

~Other Speakers S-Z: H.J. Vine:

God is Love

Only in one chapter in the Bible do these glorious words occur, but twice are they given there (1 John 4:8, 16). Love is the nature of the eternal God. This has been declared and manifested in the fact that He sent His only-begotten Son into the world. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The Holy Spirit of God, who has been given to all who have believed on the Son of God, makes this great truth an experimental and practical fact to them, for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given to us. Infinite in holiness, power, wisdom, righteousness and majesty God is love, and love must have those upon whom it can pour out its blessedness and its priceless treasures, hence we learn that God has children in the world who are begotten of Himself.

Children of God

They are first named in John 1:12, where sons of God should read children of God. The difference is important. Sons sometimes simply denotes character or position, but children of God means they are born of God, as verse 13 declares. They are vitally in relationship with God, by the Father's love, the prerogative of the Son and the work of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing like the Word of God for comfort, assurance and joy. Let us see what it has to say about this threefold work. (1) Of the Father it is said, Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God (John 1:12). (2) Of the Son it is said, To as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the children of God (John 1:12). (3) Of the Holy Spirit it is said, The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16).

God is One

There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things and we by Him (1 Cor. 8:6). The cattle on a thousand hills are His, and all the wealth of the earth and the glories of the heavens. He created the countless stars and calleth them all by name. The invisible things of Him from the foundation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made even His eternal power and divinity (Rom. 1:20). But His children are nearer and dearer to Him than the works of His hands. They have been begotten by His word and are partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). They are in the world but not of it. The millions of people on earth belong to God. The nations and Israel, His chosen people, and the assemblies of Christendom that profess His Name, all are His, and are responsible to Him, but His children are on the earth also, and they stand in this most wonderful relationship with Him, they were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:13). I ascend, said the risen Son of God, to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.

God's Children are not Known by the World

The children of God are in the world but there has also appeared a great worldly Christendom. The taxes have been sown among the wheat, as the Lord foretold (Matt. 13). The children of the devil are there as well as the children of God. The children of God are not known by the world, they are travelling incognito through the world, and it does not yet appear what they shall be, though they know their destiny they are to be like Christ. Their place is prepared for them in the Father's house by their great Leader and Forerunner, who only had a right to that home, as the Son. Meanwhile they need to be preserved from the world's snare, and particularly from the anti-Christian doctrines that pervade Christendom, and please well the children of the devil in it. We read, Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father, and this is the promise which He has promised us, even eternal life (1 John 24-25).

It is important to let the blessedness of the Word dwell richly in our hearts. It says, Beloved, now are we the children of God. We are born of God; the world, religious or otherwise, is incapable of knowing us in this divinely given nature and relationship. Yet we bear marks that distinguish us from the children of the evil one. Those that are born of God do not practice sin (1 John 3:9) Sin is lawlessness, and God's children are children of obedience; they practice righteousness and love one another.

The Children of God are One Family

When the only-begotten Son of God came into the world it did not know Him, and Israel who ought to have known Him, for Moses had written of Him for them, would not receive Him, but a most remarkable prophecy was uttered by the Christ-rejecting high priest. He said in the Jewish Council, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." In uttering those words he was speaking beyond his own knowledge and intuition; the spirit of prophecy had come upon him. Though he was a dark and godless man, and he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:49-50). Yes, the death of Jesus is the righteous and divinely appointed way and basis of all the blessing into which the children of God shall come. It is the ground of their present relationship and future glory with Himself. He has secured all by His atoning death and He will gather all together in one in the predestined glory very soon. But are the children of God to expect to remain scattered abroad until then? Must they leave the blessedness of thus being gathered in one until the future? Is it not the intercession of His heart to the Father, that we all may be one even now, before the bright day of glory? Are not they all indwelt by the one Holy Spirit? And do not all cry, Abba, Father?

It is true that He, for whom we look, will bring all God's children home to His Father's house of eternal love; our hearts thrill at His words, "Surely I come quickly," and not one shall be missing then. But He died: He knew the loneliness and sorrow of the night of forsakenness and blood shedding for us first"HE DIED THAT HE MIGHT GATHER TOGETHER IN ONE NOW AND FOREVER THE CHILDREN OF GOD THAT ARE SCATTERED ABROAD.