

Elect Sons in Grace and Glory

by Thomas Bradbury

The sermon emphasizes the profound love of God for His elect and the assurance of their identity as His children through Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 17:15, Romans 8:1, 1 Corinthians 13:9, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 1 John 3:2, 1 John 4:17

Topics: "Divine Adoption", "Eternal Predestination"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches about the assurance of being the sons of God, emphasizing the distinction between God's children and the children of the devil, urging listeners to examine their hearts. He delves into the deep love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit towards His children, highlighting the eternal predestination, divine adoption, and spiritual regeneration that make believers the sons of God. Bradbury discusses the shortsightedness of believers in understanding their future glory, the assurance they possess in being like Christ when He appears, and the ultimate cause of their transformation - seeing Him as He is.

Transcript

"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 3:2)

It would be a marvellous privilege if I were able to look around, and with confidence meet the gaze of every one in this place, and say without hesitation, in the presence of the King of kings, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." However, without wishing to put a damper on any rising up of little hope or feeble faith in the heart of any child of God here present, I am compelled to say, and that by Divine revelation, I cannot hope for such a privilege, for in communities here below God has drawn His line of demarcation. In our shortsightedness we may not be able to trace out this line, and in our ignorance and folly we may search for it where God has not placed it. Yes, we may be laying our hands upon those who belong not to Him, and endeavour with all the strength of our natural affection to bring those into the bond of the covenant and within the enclosures of His grace, whose names are not written in the Book of Life. This is a harsh statement to human nature; but one before which the truly-taught child of God will not wince. Now concerning ourselves at this very moment, we are either the children of God or the children of the devil. It is either or the other with us, which? We are either in the family which God loves with an everlasting love, or we are in Satan's family "The people against whom the Lord has indignation for ever." But we may take a little hope home to our hearts from the very fact, that we are, in the good providence of God, found within

these walls listening to the glorious truths of God's covenant salvation, which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory, that we are interested in a Gospel in which is revealed the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we delight in the intercession of the Great High Priest which He ever makes for transgressors, and that we are dependent upon one Teacher, God the ever-blessed Spirit, of whom Elihu could say, "Who teacheth like Him?" Therefore, in humble dependence upon the guidance of this best of all teachers, we will look at the portion I have read to you as my text. To my mind it divides itself into several heads, thus

THE PERSONS ADDRESSED - "Beloved."

THE TIME AND PRIVILEGE - "Now are we the sons of God."

THE SHORTSIGHTEDNESS OF THESE PERSONS - "And it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

THE ASSURANCE THEY POSSESS, AND THE CONSUMMATION OF THEIR HOPE - "But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him."

THE CAUSE OF THAT CONSUMMATION - "For we shall see Him as He is."

I. THE PERSONS ADDRESSED - "Beloved." Beloved by whom? 1. By the Father. 2. By the Son. 3. By the Holy Ghost; and 4, by the saints with whom they are privileged to hold sweet communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. 1. Look at the love of the Father as revealed in His blessed Word. See 1 Thess. 1:4, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." Or, as I like much better, the marginal reading, "Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election." Notice. Election, not the cause, but an effect, of God's love. As all God's purposes and acts are like Himself, eternal, so election is of necessity eternal. It is His sovereign decree, reaching from eternity to eternity, and embracing all the objects of His love. The justification of His people in Christ Jesus is an eternal justification. Their sanctification, not the fruit of their justification, but the accompaniment thereof, therefore they are eternally sanctified and justified in Christ Jesus. They are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. But looking at this word, "Beloved," we are taken up to higher heights altogether to those blessings we enjoy through the communications of the Holy Ghost in those spots of necessity, trial, and tribulation allotted to us in God's never-failing providence. For instance, we speak of the Father's grace, but this has respect to us in time. I grant you that it is according to His own purpose and grace, which was given in Christ Jesus before the world began, that we are saved and called; (2 Tim. 1:9) yet grace ever has respect to our unworthiness and undeservedness. Our God is a God of mercy, but His mercy has respect to our misery. He is a God of compassion, but His compassion has respect to our necessities. He is a God of pity, but His pity has respect to our infirmities. He is a God of patience, but His patience has respect to our rebelliousness. But see! He is a God of love, but His love respects me not simply as a sinner. Grace, mercy, compassion, pity, and power meet me there; but love, free, eternal, uninfluenced love, delights in me with ineffable delight as a member of the body of His own dear Son. As one with Him in covenant before all worlds, He owns and acknowledges me as His own gift to the Son. This is clearly set forth in that glorious hymn of dear old John Kenta hymn which I would sing every moment of the day but for the weakness of the flesh:

