

The Mystery of Sonship

by Art Katz

For the anxious longing of creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. (Rom. 8:19)

The whole concept of ‘sonship’ in its true and biblical sense has been lost to us in modern times. We bring up our children and get them through school, and they have some kind of modest affection. The day comes, however, when we withhold the keys for the car, and then we sense the depths of the rebellion and deep disrespect they have for their parents. They have their own independent careers already in mind, and the parents are looked to as the instrumentality by which those ends are to be obtained. To think of a contemporary son today who would live his life for the delight, satisfaction and approval of his father is hardly to be imagined. He has his own independent agenda as soon as he comes to an age of consciousness. This is, however, a grotesque distortion of the Hebraic concept of ‘son and father.’



The Attaining of Sons

Even in the church, the words, ‘sonship’ and ‘manifest sons’ have become so tainted and even denigrated, due to certain segments of Christendom that have made merchandise out of them. There have been the most scandalous distortions, where there are men who say that they will never die, etc. It is one the enemy’s favourite tactics to take something holy and precious, and have men to so mutilate and transfigure it, that the Body of Christ for whom it was intended has such a distaste for these words and what they represent. We tend, therefore, to ignore this mystery, or shuck it off altogether, and we are robbed of something so intrinsic to our faith and calling.

Every true saint should consciously covet coming into the place of sonship, and to become a son or daughter of God. It is *not* automatic. There is a difference between sons and children. Sonship is a matter of *attainment*, and with it is the privilege of authority in God. It is the place of maturity and stature that alone effects the consummation of God’s purposes. God’s whole program is, therefore, to obtain sons and daughters, and to “bring them to glory.” I have noticed from experience that so few ever attain. The greater majority of believers do not even aspire toward it. But the Last Days’ purposes of God will *only* be fulfilled by sons and daughters of God.

For the anxious longing of creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. (Rom. 8:19)

There is something instinctive in dumb and insensate nature that recognizes the ravages of the Fall. It knows that there is a greater and more glorious demonstration that waits upon the coming forth of this one phenomenon—the sons of God. In other words, the whole eschatological program of God and the whole final redemption of creation waits for a certain number of sons. Sons are going to remove from creation the anxiety and anguish from which they groan, not by anything they do, but by what they *are*. The mere ‘coming forth’ or ‘revealing’ of sons is *itself* the thing that breaks the bondage of futility in creation. We are so habituated to think in a certain way, and that in order to effect something, then something must be *done*. But God says that it is not what will be *done*, but what the reality of sons *are* that destroys the last vestiges of darkness in their crippling influence upon creation.

Jesus was the Son of God in a **positional** way by birth, but something was required in a moment of time that made it actual, namely, a divine declaration or decree. Jesus had to come to the place where the Father could say: *I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee." (Psalm 2:7).*

Sonship is a proclamation that announces to all creation, to all mankind, and to the principalities and powers of the air that **today** or **this day** they have got something new to reckon with. This is One who is made in God's image, One who has come to stature, One who shares the Father's character and who embraces His purposes, and to whom He has invested His authority, and One to whom He has given the nations as an inheritance:

"Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession." (Psalm 2:8).

Sonship and inheritance are implicit and connected. Coming into sonship means that there is now an authority in expressing the rule of God, even now while yet in the earth, that was not ours before that decree or announcement. There was a day that had to be waited for before the King could be established upon the holy mountain of Zion.

"I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain." (Psalm 2:6b).

The decree that announces Him as the Son is the decree also that announces Him as the King. And what is true for Him is true for us. When we come to sonship, then we come also to kingship, the place of our ruling and reigning with Him.



Resurrected unto Sonship

God declared the decree, "**This day**," because something happened on that day, namely, the raising of Jesus from the dead. It is called ascension. He ascended to glory after a profound humiliation. It is clear from the context that the 'today' spoken of here is not the day He was born. This is not an infant that is ascending to the throne, but a man of authority ascending the throne. It is the authority of maturity that allows one to rule.

