

## SERMON XX.

### The Nature And Privileges of Adoption.

The last sermon the author preached at his own meeting-place,  
in Goodman's-fields,

Galatians 4:6.

*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,  
crying, Abba, Father.*

THE great design of the Holy Ghost in this epistle was, you know, to relieve the churches of *Galatia* from the burdensome yoke of the ceremonial law, which was imposed on them by some of the judaizing teachers of those times, as necessary, together with the gospel, to salvation. Christianity having spread itself, by the ministry of the apostle Paul, to this part of the world, Satan, the great adversary of souls, threw in his tares with the seed of the word, exciting some, under a profession of religion, to invade the glorious liberty of the gospel; and, as a sanction to their impious conduct, to abuse the names of Peter, James, and other apostles, by whose authority and commission they pretended to act, when they endeavored to engage the churches to continue the practice of circumcision, and other rites of the legal dispensation. And as persons corrupted in principle very rarely confine themselves to truth, or decency, they reproach the great apostle of the Gentiles, as a man of unreasonable singularity, and of a dying reputation in the church of *Christ*. Now to remove these false aspersions, and vindicate his character from so unjust a charge, the apostle, under the special direction of the infallible Guide, writes to them, expressing his wonder, that they, of all others, should be so soon turned aside, before *whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth, crucified among them.*<sup>1</sup> Upon which, in the three first chapters of this epistle, he sets himself to undeceive them, by alluring them that Christ had abolished the whole legal dispensation, which was but a *shadow of good things* to come. And having observed, that as

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 3:1.

many of them *as had been baptized into Christ*:<sup>2</sup> he then shows them that there was no difference, in God's account, *whether* they were Jews or Greeks, bond or free, male or female; or they were all members of the same body, and united to the same person, as their head, even *Jesus Christ*. Upon which he argues, that is they were Christ's, *then were they Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*.<sup>3</sup> In the chapter before us he considers the state of the church, antecedent to the coming of Christ, as that of an heir or child under age; and observes, *that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though, in right, he be lord of all, being in his nonage, and under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the Father. Even so says he, we Jews, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements, or in subjection to the ordinances and institutions, of the world. But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, and of the seed of Abraham, according to the promise, made under the law; that by his obedience to it, he might redeem them that were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons*.<sup>4</sup> We are all by nature desirous of being under the law as a covenant, but Christ having fulfilled it, we now *receive the adoption* of children; which invaluable privilege, together with our interest in it, is proved in that, because we are sons, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father*. In the consideration of which words I shall,

I. Enquire into the meaning of the term that is here applied to the people of God; they are called *sons*.

II. I shall endeavor to show you, that all such either have, or shall have, *the Spirit of Jesus Christ* sent into their hearts.

III. Treat this privilege, as a fruit of their adoption or Sonship; — *because ye are sons*; therefore, or being sons of God, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts*. And then,

IV. Consider the Spirit as an intercessor within them, crying, in the language of adoption; *Abba, Father*.

1. I begin with the meaning of the term applied here to the saints they are stilled sons; a word peculiarly significant of the distinguishing and inestimable privilege of God's chosen people. And this term very plainly implies,

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<sup>2</sup> Verse. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 3:28, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 4:1-5.

1.. Liberty, in opposition to bondage. They are called *sons*, and not *servants*.

