

Relationship with the Father

and

Some of its Privileges.

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LONDON :
G. MORRISH, 20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

PRICE THREE HALFPENCE.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER, AND SOME OF ITS PRIVILEGES.

(JOHN I. 1-18.)

God is love, the living God who dwells in light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, neither can see. It has pleased Him in wondrous love to reveal Himself to His creature man, and we have that revelation in His word. The scriptures of eternal truth are the record of His word. We learn thereby who God is and what He is. I learn what you are by your words and ways. You learn what I am by my words and ways. It is so also with God. His words, His ways, His works manifest what He is, what His nature is, His character and His glory.

In revealing Himself to man He speaks in different ways at different times, and makes Himself known in different relations and in different circumstances. We get many titles brought before us in the scriptures, and when we come to the Gospel of John in the New Testament, the scripture we have read, He is referred to as "the Word." "In the

beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." It is a marvellous statement, a magnificent revelation. In this wondrous gospel we discover untold blessing as the portion of God's saints. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He is "the Word." It is the English word for "Logos." The mind of God is made known to us. The Word was His title down here. In the Gospel of Luke the apostle says, "we were eye-witnesses of the Word." (Luke i. 2.) They knew Him as the "Logos," the expression of the mind of God in a Man down here in this world. In the opening of this chapter we find it has pleased the Spirit of God to bring before us the glory of Him who was the Word, the mind of God expressed in a Man. "In the beginning was the Word." That shews His eternal existence and Being. The Word was before the beginning. In the beginning He was, for He existed from all eternity. We have in that first sentence His eternal existence. "The Word was *with* God." That brings out His personality. We know there are three divine Persons in the Godhead, and "the Word" is the Son come into the world. Oh! how blessed! He is divine;

He is God Himself; God manifest in flesh; Emmanuel, God with us. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." That gives us His eternal Personality. So we have four things—His eternal existence, His Personality, His Divinity and His eternal Personality. This was all true of the Word, who, as we get later on in verse 14, was made flesh. It pleased Him who is the expression of the mind of God to come here in flesh. "A body hast thou prepared me," we learn elsewhere. He dwelt among us. He was there in the midst of His people. They were His companions, His disciples, His loved ones. They walked up and down with Him, and ate and drank with Him, and heard the grace which fell from His blessed lips. There was a moment when John and two of his companions beheld His glory on the mount of transfiguration. They saw the King in His beauty; His countenance shone as the sun in its strength. His countenance is as Lebanon. They beheld His glory, and it was the glory of an only-begotten with the Father. In answer to the Lord's question to the disciples, "Whom do ye say that I am?" the voice from the excellent glory declares, "This is my beloved

Son, in whom I am well pleased." He was the only-begotten with the Father, and the Father beheld Him from the glory.

This blessed One was full of grace and truth. There was nothing but grace and truth there; perfect truth and illimitable grace. It was pent up more or less in His heart through the state of man, and could not be told out fully until He had entered the glory. It came out in all its fulness when the Holy Ghost was sent down here from the glory. John, who was witness of Him, cried, saying, "this was he of whom I spake." He was the One John said would come—the sent One of God. "He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me." He is a divine Person. That blessed Man was God, as we have seen, for the Son is God, and He was preferred before John, for He was before him. Although He came after him He was before him, because He is the eternal God, He is the fulness of that blessed One. All the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily, and dwells in Him now. "Of his fulness have all we received"—not divinity—do not mistake me; but of the fulness of that blessed One who came into this world have we received, and grace for grace. The force of it is grace *upon* grace. Heaps of

grace ; grace piled up, if we may so speak ; grace *upon* grace ; boundless grace ; the riches of grace ; the exceeding riches of grace. There is no limit to it. It is grace *upon* grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth not only came by Jesus Christ, but there is a further statement, which was that they subsisted. Though they came while He was there, and He was the truth, and the grace of God was expressed in Him, it is more than that. Grace and truth do not leave the earth with Him, they subsist. And the Spirit of God works them out in our hearts and minds. Grace and truth subsist by Him, and reached us by the same channel when He yielded up His life for the glory of God on Calvary's cross.

"No man hath seen God at any time." We have heard about God and believe in Him ; we believe He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, but we have never seen Him. We shall never see God—who is a Spirit and invisible. We shall see Christ, and Christ is God, God revealed in that blessed Man. "We beheld *his* glory," but the *invisible* God is everywhere. "In him we live and move and have our being." "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom

of the Father, he hath declared him." He is co-equal with the Father. There is not only no end to the existence of God, but there is no beginning to God, He is the Eternal One. This is far beyond our highest thought. Christ has made the Father known; He came to manifest the Father. He came for many objects, and one was to declare the Father.