Jesus was, "declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 1:4).

He was declared the Son of God with power because power could now be entrusted to One who has no purpose in Himself or for Himself. He was not seeking for anything. He did not need to be acknowledged. He had no ambition of any kind, but only one purpose for being, namely, to serve the will of the Father. A son is one who lives to do the will of his father, and he has no other intent or purpose for himself than that. A son can bring the Father's word in the Father's authority and be trusted with that.

In other words, Jesus, who was positionally the Son, would not have been declared the Son unless He had been raised from the dead. That ties in with Psalm 2:7b: "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee." It was the day He was declared or proclaimed the Son of God by decree. It was the day that He was begotten, namely, the day that He was raised from the dead. The resurrection attests to the acceptance of the sacrifice of the Lord Himself. The exaltation of the title, "Thou art My Son" is the adoption. The resurrection is the exaltation. Jesus was raised up out of death by the power of God and the glory of God. His ascending up on high to the right hand of the Father was to a place in the government of God as the anointed King.

For to which of the angels did He ever say, “Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee”? And again, “I will be a Father to Him, and He shall be a Son to me”? (Heb. 1:5)

But of the Son He says, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom. (Heb.1:8).

The issue of Jesus as the Son of God in terms of His authority to rule as the exalted Son, to whom was given all authority in heaven and earth, has exclusively and totally to do with the fact that He was raised from the dead. In that day, that great declaration and announcement and reality was established. If Jesus’ exaltation as King, which includes His authority to rule in His power, could not take place until He was first declared to be the Son of God by resurrection, then the requirement for us is exactly the same. Unless we are declared to be sons by virtue of resurrection, then we have no authority, no overcoming, no sonship, no kingship, and no power—**nothing**. Everything is connected with being raised from the dead.

As long as we remain in a place where resurrection is only a doctrine, which regrettably describes the majority of Christians, then we are still children. It is only when resurrection is **our** experience that the Father is released to declare the decree: “This is My son or daughter.” The coming into the resurrection realm is the exaltation and adoption as a son. We have got to come beyond the place of mere acknowledgement of the truth of resurrection as doctrine. Jesus did not feign death. It was a **literal** death and resurrection.

When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. (Hebrews 1:3b-4).

The more excellent name is that of a son. He obtained it as an inheritance, and one only obtains an inheritance **after** death. Evidently God regards the title ‘son’ as being more distinctive and more honourable than even that which is angelic.

The Baptism of Jesus

Jesus was declared to be the Son of God on the day that He was begotten, i.e., the day of His ascension out of death through resurrection. There was, however, another decree and another declaration that had come at the inception of Jesus’ walk, namely, His baptism: “*Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased.*” (Luke 3:22b).

That announcement was made on His coming up out of the water. It had to wait on Jesus’ baptism and not earlier, because **baptism is death and resurrection**. It is not the fulfilling of a religious requirement or obligation. Baptism is a going down, a **submitting** unto death and an immersion into it. The baptism of Jesus was a burial, and He was declared to be a beloved Son on **that** day because He was bringing to death anything that might have remained to which He could have been alive. His coming up out of the waters was the resurrection. In other words, the baptism in the Jordan was a prefiguring of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus.

The Father recognised what the baptism of Jesus meant to Jesus. It was a death to any independence of will or desire for Himself that had to do with honor, recognition, fame, and ambition of a religious or any other kind. It was a total death, and when He came up out of that, the Father announced: “Thou are My Beloved Son.” The Father recognized it as being an authentic act, and therefore He could make that announcement. Jesus had divorced Himself from the prospect of any gratification or fulfilment independent of the Father. His whole life from that day forth was for His Father’s sake. It was Jesus’ willingness to bring His manhood into total death that made the Father

‘well-pleased.’ He was willing to be totally dependent on the Life of the Father through Him, and in fact, this act established Jesus as a Son. It is only sons who have the Father’s good pleasure. The Cross was only the climax of an entire life lived in death and resurrection.

