

THE SONS OF GOD NO. 339

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 7, 1860
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“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 8:16-17*

MY brethren, what a contrast there is between the present and future estate of the child of God! The believer is here the brother to the worm, in heaven he shall be next of kin to the angels. Here he is covered with the sweat and dust which he acquired by Adam’s fall, there his brow shall be bright with the immortality which is conferred upon him by the resurrection of Christ. Here the heir of heaven is unknown, he is in disguise, full often clad in the habiliments of poverty, but there his princely character shall be discerned and acknowledged, he shall be waited upon by angels, and shall share in the admiration which the universe shall pour upon the glorified Redeemer.

Well said our poet just now,

“It doth not yet appear, how great we must be made.”

I think I need not remind you of your condition here below, you are too conversant with it, being hourly fretted with troubles, vexed with your own infirmities, with the temptations of Satan, and with all the allurements of this world. You are quite conscious that this is not your rest. There are too many thorns in your nest to permit you to hope for an abiding city below the skies.

I say it is utterly needless for me to refresh your memories about your present condition, but I feel it will be a good and profitable work if I remind you that there are high privileges of which you are possessors even now, there are divine joys which even this day you may taste. The wilderness has its manna, the desert is gladdened with water from the rock. God has not forsaken us, the tokens of His goodness are with us, and we may rejoice in full many a gracious boon which is ours this very day. I shall direct your joyous attention to one precious jewel in your treasury, namely, your adoption into the family of God.

There are four things of which I shall speak this morning. First, *a special privilege*, second, *a special proof of it*, the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit, then thirdly, *a special privilege*, that of heirship, and fourthly, the practical part of the sermon, and the conclusion shall be *a special manner of life demanded of such persons*.

I. First then, my brethren, a SPECIAL PRIVILEGE mentioned in the text. *“We are the children of God.”*

And here I am met upon the very threshold by the opposition of certain modern theologians, who hold that sonship is not the special and peculiar privilege of believers. The newly discovered negative theology, which, I fear, has done some damage to the Baptist denomination, and a very large amount of injury to the Independent body—the new heresy is to a large degree, founded upon the fiction of the Universal Fatherhood of God.

The old divines, the Puritans, the Reformers, are now in these last days, to be superseded by men whose teaching flatly contradicts all that we have received of our forefathers. Our old ministers have all represented God as being *to His people* a father, to the rest of the world a judge. This is styled by our

new philosophers an old cumbersome scheme of theology, and it is proposed that it be swept away—a proposition which will never be carried out while the earth remains, or while God endures.

But at any rate, certain knight-errants have set themselves to do battle with windmills, and really believe that they shall actually destroy from the face of the earth that which is a fundamental and abiding distinction, without which the Scriptures are not to be understood.

We are told by modern false prophets, that God in everything acts to all men as a father, even when He casts them into the lake of fire, and sends upon them all the plagues that are written in His book. All these terrible things in righteousness, the awful proofs of holy vengeance in the judge of all the earth, are successfully neutralized in their arousing effect, by being quietly written among the loving acts and words of the Universal Father.

It is dreamed that this is an age when men do not need to be thundered at, when everybody has become so tenderhearted that there is no need for the sword to be held “in terrorum” over mortals, but that everything is to be conducted now in a new and refined manner, God the Universal Father, and all men universal sons.

Now, I must confess there is something very pretty about this theory, something so fascinating that I do not wonder that some of the ablest minds have been wooed and won by it. I, for my part, take only one objection to it, which is that it is perfectly untrue and utterly unfounded, having not the slightest shadow of a pretense of being proved by the Word of God.

Scripture everywhere represents the chosen people of the Lord, under their visible character of believers, penitents, and spiritual men, as being “the children of God,” and to none but such is that holy title given. It speaks of the regenerate, of a special class of men as having a claim to be God’s children.

Now, as there is nothing like Scripture, let me read you a few texts, Romans 8:14—“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Surely no one is so daring as to say that all men are led by the Spirit of God, yet may it readily enough be inferred from our text, that those who are not led by the Spirit of God are not the sons of God, but that they and they alone who are led, guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, are the sons of God.

A passage from Galatians 3:26—“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” declaring as it seems to me, and rightly enough, that all believers, all who have faith in Christ are the children of God, and that they become actually and manifestly so by faith in Christ Jesus, and implying that those who have no faith in Christ Jesus, are not God’s sons, and that any pretense which they could make to that relationship would be but arrogance and presumption.

