

~Other Speakers A-F: Samuel Davies:

The Nature and Blessedness of Sonship with God

by Samuel Davies

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us—that we should be called the sons of God! Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does 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 3:1-2

Though the schemes of divine Providence run on with the most consummate harmony, and will at last terminate in the wisest ends—yet, to the undiscerning eyes of mortals, confusion seems to reign through this world; and nothing appears in this infant state of things—in that light in which eternity, the state of maturity, will represent everything.

This remark is particularly exemplified in the dispensations of grace towards the heirs of heaven. Though they are not in such unmingled darkness, even in this region of ignorance and uncertainty, as to have no evidences at all of their being the objects of divine love, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit—but may, in some shining moments, at least, conclude that they are even now the sons of God; yet they can form no adequate ideas of the immensity of that love which has adopted them as the sons of God, and made them heirs of heaven—who were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

There are indeed such rays of this divine love, that make us stand and pause in delightful astonishment, exclaiming, "Behold! What manner of love is this! How great, how vast, how immense, how unaccountable, how incomprehensible—is that love which has given us—us rebellious sinners and heirs of ruin—the title of the sons of God, and the many privileges of such a wondrous relationship! Behold! What sort of unheard of, unparalleled love is this!"

Behold it with intense observation and grateful wonder!

You trifling sons of men—abstract your thoughts from the toys of earth, and here fix your attention! Look here and gaze, until you are so transported with the survey of this love, as to be engaged to the most vigorous endeavors to be partakers of it.

Our brethren in grace—who share in the same privilege, you may especially pause, behold, and wonder! Let all your admiring powers exert themselves to the utmost in the contemplation of that love which has bestowed upon you so gracious, so honorable a distinction, as that of sons of the King of heaven!

And you blessed inhabitants of heaven—who know the import of this glorious title, and the riches of the inheritance reserved for us; you angels who are happy in your Maker's goodness—but have not been distinguished with redeeming grace—look down from your celestial thrones, look down to this contemptible earth, and view the greatest exploit of divine, infinite love! For surely no achievement of almighty grace among your various orders through the limitless heavens, can equal this—that we rebellious worms, should be called the sons of God, the highest title which you can imagine. Behold, and wonder, and adore with us—and supply our defects of praise! You see farther into the secrets of this mystery of love than we in our present state, who can only pause in silent admiration, or vent our blind conjectures upon it. Behold! What manner of love is this! Therefore unloose all your contemplative powers upon a theme you can so deeply penetrate.

Farther, As the sons of God in their present state cannot comprehend that love which has conferred this title upon them; so they know not fully the glorious import of the title! They only know in general, that when He appears—they shall be like him—but they do not exactly and fully know what that likeness is! It does not yet appear, even to themselves—what they shall be. Their liveliest imagination can form no adequate ideas what glorious creatures they will before long be—they are utter strangers to their future selves. They know themselves only at present in their infancy; but when these little children of God, these babes in grace, arrive at their adult age, and grow up to the fullness of the stature of Christ—they will be prodigies to themselves, and mysteries which they cannot now conceive!

In this world we are accustomed to little and obscure things, and our thoughts are like their objects; we see

nothing sufficiently glorious to suggest to us any proper images of the glory of the sons of God, when they come to maturity, and enter upon the inheritance to which they are born. The splendor of the meridian sun, the grandeur of kings, and the parade of nobles, are but obscure shadows of the glory and magnificence of the lowest pious beggar, of the poorest Lazarus that ever languished upon earth, and is now arrived at heaven! The difference is greater than that between Job upon the dung-hill, lying in ashes, and covered with ulcers—**and Solomon in all his glory.**

However, amidst all our ignorance, we may rest confident in this: that if we are now the children of God—then we shall be conformed to him when he appears to us in all his glory, on the other side of death; and especially when he appears in the clouds in all the majesty of the universal judge, when every eye shall see him! And though we should know no more than this in general, we may rest implicitly satisfied, that we shall be inconceivably glorious and happy—since the perfection of our nature consists in conformity to God.

We may be sure that that state which the apostle here, by unerring inspiration, calls a likeness to God, the standard of all excellency, must be as perfect as our nature can bear. The apostle having said, that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him;" then adds, "for we shall see him as he is!" This vision of the blessed God in his unveiled glory may be here mentioned, either as the evidence, or, as the cause of our likeness to God, when he shall appear.