Jesus never did anything out of His deity. Everything was out of the Life of the Father. His miracles and His ability to know something in a supernatural way were not drawn from His ability as God. That is exactly what He *laid aside*, and took upon Himself the form of a man—but a resurrection man—to show us that we have the same prospect as He, in the same kind of faith relationship, if we are willing to forfeit, as He did, our own life. To forsake our own opinions and the things that would bring esteem for ourselves, and to speak only the words of God as He will give them, is a continual humiliation. The temptation will always be with us to speak or to act out of our independent manhood. To willingly forsake our own words for the words of God requires the faith of a son and not a child. To speak them when they come, however horrific and offensive they might be, is the obedience that can only be given by a son. He will not hold back or diminish or soften the words of God. He will cry out: “Hypocrite and viper! Your father is Satan!” with a remarkable abandon, liberty, and authority. These were not Jesus’ petulant responses to men who were rejecting Him. They were the words *given* by the Father.

Only a dead man can be entrusted with the Spirit of holiness and with that power. If we are still ambitious religiously for our own ministry or recognition, then we have not yet attained to sonship, and we will never attain unless it is a conscious and wilful desire to come to this stature and qualification. The gospel can only be declared with power according to the Spirit of holiness by those who are resurrected from the dead. Only resurrection glorifies God. The opposite would be our desire to succeed employing correct principles on how to live or how to serve. A son is a son because he will remain in death until the resurrection phenomenon. We have got to resist every temptation to succeed on the basis of our own wit, our own intelligence, our own ability, and our natural life. To refuse the temptation to succeed on that basis and to prefer to be buried in baptism unto death with Him, until the Spirit of His life be revealed unto glory is what a son is.

It is a once-and-for-all and also a continuous resurrection from the dead. It is again and again a jealous remaining in the place of burial *until* His life is revealed. Death is painful and humiliating, but because our single and burning desire is the glory of the Father, and we know that glory is intrinsically bound up with resurrection, we choose the death again and again. That is walking as a son. A son will wait and trust for the things that will glorify God, and he knows that they come only out of death. A son will not look for the convenient way out or how the tensions could be alleviated. The issue of sonship is the issue of death and resurrection. We are the sons of resurrection or we are not sons at all.



Biblical Adoption

For to which of the angels did He ever say, “Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee”? And again, “I will be a Father to Him, and He shall be a Son to me”? (Heb. 1:5).

There is a difference between being born and being begotten (or adopted). The Hebraic understanding and practice, as far as I understand it, was that a boy’s true identity as a son could only be obtained through adoption, even though he might have been a son by biological descent. It is the irony of a natural father waiting to adopt his own son. A son is not called a son in a spiritual and significant way until a certain condition of maturity is obtained, and the father adopts what was his already by virtue of procreation. This also means that not every child that the father

births automatically becomes a son.

Biblical adoption is not as we think of it today, where you take a baby out of an orphanage and you adopt it. It is adoption in the sense of waiting on the maturity and the coming of age of your offspring. It is another kind of concept. Adoption took place when the father recognized some qualitative change with regard to the way in which he looked at his own son, because something had been attained of a distinctive quality—like unto the father himself, having the same quality of character and jealousy for the glory of God. He could therefore declare the decree: “This day you are my son.” That declaration gave the son the right to rule in the Father’s name, as well as being the thing that qualified him for the inheritance.



Priestly Rule

Sons are called to be kings and priests in the sense of ruling with Him from His throne in the heavenlies. Our entire church life should have as its principal focus a preparation for our own millennial and eternal destiny, namely, to rule and reign. This is the reward given the overcomers. Our perception of government and rule has been so perverted by worldly and earthly examples. That kind knows only human ambition, political intrigue, self-exaltation, men furthering themselves, bureaucracy, shuffling through papers, and all of the dull and deadly things that make up human government. The government of God, however, is the communication of the wisdom of God and how men should live in the light of God’s wisdom and mercy, by those who have been schooled in those realities while in their own earthly role.