And hear you this, John 1:12—“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” How could they have been the sons of God before, for “to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born *not of blood*”—then they were not made the sons of God by mere creation—“nor of the will of the flesh,” that is to say, not by any efforts of their own, “but of God.” If any text can be more conclusive than this against universal sonship, I must confess I know of none, and unless these words mean nothing at all, they do mean just this, that believers are the sons of God and none besides.

But listen to another word of the Lord in the first epistle of I John, 3:10—“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” Here are two sorts of children, therefore all are not the children of God. Can it be supposed that those who are the children of the devil are nevertheless the children of God? I must confess my reason revolts against such a supposition, and though I think I might exercise a little imagination, yet I could not make my imagination sufficiently an acrobat to conceive of a man being at the same time a child of the devil, and yet a real child of God.

Hear another, 2 Corinthians, 6:17-18—“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” Is not that “coming out” necessary to sonship, and were they His sons, were they His daughters, had they any claim or right to call Him Father, until they

came out from the midst of a wicked world, and were separate? If so, why does God promise them what they have already.

But again, Matthew 5:9—“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” A fine title indeed if it belongs to every man! Where is the blessedness of the title, for they might be lovers of strife, and yet according to modern theologians they might still be the sons of God.

Let us mark a yet more positive passage, Romans 9:8—“The children of the flesh, these are not the children of God.” What then is to be said to this, “These are not the children of God.” If any man will contradict that flatly—well, be it so. I have no argument with which to convince the man who denies so strong and clear a witness.

Listen to the divine apostle John, where in one of his epistles he is carried away in rhapsody of devout admiration, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” And then he goes on giving a description of those who are the sons of God, who could not mean any but those who by a living faith in Christ Jesus, have cast their souls once for all on Him.

As far as I can guess, the main text on which these people build the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood, is that quotation which the apostle Paul took from a heathen poet—“As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.” The apostle endorses that sentiment by quoting it, and against that endorsement we can of course have no contention, but the word there used for “offspring,” expresses no idea of Fatherhood in the majestic sense of the term, it is a word which might be used as appropriately for the young of animals, the young of any other creature, it has not about it the human sympathies which belong to a father and a son.

I know, besides this, nothing which could support this new theory. Possibly they fancy that creation is a paternal act, that all created things are sons. This is too absurd to need an answer, for if so, horses and cows, rats and mice, snakes and flies are children of God, for they are surely creatures as well as we. Taking away this cornerstone, this fancy theory tumbles to the ground, and that theory which seemed to be as tall as Babel, and threatened to make as much confusion, may right soon be demolished, if you will batter it with the Word of God.

The fact is, brethren, that the relationship of a son of God belongs only to those who are “predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of the Father’s will,” Ephesians 1:5. The more you search the Bible, the more sure will you be that sonship is the special privilege of the chosen people of God and of none beside.

Having thus, as far as I can, established my point that the privilege of our text is a special one, let me dwell upon it for a moment and remark that, as a special one, it is an act of pure unmistakable grace. No man has any *right* to be a son of God. If we are born into His family it is a miracle of mercy. It is one of the ever-blessed exhibitions of the infinite love of God which without any cause in us, has set itself upon us.

If you are this day an heir of heaven, remember, man, you were once the slave of hell. Once you did wallow in the mire, and if you should adopt a swine to be your child, you could not then have performed an act of greater compassion than when God adopted you. And if an angel could exalt a gnat to equal dignity with himself, yet would not the boon be such a one as that which God has conferred on you.

He has taken you from the dunghill, and He has set you among princes. You have lain among the pots, but He has made you as a dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Remember that this is grace, and grace alone.

When you regard your adoption, remember the house of your natural parentage—look back to the hole of the pit whence thou art digged, and the miry clay whence thou wast drawn. Boast not, if you are in the true olive. You are not there because of your original, you are but a graft, you are a scion from an evil tree, and the Divine Spirit has changed your nature, for you were once nothing but a branch of the vine of Gomorrah. Ever let humility bow you to the very earth while your adoption lifts you up to the third heaven.

