

FOOTSTEPS OF SONSHIP

PJ MATHEW

It is very clear from the study of the scriptures that God calls us exclusively to enter into Sonship by becoming like him. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed (Romans 8:20). Also, it (creation) has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time (Romans 8:22).

"The hour has come for the unveiling of the sons of God. God is calling us to cross Jordan as Israel crossed from the wilderness into the Promised Land. When the sons are unveiled, they will possess a power that is unimaginable, but the power and the authority that the sons will have will be entirely for the benefit of the creation" (A.M. Hinchliff, Sons and Sonship, p.58). However, God accomplishes his plan through a process of his own. The following scriptures illustrate an order of God in the walk of Sonship.

"For God, in his foreknowledge, chose them to bear the family likeness of his Son, that he might be the eldest of a family of many brothers. He chose them long ago; when the time came he called them, he made them righteous in his sight, and then lifted them to the splendor of life as his own sons" (Romans 8:29-30, PHILLIPS).

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (Romans 8:29, NIV).

In the above scriptures, the apostle Paul conveys a train of thought confirming that God knew us before we ever knew him. Being aware of the fact that God knows us is the threshold of our path towards sonship. In a sense, we begin to respond when God begins to know us. The word "know" is not merely the knowledge of God but much more profound in the application. This foreknowledge of God is very intimate and personal. It is beyond our understanding and comprehension. Why should God know us? It is because He loved us even before we knew him. That is why he chose us a long time ago. Jesus said, *"You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you"* (John 15:12). God knew Jeremiah before he was formed in his mother's womb. He was set apart before he was born. God appointed him as a prophet to the nation (Jeremiah 1:4-5). He chose us to become like him or to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

The word of God also says that He has predestined, which means to destine, decree, determine, appoint, or settle beforehand, according to Merriam-Webster's dictionary. He has determined beforehand that we will be conformed to the very image of His Son or family likeness of his Son, Jesus Christ. The will of God is to change us to the very likeness of Jesus Christ and it has been the plan and pattern of God since the beginning of the creation of mankind. It is the very intention of God that we are born into the family of God as brothers and sisters so that Jesus becomes our elder brother. We read in Hebrews 2:10-12, *"For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies (sets apart, or declares holy) and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, 'I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise'"* (Hebrews 2:12, ESV).

He Called Us: After pre-ordaining, he called us to follow him. It is interesting to note that Matthew, a tax collector, fishermen of Galilee, and sinners and outcasts were the called-out group of Jesus Christ. Matthew, a tax collector, who was hated by the Jews because of his profession even became an apostle. They did not meet the standards according to the law or the Jewish traditions. In 1 Corinthians 1:26-30, we read, *"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption"* (NIV). The calling of God is above all human rules, standards and expectations. This calling of God has a purpose and it is a journey towards Sonship. We must note here that Sonship is not a title or a position, instead it is a growing process of maturity.

He also Justified: Justified means to prove or show to be just, right, or reasonable: to judge, regard, or treat as righteous and worthy of salvation, according to Merriam-Webster's dictionary. It simply means that when God called us as His sons and daughters, he removed all our sins and made us honorable and righteous. We are justified by faith not by works. It is like the prodigal son returning home and being accepted as worthy and upright even though he had caused a lot of heartaches to his father (Luke 15:11-32). This is one of the greatest parables ever spoken by Jesus Christ. It is humanly impossible to forget all the losses that the prodigal son had brought upon the family. However, when he returned seeking his father's face, he welcomed him as if he had not done anything wrong. It is a great example of God's justification in the parable expounded by Jesus. *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand"* (Romans 5:1-2, NIV). That is exactly

what the love of God can do for us.

He also Glorified: J.B. Phillips translates the phrase, *"He also glorified"* as *"and then lifted them to the splendor of life as his own sons"* (Romans 8: 30). I believe that the expression "splendor of life," applies to a place in the realm of the Spirit, as is expressed in Ephesians 2:6, God *"has lifted us to take our place with him in Christ Jesus in the Heavens"* (PHILLIPS). The apostle Paul is proclaiming a mystery that a place in the realm of the spirit is available to us as sons and daughters of God. The word "glorified" or "splendor of life" needs more analysis. The word "glory" comes from the root word in Greek "shekinah" and "kaboth" in Hebrew. It was the divine splendor of light visiting His people in a tangible way. Such experience had occurred in Israel's history very frequently (Exodus 16:10, 24:16-17, 29:43, 33:18-22). Israel had seen God's glory, and yet they had rejected Him. To us, it has been given to see the glory of God's love and mercy in the face of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the very embodiment of God's glory. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us is also the manifestation of God's glory. John 17:24 says, *"Father, I want those you have given me, to be with me, where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."* The glory that the Father has given to Jesus Christ is shared with the church. As promised by Jesus, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the people who had gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem. We can't describe how that day looked or how wonderful the people felt. I think that was a spectacular experience for the people who had gathered there from sixteen countries, in general, and for the apostles, in particular. It was the very holy presence of God manifested through the Holy Spirit. The world hadn't witnessed such a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit until that time. They had heard of the glory of God descending on the tabernacle, the temple built by Solomon and on the Mount of Transfiguration. But here, on the Day of Pentecost, they became partakers or participators of the glory of God when the Holy Spirit descended upon them like tongues of fire. *"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them"* (Acts 2: 1-5, NIV). It is very essential that we be filled with the Holy Spirit and be led by the Spirit of God. *"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God"* (Romans 5:14, NIV). This is another example of the way of Sonship.