There are other references to ourselves as sons and the issue of rule:

“And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father.” (Rev. 2:26).

“He who overcomes, I will grant to Him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Rev. 3:21).

There is a powerful conjunction between overcoming sons and the issue of ruling and reigning, and throne rights.

The authority that is given only to sons is also the priestly ability to minister in the power of God and to invoke blessing by their prayer. The word ‘blessing’ for many of us has become a shopworn cliché. It has lost its cogency and its power. We say the word, but no-one is in fact blessed, because only a priest can invoke the word ‘blessing’ with an authority that confers something palpable, felt and experienced. One is no more a priest than one is a son. Hebrews chapter 7 refers to the kind of priesthood that Jesus Himself obtained, and the only kind that is available to us on the same basis, has **not** to do with being a descendant of Aaron or a genealogy from the tribe of Levi. This was not Jesus’ earthly descent. He was of the tribe of Judah. But there is a whole other priestly order that replaces the Aaronic and abides forever called the Melchizedek priesthood from that mystery name of that ‘king-priest’ who provided for Abraham bread and wine, and to whom Abraham gave tithes. Abraham recognized the spiritual superiority of this Melchizedek in that he tithed to him, and received blessing from him, for the lesser receives blessings from the greater.

The remarkable credentials of what constitute a Melchizedek priest are: *Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest perpetually.* (Heb. 7:3).

These are the intrinsic qualifications of priesthood and the definitive qualities of a son. We will never attain to sonship if we are still linked to father and mother or our cultural heritage. Those are **earthly** distinctions, and if we continue to cultivate them, then we will make ourselves void of priestly consideration—and therefore sonship. The power to keep one's identity in one's ethnicity is formidable, but it disqualifies us for heavenly things. Unless we have risen above considerations of that sentimental kind, then we can never 'bless' our mother and father and ethnic kinsmen. We might gratify their soulishness and placate their earthly hearts by 'making nice,' but we cannot bless them in any priestly sense unto salvation. Only priests can do that. We cannot invite our hearers to something that we ourselves have not obtained.

Jesus was 'made' unto a Son of God. It is a process of dying by which those earthly things are forsaken and given over. It hurts and it is painful because those things are so familiar and dear. They are sentimental and have long traditions and histories, and we have been nurtured in them. Our identity has been established in them. To forsake them is nothing less than a dying.

Sonship Through Obedience

Jesus became a son or attained sonship by learning obedience through the things that He suffered.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. (Heb. 2:10).

Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. (Heb. 5:8).

God has given us One Pattern Son, and nothing in His sonship was in any way automatic. He divested Himself of His deity. He did not achieve or attain on the basis of the supernatural power that was His, being God. But in every way, as the Son of Man and of the seed of Abraham, He was tempted in every point like as we. God chastises sons, and if we are not being chastised in the sense of God bringing discipline and correction, exhortation, rebuke and dealings, then we are illegitimate, and He has no interest in us. We are not walking in a way that He even recognizes as being serious. But when He sees a candidate for a son, He chastises him and prepares him and fits him through training, hardship and suffering. These are **all** experiences in death.

Paul groaned that Christ be formed in His converts, that they might be presented blameless before the Lord on the Day of His appearing. Paul's every energy and heart was for the bringing forth of sons, that He could present the fruit of his labor to the Lord. He was a real father in the faith, who never withheld the whole counsel of God. He never spared his churches with words that were hard and painful, challenging and disturbing.

A true son reveals his Father, and his sole purpose is serving his Father and doing his Father's will. His only motivation is the Father's glory, his honor and his name. Only sons can be trusted with the things that pertain to the Father's glory. He is able to rise above and overlook injury and insult, and even though he has the ability and power to retaliate, he does not answer in kind. He is able to relinquish, even things that relate to the Lord's interests. How often it is that we overlook things when it comes to personal injury, but when it comes to something concerning the interests of the Lord, there we are like mules. We kick our heels into the dirt and do not budge, thinking that we are

doing God service. But it is only the faith which trusts God that will relinquish—and that is what makes a son a son.