Now, I want to speak a little to-night about that declaration of the Father, and its consequences for you and me through grace, and to call attention, as we may have time, to many precious things in the Gospel of John which refer to the Father in relation to us. "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." There is not only the fact that He has declared Him, but that He declared Him to certain individuals. His own people received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God. Not merely out of Israel, but out of the Gentiles. The word "many" comes out very often in the gospel. He is the Firstborn among *many* brethren. He is bringing *many* sons to glory. "As *many* as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God." The thought here is children—it is quite true we are sons, but here it is children; those who believe on His name.

Faith is divinely wrought in the soul in sovereign grace by the Spirit of God. We believe on His name. He makes a wonderful statement about them, and that is, that they were "not born of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." He is the source of our origin, and has revealed Himself to us as Father. We are born of the Spirit, of incorruptible seed by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. There is the exercise of faith down here. We believe through grace. It is divinely given faith. But there is also the being born of the Spirit. Faith is the outcome of the sovereign act of the Spirit of God through the word. Henceforth we can look up into the presence of God and know that we are born of Him. He has revealed Himself as our Father.

In the Epistle to the Romans we get the way we come into this relationship. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." The believer in this day of grace does not receive the spirit of bondage under the law, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." If children, the love of God's heart comes out to us at once. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." If we are children of God, we are God's heirs,—blessed be His name. And

not only so, but we are joint-heirs with Christ. This glorious One has gone up out of death and is God's appointed Heir. He is waiting in patience at the right hand of God on high. He was alone in death, but He will return surrounded by the children of God. They will be displayed in the day of His glory. And when He shall wield the sceptre and fill the whole universe, heaven and earth, with His glory, angels and men will behold us with Him, and will know that we are loved by the Father as He is loved. That is what the Spirit of God teaches us now, and what God desires we should know and enjoy now in the secret of our souls. If we are the children of God, we are loved by the Father as He loves His own Son.

Every one that doeth or practiseth righteousness is born of God. This is an important scripture, because as many as receive Christ become the children of God. It is the practical side. How are we to know who are the children of God? We can only judge by their conduct. "Whosoever is born of God does not practise sin." We have put off the flesh, and here we are viewed characteristically. It manifests those who are born of God and those who are not. The one that is born of God does not commit sin. You can never accept a man as a true

Christian who is characterised by sin. It says, "whosoever is born of God does not practise sin." He cannot sin, because he is born of God. No sin comes from God. God is not the author of it; it is impossible. In this the children of God are manifest, because we refuse sin. Whosoever does not practise righteousness is not of God. Moreover, if I do not love my brethren, I am not born of God. The man that is born of God does both. "By this we know that we love the children of God, because we love God and keep his commandments."

In the Epistle of John (chap. iii. 1) it says, "Behold." Whenever God says "Behold" it is a striking word which He uses to call our attention to some important truth. This is a case in point, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." Who can fathom the depth of that love? "Behold, what manner of love." It is not the love of angels; it is the love of those who were once by nature alienated from God, on the brink of death and eternal judgment. Christ came in and died. By faith we become children of God. And the love of the Father is the spring of it all. It is all linked up together. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." He has done it for His own glory, apart

from our worthiness, and He never repents of what He does. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." What is the manner of love? "That we should be called the children of God." It brings us into the highest relationship, far higher than angels. There is an innumerable company of angels surrounding the throne of the living God, who delight to be our servants. They delight to serve the saints, who have come into such wonderful blessing. The manner of love of the Father puts us in the children's place. "Behold, what manner of love." The world does not know the Christian. It does not know us, because it did not know Christ. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." But we know God, and that He is our Father, and we His children. When we are brought into this blessed relationship we go through this world as not of it. We are better known in heaven than on earth. The church, one has said, is the angel's lesson book. They are learning the manifold wisdom of God through the church. The world cannot read us: it neither understands nor likes us. The angels delight to see the wisdom of God and the love of God in relation to the children of God. "Beloved, *now* are we

the children of God." Is somebody saying, "I hope I shall be a child of God in glory"? If you are not a child of God in time you will never be in glory in eternity. "Beloved, *now* are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." God has so wrought, that it is grace *upon* grace.

There is something, too, that has not appeared; there is something still to come. Faith looks on to it and apprehends it. We are not in the enjoyment of it yet. It is not what we merely hope to be, but what we *shall* be. It is all the language of faith. We "know," that wonderful word that characterises the Epistle of John, and which is employed forty times in the original in different connections. "When Christ *shall* be manifested we *shall* be like him, for we *shall* see him as he is." The image and likeness of the Lord God were defaced through Adam, but there is a moment coming when image and likeness will be restored. It will not be the image of *the Lord God*, or of Christ as Man in flesh and blood, but in the image and likeness of *the risen Christ* as the glorified One. It will be as He is. We shall be like Him. God will conform us to the image of His Son, and we shall come out in His image and likeness. "Every man that hath this hope

in him," and the hope of Christianity is always sure, because it is hope in One that *cannot fail*. God cannot fail, for He never has, and therefore we hope in Him. It is all sure. "He that hath this hope in him." He gets Christ before his soul and he desires to be free from all the influences and attractions and follies of this poor world, that Christ might be lived out here, as he knows that he will be like Christ there. Christ is the One who died; Christ it is who lives. It is Christ that is coming. Now we should seek "that Christ might shine out in us." We should be morally conformed to the image of God's Son now. This is the desire of His heart for us. Our reigning will be with Christ. It is all Christ; it is Christianity.