Twas with an everlasting love

That God His own elect embrac'd

Before He made the worlds above,

Or earth on her huge columns plac'd.

Long ere the sun's refulgent ray

Primeval shades of darkness drove,

They on His sacred bosom lay,

Lov'd with an everlasting love.

Then, in the glass of His decrees,

Christ and His bride appear'd as one;

Her sin, by imputation, His,

While she in spotless splendour shone.

No sin there! No wrath there! No condemnation there! No misery there! No. Christ and His bride in the embraces of everlasting love. Look at that picture of the Lamb and His redeemed company on Mount Zion given in Rev. 14:1-5: "These are they which were not defiled with women." The words, "defiled with women," denote spiritual adultery. "For they are virgins." Who are virgins? Listen!

"There David shines without a stain;

Uriah's blood can ne'er be known;

For like a millstone in the main

Are all his black transgressions thrown.

"Rahab, the harlot, loved by Thee,

Shall never sink to Tophet's flame;

When Jesus suffered on the tree,

The Book of Life contained her name."

Oh! Look at that glorious, uninterrupted, unintercepted union existing between Christ and His members, the Redeemer and the redeemed. In time they appear on this wretched earth, and in the midst of the ruins of the Adam-fall they are found in their sin, filthy and corrupt. Yes, they are found, saved, cleansed, clothed, and crowned by a precious Christ, and brought by Him up to the very heights of glory, where they ever stand in His adorable person, and are seen as though they had never sinned. And, blessed be the name of our covenant God and Father, from eternity they stood uninterruptedly in the Son of His love; they stand, and ever will stand, before Him without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Does He go into the furnace? Does He enter the flood-gates of sorrow and suffering? They follow Him. Is He led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil? They follow Him. It matters not where He goes as the Forerunner of the whole election of grace, all the elect must follow Him; "and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them," for nothing can hurt or destroy in all this holy mountain, this Mount Zion which God eternally loves. "These were redeemed from

among men, being the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." God looks, and in His sovereignty He sees all those who are one with Christ as He sees Christ, "Perfect in Christ Jesus. Complete in Him. (Col. 2:10) Accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. 1:6)

Now let us look at the manifestations or evidences of the Father's eternal love. Turn with me to Eph. 1:3 and following verses, and read according to the punctuation I give: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him." Here I pause. Look at that! "Holy and without blame before Him?"

Yes. Ah, say you, I can mention many of your faults and discrepancies! My dear friend, you can be better employed than in trying to rake up my follies and failings, because if you begin, and intend to persevere with the task, depend upon this, both your head and your heart will ache before you finish. But see! You need not trouble yourself, for it says, "holy and without blame before Him," not before the world nor before the Church. Our glorious Head was not, and we His members must not expect better treatment.

We will proceed. "In love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." In love we were predestinated. Here I would give you a hint. Whenever you find the word "predestinate," "predestination," or "predestinated" in the Scriptures, it always has reference to the children of the living God. In every instance it is predestination to some blessing or benefit stored up for His elect family. "Predestinated unto the adoption of children."

Predestination is God's decree before time, adoption is His act by the power and indwelling of the Holy Ghost in time. By nature, where are we? By will, desire, and determination, among the children of the devil and on the high road to hell. It matters not how moral or immoral, pious or profane we may have been naturally, the bent, desire, and determination of our mind was to be with the devil's children, having no respect whatever to the terrible consequences. But, in His own good time, according to His predestinating love, He sent His blessed Spirit, who, by His convincing power, brought us into some knowledge of our true state and condition before Him, to mourn before the footstool of sovereign mercy, and to receive from His gracious hands those blessings, privileges, and immunities which He afore designed to give.