David cut the corner of King Saul's robe instead of slaying him—though he had it in his power to do so in a legitimate way. A prophecy had even been given him: "Behold, I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you." But it pleased David to let him go, and in so doing, perfectly demonstrated this relinquishment. He would not stretch forth his hand against God's anointed, even though Saul was a defunct king, who was not operating in the anointing of God. David, however, still respected the position, and called Saul his father.

David refused to do on behalf of himself the very thing that would preserve his life. He knew that Saul would keep on with his relentless desire to exterminate him. To let Saul go was to sign David's own death warrant. **That** is relinquishing one's own life. If God would not preserve him, then David was not going to take the issue into his own hands and preserve himself. David knew his calling as king of Israel and one through whose loins the Messiah of all mankind would come, yet he relinquished everything, trusting God even for the preservation of God's own interests. **That** is a son, and that is why it is called the Kingdom of David to this day, and will be again when God restores it on the throne of the Greater David.

Only sons will establish the Kingdom, and only sons will rule and reign with Him as overcomers. Only sons are the "blessed, holy, and priestly", and for whom thrones will be established in the millennial Kingdom. It is only sons who will rise in that first resurrection because it is only sons who can hear the voice of the **Father**. The rest will sleep, those who were satisfied with some designation other than sons, and were unwilling for the processes of death alone by which sons are formed. To see a son is to see the Father. Nothing else reveals the Father. No amount of religious determination and propriety, and keeping our nose clean, and subscribing to correct doctrine will reveal the Father, but only a son in the stature, the character and the Life of God. God's purpose is still the bringing of many sons to glory.

In fact, it is **only** as a son that the prospect of glory is at all possible. I do not think God would be disposed to share His glory with anyone less or other than a son, and I do not think that anyone other than a son could bear the glory, or touch the glory, or handle the glory, without some corruption of himself. The Lord has no fear whatever that a son will ever take the glory of God to Himself in such a way as to become self-exalted. And indeed, if there is any prospect, God will put a thorn in his side for the magnitude of the revelations that are being given.



The Principalities and Powers of the Air

The bringing of many sons to glory has a powerful consequence for the rulers of this present world, the ancient enemies of God: the principalities and powers of the air.

Why are the nations in an uproar, and the peoples devising a vain thing?

The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed:

"Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us!"

He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them.

Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury:

"But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain. "

I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee. " (Psalm 2:1-7).

God is declaring to the principalities and powers of the air (the rulers) a new fact that has come into being that means they are henceforth finished. In other words, their false rule and usurpation as the rulers of this world is on the way out because, ‘Today’ something has happened, namely, “I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.” Kingship is related to sonship, and sonship is related to resurrection, made possible by the raising of Jesus from the dead.

We cannot comprehend enough the significance of what was wrought in the death, burial resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It was the death sentence over the powers of darkness. That terminal event, which they themselves set in motion in acting out of their own vindictive wisdom to destroy the Son of God, set in motion the very things that destroyed them once and for all.

If Jesus had not been resurrected and only remained in death, then their kingdom and system would have remained unthreatened. Jesus’ resurrection and ascension broke the power of that dark monopoly, because it was the statement of the Father’s acceptance of that sacrifice in the exaltation of the Son as the True King, who will rule over His creation.

Divine order will be restored in the heavenly places by sons who can be trusted to occupy those places and not abuse that authority. They come into that place by virtue of their sonship. There is an elect number that must be taken *from all the Gentile nations* in order that they may replace the principalities and powers of the air who are going to be cast out. Only sons can rule and reign with Christ. Only sons can govern in the spirit of the Great King Himself. Some will govern over five cities and some over ten, in proportion to what they have earned or obtained in their life in this earth.

The powers of darkness are terrified by sons, because they know that sons constitute a threat to their kingdom of darkness, and therefore they ventilate their fury upon them. There is an opposition of a peculiar kind that is reserved only for sons. We become marked in their sight as being dangerous and worthy of their opposition. Only a son is willing to bear this retaliation and hatred of the powers of darkness. The Father allows it because it is the very means by which our sonship is being honed and shaped—in the fiery crucible of faith, by an opposition that is reserved uniquely for us.



