

The Image of God: Our Inheritance as His Children

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Moses and the burning bush. God appears to Moses as He does, because it's a picture of Moses' ministry (and ours). God shows up in a bush that burns and yet is not consumed. Moses was called to be one who burns – who stands in the presence of God who is an all-consuming fire – and yet who is not consumed. We are called to be a reflection of God – of His glory and His goodness simultaneously – burning from dwelling in the presence of Holiness, yet not consumed because of His great mercy.

2 Corinthians 3:7 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. 10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. 11 For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. 12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— 13 unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. 14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Philippians 2:15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe 16 as you hold out the word of life

I. Heirs of God

1. As God's children we are His heirs

Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Galatians 4:1 Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, 2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to

the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

2. As we receive our inheritance, He receives His (Eph 1:6,12). It is to the praise of His glory and of His grace.

Ephesians 1:18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe

3. Our inheritance – the presence of Holiness

1. We were made to walk with God (Gen 2-3)
2. We were made to inherit the kingdom

Matthew 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

John 14:2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

4. The dilemma of holiness

1. God is holy – in all of eternity that's the only description those around Him have ever come up with (Isa 6, Rev 4)
2. God is so holy, the unholy cannot be around Him

Leviticus 19:1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

Matthew 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Isaiah 33:14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?

3. Yet God desires us in His presence

John 17:24 "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.

2 Corinthians 6:16b For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.” 17 Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.”

4. Because He desires He will make a way

2 Corinthians 6:18 “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.” 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

5. The solution – the image of Holiness

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

II. Our Inheritance is Freely Given

1. Our adoption as sons – God's choice – freed us from sin

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. 36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Romans 8:12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

2. As His children we have received a new nature, the nature of God

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God

1 John 3:9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.

3. It is a hope unseen

Romans 8:23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

4. But the Spirit in us is our guarantee of this inheritance

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

Ephesians 1:13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

5. God in us does the work

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave

Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

Leviticus 20:7 " 'Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. 8 Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2 ...Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...

Romans 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

III. Our Inheritance Cannot Be Earned, But It Can Be Rejected

1. Though it is a free gift, we are still required to receive it and put it on

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

Matthew 22:1 And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 2 “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, 3 and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. 4 Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”’ 5 But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. 7 But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ 10 So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 “But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

2. Rejecting our inheritance

1. We're in severe danger of falling into this when we misunderstand the purpose of grace
2. God's grace was not meant to be an endorsement of where we are at, but an empowerment to become who we're meant to be
3. The same grace that freed us from sin is intended to lead us to holiness

Romans 6:1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't

you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

20When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

21What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of?

Those things result in death! 22But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. 23For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. Esau's rejection of the promise

Hebrews 12:14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

1. He chose the flesh over the promise

2. He chose the things seen over the things unseen

3. The demands of his flesh 'give me to eat or I will die' were more real to him than the promises of God

4. Likewise we often reject our promised inheritance

1. We sell ourselves short and believe that we must give in to the flesh – the best we can do is control it

2. In reality, the promise is we will be like Him (Rom 8:29-30)

3. And the Spirit will conquer the flesh and bring life to it (Rom 8:10-11)

4. Will we believe the promise though it's not seen and the reality of the flesh is?

Romans 8:23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

IV. Pursuing Holiness As Our Inheritance – What does it look like to pursue holiness from the perspective that we are children of God receiving from Him our inheritance of being made like Him?

1. We are encouraged by the promise

1. We persevere through difficult times by seeing what is to come

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

2 Corinthians 4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

16Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2. We subject ourselves to God trusting that in all things He is working toward this good end

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Hebrews 12:3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

“ My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,

Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens,

And scourges every son whom He receives.”

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

1. Lest you become weary and discouraged – consider this: you have not yet resisted to bloodshed in the struggle for your holiness, He has.
 2. Do not despise His chastening – do not ignore it or make light of it.
 3. Do not be discouraged by it – it is not anger, but love that motivates it. God is not in any way disappointed or angry when He has to correct us. He loves training us up to be like Him.
 4. Keep an eye on the end reward. He wants us to be partakers of His holiness, so that we can be with Him (vs 14).
2. We are driven by grace and not fear
 1. The contrast between old covenant and new covenant – same requirements, new motivation and method to reach them
Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.
John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
Hebrews 12:18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. 20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.” 21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”)
22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.
 1. When God appeared on Mount Sinai it was to cause the fear of the Lord to enter Israel that they would strive for holiness (see Deuteronomy 5:23-29)
 2. We are invited into holiness instead through the blood of Jesus our Mediator and the promise of dwelling in heaven with spirits 'made perfect.'
 2. We pursue holiness with the understanding that God does not demand it of us, He is

working it in us. He is not a judge deciding whether we have made it or not, He is a Father training us up in His image.

Romans 8:5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

3. Our key responsibility is simply to desire what He desires
3. We are inspired by His beauty
 1. Our drive for holiness should be inspired not by seeing things wrong with ourselves, but by seeing things beautiful in God.
 1. Condemnation is the enemy's tactic to prevent us from reaching holiness.
Revelation is God's tactic to empower us to reach holiness.
 2. Focusing on our own weakness and inability denies God's power to change us.
 3. We want a childlike desire to become like Him
Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children
 4. As we see what He is like we respond 'God I love that about You, I want to be just like You in that.'
 2. The beholding and becoming principle
 1. Our inheritance is to see Him and then to be made like Him (1 Jn 3)
 2. The eye is key – if we're looking at ourselves or the world then we're going to be taking in darkness. Only when we look at God do we take in light.
Matthew 6:22 “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!
Hebrews 12:2 ...fix our eyes on Jesus...
 3. As we behold we are transformed
2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.
Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
 4. Beholding requires not just seeing, but meditating on what is good. Becoming requires a desire to put into practice the good things we behold.
Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.
 3. This inspiration will push us so much farther than trying to seek and eliminate our issues, or by comparing ourselves against some arbitrary standard of good. It is the only way we can reach the level to which we've been called – the fullness of God.
Ephesians 3:19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with [to the measure of - NIV] all the fullness of God.
20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the

work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

Colossians 2:9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

4. We are motivated by intimacy

1. We desire holiness for the same reason God desires it – it enables us to be near to Him.

Isaiah 33:14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites:

“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” 15 He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, He who despises the gain of oppressions, Who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, And shuts his eyes from seeing evil: 16 He will dwell on high; His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; Bread will be given him, His water will be sure. 17 Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; They will see the land that is very far off. 18 Your heart will meditate on terror:

Psalm 101:2 I will behave wisely in a perfect way. [NIV – I will walk before You in a blameless way] Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

Psalm 24:3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6 This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face.

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

2. This is a promise not just for eternity, but for now.
3. Bob Sorge calls it 'radiation therapy' – as we draw near to God the things in us that do not agree with Him burn away. We're then able to draw closer and to stay longer, and that in turn burns away the next level.

This is 'the hope of His calling' – that He desires an inheritance in us of a people able to stand before Him in holiness – 'the glorious riches of His inheritance in the saints' – and so He turns loose all of His power and might to see it accomplished – 'His incomparably great power on behalf of those who believe.'