The apostle Paul also explains another perspective of how we are being transformed into his glory. *"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit"* (2 Corinthians 3:18, NIV). *"But all of us who are Christians have no veils on our faces, but reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord. We are transformed in ever-increasing splendor into his own image, and this is the work of the Lord who is the Spirit"* (2 Corinthians 3:18, PHILLIPS).

We must diligently pay heed because the writer uses the present tense regarding glorification. In this pilgrim walk, we should be willing to yield, lose and even die during this process of glorification. In the Old Testament period, the glory of the Lord descended upon the temple, tabernacle, and priests, but it faded away after some time. In the New Testament age, the church herself reflects the glory of God. There is a constant and ever-increasing transference of the splendor of God from the head (Christ) to the body of Christ. Intriguingly, the apostle John speaks of this glory that will occur in the future. *"We don't know what we shall become in the future. We only know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"* (1 John 3:2, PHILLIPS)! The readers should understand that this is another level of glorification in the sense that John speaks of this event that will happen at the time of His second coming in glory. The glory that we experience now will culminate fully

at His coming in glory. That is when we will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. That is the hope of the church, to be like Him, sharing in the Sonship of Christ in fullness.

In conclusion, He has designed us to bear His image or be transformed into His likeness not in the physical but in the spiritual. In our regenerative experience, we know that such a change is taking place in our spirit. In the process, he called us, justified and glorified us. It is a glorious walk as we are being filled with the splendor of life in an ever-increasing manner. God wants us to be His mature sons and daughters and not children in our faith. "Our hope is the fact that He has chosen us. Our responsibility is to be faithful to the call and the choice that He has made. We are waiting for the unveiling of the sons. In fact, the whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own" (A.M. Hinchliff, Sons and Sonship, p.17).✚



In 1987, Bro. Albert York asked for written testimonies from many of the saints that were 80 years and older. The purpose was to recall and record their eyewitness accounts of the great revival of 1948 in North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

The following is the testimony of Lillian Strain of the church at St Louis, Missouri.

She was a gracious lady that displayed the holy presence of God as if wearing an elegant garment. Everything that she did and said, seemed to be touched by her close relationship with the Lord. Her son-in-law, Joe Haney, and grandson, Steve Haney, continue to bless the church at large as elders with a gifted ministry in music.

In her words, here is Lillian Strain's testimony. ~ Andy Snoke

Recently, I celebrated my 90th birthday and was honored with two special parties, one in Regina, Saskatchewan where I was living with my daughter; and the other in St. Louis, Missouri after returning here (Missouri) to be with my other daughter and son. I am truly grateful to all my family, relatives and friends for every act of love that was showered on me, and those things will live long in my memory. It is only by the grace of God, He has given me a long life.

When I was just a child, I felt the call of God on my life. In 1914

a great outpouring of the Spirit of God swept our country, and my parents and aunt and uncle would stay up late many nights talking about spiritual matters. I would listen to them with great interest, but they would always make me go to bed. Little did they realize there was a great hunger in my heart to know the Lord. At age 8, I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Roy Strain and I were married in 1928, and we had a happy life together but not without its ups and downs. On two different occasions, our house burned to the ground, and we were forced to live with friends and relatives for a time.

My husband was very depressed after that last fire, but I recall saying to him, "You just wait and see. The Lord will replenish all the things we lost, and we will have even more than before." Within a relatively short time, we realized it happened just that way. God has been good, and we have been blessed beyond measure.

I'll never forget the first time I heard about this move of the Spirit. It was in the year 1949 when someone said, "There is a great revival that has started in Canada, and it is sweeping the whole country!" As those words were spoken, they seemed to carry an anointing, and immediately like electricity going through my whole body, it witnessed in my heart, that was what I was looking for. The apostolic brethren began conducting meetings in St. Louis, Missouri which we were

eager to attend, and soon we were traveling to Canada to attend meetings there.

Eventually, we broke away from the denominational system and became identified with this move of the Spirit. In due time we were both prophesied over, and my husband Roy Strain was set in as an elder in the St. Louis church.

As I look back and reflect on my life, I see God's hand working in every circumstance, and I thank Him for even the hard times I went through.

Today, more than ever before, I am determined to be an overcomer and move into that resurrection life. ✚



Hi boys and girls. What is faith? I was listening to some prophecies, and several times I heard the phrase from the Bible in Hebrews 12:2 which says ... "to Him that is the author and finisher of our faith." What is faith? Hebrews 11:1 says, *"faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proof or evidence of things not seen."* By faith we believe that Jesus died to save us (1 Peter 1:8-9). Noah is an example of faith. He believed God when God warned him of things to come that he could not see. He went ahead as God had directed him and built an ark to save his household.

I saw an example of faith a few weeks ago. My grandson came to help me with some yard work. He offered to clean out the eaves trough. I consented, but thought it best if I stayed and watched. He got the ladder, which was a little short, made his way to the top and then pushed himself up on the roof. He did a great job, filled a large pail and lowered it by a rope to be emptied. When he was finished he tried several times to get down. Then I heard, "Grandma, how do I get down?"

"Try lying on your stomach and dangle your feet over the edge to find the ladder."

"But I can't see it, and my legs are too short, I can't feel it!"

"Do you trust me? Have faith that I can guide you down? Slide yourself to the right just a little bit. There, now you are over the ladder. Let yourself slide down a bit more. There, stretch your toes about two inches."

He said, "I feel the ladder; I can do it now."

How that is like our Lord Jesus. He is always there for us, even when we can't see Him or can't feel Him. We just need faith to believe in Him, trust in Him. *"I will never leave you or forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5). *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He rewards those that diligently seek Him"* (Hebrews 11:6).

"I feel the ladder, I can do it now!"

"Faith is the victory. Faith is the victory! O glorious victory, that overcomes the world" (Songs We Love songbook). ✚

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