Israel, God’s First-Born Son

The nation Israel is God’s first born son (Ex. 4:22). They have not fulfilled that role, but it is still their calling and destiny. If God speaks something, then it must in time be fulfilled, or it nullifies the God who speaks. If God makes a call, then it is irrevocable. Present day Israel is nothing more than a compendium of self-willed individuals seeking ‘their thing.’ The nation itself is a self-willed entity that wants to be like other nations, and wants only to be left alone to enjoy its prosperity. It has no concept that it has been called to be a ‘first-born’ son unto God, corporately, as a nation, and as an example to all nations. God will yet have *this* ‘son’ despite their resistance and unwillingness. Israel’s call is a call to sonship.

Jesus was brought into being, as it were, through death and resurrection, and therefore Israel shall become the sons of God through exactly the same way, i.e., through death and resurrection. He is the pattern, and everything must be

conformed to the pattern of that Son.

The whole purpose in the establishing of the church and the setting aside of Israel will be fulfilled *when God has His full number of sons*, hinted at in the phrase:

...a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and thus all Israel will be saved...(Rom. 11:25b-26a).

The revelation of God that will move Israel to jealousy is a revelation that can only come to them through the manifestation of sons. In other words, the only thing that is calculated to move Israel to jealousy is to see the sonship to which they were called being enacted and walked out in full by the Gentiles. When Jews realize that this is what they have forfeited in the rejection of 'The Son,' who was given to call many sons to glory, and when they see that the Gentiles have attained it, then their jaws will drop. It is an exhibition of an ultimate kind, and the same kind that delivers creation from its bondage and the futility to which God has subjected it. Both creation and Israel are waiting for the full number of Gentile sons to come in. It is the same mystery and the same fulfilment.



The Last Day

Our complete sanction as sons waits on one final event, which God *alone* can perform, and that is the resurrection of the righteous on the Last Day. It is the Day when we shall obtain glorified bodies, and it is tied in with His coming, for: "When we shall see Him, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." There is much that we can do in this life, in terms of pursuing sanctification, walking in consistent faith, and everything that we can do through the power of resurrection, yet there is one final thing we cannot do, namely, the being raised from our graves as those who are asleep in Christ. That rising and that resurrection is our glorification as sons. If Jesus' exaltation waited on His resurrection, then our exaltation is the coming into the heavenlies to be seated on thrones, and rule and reign with Him. Jesus is the pattern Son, and this is our destiny also, but only on the same basis.

If all of this is theoretical and future, what good does it do us now to consider these things? If it is all positional and future on that Day, then why consider it now? It *is* the joy that is set before us. We are moving toward a consummation. It is a hope of a blessed kind. What we are now, and how we walk now, is altogether related to what we anticipate for the future, because we have a foretaste of that now, of the power of the age to come and the glory that is to come. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a token, a down payment and a foretaste of the powers of the age to come.

One of the terrible things wrong with contemporary Christianity, is that it has not seen the Holy Spirit in the eschatological context. It has seen Him only as a present phenomenon, as if it is the whole thing already, poured out on all flesh, in order to renew our denominations, and to bring a degree of titillation and excitement into an otherwise dull Christian life. It continually amazes me that God's fist has not come down on the whole thing and blotted us out. It borders on being sacrilegious, if not an ultimate travesty.

Contemporary Christianity does not see the Holy Spirit in the context of God's intention, as being a foretaste of the powers of the age to come, to whet our appetites in anticipation of the thing that is future, enduring and eternal. This is what should make the church a peculiar people. We are living in the present, but that the quality of that living and the witness of that living is altogether related to the anticipation of the end, the eternal, millennial future

and glory—or else it is not a proper living now nor a proper witness now.

