

Sons of God

#0204

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—March 10, 1959

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure” 1 John 3:1–3.

I think this is a wonderful chapter, don't you? Let's meditate on part of it this evening, and notice the wonderful message that is given us here. First of all, the apostle calls on us to behold the love of God. “What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us”; that's what our brother has just been singing to us about—this matchless, unfathomable, immeasurable love of God.

John seems to feel that the most wonderful thing about this love, as he beholds it, is that you and I have been privileged to be given the name of sons or children of God. And really, when you stop to think about it, friends, that is a wonderful manifestation of God's love, that He should call us His children, isn't it? Yes. Over where our good brother McCunin and his wife is from, there's a king and a queen. The queen right now, but in any event, whether king or queen, it would be quite an unusual thing that any of the common people should become members of the royal family. A very unusual thing it would be.

Oh, my dear friends, think of it: The King of the universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords, has called you and me not just to be His servants, but to be His *sons*. He has not only pardoned us, but He has received us into the most intimate fellowship with Himself.

John says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” In other words, this experience isn't just something to look forward to. It isn't something merely in the future life. It isn't something that's to happen later on in our Christian experience *after* we have attained certain victories that we look forward to; *after* we have received the Latter Rain for example. No, beloved *now* are we the sons of God.

That really is a wonderful evidence of God's love that He calls us children even when we do not measure up to all that that name ought to include. Isn't that a wonderful manifestation of God? And of course, the only way He can do that is through what we call the imputed righteousness of Christ; which simply means that Jesus' life is covering our life, and as long as we are in that experience, instead of our being counted as we really are, we're counted as we are in *Christ*. That's the way we are accepted as God's children.

In the General Conference Bulletin of April 17, 1891, the Lord's messenger wrote it like this:

"Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities...
We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to be
anxious about what Christ and God think about us,
but about what God thinks about Christ, our Substitute.
Ye are accepted in the Beloved" *General Conference
Bulletin of April 23, 1901*, page 420.

Did you ever wonder what God thought of you? Well, friend, that all depends on whether you are in Jesus or not. If you're *not* in Jesus, then of course, you're a guilty sinner under the condemnation of the law, under the wrath of God. For God hates sin. He *must* hate sin. It's what has made all the trouble in the universe. But if you've accepted Jesus, then what does God think about you? Why, He thinks about you just what He thinks of Jesus. He thinks you're His dear child, and He says to you, as He said to His Son, there on the banks of Jordan, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (See Matthew 3:17). This is My dear daughter that I've accepted. That's what God thinks of you. Did you know that, friend? "Well," somebody says, "I wish it could be true." Well, it is true; I just read it. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

That's what it says; will you believe the Word of God, or will you substitute your "sometime" for His "now"? Will you dare to add to and take from the Word of God? Will you take out that blessed "now" and substitute your "sometime"? Oh, do not thus grieve God and grieve your own heart. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Will you read it with me? "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Isn't that nice? Is it *true*? Yes. Well, then thank God we can rejoice.

No wonder He says there in the first verse, Behold, look at it, marvel what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God.

Let me read these verses for you from Weymouth:

"See what marvelous love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called God's children; and that is what we are. For this reason the world does not recognize us, because it has not known Him. Dear friends, we are now God's children. But what we are to be in the future has not yet been fully revealed. We know that when Christ reappears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And every man who has this hope fixed on Him, purifies himself so as to be pure as He is" 1 John 3:1-3.

Isn't that nice? Thank God it's true.

Now I'd like to notice that little expression, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Do you know what you're going to be? No, you don't, friends, any more than a crawling caterpillar can guess what kind of moth or butterfly knows it will turn

out to be. And why in the world try to figure it out? You can't. Of course, I know it's very human for us to wonder what we're going to be, and sometimes we wonder in a very grandiose manner, and other times we think about it in a very depressed or fearful manner. But in either case, the real fact of the thing is, friends, we don't know what we're going to be. We don't know.

That's a favorite piece of conversation when you're talking to children. You say:

"Mary, how old are you?"

"I'm eight years old."

"Where do you go to school?"

"Well, I go to a certain school."

"What grade are you in?" She tells you.

"Well Mary, what are you going to be when you grow up?"

Does Mary know what she's going to be? No. She may have ideas. She may have ambitions. She may even in her little way have plans, but she doesn't know what she's going to be.

Well, you ask her again at 14, or 18, and again, she has ideas and plans. They're probably different from the ones she had when she was eight years old. But still, she doesn't know what she's going to be.

I wonder how many of you here tonight are doing what you planned to do when you were children? I'd just like to see; there probably might be a few. I'd just like to know how many of you who are grown are doing what you planned to when you were children? Yes, a little sprinkling of hands. But how many of you are doing things that you never thought of doing, may I see your hands? Oh, watch the hands go up. Yes.