Consider again, I pray you, what a dignity God has conferred upon you—even upon *you* in making you His son. The tall archangel before the throne is not called God's Son, he is one of the most favored of His servants, but not His child. I tell you, poor brother in Christ, there is a dignity about you that even angels may well envy. You in your poverty are as a sparkling jewel in the darkness of the mine. You in the midst of your sickness and infirmity are girt about with robes of glory, which make the spirits in heaven look down upon the earth with awe.

You move about this world as a prince among the crowd. The blood of heaven runs in your veins, you are one of the blood royal of eternity—a son of God, descendant of the King of kings. Speak of pedigrees, the glories of heraldry—you have more than heraldry could ever give you, or all the pomp of ancestry could ever bestow.

II. And now I press forward to notice that in order that we may know whether we are partakers of this high—this royal relationship of children of God, the text furnishes us with a SPECIAL PROOF—“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”

You will notice here, my beloved, that there are two witnesses in court—two who are ready to prove our filiation to the eternal God. The first witness is *our spirit*, the second witness is *The Spirit*, the eternal Spirit of God, who beareth witness with our spirit.

It is as if a poor man were called into court to prove his right to some piece of land which was disputed. He stands up and bears his own faithful testimony, but some great one of the land—some nobleman who lives near—rises, stands in the witness box, and confirms his witness. So is it with our text. The plain, simple spirit of the humble-minded Christian cries, “I am God's child.” The glorious Spirit, one with God, attests the truth of the testimony, and bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Let us notice in the first place, how it is that *our spirit* is able to bear witness, and as this is a matter of experience, I can only appeal to those who are the true children of God, for no others are competent to give testimony. Our spirit bears witness that we are the children of God when it feels a filial love to God. When bowing before His throne we can boldly say, “Abba Father”—“Thou art my father,” then our spirit concludes that we are sons, for thus it argues, “I feel to You as a child feels to its parent, and it could not be that I should have the feeling of a son if I had not the rights of a son—if I were not a child You would never have given to me that filial affection which now dares to call you “Father.”

Sometimes too, the spirit feels that God is its Father not only by love but by trust. The rod has been upon our back and we have smarted very sore, but in the darkest hour we have been able to say, “The time is in my Father's hands, I cannot murmur, I would not repine, I feel it is but right that I should suffer, otherwise my Father would never have made me suffer.”

He surely does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nought, and when in these dark gloomy times we have looked up to a Father's face and have said, “Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee. Thy blows shall not drive thee from me, they shall but make me say, ‘Show me wherefore thou contendest with me, and purge me from my sin.’” Then our spirit beareth witness that we are the children of God.

And are there not times with you, my dear friends, when your hearts feel that they would be emptied and void, unless God were in them. You have perhaps received an increase to your wealth, and after the first flush of pleasure which was but natural, you have said, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; this is not my joy.” You have had many mercies in your family, but you have felt that in them all there was a lack of something which could satisfy your heart, and you have felt that that something was God.

My God, You are my all in all—the circle where my passions move, the center of my soul. Now these longings—these pantings for something more than this world can give you—are but the evidences of a childlike spirit, which was panting after its Father's presence. You feel you must have your Father, or else the gifts of His providence are nothing to you. That is, *your spirit* beareth witness that you are the child of God.

But there are times when the heir of heaven is as sure that he is God's child as he is sure that he is his own father's son. No doubt can make him question. The evil one may whisper, "If you be a son of God." But he says, "Get thee hence, Satan, I know I am the son of God." A man might as well try to dispute him out of the fact of his existence as out of that equally sure fact that he has been born again, and that by gracious adoption he has been taken into the family of God. This is our witnessing that we are born of God.

But the text, you see, furnishes us with a higher witness than this. God that cannot lie, in the person of the Holy Ghost, graciously condescends to say "Amen" to the testimony of our conscience. And whereas our experience sometimes leads our spirit to conclude that we are born of God, there are happy times when the eternal Spirit from off the throne, descends and fills our heart, and then we have the two witnesses bearing witness with each other, that we are children of God.

Perhaps you ask me, how is this. I was reading a passage by Dr. Chalmers the other day, in which he says that his own experience did not lead him to believe that the Holy Spirit ever gave any witness of our being the children of God, apart from the written Word of God, and His ordinary workings in our hearts. Now, I am not sure that the doctor is perfectly right. As far as his own experience went I dare say he was right, but there may be some far inferior to the doctor in genius, who nevertheless were superior in nearness of fellowship with God, and who could therefore go a little farther than the eloquent divine.