Let us now go back to the Gospel of John. There are secrets in relation to the Father belonging through grace to you and me and to every one of the children of God. "And this is the Father's will who hath sent me." Our Father who has made us His children in His wonderful love has *a will*. He is the only One who has right to a will. Neither man nor Satan has right to a will. The moment I exercise my own will it is sin; but the Father has a will, and He has right to a will. He has revealed it,

and it is concerning us. "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." It is mentioned seven times in our Lord's prayer in John xvii. that the saints were given by the Father to Him. And it is His will that all which He has given to Him (and we are amongst them) should be sure of two things. One is that it should not be lost, and the other is that He should raise it up at the last day.

The last day is a Jewish thought. It is not a question of time, but the last day in contrast to those which precede it. Nothing will be lost that the Father has given to the Son, and He will raise it up in His own glorious likeness to share blessing in the sphere into which He has Himself entered. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." He has it now. It is not by works, but the gift of God. "The gift of God is eternal life." This is also connected with the will of the Father. We receive everlasting life in the Son. It was always in the Son. He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life. And then there is a second statement, "and I will raise him up at the

last day." He says, "I will do it." He said in verse 39 He should do it, and here He says He will. The Son says He will.

Notice further that in verse 39 it says, "all," "nothing," "it." The gift of the Father to the Son is viewed *in the aggregate*, whereas in verse 40 the blessing is looked at as the portion of *each individual* saint.

We pass on to chapter x. Here we are viewed in another aspect as sheep. Christ is the Shepherd and we are His sheep. He leads His sheep out of the Jewish fold, and there is now *the heavenly flock*. There are nine things mentioned in connection with the sheep. *First*, they hear His voice; *secondly*, He knows them; *thirdly*, they follow Him; *fourthly*, I give unto them eternal life; *fifthly*, they shall never perish; *sixthly*, neither shall any man pluck them out of My Father's hand; *seventhly*, My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; *eighthly*, no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand; and *lastly*, I and My Father are one. There is the most absolute harmony and oneness between the Father and Son, and the Father's hand and the Son's hand. "My sheep hear my voice." They turn from the voice of strangers. They refuse the babel of voices in Christendom, and

they hear the still small voice of Christ. He says, "I know them." He knows us perfectly too, far better than we know ourselves. And He says, "They follow me." That is a true sheep, one that follows the Shepherd. If I am following Christ it is a sign that I am a sheep. Secondly, He is known to the sheep. Therein is a proof that he follows Christ. He has set us an example that we should follow His steps. Many perished in the wilderness, but we shall never perish. The Lord Himself always goes before us. We shall not perish by the way; we shall never perish. "None shall pluck them out of my hand." And not only no one shall pluck them out of My hand, but "no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

The Lord has further said He was going away. Peter was sorry, as also the other disciples, and he wants to know where the Lord is going. He said, "Whither goest thou?" The Lord in course of His reply said, "Let not your heart be troubled." He did not want them to trouble because He was going to leave them. He would tell them of something better than they had known before. He says, as it were, you have had Me with you, but I am going away. I shall be hidden in the heavens, but now

you have to walk the path of faith, and I shall present Myself to you as an Object of faith. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." This is the first time they had heard of the Father's house. The temple at Jerusalem was only a figure of the Father's house. The Father is God, and where does God dwell? He dwells in the universe; He is everywhere. He is omnipresent, and this mighty universe is His dwelling-place. He dwells in light which no man can approach unto. We must divest our thoughts of all that which is material in order to grasp it in any little measure. He continues, "If it were not so, I would have told you." He is going away and He says, "I go to prepare a place for you." There was no place yet prepared for them. It was blessing outside this scene. There was going to be a place prepared by the Lord for His loved ones. I am assured there is no place equal to it. I think I know where it is. I will tell you; it is *in His heart*. God is love, and that place is in the heart of Him who is love, who has revealed Himself as Father, and loves us with the Father's love. He says, as it were, I am not going away for ever; I am coming back again. I will not send the angels; I will do it all My-

self. I will come Myself and fetch you, because I love you. The Lord will descend and we shall ascend. It is the Lord's coming down from the throne into the air to receive us to Himself. That is the trysting-place. It is between the earth and the heavens. We shall see Him between the earth and heaven, caught up by divine power in order that where He is we may be also. Now, beloved friends, that is what is prepared for us at the end of our desert journey.