Adoption is God's own act in bringing me from the service, and from among the children, of Satan, to know my high calling in Christ Jesus as a child of the living God. Ay, and to something better. You may be ready to say, Whatever can be better than that? That which God declares in Isaiah 56:5, "Even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons or of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

Here we have a position and privileges vastly too high for the human imagination to reach. Predestination is the allotment of the Father's love. Adoption is an evidence of our standing among the children of the Father, and participating in the privileges of the family of God. Blessed be His holy name, our God not only loves, but He loves as a Father. Were it not for some sweet experience of this, I do not think I should possess the feelings of a father. See Psalm 103:13,14: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.

For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." Oh, for me to think that as a father I have eight lumps of dust, and were it not for the love and affection of my God, I should manifest, not the pity, but the petulance of a father. The love of a covenant-keeping God toward His poor Ephraim who is now in this

pulpit is truly marvellous, and alters matters altogether. He has spoken again and again to me in that sweet Scripture, "Is Ephraim My dear son?" or, according to the affirmation of Jehovah, "Ephraim is My dear son, he is a pleasant child; for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." (Jer. 31:20) Oh, what wondrous love our Father has to us His wayward children.

Predestinating love before the foundation of the world. Preserving love through all the toils and dangers of this wilderness world. This is heart-warming and heart-comforting to the poor child of God who is brought into the enjoyment of the adoption into the family of God, who can bless and praise His holy name for His covenant kindness, covenant love, and covenant concern, in the language of the redeemed Atheist, William Mushett:

"More of Thy love, my God, I find

In every hour I live;

More of Thy peace in heart and mind

Doth each sharp trial give.

Up to my Father's high decree

Each act in time I trace;

Up to the glorious Sovereign Three

Almighty Fount of grace."

At this moment, I can address you whose hearts are bubbling up and flowing out in desires to such a God as this, as, Beloved of, and in, Him.

2. Loved by the Son. The Father chose to Himself a countless number who should fall into sin, shame, and disgrace; but the Son identified Himself with them. See! The second Person in the all-glorious Godhead came down from the heights of glory into the very depths of His poor brethren's necessities, to desertion and to death. Oh, to think that He who is holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners, should condescend to come into close and bitter contact with such vile sinners as we, and that His holy and sensitive nature should bear the sins which He hated and shuddered at, this is love indeed. It is also wonderful for us to remember that the sinless Jesus bore all the sins of all His people, past, present, and to come, sins, which if the world could only see, it would shudder and start from us with convulsive horror. If God were to rend the vail away from our bosoms and others could see us, and read our inward thoughts and corruptions, where should we be? What should we be? Forsaken by all, and the very devils would be ashamed to be seen in our company; for, according to the testimony of one who is now in glory, the devils never get drunk nor commit adultery. Yet, the Father teaches us in this glorious Gospel that He has taken all our sins and laid them upon the sinless shoulders of a precious Christ, who, with the experience of their painful load in the gloomy shades of Gethsemane, was forced to cry, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." (Matt. 26:38) And amid the wild desolations of Calvary, said, "I thirst." What thirst was that? The thirst of that hell which I so richly deserve. Oh, think! that He should cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Ps. 22:1; Matt. 27:46) This was love indeed, the love which passeth knowledge. Though He endured all this, back to the heights of glory He returned, there to appear in the presence of

the Father for thee and for me, there to open His mouth for us poor dumb sinners, to maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor. Think of this! The more I wander from Him and the more He pursues me with tokens of purest, tenderest love. The more I forget Him and the more mindful He appears to be of me. The more I manifest the perversity of my wretched, rebellious nature, and the more He seeks to display His patient uncomplaining love. Does not our heart thrill with delight as we go through that precious hymn of Mushett's?

The Man who lived, and died, and rose

To perfume heaven with blood;

To Him my soul her pardon owes,

And claims Him for her God.

There high He reigns in ether bright,

The great Incarnate Word.