Well, you know, when we get home to the Father's house, and sit down together under the tree of life, and then we go out on those trips all through the universe and visit those worlds up there and on beyond after we've been together a million years or even a thousand years, we may sit down sometimes and compare notes. And won't we say as John says, it didn't appear what we were going to be? It didn't show up. It's going to be grander and more wonderful.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" 1 Corinthians 2:9.

It isn't just the things that are prepared for us that are beyond our comprehension. Oh, no, it's the things He's preparing us for. We ourselves will be the greatest wonder of eternity as far as any created creature is concerned. Oh yes, friends. We will be the greatest wonder of all. The wonders of redeeming love, our

highest thoughts exceed. Oh, that we may be there to see what we're going to turn out to be.

I'd like to see, wouldn't you? It does not yet appear what we shall be. But do you know that that's true right here in this present life? We just took a sampling of it here a few minutes ago.

I want you to think of some of the Bible characters. We were studying about Moses last vesper service. Now you know that when Moses was growing up, he was told that the angel of God had planned for him to be born to deliver His people, so he had an idea of what he was to be. And yet, after all that, at the age of 40, did he really have any adequate picture of what he was to be? No. He proved that when he took a sword and killed a man. He showed he had a very meager and inadequate, and even a perverted idea of what God intended, didn't he?

Then after 40 years out in the desert herding sheep, we're told that no longer did he plan to do a great work. He just sought to do faithfully, as unto God, the work committed to his charge. He didn't know what he was going to be.

And do you know, I've thought about it: that morning that Moses led his flocks out, as he had hundreds and thousands of times before out there at the edge of the desert, he didn't know that that was the last time he'd ever lead those sheep. He didn't know it was the last morning. But before the sun of that day set, he met God at the burning bush. And he laid down the work of shepherding sheep and took up the work of shepherding Israel. And that all happened that one day, my friends.

But for 80 years before that time, it had not yet appeared what Moses was to be. We look back at it and say, "Oh, Isn't that wonderful?" But my point is, for years and decades, Moses had to keep just tramping on and working in the common humble round of toil, and concerning *him*, it could well be said all during that Median experience, "It doth not yet appear what he shall be."

It didn't appear; it wasn't *meant* to appear. It wouldn't have been good if it *had*. How often God hides His purposes as He hides the oak in the acorn, as He hides the blossom and the fruit in the bud. So in many a life, He's working out a mysterious purpose far more wonderful than those who look on can understand or foresee.

Is there somebody here tonight that God is working out some wonderful purpose in that life? Could that be? Could there be some Gideon here, some Joseph, some John the Baptist? Could there be some Dorcas or Esther, somebody that up in Heaven the angels are watching with the deepest interest; somebody upon whom the eye of God is fixed and following with the most intense interest and wonderful love? Oh, my friend, it is so. It is so. And you, my boy, you, my girl, can be that one if you will.

Oh, if Moses had missed that visit with God out there at the burning bush, if he'd failed in his response, what a calamity. It says that when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, He spoke to him.

Are you watching the signals of providence? Are you watching the providences of God in your life? It does not yet appear what we shall be. No, it doesn't.

I think of Joseph at the age of 17, grabbed and tied up, and thrown roughly on the back of that camel, carried as a slave down to Egypt. It didn't appear what he was to be, did it? No. And when he was put on the auction block down there in Egypt and bought by the captain of the king's guard and put to work as a slave, it didn't appear what he was to be.

Ten years later, when they falsely accused him and threw him in the dungeon and put his feet in the stocks and hurt him, there under cruel bondage he stayed month after month for three years, it didn't appear what he was to be. God didn't send him an angel to tell him how it was all going to turn out.

I think of what Sister White wrote her son, James Edson White, some of his work down here in the Southern states, where he had many disappointments and misunderstandings and even persecution. Sister White wrote her son when she was in Australia, she said, "The Lord does not explain the reason of the trials He allows to come you, because that would be to defeat the very purpose of them—and that is that you should exercise faith." And it is even so, friends.

And so it is in the plan and purpose of God that it does not yet appear what we shall be. It's not given to us to plumb the mystery of our life purpose or to know the full meaning of God's providence. God doesn't *expect* that of us, so let's not try to penetrate that future.

Oh, how human we are, and shall I say how childish. How we would love to pull aside that curtain and see what tomorrow or next year will bring.

"What are you going to be doing?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"Oh, don't you know what you're going to be doing?" If you tell the truth, you must answer,

"No, I don't."

"Well, isn't that an awful way to live?"

"No, it's a happy way to live, if you read and believe and accept the rest of this verse."

This is the way I would think of it, friends: I'd rather know what I know than know what I don't know.