As God is the great parent of the whole creation, and especially the Father of the spirits of all flesh, he hath a sovereign, indispensable right, at his pleasure, to command us as his servants: but then this service, in a state of innocence, would be perfect freedom. So that though Adam in paradise was a servant, yet at the same time he *was the Son* of God.<sup>5</sup> And the angels themselves, in all the heights of happiness and glory they enjoy, are represented as ministering spirits, and the saints not only serve God in this world, but will do so, day and night, throughout the endless ages of eternity, in his temple above. But this service is so far from debasing them, that it exalts them to the highest dignity, as it is attended with a special interest in the favor of that God whom they serve; and every act of homage and obedience will be justly esteemed the glorious privilege of him that pays it, as well as the undoubted right of God who receives it. So that this service of ours, being founded in our relation to God as creatures, is confirmed, and by no means destroyed, by our relation to him as children. But as we have all forfeited our interest in God as a Father and Creator, by our apostasy; so we have enslaved ourselves, and are become servants of sin and Satan. Which thralldom we are only delivered from, as we are the sons of God. The great author of our liberty is the *Lord Jesus Christ*, the great Captain of our salvation, *the lion of the tribe* of Judah; and to this office he was anointed and commissioned by his Father, agreeable to that well known passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, *'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.'*<sup>6</sup> The way in which he procured it, was by a voluntary susception of our debt, whereby he became bound to divine justice, to answer for our offences and thus, by his own death, destroying him that had the power of death, he is the author of a glorious liberty to every soul that flees for refuge to him.<sup>7</sup> There being now no condemnation to the children of God,<sup>8</sup> Satan can have no power to destroy them, though he may disturb their peace. The glorious instrument that conveys this liberty to the soul is the Spirit of Christ, sent forth by the

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 3:8.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 61:1.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 2:14.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:1.

Father to all the heirs of salvation. Thus we are told, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.<sup>9</sup> Before conversion, the man may be terrified by the threatening of the law, and too often afterwards, may for a season, thro' the prevalence of unbelief, be led into bondage; but when the Spirit comes, and reveals Christ to him as the hope of his glory, he is introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God. To this purpose you find the apostle speaking, for ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.<sup>10</sup>

2. This term implies the nearness of their relation to God. They are not only regarded by him as if they were his children, but he is indeed their Father. This you know is a title frequently given to God in scripture. And I think our Lord gives us the sum of it, where he says to Mary, Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God.<sup>11</sup> A passage that has been full of comfort to his people in all generations. This relation, as it is near, and intimate, so being founded in the sovereign grace of God, it is indissoluble; for whom the Lord loves once as a child, he will love, and delight in to the end: And the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent. For he is not a man, that he should repent.<sup>12</sup> This supposes him to be reconciled to us in his Son, for otherwise he is our enemy, and not our Father. Again,

3. This implies an intimacy of communion, or familiar converse. It is not thought proper indeed by prudent earthly parents, to indulge their children with too great an intimacy with their secrets, while they are in their nonage, or to let them know how much they love them: and so our heavenly Father doth not always see it good, that we should dwell in his smiles, and enjoy the unclouded view of what he has provided for us. But as we grow up in Christ our head, we shall find nearer access unto God as our Father. Of this our Lord gives us an intimation, in that condescending speech of his to his disciples, *Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth, but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.*<sup>13</sup> Compare this with that passage in one of John's epistles, *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our*

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:17.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:15

<sup>11</sup> John 20:17.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Samuel 15:29.

<sup>13</sup> John 15:5.

*fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*<sup>14</sup> And upon this account the author of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks of having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.<sup>15</sup> Should it be enquired what this converse or communion with God is, we must answer in general, that it is better felt than expressed. And I think the best way of conceiving of it is, to consider the soul as led forth by the spirit of Christ, in the exercise of faith and prayer, to God as its Father, and meeting with a gracious answer, whereby it is filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is, in a word, God's filling the spiritual desires that he puts into the hearts of his people, with himself. Thus he lets them know the greatness of his love to them, and the designs of his grace, which are to be accomplished when they come to glory. But then,

4. This Farther implies a right to an inheritance. Now the inheritance that God bestows on his people, is himself. Thus you know he revealed himself to Abraham; Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward;<sup>16</sup> and in the verse following my text the apostle adds, Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God, through Christ. By this we are not to understand an enjoyment of his perfections, but a possession of all that good in, and from the fountain of goodness, that we are capable of enjoying. Now our right to this is antecedent to the enjoyment of it. We are heirs when under age. Thus the apostle speaks, — *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 also be glorified together.*<sup>17</sup> That is, Christ, as our head and fore-runner, hath taken possession of the inheritance for us, and the very same inheritance that he enjoys we shall, in our measure, be admitted to, since we are to be glorified together. And he will confer the same kind of glory upon his chosen that he hath received from his Father himself. This he declares expressly in his address to the Father, *And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.*<sup>18</sup> The beginning of this, or the first fruits, we have now, we have joy and peace in believing: but the full possession is in reversion for us. Thus then I have considered the general meaning of the term Sons, as supposing a

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<sup>14</sup> 1 John 1:3.