Meanwhile He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you *another* Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever . . . Ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John xiv. 15, 16, 17.) He is one Comforter. The Spirit of truth is another. He comes to abide. I want to shew you a little point which struck me very much. It says in verses 2 and 3 twice *for* you ; here it says *with* you, and shall be *in* you ; and in verse 18 *to* you. "I will come *to* you." *For* you, *with* you, *in* you and *to* you. We are the objects of His love. Christ acts for us and comes to us. The Spirit comes and abides with us and in us. The Spirit remains ; He is here to-day. Christ intercedes on high, and the Spirit below. He undertakes our cause before the Father there,

and the Spirit undertakes our cause in this present world down here. Then, when going through all the trials of the pathway, "I will not leave you orphans." Christ comes to us. I do not think that is Christ coming exactly in the assembly, for this reason, because John does not speak of the assembly, except after the resurrection. It is not a question here of the assembly (or the church) which is brought before us, but Christ comes to the children of God. "I will come to you"; that is, to the children of the Father. It is in principle the same thing, for we are the assembly in one aspect, and children of God in another. But He has not the thought of the assembly before Him in this passage. "I will come to *you*."

Now there is another point in the opening of chapter xv., "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Speaking broadly, saints are presented here as branches in the vine that should bear fruit. The false ones do not bear fruit, and the true ones bear fruit, and the Father purges them that they may bring forth more fruit. This figure is presented in order to shew that the children of God,

so long as they are down here, should be fruitbearing disciples of Christ. As Christ walked here under the eye of God, there was always fruit to God, and that fruit to God was light and testimony to man. So in the same way, if we are bearing fruit that will abide, we shall be a testimony in this dark world; for all the blessed traits of the character of God which came out in Christ are thus reproduced in the saints. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Beloved friends, fruit like that is finer than grapes of Eshcol. I am afraid there are very poor bunches of grapes produced by many of us. The Lord wants more fruit from His saints. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth *much fruit*." (Chap. xv. 5.)

A little later on in chapter xvi. we get another privilege. He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Then again, in verse 26, "at that day ye shall ask in my name." Now He was going away, and the asking would be of a new order. They had not

yet asked in His name, and they would have the privilege of presenting their petitions to the Father shortly in the name of the Son. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." It is not a question here of our daily circumstances; but more, I judge, in connection with the glory of the Father and the Son. The glory of the Father and the Son in John is in grace in different passages connected with the saints here below. It is one of our great privileges to ask thus. We have access by one Spirit through Jesus Christ to the Father; not merely to God, but to God as the Father. We are trusting One who loves us with an everlasting love as He loves His own Son. It is for His sake that the Father answers these petitions.

"The Father himself loveth you." (Chap. xvi. 27.) This brings us to the heart of the Father in the fact that He loves us. "The Father loveth the Son," but here it is that the Father loveth you. He loves the Son, and loves those whom He gave to Him. He goes on to shew that He was not only the sent One of God, but the sent One of the Father. At the moment the disciples did not understand it. There is no excuse for us if we do not, now that the Spirit is bestowed.

In the end of chapter xvii., when we come

out in the day of glory to reign with Christ, the world shall know that the Father has loved us as He has loved His own Son.

To sum it all up, there is the will of the Father connected with our blessing; the Father's hand preserving us; a place in the Father's heart and home on high prepared for us; the Father's care for us here below; the Father's culture that we may be fruitful; the Father's ear open to us; and lastly there is the Father's love which will be fully manifested before a wondering world in the day of the manifest glory of the Son. If our souls are in the power of the Spirit of God, and we are entering into these wonderful things, and dwelling in the Father's love, we shall be set free from this poor world. Then, I believe, when we come together on the morning of the first day of the week to remember the Lord, we shall find ourselves together apart from form and legality, in the spirit of the third passage that I read at the commencement of this meeting. We shall be in the spirit of those blessed words which the Lord spoke of to the woman of Samaria when she said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." And He answered, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, and now is, when *the*

true worshippers shall worship the Father *in spirit and in truth.*" As we enter into this wonderful love, we shall enter upon our functions as priests, and our hearts will overflow in worship in the power of the Spirit to God the Father and the Son. "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." We shall see at once the folly of returning to Judaism, &c., and we shall be kept from every false way which God hateth. And there will be worship, adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, spiritual sacrifices going up acceptable to God our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Ghost.

May the Lord so lead our souls that we may enjoy and answer to these great privileges. They are wonderful realities. The worship of God, the Father and the Son commenced on earth will continue to an everlasting day.

E. H. C.