Now, I do believe with him this morning, that the chief witness of God the Holy Spirit lies in this—the Holy Spirit has written this Book which contains an account of what a Christian should be, and of the feelings which believers in Christ must have. I have certain experiences and feelings, turning to the Word, I find similar experiences and feelings recorded, and so I prove that I am right, and the Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am born of God.

Suppose you have been enabled to believe in Jesus Christ for your salvation, that faith has produced love to Christ, that love to Christ has led you to work for Christ, you come to the Bible, and you find that this was just the very thing which was felt by early believers, and then you say, "Good Lord, I am Your son, because what I feel is what You have said by the lips of your servant must be felt by those who are Your children." So the Spirit confirms the witness of my spirit that I am born of God.

But again, everything that is good in a Christian you know to be the work of God the Holy Ghost. When at any time then the Holy Spirit comforts you—sheds a sweet calm over your disturbed spirit, when at any period He instructs you, opens to you a mystery you did not understand before, when at some special period He inspires you with an unaccustomed affection, an unusual faith in Christ, when you experience a hatred of sin, a faith in Jesus, a death to the world, and a life to God, these are the works of the Spirit.

Now the Spirit never did work effectually in any but the children of God, and inasmuch as the Spirit works in you, He does by that very working give His own infallible testimony to the fact that you are a child of God. If you had not been a child He would have left you where you were in your natural state, but inasmuch as He has wrought in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure, He has put His stamp on you as being one of the family of the Most High.

But I think I must go a little further than this. I do believe that there is a supernatural way in which apart from means, the Spirit of God communicates with the spirit of man. My own little experience leads me to believe that apart from the Word of God, there are immediate dealings with the conscience and soul of man by the Holy Spirit, without any instrumentality, without even the agency of the truth.

I believe that the Spirit of God sometimes comes into a mysterious and marvelous contact with the spirit of man, and that at times the Spirit speaks in the heart of man by a voice not audible to the ear, but perfectly audible to the spirit which is the subject of it. He assures and consoles directly, by coming into immediate contact with the heart. It becomes our business then to take the Spirit's witness through His Word, and through His works, but I would seek to have immediate, actual, undivided fellowship with the Holy Ghost, who by His divine Spirit, should work in my spirit and convince me that I am a child of God.

Now let me ask my congregation, do any of you know that you are God's children? Say not, "In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, and a child of God." There are not many in England, I think, who believe those words. There may be a few who do, but it has never been my misfortune to meet with them.

Everyone knows that it is a disgrace to a matchless prayer book, that such words should be permitted to stand there—words so infamously untrue that by their gross untruthfulness they cease to have the destructive effect which more cunning language might have produced, because the conscience of man revolts against the idea that the sprinkling of drops of water upon the infant's brow can ever make it a member of Christ, and a child of God.

But I ask you, does your spirit say today, "I am God's child." Do you feel the longings, the loves, the confidences of a child? If not, tremble, for there are but two vast families in this world. They are the family of God, and the family of Satan—their character is different—their end, how strangely divided!

But let me say again to you, have you ever felt that the Holy Ghost has borne witness with your spirit in His Word, and in His work, in you, and in that secret whisper has He ever said to you, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." I conjure you, give no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids, till by this divine mysterious agency, you are new made, new born, and new begotten, and so admitted not only nominally but really into the living family of the living God.

III. I shall now pass on to my third point. If it be settled in our mind by the true witness—the spirit within us, and the Spirit of God—that we are God's children, what a NOBLE PRIVILEGE now appears to our view. "HEIRS OF GOD, and joint heirs with Christ."

It does not always follow in human reasoning "if children, then heirs," because in our families but one is the heir. There is but one that can claim the heir's rights, and the heir's title. It is not so in the family of God. Man as a necessary piece of political policy, may give to the heir that which surely he can have not more real right to in the sight of God, than the rest of the family—may give him all the inheritance, while his brethren, equally true born, may go without, but it is not so in the family of God.

All God's children are heirs, however numerous the family, and he that shall be born of God last, shall be as much His heir as he who was born first. Abel, the protomartyr, entering alone into heaven, shall not have a more secure title to the inheritance than he who, last of woman born, shall trust in Christ, and then ascend into His glory. In heaven's logic it is true, "if children, then heirs."