Considering it as an EVIDENCE, the meaning is, "It is evident that we shall be in some measure like God when he appears, otherwise we could not bear the full vision of his glories; we could not see him and live!" It is also evident the apostle here speaks of the vision of God as a happiness, and the blessed privilege of his sons.

Now to see God could afford no pleasure—to such as are not like to him: they would be shocked and confounded at the sight, and shrink from it! And by how much the clearer the vision—by so much the more they would hate him, because by so much the more they would discover his contrariety to them. Therefore it is a sufficient evidence of our likeness to God, that we can bear the vision of his unveiled perfections with pleasure—for none that are unlike to him can bear it.

Considering the passage in the other view, which probably was what the apostle intended, as the CAUSE of likeness to him, it means, that the full and direct views of him will be transformative, and efficacious to change the beholders into his likeness. As the light shining upon glass renders it transparent, or as the sun diffuses its luster into a diamond, and gives it an intrinsic radiancy—so the discoveries of the divine perfections will impress their image upon the minds they illuminate.

Their views will not be superficial and speculative, nor attract an idle gaze—but they shall be vital, efficacious, and impressive; and no wonder if such views, which we now know so little of, should produce a perfection we can now so little conceive. If the sons of God are such strangers to the riches of their present title, and the dignity and glory of their future selves—no wonder that a blind world should not know them. If it does not yet appear to themselves what they shall be—much less does it appear to others, who are strangers to their heavenly Father, who know not his lineaments, and therefore cannot discern his children by their resemblance to him.

This the apostle may intimate when he says, "It does not appear," (that is, it does not appear to others,) what we shall be; and we are led to this sense by the former verse, therefore the world, the general run of mankind, who are strangers to God, know us not. That is, they do not distinguish, love, and honor us, who are children of God—because they know him not. As they are ignorant of our Father, and disregard him—so they accordingly treat us. They look upon us with contempt, and are wholly ignorant of our heavenly extraction and dignity, and thus it will be—until we shine in all the glory of the children of so illustrious a king, and possess the inheritance of the saints in light! Then, to their confusion, they shall discern the difference between the righteous and the wicked. I shall,

- I. Show you what is the import of the glorious title, the sons of God.
 - II. Mention some instances of the present ignorance of the sons of God, with regard to their future state.
 - III. Show in what respects they are mistaken and unknown to the world.
- I. I shall show what is the import of this glorious title, the sons of God.

It is evident that the title is used here, not in so general a sense, as elsewhere, where it signifies no more than the creatures of God, (Acts 17:28, 29,) for here it is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of true Christians, in which the world in general does not partake. In the sense of the text, it implies:
 that believers are born again of God;
 that they are admitted to enjoy the privileges of God's children;
 and that they are the heirs of heaven.

1. To be the sons of God, implies that they are regenerated, or born of him.

He is a son, who is begotten and born; and therefore to be a child of God, supposes that we are begotten by him. This seems to be the peculiar foundation of that sonship the apostle here has immediately in view; for it is the thought of being born of God, mentioned in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, that seems to introduce the text, and bring him to the fourth verse of this chapter, into that transported exclamation, "Behold! what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!"

This new birth you have often heard me describe, as a thorough universal change of a corrupt, rebellious sinner—into an affectionate, penitent, obedient servant of God. His views of things, and dispositions towards them, are happily altered—which in turn, produce a corresponding change in his practice. But I cannot enlarge on this, without excluding the other subjects of my discourse.

I pray God that you would seriously consider the importance of this spiritual birth, and not vainly deem yourselves as the sons of God—while you are strangers to it. You may as well become the sons of men without being generated by human parents, as the sons of God without being regenerated by supernatural grace! For the Scripture has repeatedly declared the absolute necessity of the new birth in various terms. All who become the children of God are born of him, and not of blood, or by natural generation, nor of the will of the flesh, or by any natural inclinations of theirs, nor of the will of man, or by the best endeavors of others with them. John 1:12, 13. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ begets them again, 1 Peter 1:3; and creates them anew, Ephes. 2:10; so that old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17. And Christ himself, who best knows the terms of admission into heaven, has assured us with a "truly, truly, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3, 5. And this is the declaration of infallible inspiration, that neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; that is, a conformity to the externals of the Jewish or Christian religion—is of no avail to salvation—but the new creature. Galatians 6:15.

