Sons of God

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."
—I John 3:1

THE 'SONS OF GOD' THAT John is addressing in this scripture are those who have been richly blessed by our Heavenly Father, and have received abundantly of his loving care and provisions of grace. They now have a new standing in Christ Jesus and are justified because of their faith in his precious blood that was shed on their behalf. As members of the fallen human family, they could never have attained this position on their own.

During this present Gospel Age, the Heavenly Father has been calling from the world of mankind a very special class of consecrated Christians who will share in joint-heirship with Christ during his future kingdom of righteousness that will be established over the earth, and which we believe is near at hand. John spoke further of this wonderful calling and relationship as sons, when he said, "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. And every man that hath

this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (vss. 2,3) To this, the revelator has added, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

A LIVING SACRIFICE

Having been set free from the Divine sentence of death that was imposed upon mankind because of our first parents disobedience in the Garden of Eden, we may then in turn present ourselves to the Father as a living sacrifice. The Apostle Paul addressed this point in his letter to the brethren at Rome, when he said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) In presenting our consecrated lives as a sacrifice to God, we must be alert and keep ourselves continuously in the narrow way of self-denial that leads to life on the Divine spiritual plane.

A BLESSED RELATIONSHIP

The sons of God are associated with Christ in a very special way, first by participating in his suffering during our present lifetime, and then, if faithful, by sharing his glory in his future kingdom as members of his bride. If we suffer with him now, we shall also reign with him later. (II Tim. 2:12) In his first epistle, John intimately connects the sons of God with the Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ. In reference to this wonderful relationship with our dear Lord, he begins his first letter by saying, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,

of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (I John 1:1-3) Jesus is the 'Word of life' that had been with the Father as his only begotten Son, and was manifest to us. We may have fellowship with him, the Heavenly Father, and with one another.

NO MORE DARKNESS

John spoke further concerning this wonderful relationship. He said, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—vss. 5-7

During the time of our Lord Jesus' earthly ministry, some were questioning him when he proclaimed to them the importance of being in the light of Truth. The apostle recorded the occasion, and we read, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12) It is essential that we be enlightened regarding the message of Truth. We must walk in the light with those who also walk in the light and share this blessed fellowship one with another.

LEARNING OBEDIENCE

In Samuel's answer to Saul regarding the king's intention to offer sacrifices to God, he presented to us an important and fundamental lesson in connection with those who would be pleasing to the Heavenly Father. "Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."—I Sam. 15:22

In connection with Christ's earthly priesthood many centuries later, the Apostle Paul said, "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." (Heb. 5:1) In his letter to the Hebrew brethren, he also spoke of Jesus and his great love for his Father and his desire to carry out his life of sacrifice in complete obedience to God's will. Although he lived a perfect life, as we all know, nevertheless he was allowed to be tested by the great Adversary to prove his faithfulness. The apostle explained, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15) Concerning Jesus' relationship to the Father, Paul pointed out, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."—Heb. 5:8

Luke records Jesus' own words when he explained, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. And he said to them all, If any man will come after

me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."—Luke 9:22,23

A NEW COMMANDMENT

We also read, "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." (I John 2:8) "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."—I John 3:23,24

The apostle states that because of the true light of Truth that we now share, we also are given a 'new commandment' of love. The power of love cannot be over estimated. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."—John 3:16,17

WALKING IN LOVE

We may show our loving devotion to God by acts of kindness and generosity toward one another in various ways, and when we do so we will often find that love begets love. It has been said that others of like precious faith who are consecrated followers of our Lord Jesus may be identified by their expressions of love. This has resulted from their coming to know and appreciate the Heavenly Father and from walking with our Lord Jesus in the light. God is love, and the sons of God will also walk accordingly.

The Apostle Paul spoke concerning the followers of Jesus who expressly love the Heavenly Father and desire to know and serve him. He pointed back to a scripture that had been written earlier and said, "As it is written [Isa. 64:4], Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (I Cor. 2:9) Paul laid down his life in sacrifice to the Father as an expression of his great love, and words could not adequately describe the blessings that would be realized for his devoted actions.

LIGHT AFFLICTIONS

Paul explained to the brethren at Corinth, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—II Cor. 4:17,18

What a privileged and responsible position we find ourselves in as those who have been called out of darkness into the glorious light of Truth. We are blessed with a knowledge and understanding that not only enables us to explain the present, but to some extent even unfold the future and the ultimate plan and purpose of the Heavenly Father. For this we offer our thanks and loving devotion.

MANY SONS

Concerning the faithful Son of God we read, "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands." (Heb. 2:7) The realization of this wonderful calling in Christ

Jesus is put into perspective when Paul explained, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—vs. 10

Our wonderful relationship to this heavenly fam-ily is further emphasized by the apostle when he said, "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Saying, I will de-clare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me."—vss. 11-13

THE HOUSE OF SONS

We are encouraged by Paul's words which were written to the brethren at Rome, in which he said, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called ac-cording to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the im-age of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom. 8:28,29) "Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."—Heb. 3:6 ■