

J. C. Ryle Tracts

Some of these rare, short “Helmingham Series” tracts, (J. C. Ryle had been once a Rector at Helmingham, Suffolk), have come into my possession, and I offer you these exactly word for word as they were published when J. C. Ryle was Bishop of the new diocese of Liverpool. (Ev. Tracts’ editor.)



THE ROYAL FAMILY.

READER,

It is reckoned an honour in this world to belong to a royal family. But it is an honour beyond the reach of most people. There are many poor on earth. There are few kings.

But there is a dignity which the poorest man in the world may attain to. Reader, that dignity may become your own this very day. You may join the family of Him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. You may become a member of Christ, and a child of the Almighty. This is the honour of all true Christians,—they are the sons of God.

But HOW can sinful men like you and me become sons of God? When do they enter into this glorious relationship? We are not the sons of God by nature. We are not born so when we come into the world. No man has a natural right to look to God as his Father. It is a vile heresy to say that he has. Men are said to be born poets and painters,—but men are

never born sons of God. The Epistle to the Ephesians tells us, “*Ye were by nature children of wrath, even as others*” (Eph. ii. 3). The Epistle of St. John says, “*The children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God*” (1 John iii. 10). The Catechism of the Church of England wisely follows the doctrine of the Bible, and teaches us to say, “By nature born in sin, and children of wrath.” Yes! we are all rather children of the devil than children of God. Sin is indeed hereditary, and runs in the family of Adam. Grace is anything but hereditary, and holy men have not, as a matter of course, holy sons. How, then, and when does this mighty change and translation come upon men? When, and in what manner, do sinners become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty?

Men become sons of God in the day that the Spirit leads them to believe on Jesus Christ for salvation, and not before.¹ What says the Epistle to the Galatians? “*Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*” (Gal. iii. 26). What says the Epistle to the Corinthians? “*Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus*” (1 Cor. i. 30). What says the Gospel of John? “*As many as received Christ, to them gave He power (or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name*” (John i. 12). Faith unites the sinner to the Son of God, and makes him one of His members. Faith makes him one of those in whom the Father sees no spot, and is well pleased. Faith marries him to the beloved Son of God, and entitles him to be reckoned among the sons. Faith gives him fellowship with the Father and the Son. Faith grafts him into the Father’s family, and opens up to him a room in the Father’s house. Faith gives him life instead of death, and makes him instead of being a servant, a son. Show me a man that has this faith, and whatever be his church or denomination, I say that he is a son of God.

Reader, this is one of those points you should never forget. You and I know nothing of a man’s sonship *until he believes*. No doubt the sons of God are foreknown and chosen from all eternity, and predestinated to adoption. But, remember, it is not till they are called in due time, and believe,—it is not till then that you and I can be certain they are sons. It is not till they repent and believe, that the angels of God rejoice over them. The angels cannot read the book of God’s election. They know not who are His hidden ones in the earth. They rejoice over no man till he believes. But when they see some poor sinner repenting and believing, then there is joy among them,—joy that one more brand is plucked from the burning, and one more son and heir born again to the Father in

¹ The reader will of course understand that I am not speaking now of children who die in infancy, or of persons who live and die idiots.

heaven. But once more I say, you and I know nothing certain about a man's sonship to God *until he believes in Christ*.

Reader, I warn you to beware of the delusive notion that all men and women are alike children of God, whether they have faith in Christ or not. It is a wild theory which many are clinging to in these days, but one which cannot be proved out of the Word of God. It is a perilous dream, with which many are trying to soothe themselves, but one from which there will be a fearful waking up at the last day.

That God, in a certain sense, is the universal Father of all mankind, I do not pretend to deny. He is the Great First Cause of all things. He is the Creator of all mankind, and in Him alone all men, whether Christians or heathens, live and move and have their being. All this is unquestionably true. In this sense Paul told the Athenians a poet of their own had truly said, "*we are His offspring*" (Acts xvii. 28). But this sonship gives no man a title to heaven. The sonship which we have by creation is one which belongs to stones, trees, beasts, or even to the devils, as much as to us.

That God loves all mankind with a love of pity and compassion I do not deny. His tender mercies are over all His works. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. All this I admit to the full. In this sense our Lord Jesus tells us, "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life*" (John iii. i6).

But that God is a reconciled and pardoning Father to any but the members of His Son Jesus Christ, and that any are members of Jesus Christ who do not believe on Him for salvation,—this is a doctrine which I utterly deny. The holiness and justice of God are both against the doctrine. They make it impossible for sinful men to approach God, excepting through a Mediator. They tell us that God out of Christ is a consuming fire. The whole system of the New Testament is against the doctrine. That system teaches that no man can claim an interest in Christ, unless he will receive Him as his Mediator, and believe on Him as his Saviour. Where there is no faith in Christ, it is drivelling folly to say that a man may take comfort in God as his Father. God is a reconciled Father to none but the members of Christ.

Reader, once more I warn you to beware of this theology. I charge you to hold fast the doctrine which I have been endeavouring to uphold in this tract. Remember what I have said, and never let it go. No inheritance of glory without sonship to God! No sonship to God without an interest in Christ! No interest in Christ without your own personal faith! This is God's truth. Never forsake it.

Who now among the readers of this tract *desires to know whether he is a son of God?* Ask yourself this day,—and ask it as in God’s sight, whether you have repented and believed. Ask yourself whether you are experimentally acquainted with Christ, and united to Him in heart. If not, you may be very sure you are no son of God. You are not yet born again. You are yet in your sins. Your Father in creation God may be, but your reconciled and pardoning Father God is not. Yes! though church and world may agree to tell you to the contrary,—though clergy and laity unite in flattering you, —your sonship is worth little or nothing in the sight of God. Let God be true, and every man a liar. Without faith in Christ you are no son of God,—you are not born again.

Who is there among the readers of this tract who *desires to become a son of God?* Let that person see his sin, and flee to Christ for salvation, and this day he shall be placed among the children. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, and lay hold on the hand that Jesus holds out to thee this day, and sonship, with all its privileges, is thine own. Only confess thy sins, and bring them unto Christ, and God is faithful and just to forgive thee thy sins, and cleanse thee from all unrighteousness. This very day old things shall pass away, and all things become new. This very day thou shalt be forgiven, pardoned, accepted in the Beloved. This very day thou shalt have a new name given to thee in heaven. Thou didst take up this tract a child of wrath. Thou shalt lie down tonight a child of God. Mark this, if thy professed desire after sonship is sincere,—if thou art truly weary of thy sins, and hast really something more than a lazy wish to be free,—there is real comfort for thee. It is all true. It is all written in Scripture, even as I have put it down. I dare not raise barriers between thee and God. This day I say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be a son, and be saved.

Who is there among the readers of this tract that is a *son of God indeed?* Rejoice, I say, and be exceeding glad of your privileges. Rejoice, for you have good cause to be thankful. Remember the words of the beloved Apostle, “*Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God*” (1 John iii. 1). How wonderful that heaven should look down on earth,—that the holy God should set His affections on sinful man, and admit him into His family! What though the world does not understand you! What though the men of this world laugh at you, and cast out your name as evil! Let them laugh if they will. God is your Father. You have no need to be ashamed. The Queen can create a nobleman. The Bishops can ordain clergymen. But Queen, Lords, and Commons,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons,—all together cannot, of their own power, make one son of God, or one of greater dignity than a son of God. The man that can call

God his Father, and Christ his elder brother,—that man may be poor and lowly, yet he never need be ashamed.