2. Those who are the sons of God—are admitted to enjoy the privileges of God's children; and this is implied in their title.

God here treats us with his usual condescension in expressing divine things—in the humble language of mortals; by metaphors borrowed from affairs among men, that are familiar to us. Therefore from an idea of the usual privileges which a child enjoys from a gracious and powerful father, and leave proper room for the infinitely superior perfections of our heavenly Father to those of the most excellent human parents, and you may from the analogy know something of the peculiar privileges of the children of God.

A son, you know, has liberty of access to his father, however great; he obtains his requests. He has the guardianship and compassion of his father; and is seasonably corrected by him for his good. And thus our heavenly Father deals with the children of his grace.

He gives them liberty of access to him in prayer and the institutions of the gospel. He not only allows them to attend upon his ordinances, which many do who continue strangers to him—but at times he enlarges their hearts, so that they find themselves near him; they are admitted into the presence-chamber in free audience with him, and pour out all their hearts before him, vent their complaints, beg a supply of their needs, and render their grateful acknowledgments for his mercies. This temper of mind is so suitable to their relations as the sons of God, that the Holy Spirit, as the author of it, is called the Spirit of Adoption; and the children of God are not capable of exercising this filial freedom at pleasure—but just as he enables them to draw near with humble boldness to the throne of grace. Romans 8:14,15, 26, 27; Hebrews 10:22, and 2 Corinthians 3:17. And the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of liberty and adoption, is a privilege entailed upon the sons of God, and which they at times enjoy. Galatians 4:5,6.

Again, As the children of God have liberty to address their Father—so they have the privilege of having their petitions graciously heard and answered. A human parent is ready to give good gifts to his children—and much more is our heavenly Father. Thus Christ reasons in the most familiar and moving manner, in Matthew

7:7-11, and Luke 11:11-13; and he seems to intimate that this privilege is implied in the relation, by repeating the endearing term Father, in Matthew 6:6, 8, 9. "Pray to your Father—and your Father shall reward you; Your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask him. After this manner therefore pray—Our Father," etc.

Again, the children of God are entitled to his protection and compassion. His guardian care is celebrated in Psalm 92 and Psalm 121, and his tender compassion in Psalm 103:13; Isaiah 63:9, and in numberless passages that speak of his affections of mercy, his compassions, etc.

Another privilege of the children of God is, that they are seasonably corrected by his fatherly chastening. This indeed they are too apt to count a calamity—rather than a privilege; but since his correction is necessary for their reformation; since it proceeds from the benevolence of a Father—and not from the vengeance of an incensed judge; since it is intended for their benefit—and not for their destruction; since they are supported under it—and it has a proper measure and seasonable end; and since it will be more than compensated with future rewards—then it follows that their chastisement is one of their blessings, and as such it seems promised rather than threatened, and mentioned as a badge of the sons of God, Psalm 89:30-34, Hebrews 12:5-11; and many of the children of God have found reason to praise him for his wholesome severity. Psalm 119:67, 68, 71. Upon this principle, James exhorts them to rejoice when they enter into divers temptations, James 1:2; and Peter tells them that they will befall them only if need be. 1 Peter 1:6.

3. The children of God are heirs of the heavenly inheritance, and their relation implies a title to it.

They are born to a crown, begotten to "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—reserved in heaven for them!" 1 Peter 1:3, 4. "If we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Romans 8:16, 17; Galatians 4:7. And how vast their inheritance is, you may learn from Revelation 21:7, and 1 Corinthians 3:21, 22.

What advancement is this—to base, sinful, miserable creatures! Out of prison they come—to reign with Christ! They are raised from the dung-hill, and set among the princes of heaven! No wonder the apostle should exclaim, "Behold! what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us—that we should be called the sons of God!"

Thus I have briefly shown you the glorious import of your relation, the sons of God; and you see it should be the greatest concern of each of you to inquire whether you bear it. To determine this point, I need only tell you, that if you are the children of God, you have been supernaturally begotten by him, as I observed before, (James 1:18,) and you have the temper of dutiful children towards him, particularly you reverence and honor him; (Mal. 1:6;) you love and fear to offend him, and cheerfully do his will, and mourn over your undutifulness; you are partakers of his divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4; and bear the lineaments of his holiness.

