am, who have seen My ways, who have heard My voice, who have witnessed My character — now every thing I want to teach you about the Father is presented in Me." It is like a child learning the character of its father, perhaps in the little things of the nursery or the schoolroom. When it is put into other circumstances it has got its heart formed, its affections trained. If you brought before it something different the child would not admit it. "No, *that is not my father*; I know my father well." Now the Lord had been with them in all the Jewish circumstances. "I want to bring my Father before you. Now, do you know Me?" Oh, I do believe the children of God at the present time have a little word to look at in connection with themselves — whether or not they have taken the character presented by the blessed Lord as the true expression of the Father. What a complete purpose of His heart to vindicate the Father's marvellous grace! Whenever we come to know Abba, we are to think of Him, the perfect Son of the Father, walking among them, caring for them, keeping this ever before His mind, the revealing of the Father to their hearts.

Well, they did not understand, and they gave Him another occasion. "Hast thou not known Me, Philip?" (vv. 9-11) I should suppose the "works" here are His *whole* bearing. "Whatever you see Me do, that is of the Father. What knowledge have you of *Me*?" He showed it at the time of His own humiliation. He came upon the ground on which Israel was to show the fulness of the perfection that was in Him. He turned to wipe away the tears from the eyes of the widow. He turned to feed the multitude; He ever kept His eye on the glory of God. The whole question of sin has been settled by Him, and God has "sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Has that led

you into the truth of what it is to be — "a son"? "In My Father's house are many mansions." The blessed One gone there is just the One through whom that truth is out, and He tells of all that love of Abba, this purpose of Abba. God shows me Him in the highest glory, and tells me that my place is With Him there.

It is important to keep separate the fruits of the relationship, and the security of the relationship. The grand doctrine of sonship now is, that the only-begotten Son is upon the throne, seated there as *Man*, the rock that was smitten; and God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. This love is set upon me in this Christ. I may walk carelessly, and get into sorrow because of it; but the relationship never varies. Well, how far does that fulness, that circle of love which goes forth because of the Father's delight in that only-begotten Son, *engross* my heart? I am a son of God, and I have nothing to do with any world, or any place, that does not know these sons of God. Has He put me into the place of knowing Abba by the light that shone upon the Son in humiliation? Can I, beloved friends, take a place before you, and say, "If you look at my life closely enough you will see that I am carrying out that"? Can you say, "Well, I know I am a son, and I have taken the place *distinctly*?" I ask you individually, Do you take that place? You will find it will not do to have any neutral ground. You cannot stand upon earth and water. All the tide Mowing in will not sweep away what is thus secured by the Lord Jesus Christ You will find, if you take the place of a son, that it cuts off a thousand things that you would do comfortably with if you were only trying to be a good man here. If you try to carry out His mind, you must remember He had no mind but the mind of a Son of God down here. Independently of Him, we could not say to His Father what He could say directly to His Father. It is made good to us in Himself. He is the Son of God, Heir of God; we are sons, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ

It is exceedingly important to bring in the place with the privilege. It detects the character of what we are carrying with us as we go along. What burden am I carrying with me now? Is it anything that will amalgamate with the inheritance? that will be a pleasant retrospect from the glory? Shall I look back, and say, "Well, there I was toiling and labouring. It was what came upon *Him*, the same in character. *I did* suffer with Him there, and now I am singing with Him here. How pleasant it looks from the Father's house!" Or else, "Alas! He had to drag me up through the dying embers, like Lot in Sodom; but there is my whole course all gone. It vexed me as I went along. I am positively angry when I think of myself as I passed through the world."

Today you have been acting as a son or daughter, or you have not. He had objects that He loved. His heart was bearing in gentle patience all their stupidity. But there was not a single thing in connection with the course of the Lord that was not of the Father. No one could put a finger on anything in that course and say, "There was a bit of His worldliness." Now it is a time of complete separation. If you get back to the gospels, it was a time when all was going to the sieve. Scribes and Pharisees and Herodians were there. There was but one spiritual mind in the whole scene, and that *One* was the touchstone of everything. The separation took place, and other ground was found for placing what He counted dear upon. Much more will a spiritual mind feel at the present time that the crisis has come, and that there is no longer any time for shilly-shallying or vacillation. Everything is called into question at the present moment. All the influences of the world are active, and the power of Satan is at work, driving the vortex round and round, and people do not know where they are drifting to.

Can you say, "I am a son of God! I have the Father's heart open to me"? The one thing on which *the* Son knows my mind is set, is carrying out His mind down here. Well, He says, "They will feel my mind some way or other;" "smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones."

Whatever the state of things, the Father will turn His hand upon "the little ones." They must walk now in the comfort of it, if they are to find it in that day. Are you a son of God? Does He look down upon you with all the affection of that heart bearing upon you as a son? Yes, blessed be God! Are your steps down here, are the marks of your feet as you go along through this scene, beloved, are they the steppings of the Father's children? The relationship is all secured, but am I walking as a son? Are you individually walking in such a way that the Father's heart can find its satisfaction in you? that the Son of God can look down upon you as those to whom the looking to Him for guidance is habitual? Beloved, it is practice, it is the carrying out of God's mind in all the detail of your path down here.