That which is at the end is also to a certain degree **now**. If our exaltation and being raised from the dead waits on our final resurrection, then what do our present exaltations wait on? If we come into our ruling and reigning with Christ in heavenly places in the same kind of authority by which He was exalted by virtue of His resurrection, then is there any echo or an expression of that possible now? Is the theme of resurrection and exaltation possible to us now in our daily walk? I would say that, yes, most definitely, it is. The antithesis of exaltation is humiliation unto death, and if we are not willing for the one, then we will not know the other. A faith to believe for the thing that is future and eternal is the reason why we can believe for it now. We are believing for resurrection power **now** by the Holy Spirit. We cannot detach the two. The Holy Spirit **is** the resurrection power, and it is He whom we have as a foretaste of the age to come, for **that** age will be eminently in **that** power. We have that power only in part now, but it is the same principle. It is available **only** to sons who are willing to go down, that they might come up, for only a son is willing.



Led by the Spirit

A son is one who is obedient to the desires of the Father. He does not have to be barked at and commanded. He intimates the Father's will and waits to catch the very inflection of the breathing of the Father before he needs to be told in so many words. That is a nearer definition of what it means to obey the commands of God. Sons go beyond the mere outward conformance to correct behavioural patterns, which so characterises present day Christianity. Sons exhibit in their life and their obedience the same kind of sonship and character that constitutes the sonship that Jesus exhibited. They are those who do not have to wait for the commandments of God, but who lean forward as sons, as only a son will, to intuit even the desire of the Father.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are God's sons. (Rom. 8:14).

Sonship is a Spirit-phenomenon. It is obtained in a relationship through the Spirit, and it is exercised through the Spirit. Sons of God are led by the Spirit, and that is no small or cheap thing. It requires such a dependency and sensitivity, because often it will bring us into conflict with our own reason, our own rationality, and even our own past experience that God had given us. If we allow our past experience to determine what we are going to do now, then we are not acting in sonship in that moment. We are acting on the basis of what we think to be right on the basis of our reason. We must never proceed on that basis. Every moment is a unique moment and a new requirement of dependency.

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Except a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." In other words, the Kingdom of God can only be established by the same Spirit. It must come down from above. There is a certain utter dependency upon what God gives from above by the Spirit, and if it was not for that, we would not have been born into the Kingdom. Once having been born into the Kingdom by the Spirit, we continue in it by the exact same dependency, namely, by that which comes down from above, moment by moment. To be led by the Spirit of God, as sons of God, is to be dependent upon the same Spirit.



The Totality of Death

A son is one who will be obedient to the Father, even to a suffering unto death. No man can ever set forth what it meant for Jesus to suffer His death. I am not just talking about the excruciating torture of it, nor the indignity of it, nor the nakedness of it, nor the humiliation of it—but the God-forsakenness of it, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Death is death. It is absolute non-existence. It is extinction, and unless something happens to us after that, from outside of ourselves, then we simply remain in that state. Jesus was the most supreme piece of humanity that has ever walked this earth. He was a son of man in all His beauty, in all His character, in all His speech, and in everything that constitutes a full and true humanity, but the totality of that was brought to an absolute death at the Cross. Resurrection life and power is when the life is no longer from the natural source, but the divine.

Even in his final extremity, a son can willingly die without the sense of the Father’s presence. A son can bear the solitude and the lowness of the rejection of men, and even God’s absence, without diminishing in one iota his obedience as a son. He does not need continual applause or to be patted and affirmed. That is something children need, not sons. I can remember attending a conference where we were taught how to evoke the presence of God by our worship. When it was my turn to speak, I told them that they would have done much better to teach God’s people how to live *without* the sense of God’s presence, for *this* is going to be the dimension of our experience in Last Days’ trials. Can we worship God in the Spirit when we are like Paul and Silas in the prison in Philippi, bound hand and foot in the lower dungeon with our backs hanging in strips, miles removed from any saints, who do not even know where we are, and yet praise God—at midnight? That is the activity and the worship of sons. They were praising God, not to try and psyche themselves up because they were disconsolate and forlorn, but because they could not contain their worship. They were rejoicing in their privilege of sons to share in the sufferings of their Christ.