And see what it is that we are heirs of. The apostle opens with the grandest part of the inheritance first—*heirs of God*—heirs not of God's gifts, and God's works, but heirs of God Himself. It was said of King Cyrus that he was a prince of so amiable a disposition, that when at any time he sat down at meat, if there were aught that pleased his appetite, he would order it to be taken away and given to his friends with this message, "King Cyrus found that this food pleased his palate, and he thought his friend should feed upon that which he enjoyed himself." This was thought to be a singular instance of his affability, and his kindness to his courtiers.

But our God does more than this, He does not send merely bread from His table, as in the day when man did eat angel's food, He does not give us merely to drink the wines on the lees well refined—the rich wines of heaven—but He gives Himself, *Himself* to us.

And the believer is to be the heir, I say, not merely of God's works, not simply of God's gifts, but of God Himself. Talk we of His omnipotence?—His Almightyness is ours. Speak we of His omniscience?—all His wisdom is engaged in our behalf. Do we say that He is love?—that love belongs to us. Can we glory that He is full of immutability, and changes not?—that eternal unchangeableness is engaged for the defense of the people of God. All the attributes of divinity are the property of God's children—their inheritance entailed upon them. Nay, He Himself is ours. Oh, what riches!

If we could say this morning that all the stars belong to us, if we could turn the telescope to the most remote of the fixed stars, and then could say with the pride of possession, so natural to man, "That star, a thousand times bigger than the sun, is mine. I am the king of that inheritance, and without me does not a dog move his tongue."

If we could then sweep the telescope along the Milky Way, and see the millions upon millions of stars that lie clustered together there, and could cry, "All these are mine," yet these possessions were but a speck compared with that which is in the text. Heir of God! He to whom all these things are but as nothing, gives Himself up to the inheritance of His people.

Note yet a little further concerning the special privilege of heirship—we are *joint heirs with Christ*. That is, whatever Christ possesses, as heir of all things, belongs to us. Splendid must be the inheritance of Jesus Christ. Is He not very God of very God, JEHOVAH'S only begotten Son, Most High and glorious, though He bowed Himself to the grave and became the Servant of servants, yet God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

Oh! what angelic tongue shall hymn His glory? What fiery lips shall ever speak of His possessions, of His riches—the unsearchable riches of God in Christ Jesus. But beloved, all that belongs to Christ belongs to Christ's people. It is as when a man does marry. His possessions shall be shared by his spouse, and when Christ took His church unto Himself He endowed her with all His goods, both temporal and eternal. He gives to us His raiments, and thus we stand arrayed. His righteousness becomes our beauty.

He gave to us His person, it has become our meat and our drink, we eat His flesh and drink His blood. He gave to us His inmost heart, He loved us even to the death. He gave to us His crown, He gave to us His throne, for "to him that overcometh will I give to sit with me in my throne, even as I have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in His throne." He gave to us His heaven, for "where I am, there shall my people be." He gave to us the fullness of His joy, for "my joy shall be in you, that your joy may be full." I repeat it, there is nothing in the highest heaven which Christ has reserved unto Himself, "for all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

I cannot stay longer on that point, except just to notice that we must never quarrel with this divine arrangement. "Oh," say you, "we never shall." Stay, stay, brother, I have known you do so already, for when all that is Christ's belongs to you, do you forget that Christ once had a cross, and that belongs to you? Christ once wore a thorny crown, and if you are to have all that He has, you must bear the thorny crown too. Have you forgotten that He had shame and spitting, the reproach, the rebuke of men, and that He conceived all those to be greater riches than all the treasures of this world?

Come, I know as you look down the inventory, you are apt to look a little askance on that cross, and you think, "Well, the crown is glorious, but I love not the spittle, I care not to be despised and rejected of men." Oh! you are quarreling with this divine arrangement, you are beginning to differ with this blessed policy of God. Why, one would have thought you would rejoice to take your Master for better or for worse, and to be partaker with Him, not only in His glories but in His sufferings.

So it must be, "If so be that we suffer with Him that we also may be glorified together." Is there a place into which your Master went that you would be ashamed to enter? If so, I think your heart is not in a right state. Would you refuse to go with Him to the garden of His agony? Believer, would you be ashamed to stand and be accused as He was, and have false witness borne against you? And would you blush to sit side-by-side with Him, and be made nothing of as He was?

Oh, when you start aside at a little jest, let your conscience prick you and say, "Am I not a joint heir with Christ, and am I about to quarrel with the legacy?" Did He not say, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"? And oh, would you be ashamed to die for Christ, I think, if you are what you should be, you will glory in tribulations also, and count it sweet to suffer for Christ. I know the world turns this into ridicule and says, "That the hypocrite loves persecution," no, not the hypocrite, but the true believer, he feels that though the suffering must ever be painful, yet for Christ's sake, it becomes so glorious that the pain is all forgotten.

Come, believer, will you be partaker with Christ today in the battle, and then divide this spoil with Him? Come, will you wade with Him through the deep waters, and then at last climb up the topless hills with Him? Are you prepared now to be despised and rejected of men that you may at last ascend up on

high, leading captivity captive? The inheritance cannot be divided, if you will have the glory, you must have the shame. He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.

Come, men, put your face against all weathers, be ready to come uphill, with the snow blowing in your face, be ready to march on when the tempest howls, and the lightnings flash overhead, and the snow becomes knee-deep, nay, be ready to go into the crevasse with Him, and perish if need be. Who quarrels with this sacred regulation? Certainly no true child of God, he would not have it altered, even if he might.

IV. And now I come to my last point, upon which briefly but I hope interestingly. The SPECIAL CONDUCT naturally expected from those who are partakers of the peculiar privileges of being the children of God.

In the golden age of Rome, if a man were tempted to dishonesty, he would stand upright, look the tempter in the face, and say to him, "I am a Roman." He thought that a sufficient reason why he should neither lie nor cheat. It ought to be a ten times more than sufficient answer to every temptation, for a man to be able to say, "I am a son of God, shall such a man as I yield to sin?"

I have been astonished in looking through old Roman history at the wonderful prodigies of integrity and valor which were produced by idolatry, or rather, which were produced by patriotism, and that principle which ruled the Romans, namely, love of fame. And I say it this morning, it is a shameful thing that ever idolatry should be able to breed better men than some who profess Christianity. And I think I may stand firmly while I argue here, that if a Roman, a worshipper of Jupiter or Saturn, became great or glorious, a Son of God ought to be nobler by far.

Look you, sirs, at Brutus, he has established a republic, he has put down tyranny, he sits upon the judgment seat, his two sons are brought before him, they have been traitors to the commonwealth. What will the father do? He is a man of a loving heart and loves his sons, but there they stand. Will he execute justice as a judge, or will he prefer his family to his country?

He covers his face for a moment with his hands, and then looking down upon his sons, and finding that the testimony is complete against them, he says, "Lictors, do your work." They bare their backs, the rod scourges them. "Complete the sentence lictors," and their heads are smitten off in the father's presence. Stern justice swayed his spirit, and no other feeling could for a single moment make him turn aside.

Christian men, do you feel this with regard to your sins? When you have been sitting on the judgment bench, there has been some favorite sin brought up, and you have, oh, let me blush to say it, you have wished to spare it. It was so near your heart, you have wished to let it live, whereas should you not as the son of God have said, "If my eye offend me, I will pluck it out and cast it from me, if my right hand offend me, I will cut it off, rather than I should in anything offend my God."

Brutus slays his sons, but some Christians would spare their sins. Look again at that noble youth, Mutius Scaevola. He goes into the tent of King Pyrrhus with the intention to put him to death because he is the enemy of his country, he slays the wrong man, Pyrrhus orders him to be taken captive. A pan of hot coals is blazing in the tent, Scaevola puts out his right hand and holds it, it crackles in the flame, the young man flinches not, though his fingers drop away. "There are four hundred youths," says he, "in Rome as brave as I am, and who will bear fire as well, and tyrant," he says, "you will surely die."

Yet, here are Christian men, who, if they are a little sneered at, or snubbed, or get the cold shoulder for Christ's sake, are half ashamed of their profession, and would go and hide it. And if they are not like Peter—tempted to curse and swear to escape the blessed imputation—they would turn the conversation that they might not suffer for Christ. Oh for four hundred Scaevolans, four hundred men who for Christ's sake would burn, not their right hands, but their bodies, if indeed Christ's name might be glorified, and sin might be stabbed in the heart.

Or read you that old legend of Curtius, the Roman knight. A great gulf had opened in the Forum, perhaps caused by an earthquake, and the auspices had said that the chasm could never be filled up, except the most precious thing in Rome could be cast into it. Curtius puts on his helmet, and his armor,

mounts his horse and leaps into the cleft, which is said to have filled at once, because courage, valor, and patriotism were the best things in Rome. I wonder how many Christians there are who would leap like that into the cleft.

