

## Sons of God

Matt. 5:16

### Introduction:

1. It is not only Jesus who is called the “son of God.”
2. The people of Israel were the “sons of God.” God said to Pharaoh, “Israel is My son, My firstborn. Let My son go that he may serve Me” (Ex. 4:22-23).
3. In the N.T. all who willingly accept faith in Jesus Christ are the “sons of God.” Gal. 3:26 says, “You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ.”
4. This familial relationship confers both status and responsibility on the “sons of God.” Nathan Pickup has described it as a “magnificent status” and “glorious position” (*Focus Online* –“They Shall be Called Sons of God”).
5. For the next few minutes I want to reflect with you on the responsibility associated with your being the “son of God.” (You might say, “I am not a son of God. I am a daughter of God.” Certainly the Bible refers generally to our being “children of God.” But in ancient cultures special status was given to sons and it is that status that is our consideration here.)

### Discussion:

- I. The special status is evident in being the “first-born son.”
  - A. From the days of Genesis the first-born occupied special status.
    1. It is evident in the account of Jacob and Esau. Through deception Jacob took the special blessing that Isaac intended for Esau, his first-born (Gen. 27).
    2. In the nation of Israel the first-born received a double portion of the family inheritance (Deut. 21:17). It was expected that he would become the family patriarch and the leader of the family.
  - B. The Mosaic law specified that the first-born belonged to God (Ex. 13:2), both man and beast (13:15). When God called on Pharaoh to let His first-born go it was the first-born of all Egypt that was killed by the death angel in the last plague (Ex. 13:15).
  - C. God said of David, “I will make him My first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth” (Psa. 89:27).
  - D. Being the first-born was not just about being the oldest son but about the special status conferred by the Father.
  - E. The N.T. concept of first-born is founded upon the O.T. concept.
    1. The special status of Jesus Christ is evident in Col. 1:15-20.
    2. It involves a special distinctiveness (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Note vs. 18 particularly.
    3. Heb. 12:23 emphasizes the special status that we have over Israel when it refers to us as having come to Zion instead of Sinai and identifies us as “the church of the first-born ones.”
  - F. Being identified as a “son of God” is indeed a “magnificent” and “glorious” position. We are not just sons, but “first-born sons of God” and with that comes exceedingly magnificent responsibilities.
- II. We are to manifest the family resemblance by reason of our Father’s influence.

- A. In our recent studies in the Sermon on the Mount we have characterized the teaching here as reflecting traits of citizens in the kingdom of God. But it is also true that these are traits of those in the family of God.
  - 1. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).
  - 2. "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).
  - 3. The practice of righteousness is evaluated and rewarded by our Father (Matt. 6:1-18). Giving. Praying. Fasting.
- B. There is a relational expectation to work in the accomplishment of the Father's goals.
  - 1. Is this not the meaning of "seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness" (6:33)?
  - 2. Is this not the emphasis in 6:19-24?
  - 3. Jesus at his baptism said to John, who hesitated to baptize him, "it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." After this the voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matt. 3:15, 17). Full and total commitment to the Father's work is blessed by the Father being well-pleased by His sons.
  - 4. In Jn. 17:4 Jesus prayed: "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work You have given Me to do."
- C. This stands in contrast with Israel being described as rebellious sons.
  - 1. "Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have revolted against me" (Isa. 1:2).
  - 2. "I would set you among My sons and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of the nations! And I said, You shall call Me, My Father, and not turn away from following Me. But, he says, you have dealt treacherously with Me. Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness." (Jer. 3:19-22).
- D. If through our good deeds we bring glory to our Father, then through our sins we bring reproach upon our Father.
  - 1. We give occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme.
  - 2. This is what David did in his sin with Bathsheba, his lies and his murder of Uriah (2 Sam. 12:14). God said the child born to them would die because David had given occasion for to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.
  - 3. David is God's first-born son and what has he done? He has betrayed his relationship with his Father, and his Father's teaching. If his Father does not speak against this . . . well He must!
  - 4. That's what our sin does! We have been granted "magnificent" status and then we turn away from it. Jesus contrasted sonship with God and sonship with the devil in Jn. 8. He said to the Pharisees, "You are doing the deeds of your father." "If God were your Father, you would love Me. You are of your father the devil,

and

you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning . . ." (41ff).

### III. Our Father is the standard of the family ethical responsibilities.

- A. We are to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48).
- B. We are to love as our heavenly Father loves (Matt. 5:43-48).
- C. We are to forgive as our heavenly Father forgives (Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-35).

- D. We are to be holy as our heavenly Father is holy in all our behavior. 1 Pet. 1:14-15: “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”
- E. It is one thing for us to sin so that our behavior diminishes us, embarrasses us. It is one thing for our sinful behavior to diminish or embarrass another. But it is a tragedy of the greatest proportion that our behaviors in any way diminish the glory of our heavenly Father.
- F. Paul wrote, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).
- G. Yes, we all sin and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). But let us repent and confess that we have violated our Father’s wishes and His training lest we give opportunity for some to diminish the good name of our great Father.

Conclusion:

1. God has granted us exceedingly magnificent status as first-born sons.
2. Let us in no way detract from His glory.
3. Let us behave in a way that reflects who we are as sons of God.
4. Remember who you are! May the Father say to you, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!”