Has this day come for us? Is our whole purpose for being the jealousy for the glory of God the Father? Are we still speaking our own words, and doing our own thing, and seeking our own pleasure? Are we still seeking to fulfill the requirements of God on the basis of our own natural or religious ability? God is yet waiting for us, for He is bringing many sons to glory.

We need to ask what death would fulfil sonship for us. If we are only playing with the concept of death to self, where it is only a concept, and we are yet very much alive, then we have not tasted death in the kind of finality that Jesus did through the Cross. There is therefore no exaltation or being raised for us. God only raises that which is authentically dead, and we are, therefore, cut short of what it means to serve God in the authority that is given exclusively to sons.

Paul says that if we are like Him in the semblance of His death, then we shall also be like Him in His resurrection unto a newness of life. The newness of life is one that is no longer lived for the purposes of man, but for the purposes of God. A son lives totally for God’s purposes. There is no second agenda. There is no other interest that somehow could be fitted in with God’s program. He breathes, lives, thinks, eats, and dreams totally for the Lord. That is a son. That requires a remarkable power to perform. It is exhausting if the totality of one’s life is given over to the purposes of God, especially as His purposes are ultimate and eternal. They cannot be played out nor fulfilled at the level of religion. Religion must always fall short of any ability to fulfill the requirement of God. Only sons are given the power to fulfil God’s purposes, the very same power that raised Jesus from the dead.



A Final Warning

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying “Abba! Father!” (Gal. 4:6).

We need to be jealous over this. Let us not be quick, merely because we can vocalize the word ‘Father’ to incorporate that word into some glib expression of speech. Let us wait for the truth of that holy word. The church is not going to be the ground and pillar of truth if we merely employ holy words out of our ability to vocalize them. Let us keep the word ‘Father’ sacred, and acknowledge that we have not come to the place yet where we can cry: ‘Abba.’ It has got to be the work of the Spirit that is granted to us upon our attaining of that maturity and status, that releases us to be in that relationship with God as ‘Father-son.’ Simply because we can say ‘Abba’ does not mean that we have ‘Abba.’ We deceive ourselves into a false spirituality because of our ability to verbalize something. That has been our undoing as the church, and has made our faith credal rather than actual. If anything is ever authentic, it must be the reality of sonship, or there will not be the appearing of God in His glory. He is jealous over the bringing of sons to glory, and God forbid that we should cheapen this.

There is an implication here if the church is to be the true fellowship of the saints. How can we be brothers or sisters in the same kind of quality of relationship as the Father and the Son, unless we ourselves have first come to the relationship with the Father *as* sons? It is easy to say ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ in some cheap, Full-Gospel Businessman’s way. But sonship is foundational, fundamental, and preparatory to the authenticity of the church itself. The one is contingent upon the other. We can still be in an authentic relationship with each other, and be walking something out together that is the sanctifying work of God, that brings us *to* sonship, but the deepest recognition of each other as brothers waits upon, and is related to, the recognition of God as Father. It all goes together. And if we will be glib and shallow about references to the Father, how authentic then are our references to the Lord?

A son will never be a son until he is jealous for the authenticity of what we are talking about. I cannot think of anything worse than that these holy, final and ultimate things will become merchandise; that this will become a new fad in the Body of Christ. Everybody will be talking about sonship, and we will have cheapened the things that are given as holy. The final travesty would be that the holiest and ultimate things have now become employed again as a new innovation and a new verbal thing. Let there be a reverence and a respect for a reality that has not yet come. Let us not employ this into our vocabulary as being the first in our neighbourhood to have it. In what then shall we hope if we cheapen the holy things? What hope for repentance, once we have cheapened the very thing that alone can save us?

It almost calls for a moment’s respectful silence to understand what such a title signifies, and what it will mean to become a son, both in this life and eternally. If we do not have this as our conscious intention and desire, then I do not believe that we will ever attain to it. That determination is made by us.

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