<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 10:19.

<sup>16</sup> Genesis 15:1.

<sup>17</sup> Romans 16:16, 17.

<sup>18</sup> John 17:22.

perfect freedom, in opposition to bondage, a near and indissoluble relation, intimate communion, and a right to the inheritance of our God and Father.

II. We are now to show you that all those who are sons, in this sense, either have, or shall have Christ's Spirit sent into their hearts. As to those of God's chosen, who are not yet called, the great ground of their security lies in this, that the Lord knoweth them that are his:<sup>19</sup> and he can send his Spirit into their hearts, at his pleasure. But as to those who call themselves his children, the great criterion of sonship, is the inhabitation of the Spirit: agreeable to these passages in the epistle to the Romans; *for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*<sup>20</sup> *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, is so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now is any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*<sup>21</sup> It is observable that the Spirit is said to be sent forth into their hearts; by which, I apprehend, we are to understand not only, that the understanding is enlightened, but the will subdued, and the whole soul brought into subjection to Christ. For he is sent as the Spirit of Christ, to take of his, and show it to the poor necessitous soul. After he hath convinced a man of sin, his great office is to reveal a righteousness for his refuge and comfort. This you know was all along promised as a blessing of the the covenant of grace, in the old testament: and we are told by our Lord expressly in the new, *that except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter in the kingdom of God.*<sup>22</sup>

The necessity of which, is not to justify us in the sight of God, or to give a right to his favor, but to destroy the enmity of the carnal mind against God, and to root out our pride and self confidence; to lead us to Christ, and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. And then we may observe, that he is sent as a gift of grace from God as our Father by which we are not to understand, that before he is sent, he is not present with the soul, for as he is one with the Father and Son, he fills all places with his presence. But it is to be understood of his efficacious operations, whereby the soul receives a new principle, becomes alive unto God, and full of love to the Redeemer. Which leads us,

III. To consider that the Spirit, as sent forth by the Lord into the hearts of his children, is the consequence or result of their adoption, because ye are

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<sup>19</sup> 2 Timothy 2:19.

<sup>20</sup> Romans 8:14.

<sup>21</sup> Verse 9.

<sup>22</sup> John 3:5.

sons, &cc. For the better understanding of which it will be necessary to premise two things.

1. All the gifts of God, and the blessings of the covenant of grace, and so, as one of the principal of them, the influences of the Spirit, are free and sovereign on his part, and undeserved on ours. This truth hath been received, and humbly acknowledged by the people of God in every age; and the man that disputes it, declares but too evidently his ignorance of himself, and the desert of his iniquities. If we look into ourselves, view the plague of our hearts, and reflect on our conduct, as perverse and rebellious, which is the case of the best of us, one would think it would even force an acknowledgment of our unworthiness, and oblige us to own that we are indebted to divine grace, for every blessing, whether of the upper or the nether springs. But as an additional confirmation of this, to leave those that deny it without excuse, we find it so often inculcated in the word of God, that he that runs may read it. Thus as to our election in Christ from before the foundation of the world, our Lord says, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.*<sup>23</sup> And therefore *we love him; because he first loved us.*<sup>24</sup> As to our redemption, or salvation the apostle says, *By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not; of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*<sup>25</sup> And as faith in Christ is the gift of God, so we are told of our Lord, *that him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins,*<sup>26</sup> As to our acceptance and adoption, we are said to be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ:<sup>27</sup> And, to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.<sup>28</sup> And again, as to our spiritual knowledge, to us it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.<sup>29</sup> And to add no more, as to eternal life, we are assured that though, *the wages of sin is death, yet, the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord:*<sup>30</sup> And our Lord says of his sheep, *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.*<sup>31</sup> Thus you see all those spiritual

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<sup>23</sup> John 15:16.

<sup>24</sup> 1 John 4:19.

<sup>25</sup> Ephesians 2:8.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 5:31.

<sup>27</sup> Romans 3:24.

<sup>28</sup> John 1:12.

<sup>29</sup> Mark 4:11.