Where suns to darkness dwindle quite

Before their radiant Lord.

Thence low He stoops to watch the lot

Of souls to Him once given;

And makes the dying sinner's cot

The glorious gate of heaven.

Do you like that? I do. It was fat and marrow to my soul last Saturday evening but one as we sang it in one of your houses. But Oh, how precious it appears this morning as I think of my Lord's love and care in stooping low and watching the lot of a dear young fellow in King's College Hospital a fortnight ago yesterday, and much more precious as I remember the sorrowful joy of his father's heart the next morning as he told me how Jesus had made "the dying sinner's bed the glorious gate of heaven" to Richard Vials.

3. Beloved by the Holy Ghost. This is not a very fashionable truth in these degenerate days. We hear of the Father's love to the world, of Christ's love to sinners; but precious little of the Spirit's love to His quickened ones. God so loved His elect world, but His love can never be expressed. Greater love cannot be known than that which Jesus has shown to His redeemed world. The Spirit's love to the Father's elect and redeemed children surpasses all conception. Think well of the marvellous fact, that this vile body should be made the dwelling-place of the Spirit of purity and holiness. Oh, my dear friends, with the faintest apprehension of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, we can look each other in the face, and, as these looks of love meet, there is blessed reciprocity of feeling and sympathy, and mutual love between us whom God has made eternally and spiritually one in the Son of His love. Look at that precious testimony in Eph. 1:6, "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved;" or, as it might be rendered, "graced in the Beloved." All grace in the Beloved for the whole election of grace, and for the vilest sinner out of hell who is brought to a knowledge of his wretched state by nature, and to repose in the grace, love, and mercy of the

covenant-Three revealed by the loving and patient Spirit. The evidence of the love and indwelling of the Holy Ghost is in regeneration, restoration, confirmation, and rest. Here we can sing with the Spirit and with the understanding also:

"And Thou, eternal Spirit vast,

What love can Thine transcend?

Since Thou Thy lot with me has cast,

Indwelling God and Friend."

4. Beloved by the saints. "For this is the commandment that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." (1 John 3:11) Yes, and we do love one another; but we are not going to boast about it, for there are no thanks due to us for the love we manifest one to another. But, see! Do we see one who is ready to sit in judgment upon others, to be very jealous over those he professes to love, to be a corrector of another's faults and shortcomings? When such is the case, there will be precious little manifestation of love. Love one to another is a gracious, heaven-born privilege. See how blessedly the apostle shows this to be a sweet evidence of the possession of spiritual life in 1 John 3:14. After stating what we shall receive at the hands of the world, he says: "We know" not we think or fancy, but, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." A little hint here. It may be that God has a child whom He is about to bring out of the ruins of the fall and manifest him as His own. He reveals this fact in His own way to another of His children; but this child looks on in amazement to think that so hateful a character should be a vessel of mercy. See Acts 9:10-16. The Lord Jesus appeared to a certain disciple named Ananias, and said unto him, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight (a quaint old fellow called that ELECTION STREET,) and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth." Now notice the answer of Ananias: "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." You see cautiousness and fear in the heart of the disciple to whom God had graciously revealed the secret of His love to another. But here is the truth. Beloved of God the Father, beloved of God the Son, and beloved of God the Holy Ghost, and as assuredly as God's Christ is glorified in the experience of a saved sinner, He cannot be hid. In the days of His flesh He could not be hid, and I am sure He cannot be hid in the days of His Spirit. If the Spirit reveals a precious Christ in you and me, there must of necessity be a manifestation of the Spirit of Christ to others of God's children whom He graciously brings into communication and communion with us. We now notice

II. THE TIME AND PRIVILEGE - "Now are we the sons of God." Now. This word is a very handy one for ten thousand pulpits today; but it is not understood in its Scriptural and spiritual signification by the free-willer or by the ranting "revivalist." These cry: "Now is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation! Now you may embrace the offered mercy! Now you can come if you only will!" A greater lie Satan never told. Blessed be God, that word "now" has no reference to the message or declaration of any mortal; but to the time appointed in the eternal counsels when the Father should reveal His great salvation in the Son of His love to His elect ones.

The word "now" in every portion of God's blessed Word must be understood according to the light thrown upon it by its context. Let us look at one, and it is a very blessed one: Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now

no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Now! When? To understand this now aright we must go through the experience set before us in chapter 7, the first part of which illustrates the deliverance wrought from the workings of the flesh. See! "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Mark! It is not "who has," but "who shall," having reference to the future. Here I am oppressed with sin and bowed down with continual conflict; but I rejoice and "thank God" that my Christ who loves me though I am a sinner, and in my flesh nothing but sin, my Christ who saves me from every sin, shall and will deliver me from this body of sin and corruption. When? When this mortal shall put on immortality, when this corruption shall put on incorruption, and when this vile body shall go down into the dust and the redeemed spirit shall soar aloft to its native home, to that glorious land where the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick, but where all shall acknowledge the sweets of Divine forgiveness.

Here we have the summing-up of the apostle's argument: "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Oh, say some, that's Antinomianism! Very well, you can have it so; but I am saved against the law of God which my old nature cannot obey nor satisfy, and against the law of sin which my new nature cannot obey nor satisfy. My old nature can do nothing but serve the law of sin which is in my members, my new nature can do nothing but serve the law of God as seen and known in Christ Jesus.

Now the realization of the fact, that in Christ I cannot sin, I am born again, I am a new creation, a partaker of the Divine nature, the Holy Ghost is my indwelling God, and the Father is my Friend. He beholds no iniquity in Jacob, He sees no perverseness in Israel; (Numbers 23:21) but declares with the great sound of the Gospel trumpet, "There is therefore now no condemnation." I bowed before His footstool this morning and there confessed my sin, yet there His truth was with me, "NO CONDEMNATION."

See! "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin;" yet we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:7,8) Oh, how I do feel a poor sinful wretch in myself; yet in Him cleansed from all sin. How blessed!

"THOUGH SINNING, YET FREE FROM ALL SIN."

"There is therefore now." That now has reference to an experience Divinely wrought, and to truths Divinely taught. When God says to me, "No condemnation," I dare not dispute the point with Him; but willingly and joyfully respond Amen. This will sound strange and startling to the world, and we, who believe that the sins of our old nature can never debar us the enjoyment of one covenant blessing designed for us, nor our good behaviour add one iota to our justification and salvation, shall have to put up with the proud world scorn. "The world knoweth us not." (1 John 3:1) Here you have the "Now."

"Now are we the sons of God." Think of that. How are we the sons of God? 1. By eternal predestination. 2. By Divine adoption. 3. By spiritual regeneration. Look at James 1:17,18: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth." Look again at Eph. 2:4,5: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Now turn to 1 Peter 1:23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The covenanting, creating,

communicating, and communing Word of God living and abiding for ever in every one of those who are begotten, quickened, and born of God. "As newborn babes, they desire the sincere milk of the Word." Marvellous provision has been made for them. The great and glorious Jehovah does not bring forth children and then leave them to starve and perish. No. He takes them and washes them in the full free fountain of atoning blood, clothes them in the garments of salvation and the pure white robe of His dear Son's righteousness, leads them to His table and feeds them with food convenient for them, food convenient, or suited, to their spiritual appetite. Not only this, but everything necessary for their spiritual education, accomplishment, and refinement. You may depend upon this, when God begins His work of grace in any of His children, He does it perfectly. "Now are we the sons of God." Yes, every soul within these walls this morning, man, woman, or child, who is blessed with the indwelling and witness of God the Holy Ghost, blessed with His gracious instruction, blessed with the revelation of a precious Christ, blessed with a hope in God's mercy, blessed with a desire to fear His name, and some not able to rise one hair's breadth higher than to think upon His name, longing, hoping, desiring, and expecting brighter manifestations of love and clearer revelations of His glorious person and perfect salvation, these are included in the glorious declaration, "Now are we the sons of God."

III. THE SHORTSIGHTEDNESS OF THESE PERSONS - "And it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Much speculation is rife as to the future state and condition of God's children; but God has been pleased to reveal in His blessed Word what He Himself is to them, and, in the enjoyment of this revelation of Himself, to indulge them with foretastes of future bliss. What is heaven? Some endeavour to picture heaven as a place; but let me tell you what it is to me. A foretaste of it I sometimes enjoy in this pulpit, when God's Christ has been so sweetly revealed to me, and I have felt Him precious to my heart. Then I have been like a spoiled child, and I have sighed and cried to be taken home with Him from this very spot. Oh, my dear friends, where is your heaven? It is heaven, ay, home where the heart is. Where are your affections set? Upon the person of a precious Christ. Where would you dwell? With Him, up yonder, at the Father's right hand. And the cry of your heart to Him is, "Whither Thou goest, I will go; and where Thou lodgest, I will lodge: Thy people shall be my people, and Thy God my God." (Ruth 1:16) But look how Paul declares his ignorance of the future blessedness of the saints in 1 Cor. 13:9-13: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away....For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Those to whom this love is made known, the Holy Ghost addresses us, Beloved; but rarely, if ever, as Believers. Yet it is the fashionable mode in these days to address professors as Believers. In God's Word they are addressed in a higher relationship.

IV. THE ASSURANCE THEY POSSESS, AND THE CONSUMMATION OF THEIR HOPE - "But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." This leads our minds far away from the things of time, and from the narrow bounds of sense, to that glorious period when our Lord shall come to gather together all the jewels which shall sparkle in His glorious crown, to gather together all His Father's eternally-loved ones, the fruit of His sufferings, the purchase of His blood, and to carry them up to the heights of glory, there to spend an eternity of bliss and blessedness with Him. Blessed be God! Then and there we shall be like Him. Ay, and "we know" that it will be so by the Spirit which He hath given us. The continuous desires of the regenerate soul is to be like Him. Turn to Romans 8:29,30. Here we have present-tense realities. "For whom he did foreknow, He also did predestinate conformed to the image of His Son." Read this portion without the italics, "to be." Conformed by eternal predestination, in the everlasting covenant of grace, to the image of His dear Son, "that He might be the firstborn, or chief, among many brethren.

Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." You see, in the purpose of God, all the elect are predestinated, called, justified, and glorified in the person of God's Christ, and conformed to His image. "We shall be like Him," ay, and we are like Him according to the decree of the Father, the demand of the Son, the determination of the Spirit, and the declaration of the Gospel in our hearts.

Look at that blessed testimony in 1 John 4:17, "Herein is our love made perfect." That will not do! But it says so. Look at the margin, "Herein is love with us made perfect." That will do. "Herein." What does that mean? It refers to verse 16: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." You see it is the saint in God and God in the saint. "Herein." In the experience of this blessed union "is love with us made perfect." This is the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "That we may have boldness in the day of judgment." When? Now. Though the devil and the world may judge and say, What an awful sinner you are! yet, with this glorious testimony, blasphemers though we may be in our own estimation, at the footstool of sovereign grace, we shall know what that means, "as He is, so are we in this world." "We shall be like Him" will be the consummation of our hope, and of all that God graciously reveals in our waiting hearts here below.

V. THE CAUSE OF THAT CONSUMMATION - "For we shall see Him as He is." According to the company we keep, so will be our character and disposition. What company do you keep? Do you know ought of the leading of a Father's hand? Do you enjoy the counsel of the Saviour's heart? Do you experience the consolation of the Holy Ghost cheering you with a gracious lift in the midst of all your sorrowful surroundings? Have you felt a heavenly heart-burn from the communications of the best of all friends? As this is your company, so you will be like Him now. It is a great mercy, that, sinner as I am, and devil as I oftentimes feel myself to be, I often have a little bit of assurance that I am like Him after all. The day is coming, when, before assembled worlds, to the untold delight of the child of God, He will acknowledge the glorious fact, Like Him in covenant. Like Him in calling. Like Him in communion; and, Like Him in eternal glory. "I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness. (Psalm 17:15) "We shall be like Him. We shall see Him as He is."

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