Notice the two things here in this verse: He tells us what we don't know and He tells us what we do know. What is it? "Beloved, now are we the sons of God"; we know that. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be"; we don't know that. But we know that "when He shall appear we shall be like Him."

I think that's enough to know, don't you? To know that we're God's children and that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. I say that's glorious. That's present acceptance and future perfection. That's the assurance that we are *now* God's children and that someday that image which is now imputed to us shall be fully realized. Both things we know by the grace of God. Oh I say, that is wonderful! What do you say? But do you know it? Do you know it?

I have a purse here tonight, and I think I have some bills in that purse. Yes, here is a dollar bill. It has the United States of America on it. It says, "On deposit in the treasury of the United States of America, one dollar." There's a picture of George Washington on it.

Let's see if I can find anything else in here. There's a little dime; it's a silver piece. Here is something that really is encouraging. Here's a \$20.00 bill.

But now suppose I tell you that I have a question about this? It may be counterfeit. I'm not sure whether this is genuine or not. I'm sure about the dime. I can see that's a good piece of silver. [Coin is heard dropping.] And it sounds like it.

Now tell me, which would you rather have—a real dime or a counterfeit \$20.00 bill? Which would you have? Why, you'd all rather have a real dime, wouldn't you? Unless you were just gathering some curiosities. If you want value, you'd say, "Why, of course, if that thing is counterfeit, it isn't worth the paper it's on. Give me the dime."

Do you really have the genuine experience that John is talking about here? Are you *sure* of those two things that he says is our privilege to be sure about? Are you sure that you're God's child tonight, and are you sure that by the time He comes He will have gotten you to the place where you are just like Him? Are you sure of those two things?

If you are, then you have not merely a genuine dime or a genuine \$20.00 bill; I'd say you have a genuine *million*-dollar bill. That's greater than they make up at the United States treasury, but they don't know how to deal in the figures we're dealing with. Oh, we're dealing with infinite riches.

But if your experience in either one of those points is shaky—if somebody asks are you God's child, and you say, "Well, I wish I were" or if you say, "I hope so"—what would you think of me if somebody handed me this dollar and I should look at it, and they should look at me and say, "Don't you think that's genuine?", and I should say, "Well, I hope so." Why, they would probably say to me, "You'd better not accept it at all if that's all you have is 'a hope so.'" You'd better not accept it unless it is real and genuine." And I say that to you in Christian experience, friends.

How foolish to build eternal hope on merely a guess or a wish or a desire. Hope that is real is based upon a certain promise of God and your acceptance of that. Hope is based on *faith*—the Christian's hope is. But the hope of this world is just a "hope so" in the sense I wish it could happen, but I don't know whether it will or not. The Christian's hope is not of that nature. The Christians hope is certain; in fact, we're told that we're saved by hope.

I want to read you a few things from *Great Controversy*:

“It is the privilege of everyone so to live that God will approve and bless him. It is not the will of our heavenly Father that we should be ever under condemnation and darkness. There is no evidence of true humility in going with the head bowed down and the heart filled with thoughts of self. We may go to Jesus and be cleansed, and stand before the law without shame and remorse” *Great Controversy*, page 477.

Isn't that wonderful friends? Are you in that experience? Has Jesus taken your sins and put them under His precious blood? Are you God's child? Do you know it? Are you sure of it?

Oh, let's thank Him for it if that's so. Let's echo these words of John:

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God...” John 3:2.

Or, as Weymouth puts it:

“Dear friends, we are now God's children, but what we are to be in the future has not yet been fully revealed. We know that when Christ reappears we shall be like him and every many who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself so as to be as pure as he is” John 3:2–3.

Tell me, friends. Are we to wait until we are actually as pure as He is to have that hope? No. Are we to wait until we are actually as pure as He is to believe we're God's children? No. *Now* we're God's children. *Now*.

I want to read you something very interesting from the first sermon that Sister White preached in Australia, that distant land down under, as they say, far down there in the southern hemisphere. In 1891, Sister White, with a number of helpers, set sail from America and went way over to the other side of the world down in Australia. When she got down there, of course, they wanted to hear her soon.

One of my friends, several years ago, presented me with two copies of the *Australian Record*, the paper published there by our people, in which is reprinted this sermon of Sister White's.

I know you can get these same thoughts in a dozen other places in the inspired writings, but every time you find them, they're worded just a little differently. Somehow the way some of these thoughts are worded here appeal to my heart, and I thought I'd just share them with you. After presenting this wonderful standard of perfection in Christ, she says:

“I hear one say, I can never reach that standard, but this is what you must be or you will never enter Heaven. Sometimes those who profess to be followers of Christ will say, ‘You must not be surprised if I am rough, if I

“speak bluntly, if I manifest temper, for it is my way.’ But is not Heaven surprised by such manifestations since an infinite sacrifice has been made on Calvary’s cross that we might reflect the image of Jesus? Will your way lead to Heaven?”

“Suppose one should come up to the pearly gates and say, I know I have been rude and unkind, but I want an entrance into the heavenly mansions. Would that way give him an entrance into the portals of the heavenly city? No. It is those who keep Christ’s way who will enter there.

“Since God has given us this assurance, why is it that we see so many clouded, mixed experiences? It is because people do not respond to the drawing of Jesus. Where is the holy boldness that should characterize your faith and prayers? Because you are not condemned before man and God, but can lift up holy hands without wrath or doubting, where is your ringing testimony on the side of truth? If you are indulging in known sin you cannot utter words to the glory of God because there is something in your heart that condemns you. The Spirit of God is not in your soul. But let the heart with all its affections be just where it belongs, surrendered to God, and you will have joy and peace in the Holy Ghost.

“Many do not pray. They feel under condemnation for sin, and they think they must not come to God until they have done something to merit His favor, or until God has forgotten about their transgressions.”

Now, here are some people who know they ought to pray but they feel they can’t pray because they’ve done something wrong, and so they wait. And they say, “I can’t pray, just look what I’ve done.” Any of you ever feel that way? Ah friends, the Spirit of God knows how we feel.

“They say, I cannot hold up holy hands before God without wrath and doubting, and therefore I cannot come. So they remain away from Christ and are committing sin all the time in so doing, for you can do nothing but evil.”

Every minute they stay away, they’re just piling up the sin, you see, so they’re not helping things any. Like a patient that’s sick and won’t come to the doctor and getting sicker every minute, hoping that they’ll improve so that they can go see the doctor or they are waiting for the doctor to come and see them, when they don’t feel so ashamed, you understand. Watch:

“Just as soon as you commit sin, you should flee to the throne of grace and tell Jesus all about it.

Well, you say, “Why not flee before?” Well, sure, why *not* flee before? But suppose you didn’t flee before and you sin, then what? Flee at once, friends! Flee at once!

“You should feel sorrow for sin because through sin, you have weakened your own spirituality, grieved the heavenly angels, and wounded and bruised the loving heart of your Redeemer.”

Now watch, dear ones, boys and girls, and older ones, listen: When you have asked Jesus in contrition of soul for His forgiveness, believe that He has forgiven you. Wait 24 hours? No. This is talking about a man that’s sinned and *at once* pleads to Jesus, pours out his heart to God in repentance and confession. Then what is he to do? Believe that he’s forgiven. When? Right now.

“When you have asked Jesus in contrition of soul for His forgiveness, believe that He has forgiven you. Do not doubt His divine mercy or refuse the comfort of His infinite love.”

When He tries to throw His arms around you, don’t say, “Oh no, Lord, I don’t deserve that; wait and let me see if I walk straight for a week and then throw Your arms around me. I’m going to try so hard to be good, and if I can be good for at least 24 hours, then I’ll look up and hope You’ll smile at me.” Is that the way to do it?

Have you ever been tempted to do it that way? Oh yes, as I look into your faces, I know, friends, I know. But that’s the problem of the human heart. But oh, isn’t it wonderful to have these sweet words of comfort from the Bible and from the Spirit of Prophecy? Will you look back with me now to these beautiful verses and read them again:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” 1 John 3:1–2.

I thank God it’s true. Don’t you?

Oh, let us in simple faith then tonight say, “Dear Jesus, whatever my sins and failures this moment, I give them all to Thee. Whatever my mistakes or transgressions, I lay them all at Thy pierced feet. I know that You were manifested to take away my sins. I bring them, Lord. Dear Lord, I give myself away. ‘Tis all I can do.”

Then as we do that, let us believe that He accepts us—He says so. Let us believe we’re God’s children. Not on probation. No. Not with the thought that He’s watching for every chance to throw us out. No.

You know, down at our house we've had a little one living with us. Wayne and Phyllis Waterhouse, they've had that little baby Stewart, and he's been learning to walk. Do you know what he's done most of the time learning to walk? Most of the time he's fallen down. You say, "Well, the very idea. A child like that shouldn't be left around a place like this, falling most of the time."

But you know they never even seem to have considered the thought of throwing him out on account of that. It never even came up for discussion. Apparently, they never even thought of it.

And the wonderful thing is they'll put up with his falling a dozen times just for the rapture you can see on their faces when he takes one or two steps without falling. It just fills them and thrills them.

I wonder why? We say, "Well, of course, he's theirs." That's it. That's it exactly.

And that's the way it is with God and you, friends. You're His. That's why He puts up with you, and that's why He loves you. Oh, let's believe it and revel in it, what do you say? Let's do it.

Beloved now are we the sons of God, behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us. I thank God for it tonight. Would you like to say so? You stand up and say it in your own words. Let's have a glorious time here tonight.

[Testimony service]

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