But if it is otherwise with you, as I fear it is with many; if you are not conformed to the moral perfections of God and bear his image; if you have not the dispositions of dutiful children towards him—but the temper of the devil, and do his works—then you are of your father the devil! And though you may resent this, as the Jews did, the charge is fixed upon you. Therefore awaken all the importunity of your souls, and cry to him for regenerating grace, that you also may become the sons and daughters of the living God. But if you find in yourself these characters of the children of God which I just now mentioned, then "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!" You are happier than princes, more great and honorable than the sons of earthly kings. You cannot now form any ideas what miracles of glory and blessedness your Father will make of such base, guilty, and wretched things as yourselves! Which introduces what I next proposed.

II. To mention some instances of the ignorance of the sons of God, with regard to their future state.

It is true indeed, and some of you, I doubt not, know it by experience, that the children of God in some shining moments enjoy foretastes of heaven; and even now, "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Peter 1:8. Just as a child stumbles upon a manly thought: and as the first dawns of reason may give a child some obscure hint of the masterly reasonings of a mature genius; so from these foretastes of heaven, the sons of God may form some faint ideas of the perfection of its happiness in full enjoyment.

They find these dispositions feebly working in them now, which, when brought to perfection, will constitute their blessedness; and they now find so much real happiness in the exercise of such dispositions, though in an imperfect degree—as fully convinces them that nothing is necessary to make them completely happy, but the

perfection of such exercises, and an entire freedom from contrary principles. But what this perfection is—they have not yet experienced; their highest thoughts fall short of it—and it does not yet appear to them what they shall be, in the following particulars:

1. It does not yet appear what they shall be—with respect to the enlargement of the faculties of their SOULS.

That the human soul is capable of vast enlargements, that its faculties may expand to great dimensions, is evident. And we find by experience, its improvements from childhood to youth, and thence to the close of life, especially in men of a studious turn. And we may be sure that when, like a bird out of a cage, it gets loose among its kindred spirits, and flies at large in its proper element—its faculties will be vastly improved! Otherwise it would be over-borne and crushed with the weight of glory; it would be dazzled with the intolerable blaze of heavenly brightness, like a mole that has wrought itself into daylight. As a child is utterly incapable of manly exercises; so, without a proportionable enlargement of its powers, the soul would be incapable of exercising them about the infinite objects then before it, and of joining in the exalted services of that mature heavenly world. You may therefore rest confident in this, O sons of God—that your little souls will then be vastly improved. But as the infant cannot know beforehand the improvement of riper years—so it is with you.

Compare your present selves with your infant selves—and you will see a vast difference even in the present state. And how vast the difference between what you now are—and what you will be, when you enter into a world entirely new, the spiritual heavenly region!

Beloved, you are now the sons of God; and he will make you such beings as befits so near a relation to such a Father; and what prodigies can he make of you! He who could make you what you are out of nothing, in the course of a few years; what then, can he make you out of what you now are, through the series of everlasting ages! How can he mature and enlarge your souls from one degree of perfection to another! So that, in some future period, you will no more resemble what you are now, than you now resemble what you were in the womb! Your understandings, through an endless duration, may be still brightening, without ever coming to their meridian splendor; and your views be still enlarging, though still infinitely beneath the object of your contemplation. It is fit that souls so improved, should be united to bodies suited to them. Which leads me to observe,

2. It does not yet appear to you what kind of glorious BODIES you will have after the resurrection.

We are sure they will still be material bodies, otherwise they would not be bodies at all. But matter, we know, is capable of prodigious refinements. Yonder globe of light, the sun, is of the same original matter with a clod of earth, and differs only in modifications. How vast the difference between this animal flesh on our bodies, and earth and water! and yet they are originally the same. Earth and water are the materials of which grain and other vegetables, that animals feed upon, are formed; and our bodies consist of grain formed into bread, and of the flesh of animals; so true is it, not only with respect to Adam—but all his posterity, that they are but dust.