<sup>30</sup> Romans 6:23.

<sup>31</sup> John 10:28.

blessings which we have in hand, and all that glorious reward that we have in hope, are derived to us in a way of undeserved favor. And it can be no otherwise, as we are fallen from our state of integrity, and are under the curse of the law that we have broken. But,

2, You are further to take notice, that all these gifts of God are bestowed on us, as we stand in the relation of children, or as he is reconciled to us in Christ. He is his God and Father, and so our God and Father. This naturally arises from comparing what we observed under the former head, that we are guilty before him, and the discovery God hath made of himself to us in his word, as being of purer eyes than to behold evil,<sup>32</sup> and that will by no means clear the guilty,<sup>33</sup> is founded in his very nature: and he must deny himself, before he can cease to will to punish sin. Nay his people, being in themselves sinners, are, under that view, subject to his wrath, and can inherit no blessing from him. For it must be a direct contradiction, to suppose, that, in the same sense, God wills to punish, or which is the same thing, to curse, and to bless the same person, under the same consideration. As sinners, therefore, we have forfeited his favor, lost our title to the common mercies of life. And we are entitled to his favorable regard, only as washed in the blood of Jesus, or as accepted in him.

The most material objection against this is founded in such passages as that, wherein it is said, God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ, died for us.<sup>34</sup> But I think it is very easy to reply to this, that the children of God were in this state before their conversion; and moreover, that the same persons may be very justly viewed under a twofold character, or in a twofold relation. None I believe will dispute, that have tasted of the grace of God, whether the same persons may not be related to Adam as their first head, and to Christ as their second head, as the apostle expressly asserts, that as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.<sup>35</sup>

Now in Adam, or considered in our relation to him, the very elect themselves, the chosen of God and precious, are ungodly; and God commendeth his love towards us in sending his son to save such lost

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<sup>32</sup> Habakkuk 1:13.

<sup>33</sup> Exodus 34:7.

<sup>34</sup> Romans 5:8.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:49.

creatures. But then again, consider the same persons in their relation to Christ the second Adam, and they are complete in him, comely with his comeliness put upon them, and therefore accepted of God, and in that relation made heirs of the blessings of the covenant of grace. For out of Christ God is a consuming fire to every sinner. These things being premised, let us now consider the Spirit of Christ, being sent into our hearts, as the fruit of adoption. Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, &c. By which you are not to understand,

(1.) That because you have the tempers and dispositions, and are enabled in some measure to pay to God the obedience of children, therefore he hath sent his Spirit into your hearts. Were this the case, this part of our salvation would be of works, and not of grace, and would oppose what we have established, that all the blessings of the covenant of grace are sovereign, undeserved gifts. For then, these might be expected as of debt, and not of favor. Besides, were we brought into subjection to Christ, by our own might, or power, or resolution, and could renew and sanctify ourselves, what need would these be for this blessing? But to let you see how contrary this notion is to the mind of the holy Spirit, I shall turn you to several passages, from which I hope to make it evident, that our obedience to God, as children, is not the spring, but the consequence of our receiving the Spirit of adoption. See to this purpose that passage in the prophecy of Ezekiel, where it is said, Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.<sup>36</sup> Well, lest the people should assume the honor of this privilege unto themselves, or attribute it to any worthiness or righteousness of their own, God says to them, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake.<sup>37</sup> And this is repeated again, *Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.*<sup>38</sup> And therefore you find that the Spirit is first to be poured forth, before we shall look on him whom we have pierced by our iniquities, and mourn. And this is confirmed by our Lord, when speaking of the holy Spirit, the Comforter, he first promises his disciples, I will send him unto you, and then he adds, And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.<sup>39</sup> And to let us know that we cannot deserve this favor from the Lord, the

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<sup>36</sup> Ezekiel 36:25.

<sup>37</sup> Verse 22.

<sup>38</sup> Verse 32.

<sup>39</sup> John 16:7, 8.

