

## JOHN CHARLES RYLE

**John Charles Ryle** (1816–1900) was educated at Eton and at Christ Church, Oxford, where his career was unusually distinguished.

His first serious conviction came soon after he left Eton when his friend, Algernon Coote, rebuked him for swearing. Two years went by. Then in midsummer 1837, not long before his final examinations, he fell ill with severe chest inflammation. "That was the time," he wrote, "when I distinctly remember that I began to read my Bible and pray." He entered church one Sunday after the service had begun. Ephesians 2:8–9 was read and applied to his soul with particular emphasis: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." In due time, Ryle came to love the doctrines of free grace.

Ryle became curate of Exbury, Hampshire, 1841; rector of St. Thomas, Winchester, 1843; of Helmingham, Suffolk, 1844; vicar of Stradbroke, Suffolk, 1861; rural dean of Hoxne, 1869; honorary canon of Norwich, 1872; select preacher at Cambridge, 1873–74; at Oxford, 1874–76, 1879, 1880; dean designate of Salisbury, 1880; and bishop of Liverpool, 1880–1900.

Ryle marked out a conservative Calvinistic path for evangelical churchmen in days when much of the Church of England was drifting on the tides of liberalism or tractarianism. His successor at Liverpool, F. J. Chavasse, summed him up strikingly: "A man of granite with the heart of a child."

## Heirs of God

*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, 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.*

—ROMANS 8:14–17

The people of whom St. Paul speaks in the verses before our eyes are the richest people upon earth. It must needs be so. They are called “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

The inheritance of these people 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 or 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 God."

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance *which can be kept forever*. All others must be left in the hour of death, if they have not been taken away before. The owners of millions of dollars can carry nothing with them beyond the grave. But it is not so with the "heirs of God"; their inheritance is eternal.

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

terms. "Whosoever will" may be an "heir of God, and joint heir with Christ."

If any reader wishes to have a portion of this inheritance, let him know that he must be a member of the one family on earth to which it belongs—the family of all true Christians. You must become one of God's children on earth if you desire to have a glory in heaven. I write this 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.

- I. Let me show the relation of all true Christians to God. They are "sons of God."
- II. Let me show 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."

III. Let me show the privileges of this relation. True Christians are “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

I. First let me show the relation of all true Christians to God. They are God’s “sons.” To be son of the rich and noble in this world—to be son of the princes and kings of the earth—this is commonly reckoned a great temporal advantage and 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 far higher. 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, generally speaking, 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 ourselves become sons of God? When do we enter into this glorious relationship? We are not the sons of God by nature. We were not born so when we came 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 men are never born sons of God. The Epistle to the Ephesians tells us, "Ye were by nature children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3). Yes, we are all children of the devil, not children of God! Sin is indeed hereditary and runs in the family of Adam. Grace is anything but 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" (2 Cor. 6:18)?

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? "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). 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 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" (1 John 1:3). 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.

You and I know nothing of 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 until they

are called in due time, and believe; it is not until then that you and I can be certain they are sons. It is not until 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 (Ps. 83:3). They rejoice over no man until 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 (Luke 15:10).

I warn you 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, 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 (Job 1:6).

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 dieth." 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 whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Ps. 145:9; 2 Peter 3:9; Ezek. 18:32; John 3:16).

But that God is a reconciled and pardoning Father to any but the members of His Son Jesus Christ, and that any 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 the Mediator. They tell us that God outside of Christ is "a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). God is a reconciled Father to none but the members of Christ.

It is unreasonable 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, whosoever thou art, thou shalt 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, have a right to claim an interest in Christ and a right to call themselves sons of God is to say what never can be proved from Scripture. 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?

I would to God that 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. 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! It is the result of his position. It

is the effect of circumstances! He is not accountable for his opinions, any more than for the color of his skin. He must be what he is! The Bible 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!" Of all this theology I warn men 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.

(1) Facts are directly against the teachers of this theology. Let them visit Mesopotamia and see what desolation reigns where Nineveh and Babylon once stood. Let them go the shores of the Dead Sea and look down into its mysterious bitter waters. Let them travel in Palestine and ask what has turned that fertile country into a wilderness. 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.

(2) 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.

(3) 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 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, George Herbert, 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!

(4) 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 a doctrine which is subversive of holiness and morality, and takes away all 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.

(5) The Bible is against these teachers from first to last. 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 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 men give us in its place? 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.

Who now among my readers desires to know whether he is a son of God? Ask yourself this question, and ask it today in God's sight, whether you have repented and believed. Ask yourself whether you are experimentally 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 yet in your sins.

Who is there among my readers who desires to become a son of God? Let that person see and feel 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 yours. Only confess your sins and bring them unto Christ, and God is "faithful and just to forgive thee thy sins, and cleanse thee from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). This very day old things shall pass away, and all things become new.