In short, there is a transmutation of matter into a surprising variety of forms, wherever we cast our eyes! The clothes we wear—were once earth, which was first refined into flax, then formed into thread, then woven into what we now see it. Thus our bodies may be changed in a most amazing manner, and yet continue substantially the same.

Paul tells us, that they will be spiritual bodies, 1 Corinthians 15:44; that is, so exquisitely refined, that they will resemble proper spirits, as near as it is possible, while they retain their materiality. And elsewhere he says, that "the Lord Jesus will change our vile body, that it may be formed like unto his glorious body." Philippians 3:21. Such is the glory of Christ's body in its now exalted state, that the splendors breaking from it struck Paul and his fellow travelers to the ground, and deprived him of sight for three days! How illustrious, then, must those bodies be that resemble his, though we allow him a suitable superiority! This the apostle intimates by representing the change of the bodies of saints at the resurrection as a mighty exploit of God's all-subduing power. Philippians 3:21. We are sure the body will not then be a clog to the active spirit—but a proper instrument for the employments of heaven. It may be free from the law of gravitation, and capable of moving every way with equal speed; it may be as nimble and quick as a glance of lightning; it may be adorned with a visible glory more bright than the sun in its meridian luster, like the body of Christ on the mount of transfiguration, Matthew 17:2; Daniel 7:3; and Matt 13:53. It will then be incapable of pain, sickness, and death, Isaiah 33:24; 1 Corinthians 15:33, and will no more feel hunger and thirst, nor any of the appetites of animal nature, Revelation 7:16. It will be capable of the most excellent sensations of pleasure through every organ; and a suitable companion to an improved and glorified soul. Such bodies will the saints have! But what it is to have such bodies—we have now no experience; and shall never know until the glorious morning of the

resurrection!

3. It does not yet appear to us what it is to be perfect in HOLINESS.

However enlarged and glorious our souls and bodies will become, we would be still miserable without a proportionable perfection in holiness. Now this, alas! we do not as yet know. We humbly hope some of us know what it is to feel the spark of divine love in our breasts. We hope we have tasted some small drops of bliss, though intermingled with gall and wormwood. We know what it is to exert our feeble powers in the service of the blessed God, and in contemplating and admiring his excellencies. But, alas! sin still cleaves to us, and deadens our powers! Numberless imperfections attend our best moments. But oh! to have all the powers of soul and body enlarged; to exert them to the full stretch in the exercises of heaven; to find them animated and directed by the most consummate holiness, and free from every the least taint of sin—what an inconceivable state is this! Oh how unlike the present! Surely, in such a state we would hardly know ourselves! It would astonish us to find that we, who had been so long accustomed to be assaulted and perplexed with some guilty thought or sinful inclination, should at once commence perfectly free from it! It will amaze us that we, who have so long made such languid attempts, should find all our powers full of unwearied, immortal vigor! What a happy surprise will this be!

4. It does not yet appear what will be the employments and services of the heavenly world.

We know, from the plain declarations of sacred writ, that the contemplation of the divine perfections, and their displays in the works of nature and grace, celebrating the praises of God, and prostrate adorations before him—will be a great part of the happiness of a future state. But we have no reason to suppose that it will consist entirely in contemplation and adoration. A state of activity will be a proper heaven for vigorous immortals. Will separate spirits be employed with their fellow-angels as guardians to their brethren while in these mortal regions? A very pleasant employ to loving and benevolent minds! Will they be ambassadors of their Sovereign to the most remote parts of his empire, to bear his messages, and discharge his orders? Will they be engaged in important services to the present and future creations, and the instruments of divine beneficence to worlds now unknown? A philosophic curiosity would pry into these things, and even a pious thirst for knowledge would be satisfied: but, alas! we know not what answer to give to these inquiries—until the light of eternity shall break upon us! But,

5. The sons of God, in consequence of their improvements, natural and moral, and of their exalted services and employments, will be made so exquisitely happy, as they can have now no ideas of the felicity.

We know not what it is, in the present state, to have every need supplied, every desire satisfied, and all our vast capacity of happiness filled to the utmost; and therefore we can form no just conceptions of our future selves—when we shall be thus perfectly happy!

Behold, O sons of God; behold the wonders that open before you! See to what vast things you are born! Can you survey this mystery, and not be lost in pleasing wonder, and cry out, "Behold! what manner of love is bestowed upon us!"