Spirit is said to be given unto us,<sup>40</sup> and it is said also, that the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.<sup>41</sup> From all which it is very evident, that the Spirit of God is given us to excite gospel obedience in us, and not because of any worthiness in us: for before he comes, we are disobedient children. Nor,

(2.) Are we hereby to understand that our relation to God, is the meritorious, deserving cause of the gift of the Spirit. For though there is a great deal of honor and glory attending this relation, yet we are indebted to Christ, our elder brother, for the whole that we enjoy. It is he that deserved it, by dying; and so, as the reward of his sufferings, he received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them<sup>42</sup>. And it is in him only that God is reconciled unto us, and thro' whom we regain our title to his favor, and to all the blessings we receive from him. But,

(3) Hereby, as I apprehend, the Holy Ghost intends, that in our relation to God as children, as an additional blessing, consequent upon our adoption, we have the Spirit sent down into our hearts. God having fixed an inviolable connection, between our adoption and our sanctification. As he hath given it to us to be heirs of himself, and joint heirs with his Son, so the same spirit that eminently dwelt in him as Mediator, is sent into the hearts of all the members of his mystical body. And thus we are to understand the apostle here.

Because ye are children, or in being children, that ye might have the disposition of children, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts. And that our enjoyment of the Spirit of Christ is thus a consequent blessing upon our adoption is very evident from scripture. This I think may be very fairly collected from some passages in one of John's epistles. But, says that apostle, ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you:<sup>43</sup> the persons who are here said to have an unction from the holy one, he had before spoken of, as having their sins forgiven them, and to have known the Father:<sup>44</sup> which is more fully asserted in the same epistle, Hereby know we

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<sup>40</sup> Romans 5:5.

<sup>41</sup> Ephesians 5:9.

<sup>42</sup> Psalm 68:18.

<sup>43</sup> 1 John 2:20-27.

<sup>44</sup> Verse 12, 13.

that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.<sup>45</sup> Here, the great evidence of our dwelling in God as children, and his dwelling in us as a Father, is put upon this, his having given us his Spirit. And thus I have endeavored to explain to you our third general head, viz. that because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.—That the same grace that was the origin of our relation to God as children, gives us as a consequent blessing, the Spirit, as a Spirit of adoption, which leads us to the last thing which I proposed, and that is,

IV. That wherever this Spirit is given as a Spirit of grace, he resides or dwells in that soul, as a Spirit of prayer, and supplication, crying the language of adoption, Abba, Father. And here we have two things more especially.

1. He is in us as a Spirit of prayer: this is intimated by the term *crying* and,

(1.) This supposes a person to be necessitous, and dependent. No wise man will ask, much less cry earnestly for a blessing that he sees no want of. Now that it is the Spirit of God that acquaints us with our necessities, is evident from what the apostle Paul expressly asserts. Likewise, says he, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.<sup>46</sup> Again,

(2.) As it supposes a person to be in want, and to be convinced of it; so it includes in it a view of the ability of him that is applied to, to give relief: and that none but the Spirit can convince us of this, is evident to me, from that passage in the epistle to the Corinthians; *The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*<sup>47</sup> Again,

(3.) As the Spirit shows us what is the mind of God, and the things that are freely given to us of God;<sup>48</sup> so he excites spiritual desires after this good. Thus we find it in the experience of the apostle Paul. Before conversion, he was full, and stood in need of nothing. I was alive says he, without the law once: but when the commandment came, with power, sin

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<sup>45</sup> Chapter 4:13.

<sup>46</sup> Romans 8:26.

<sup>47</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:11.

<sup>48</sup> Verse 12.

revived, and I died.<sup>49</sup> He was striped of his false confidence; and the same Spirit directed him to the proper fountain for relief; and in the apprehension of Christ's fullness, he makes his prayer unto him. Thus it is said by the Lord himself of him, as an extraordinary thing, behold he prayeth.<sup>50</sup>

2. As the holy Spirit is in us a Spirit of prayer, so of adoption too, he not only crieth, but crieth Abba, Father. And this supposes,

(1.) A discovery of God to the soul as a Father, or the love that is included in that relation. For he must first be convinced that God is a Father to his people, before he can call upon him as such. And,

(2.) It supposes a discovery of the way in which he comes to be a Father unto sinners, that it is only in, and thro' Christ, that he is our God, and our Father. For to call him Father as the God of nature, is rather to affront him than to glorify him: since we have forfeited our right to his care as children, and have sinned away that relation, by our disobedience. Christ must therefore be revealed in us, as the hope of glory,<sup>51</sup> before we can call God Father.