Why, I see you, sirs, if there is a new and perilous work to be done for Christ, you like to be in the rear rank this time, if there were something honorable, so that you might ride on with your well caparisoned steeds in the midst of the dainty ranks, you would do it, but to leap into certain annihilation for Christ's sake—oh! heroism, where has it fled—whither has it gone. You church of God, surely it must survive in you, for to whom should it more belong to die and sacrifice all, than to those who are the sons of God.

Look you again at Camillus. Camillus had been banished from Rome by false accusations. He was ill-treated, abused, and slandered, and went away to retirement. Suddenly the Goths, the old enemies of Rome, fell upon the city. They surrounded it, they were about to sack it, and Camillus was the only man who could deliver it. Some would have said within themselves, "Let the caitiff nation be cut off. The city has turned me out, let it rue the day that it ever drove me away." But no, Camillus gathers together his body of followers, falls upon the Goths, routs them and enters in triumph into Rome though he was an exile.

Oh Christian, this should ever be your spirit, only in a higher degree. When the church rejects you, casts you out, annoys, despises you, still be ready to defend her, and when you have an ill name even in the lips of God's people, still stand up for the common cause of Zion, the city of our solemnities.

Or look at Cincinnatus. He is chosen dictator, but as soon as ever his dictatorship is over he retires to his little farm of three acres, and goes to his plough, and when he is wanted to be absolute monarch of Rome he is found at his plough upon his three acres of land and his little cottage. He served his country, not for himself, but for his country's sake, and can it be that you will not be poor yet honest for Christ's sake! Will you descend to the tricks of trade to win money? Ah, then, the Roman eclipses the Christian.

Will you not be satisfied to serve God though you lose by it, to stand up and be thought an arrant fool, because you will not learn the wisdom of this world, to be esteemed a mad fanatic, because you cannot swim with the current. Can you not do it? Can you not do it? Then again I say to you, "Tell it not in Gath, and publish it not in Askalon, then has a heathen eclipsed a Christian." May the sons of God be greater than the sons of Romulus.

One other instance let me give you. You have heard of Regulus the Roman general, he was taken prisoner by Carthaginians, who anxiously wished for peace. They told him to go home to Rome, and see if he could not make peace. But his reply was, "No, I trust they will always be at war with you, for Carthage must be destroyed if Rome is to prosper." They compelled him however, to go, exacting from him this promise, that if the Romans did not make peace he would come back, and if he came back they would put him to death in the most horrid manner that ever cruelty could invent.

Regulus returns to Rome, he stands up in the senate and conjures them never to make peace in Carthage, but to burn the city and utterly destroy it. As soon as his oration is done, he bids farewell to his wife and children, and tells them that he is going back to Carthage, and of course they tell him that he need not keep faith with an enemy. I imagine that he said, "I promised to go back, and though it is to pangs indescribable, I will return." His wife clings to his shoulder, his children seek to persuade him, they attend him to the waters' edge, he sails for Carthage. His death was too horrible to be described.

Never martyr suffered more for Christ than that man suffered for his word's sake. And shall a Christian break his promise? shall a son of God be less true than a Roman or a heathen? Shall it be, I say, that integrity shall be found in heathen lands and not be found here? No. May you be holy, harmless, sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

I used this argument, I thought it might be a new one, I am sure it is a forcible one. You cannot imagine surely, that God is to allow heathens to eclipse His children. Oh! never let it be so. So live, so act, you sons of God that the world may say of you, "Yes, these men bring forth the fruits of God, they are like their Father, they honor His name, they are indeed filled with His grace, for their every word is

as true as his oath, their every act is sincere and upright, their heart is kind, their spirit is gentle, they are firm but yet they are generous, they are strict in their integrity, but they are loving in their souls, they are men who, like God, are full of love, but like Him are severely just. They are sternly holy, they are, like Him, ready to forgive, but they can by no means tolerate iniquity, nor hear that sin should live in their presence.”

God bless you, ye sons of God, and may those of you who are strangers to Him, be convinced and converted by this sermon, and seek that grace by which alone you can have your prayer fulfilled—

*“With them numbered may we be,
Now and through eternity.”*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.