

A Basket of Fragments

Part IX

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843), the pastor of St Peter's, Dundee, died in his thirtieth year, and in the seventh of his ministry. His epitaph describes him as a man who "walked with God," and who was "honoured by his Lord to draw many wanderers out of darkness into the path of life."

A Basket of Fragments is a selection of sermons first published five years after M'Cheyne's death. The sermons were put together from the notes taken down by hearers during his ministry "without the least view to publication." One advantage of this is that, as the editor of the first edition wrote, "they bring before us those extemporaneous pleadings with sinner in which few so greatly excelled." The sermons are indeed stamped with eternity; they are the expression of one upon whose heart the weight of perishing sinners pressed; they are the yearnings of one who was "deein" to the folks converted.

Taken from the 1975 edition of *A Basket of Fragments*, published by *Christian Focus Publications*, Inverness, Scotland.

"Adoption"

1 John 3.1. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

I desire, my friends, to open up to you shortly the subject of adoption. By nature you are the children of Satan; I would here show you how you may be made sons of God: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

I. What is the fountain of adoption? In answer to that, I say, it flows from the love of the Father: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," Eph. 1.5. Observe that the only reason why God adopts any one is the good pleasure of his will: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." I suppose that this congregation may be divided into two parts: the one are the children of Satan; the other, the children of God. Who can tell why it is so? Who can tell why you were chosen and not another? It was the good pleasure of his will: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Ah, my friends, this is a humbling doctrine. There is no difference between us and the children of wrath; some of us were more wicked than they, yet God set his love on us. We were like the prodigal, yet he put on us the best robe. This should humble us in the dust. If

there are any here that think they have been chosen because they were better than others; ah! if you think that, you are grossly mistaken.

II. I would show you a second point, and that is, the power by which God brings the children of the wicked one, and makes us children of God. Can we do it ourselves? No; the answer you will find in Matt. 3:9: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham." See also the 4th chapter of Romans, 17th verse: "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." See also Rom. 11:23: "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in; for God is able to graff them in again." So you see, dear brethren, that the only power that can bring a child of Satan and make him a child of God, is God himself. God is able to graff them in again. Ah! dear friends, the power is not in creatures. It is not in the power of man ? it is not in the power given to ministers; they cannot make you children of God. O my unconverted friends, observe what the power is that can take you out of the family of nature, and put you among the children: "How shall I put you among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a godly heritage of the host of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me." Jer. 3:19. It is God that must put you among the children. You that have been brought up in an ungodly family, God alone can bring you into his family. It is God alone that can do it. There is no power in earth, in heaven, or in hell, that can do it. Adoption is God's bestowment. Look then to him for it.

Upon the Lord my waiting eyes
Continually are set,
And he it is that shall bring forth
My feet out of the net.

Set your eyes on God, then wait upon him.

III. Let me inquire into the steps by which God brings a child of the devil, to make him a child of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." There are two steps, regeneration and faith if indeed, they can be separated, because the first breath of the new soul is faith; but in speaking of them we may consider one, and then the other. You will see it very beautifully brought out in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, 12th and 13th verses: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Now, here you require just to take this passage backward, in order to understand it. The first thing is, "They were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The first thing towards faith, is regeneration. The next step is, he "believes on his name," and then he is adopted into his family: "As many as received him, to them gave he power," or, as in the margin, the right, or privilege, "to become the sons of God." Here you see the exact process. First of all, he is born of God; the soul that was dead in trespasses and sins is born. "not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." God drops the life of grace into his soul. And then comes the next step ? he receives faith; that is, he

believes on his name. And then comes the next step "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God": that is, he gives them the privilege to become the sons of God. O my brethren! this is the way in which he is made a child of God. Tell me. are you a child of God?

Again, are there any of you that think you are sons of God, though ye have not believed on his name? It is a lie; for it is only those that receive him that get power to believe on his name. Ah! my brethren, will you not be driven from this time to cry, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth"; will you not cry to him?

IV. The blessedness of being a son of God: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Ah! there are many things to make it a blessedness beyond compare.

1. The first thing that makes it a blessedness is that we get the love of the Father. The moment you become a child, the Father loves you. This is shown in what Christ said to Mary: "I ascend unto my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God." Christ here intimated, that we have the same love that he had. We have not got so much of the love of the Father as Christ, because he has got an infinite capacity; but it is the same love. The sun shines as much upon the daisy as it does upon the sunflower, though the sunflower is able to contain more. Christ plainly shows you that in the 17th chapter of John, where he prays that the same love maybe in us that was in him. O how much better is it, then, to be under the love of God, than under the wrath of God!

2. Let me mention to you a second part of the blessedness we get. The Spirit of the Son dwells in us. You will see this in Galatians 4.6, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Brethren, when Christ comes, the first thing he does is to redeem you from under the curse of the law, and then he makes you a son. O it is sweet to have the smile of Christ! it is sweet to get the love of Christ; but I will tell you what is equally as sweet ? that is to receive the Spirit of Christ. Has he given you the Spirit? He will do it if you are a son, that you may be made to cry, "Abba, Father."

3. Let me mention to you another part of the blessedness of being a son of God. You get the likeness of the Father. You know this is the case in an adopted family; an adopted child in the course of time gets the very features of the family. So you get the image of the Father, and you get the love of the Father. You are taught that in Matthew 5, where Christ says, in his Sermon on the Mount, "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father "which is in heaven," that ye may bear the image of the Father. Have you that mark of adoption? Are you turning like God?

4. Let us mention another part of the blessedness. Some of you may be surprised at it. We get the chastisement of the Father. If we have no chastisement, then we are bastards, and not sons, for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not. The world

are allowed to get fat; but it is not so with those that follow God; if they wander, he puts up a hedge, and if they fall into it, he puts up a wall.

5. Let me mention the last part of the blessedness. We receive the inheritance as heirs. Paul says, "If sons, then heirs." Every child in a rich family gets something when the father dies; often he shares his fortune equally among them, and the adopted child is not forgot. If we are Christ's we get all things with him. If we are Christ's, we share the government of the world with him. If we are his, we shall share the crown with him. It is called the inheritance of the saints in light. I cannot tell the blessings of being an heir of God; but I know that it is better than being an heir of hell: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things," and that for eternity ? it cannot fade away. O my brethren! will you still remain heirs of hell? If you come to Christ you will be made heirs of God. Whether is it better to get the pleasure of the world, and hell at the end, or to be made a child of God, and an heir of Christ? "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. 7.16, 17. O that God would make you like Mary, to choose that good part that shall never be taken away from you! O that God would put life into the dead stones, and from these stones raise up children to Abraham! Amen.

**Thursday Evening,
9th September 1842.**

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