(3.) This includes in it a particular discovery to the soul, that God is his Father; and under this character the Spirit is spoken of as the earnest of our inheritance.<sup>52</sup> by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption.<sup>53</sup> And of him it is said, that the Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God.<sup>54</sup> Which privilege, when he whispers it in the souls of God's chosen, all their unbelief will not be able to destroy the evidence.

Should it be objected here, that the Spirit being said to cry in us, takes away the liberty of the creature, and makes us act necessarily, and not voluntarily: To this I answer, that as the consequence of the Spirit's abiding in us, it is he that, not only gives eyes to see, and understanding to know the things of God, but he excites holy breathings in the soul after him, and leading it to its proper object, God in Christ, as its Father, testifies to the soul its privilege. It is the Christian indeed himself that prays, but it is the Spirit that helpeth his infirmities otherwise he would not be able so much as to

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<sup>49</sup> Romans 7:9.

<sup>50</sup> Acts 9:11.

<sup>51</sup> Colossians 1:27.

<sup>52</sup> Ephesians 1:14.

<sup>53</sup> Chapter 4:30.

<sup>54</sup> Romans 8:16.

utter an acceptable or prevalent sigh or groan before the Lord.<sup>55</sup> And therefore we are said, by the same apostle, to pray in the Spirit: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.<sup>56</sup> And thus I have finished what I designed in a doctrinal way from this subject, and shall close all with a few reflections. And,

I. From hence we may learn the distinct personality of Father, Son, and Spirit. They are all three mentioned in our text, and there are three distinct acts assigned them. The Father is said to send the Spirit, and the Spirit is said to be the Spirit of the Son, and as such takes possession of the hearts of his children. The manner indeed in which they subsist, is allowed to be a mystery, concealed from us: but the reality of it, is very evident; not only from the several works, which are here ascribed to each of the sacred Three, and which imply a possession of divine perfections; but, in many other places of scripture we may observe, that God hath particularly and clearly revealed himself to us in this way, of which our text is no inconsiderable proof; where you have, God the Father sending the Spirit of God the Son, and this Spirit resting upon, and dwelling in the hearts of his people. Now if from this and other passages of scripture, we can prove, that each of these possess all possible perfections, and at the same time we allow that there is but one God, it necessarily follows, that this one God subsists in three persons, intimately related to each other, but distinct, and without confusion.

2. From hence we may learn the great reason why we meet with so many that deny, and some that deride the influences of the Spirit of God. They must surely be strangers to any experience of his divine impressions. And let their reason be never so much refined, while this is the case, their hearts are in a state of enmity with spiritual things;<sup>57</sup> and this accounts for every kind of opposition they make to them. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.<sup>58</sup> And thus you see, as he understands them not; so neither will he ever truly esteem them.

3. From hence we may also gather, that to be a son of God, is a privilege of the highest nature, much more than to be heir to the greatest

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<sup>55</sup> Verse 26.

<sup>56</sup> Ephesians 6:18.

<sup>57</sup> Romans 8:7.

<sup>58</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:14.

prince upon earth. All the pleasures of time are suited only, or principally to our carnal part: but, as the inheritance of the saints is spiritual, so it is of a most sublime and exalted nature. And though a believer, in his own apprehension, is unworthy the name of a son; yet, in the language of adoption, he may without presumption, when led by the Spirit, call God Father, and, as a joint-heir with Christ Jesus, entertain his mind with the firm hope of an inheritance with the saints in light. To conclude,

4. From hence we have a very good evidence, by which we may judge whether we are interested in this privilege, or not. Have we the knowledge of Christ in our heads only? or the Spirit of Christ also in our hearts? Do we idolize our attainments, and forget Christ and his righteousness and strength? or do we lie in the dust, and give all the glory where it is justly due? If we have the Spirit of Christ, he will empty us of ourselves. And, in proportion to his gracious and powerful operations on our hearts, so shall we be more and more filled with the glory of Christ.

FINIS.