Alas! can you forget your own eternal happiness; and let your thoughts and affections run out upon the things of this world, as if they trifles were your portion? Shall the King's sons thus degrade their dignity, and depreciate their eternal inheritance?

And you, unhappy sinners; you who are not the sons of God by regeneration; what do you think of your case, when it is the very reverse of all this! Your souls, indeed, will be enlarged—but enlarged only that they may be more capacious vessels for torment! And your bodies shall be made strong and immortal; but it will be to bear strong, immortal misery! Instead of becoming perfect in holiness—you will arrive to a horrid perfection in sin. As all sin will be rooted out from the hearts of the children of God—so all the virtuous and amiable qualities you might retain in this world, will be rooted out from you! And as the children of God will be transformed into pure unmingled holiness—so you will degenerate into pure unmingled wickedness! And consequently you must be as exquisitely miserable—as they will be exquisitely happy! And all your enlarged capacities will be as full of torment—as theirs of bliss.

I may therefore adapt the text to you, sinners: "Now you are the children of the devil; but it does not appear what you shall be; you know not what prodigies of vengeance, what miracles of misery you shall be made!" Therefore awake from your carelessness and neglect, and seek earnestly to become the children of God.

III. And lastly, I proceed to show in what respects the sons of God are unknown to the world, and mistaken by them.

The impious world may see a considerable difference between those that are, in the judgment of charity, the children of God, and themselves; but this they rather look upon as an odious singularity, than as a peculiar glory and excellency. They may see their life is not according to the course of this world; and, if they were witnesses to their secret devotions, or could penetrate their hearts, they would see a vastly greater difference; but by how much the greater difference—by so much the more they hate them. And though they still profess a mighty veneration for religion—yet, wherever it truly appears, they hate, oppose, and asperse it; not indeed under that honorable name—but under some odious character that will cloak their wickedness, and the more effectually expose it. They love religion, they say, and God forbid they should speak a word against it; but wherever a person appears remarkably pious, they will be sure to brand him with some of their odious names. Thus living Christians have always met with more contempt and hatred in the world—than easy and pliable, or even the most profligate and abandoned sinners.

Now this is owing to the ignorance of the world as to what the sons of God shall be before long. They do not look upon them as such favorites of heaven; otherwise they would not dare to despise them at such a rate. The sons of God are princes in disguise; and therefore they are not known by a blind world; who, as they are ignorant of their Father—cannot discern his features in them.

O sinners! could you but see in all his future glory—the lowest saint whom you now despise and ridicule—how would it astonish you! It would tempt you rather to the extreme of adoration, rather than contempt; how willingly would you change conditions with him!

Well, stay a little, and there will be a full manifestation of the sons of God. Romans 8:19. You will then see those whom you now account stupid, mopish creatures, who have no taste for the pleasures of life—then shining more glorious than the sun; happy as their natures can admit, and, in their humble sphere, resembling God himself.

It is, however, all things considered, an instance of divine wisdom, that it does not yet appear to themselves or to others what the sons of God shall be. Such a manifestation would quite stun and confound the world, and strike it into a torpid consternation. It would render the children of God utterly impatient of the present life and its enjoyments, and even of the low devotion of the church on earth; it would put an end to the necessary activity about temporal concerns, break off the designs of Providence, and quite alter the form of administration in this world. Therefore the manifestation is wisely put off—to the most proper season.

I shall now conclude with a few PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS:

First. What a state of darkness and imperfection is this present world! We slipped into being we know not how, and remember nothing of our own formation: and we shall be, before long, we know not what. Alas! how short are our views! all before us is impenetrable darkness, and we can see but a very little way behind us. What small cause, then, have the wisest of us to be elated with our own knowledge! In comparison of angelic beings, and even of our future selves—we see no more than the mole groveling in the earth, compared with the keen-eyed aerial eagle mounting aloft.