This very day you will be forgiven, pardoned, "accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6). This very day you shall have a new name given to you in heaven. You took up this booklet a child of wrath; you will lie down tonight 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. 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 my readers 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 hath 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! Of what consequence is it if the world does not understand you! Of what consequence is it if 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.

II. Let me show, 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 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.

*The sons of God, for one thing, are all led by*

*His Spirit.* "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 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 and 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. 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 or Hermon and lifted up with glimpses of the glory to come, it is the leading of the Spirit. Each of all of God's sons is the subject of these leadings.

Furthermore, *all the sons of God have the feelings of adopted children towards their Father in heaven.* "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye 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 "go out from the presence of the Lord" (Gen. 3:8; 4:16). They are no longer afraid of God's holiness, 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 the 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 that believeth on Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). 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 holy, they believe that God is completely reconciled; though 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 He had said to each one of them, "Wilt thou be my son?" and as if their hearts had replied, "I will."

Let us 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.

But, again, *the sons of God have the witness of the Spirit in their consciences*. What says the Scripture which heads this paper? "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16).

The sons of God have 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 are passed away and all things become new; that guilt is gone, that peace is restored, that heaven's door

is open, and that 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 "earnest" of the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13).

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 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, for the heart of the downright worldly and careless man. Ask him if he would be content to turn round 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.

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

One thing more let me add. *All the sons of God take part in suffering with Christ.* What says the Scripture which heads this paper? "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 treatment, 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 interests. 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 loveth he chasteneth." "If ye be without chastisement, then are ye bastards, and not sons." "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God." "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (Heb. 12:6, 8; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12). When Bishop Latimer was told by his landlord that he had never had a trouble, "then," said he, "God cannot be here."

Suffering is a part of the process by which the sons of God are sanctified. They are chastened to wean them from the world, and make them partakers of God's holiness. The Captain of their salvation was "made perfect through suffering," and so are they (Heb. 2:10; 12:10). 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.”

Let us try to settle this down into our hearts also. The sons of God have all to bear a cross. A suffering Savior generally has suffering disciples. The Bridegroom 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.

I warn men never to suppose that they are sons of God except they 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? Whatever others may think, I dare not say so! His spot is “not the spot of God’s children” (Deut. 32:5). He is no heir of glory.

And now, someone will want to know

if he may 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 any 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. Do not fancy it wise and humble to be living on "debatable ground." "Assurance," said John 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?"

Some 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 the 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 see that you are "sons of God."

III. Let me show, 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. "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 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, we must 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.

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 doth not yet appear what we shall be" (1 John 3:2).

The very Bible itself only lifts a little of the veil which hangs over this subject. How could it do more? We could not thoroughly understand more if more had been told us. Our mental constitution 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 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! (1 Peter 1:4; 5:4; Rev. 20:2; 21:25; 22:3; 20:14; 21:4; Isa. 33:24).

But 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.

(1) 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, there will be no more disagreements among believers!

(2) 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, not only that He might sanctify it on earth, but also "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 goodbye to sin!

(3) Is *rest* pleasant to us now? Do we often feel "faint though pursuing"? (Judg. 8:4). Do we long for a world in which we need not to be always watching and warring? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What saith the Scripture? "There remaineth 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.

(4) 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 in glory and without weariness. What saith the Scripture? "They serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:15).

(5) 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 saith the Scripture? "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Eccl. 1:14; Pss. 119:96; 17:15).

(6) 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 (Ps. 16:3)? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What saith the Scripture? "The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all they that offend, and them 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). Praised be 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 they ever 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 the coming glory there is no death, no parting, no farewell.

(7) 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 ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). We shall be with Him in Paradise (Luke 23:43). 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.

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, toiling in the fire, wearying yourself for mere earthly ends, seeking rest and finding none, chasing shadows and never catching them, wondering why you are not happy, and yet refusing to see the cause; you are hungry, thirsty, 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!

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 *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" (Rom. 8:18; Col. 3:4). 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" (2 Sam. 19:30). 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, in concluding, let me ask, 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 without delay, for you must die at last either one or the other. Settle it, 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 quickly drawing near to the judgment seat of Christ. Settle it, for death is near, the Lord is at hand, and who can tell what a day might bring? Oh, that you would never rest until the question is settled! Oh, that you may never feel satisfied until you can say, "I have been born again: I am a son of God!"

(2) 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? 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 ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty" (2 Cor. 6:18).

(3) 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 to glory. Let men be able to trace a family likeness between you and Him who begat 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 would be content with many hardships until 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" (Matt. 5:9). 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” (Heb. 10:37). Then shall be the glorious liberty and the full manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19, 21). Then shall the world acknowledge that they were the truly wise. Then shall the sons of God at length come of age and be no longer heirs in expectancy, but heirs in possession. Then shall they hear with exceeding joy those comfortable words: “Come, ye 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! Amen.