Secondly. But what surprising discoveries of things will flash upon us when we enter the eternal world! O my brethren! when we ascend the heavenly mount, and take large surveys all around of the immensity of the works of God; when the unveiled perfections of the Deity suddenly shine upon our eyes in all their naked glory, upon our waking from the sleep of death—how shall we be lost in wonders! What scenes of contemplation will then open upon our gazing minds! How shall we be astonished at ourselves, and ready to vent our surprise in some such strains as these! "Is this I—who so lately was groveling in yonder world? how changed! how ennobled! how glorified! Is this the soul that was once so overrun with the leprosy of sin! once so blind and dark! once so perverse and depraved! so feeble and weak! so tormented with vain anxieties and trifling cares, or transported with empty joys and delusive prospects! Is this the soul that had so many hard conflicts with temptations, that felt such shocks of jealousy, and so often languished under desponding fears of seeing this glorious place! Oh how changed! how free from every anxious care! unmolested by so much as a guilty thought! nobly triumphant over sin and sorrow, and all that is feared in its mortal state! And is this my once frail, mortal body? my encumbrance in yonder world? how amazingly transformed! how gloriously fashioned! Oh to what a pitch of excellency and bliss—can almighty grace raise the lowest worm! and oh! in what raptures of praise should I celebrate this grace through all eternity!" Thus may we think the glorified saint would express his wonder. But

alas! we know just nothing about it. The sensations and language of immortals are beyond our comprehension. But,

Thirdly. We are just on the brink of this surprising state. A few years, perhaps a few moments, may open to our eyes these amazing scenes! The next day, or the next hour—they may flash upon us; and oh! where are we then? In what a strange world! among what new beings! And what shall we then be? Oh! how amazingly transformed! Should you see a clod from beneath your feet, rising and brightening into a star, or shining like the noon-day sun—the transformation would not be half so astonishing! Then we will be done with all beneath the sun; all the little things of this trifling world will vanish at once like a vapor; and all before us will be the most important and majestic realities! Therefore,

Fourthly, how astonishing is it that we should think so little of what is before us! that we should still stumble on in the dark, thoughtless of these approaching wonders! You sons of God, what are you doing—that you think no more of your relation to God, and your heavenly inheritance? If a large estate, or the government of the kingdom should fall to you tomorrow, and you were told of it beforehand, would it not always dwell upon your thoughts, and keep you awake this night with the eager prospect? What! would these comparatively worthless things fix your attention? and can you be thoughtless of a glory and bliss that infinitely surpass all your present conceptions? And you, unregenerate sinners, though I cannot say you are near to glory—yet I may assure you, you are near to the eternal world, and all its solemn wonders: this night perhaps you may be there; and if you land there in your present condition, you are undone, you are ruined, you are inconceivably miserable forever! Therefore,

Fifthly, O sinners, why do you not labor to become the sons of God now while you may? Consider what prodigies of misery, what monuments of vengeance you will soon be—if you continue unregenerate! Alas! sirs, it does not yet appear what you shall soon be, otherwise you could no more rest in your present case, than upon the top of a mast, or upon burning coals. And, poor creatures, have you a mind to be initiated into those horrid mysteries of woe, and be taught them by experience? Will not you believe the repeated declarations of eternal truth, that they are intolerably dreadful, and that, until you are the sons of God, until you are born again, and have the dispositions of children towards him—you cannot have a moment's security for escaping them? Alas! I must pity you; and I call upon all the children of God to pour out the tears of their compassion over you!

Sixthly. Let me call upon all the sons of God in this assembly to admire his love in conferring this dignity upon them. "Behold! what manner of love is this—that we shall be called the sons of God!" Consider what you were—guilty, rebellious creatures, condemned to everlasting tortures; and you will own, that to be just delivered from hell, though it had been by annihilation, would be an inconceivable favor for you! But for you to be the sons of God, to be made glorious beyond the reach of thought, to be transformed into blissful beings, that you can now form no ideas of—and this, too, at the expense of the blood of God; what love is this! Go home, and forget it—if you can. I may as well bid you live without breathing—if you can!

Seventhly. Let me conclude with this reflection: how honorable, how happy, how glorious, are the sons of God! how immense their privileges! how rich their inheritance! Why then are they so backward to enter upon it? How unaccountable, how absurd is their eager attachment to this world, and their unwillingness to die! Why so much afraid of ascending to their Father's house? Why so shy of glory and bliss? Why so fond of slavery and imprisonment? Oh, my brethren, be always on the wing, ready for flight, and be always looking out and crying, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen.