

TANGAZA COLLEGE

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)

CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE IN ST. PAUL Appreciating What We Are As Sharers in the Sonship of Christ

An Essay Submitted to the Scripture Department in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for B.A Degree in Religious Studies

By
NJOROGE PETER GITHAIGA

Tutor: Aelred Lacomara, CP

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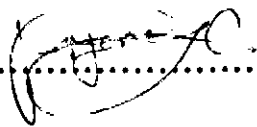
STUDENTS DECLARATION

THESIS TITLE:

CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE IN ST. PAUL:
Appreciating what we are as sharers in the Sonship of Christ

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work, achieved through personal reading, literary research and personal reflection. It has not been submitted to any college, institute or university for academic credit.

Signed:

Student:.....

Date:.....*27/12/2001*.....

Supervisor:.....*Rubel Lacomara, C.A.*.....

Date:.....*7/12/2001*.....

DEDICATION

To my mother Charity Njoroge, and the parish community of Kiangunyi, and to all those who bear the name Christian

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the end of this work, we would like to acquit ourselves of our duty of acknowledgement towards all the people who made possible its realization. To all, we would like to express our deep gratitude for offering yourselves to assist us by your time, advice and encouragement.

We are thinking in the first place of Fr. Aelred LACOMARA who, in spite of his many engagements, disposed himself to guide this work. His remarks, encouragements and suggestions helped us a lot in bringing this enterprise to its end.

We thank also the administration and the members of the faculty of Tangaza College, for their unceasing efforts, in view of offering us quality teaching for our good and the good of all people of God.

Our deep thanks go equally to all members of Allamano House community, especially Fr. Ottone, Miano, Mugecha, Gachingiri and Gitonga Paul, who took the pain to read and re-read this work. May these and all who were of help in bringing this work to this end, find in these few words the expression of my sincere gratitude.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

CHOICE OF THE TOPIC

After a close look at St. Paul's writings, I have observed an important element that often escapes our attention as Christians today: What Christ has done for us, and much more, what **he has made of us**; what we have become in and through Christ. It is the latter that we would like to magnify in this work. That we are so much a privileged people as Christians, and if we were more aware of this our dignity, we would have a new outlook of life. If a son of a royal family has been separated from his family from childhood, and comes to discover that he is born of a royal family and is re-united to this family, his whole life is changed. He will live with much more pride and confidence in life.

Most of us Christians are ignorant of the dignity and the privilege that we have attained in Christ. But St. Paul enlightens us on it all. This is the reason for which we wish to highlight from the letters of Saint Paul this element of our sharing in the Sonship of Christ: sharing the life of God in and through the Son and our being sons in the Son and co-heirs with Christ. Therefore, God is our Father and as he said to his Son, so does he now say to each one of us; "you are my beloved son". As he gave the Spirit to his son, so now he does shower the same spirit to all who believe in the Son.

We have become sons and therefore we have acquired rights and privileges as sons. All that the Father has done to his own Son, anointing with the Spirit, resurrection, glorification, eternal inheritance and so on, he will do for us his adopted sons. Even now, in union with the Son, we call God 'Abba' and he grants us everything that we ask in the name of the Son.

We therefore ask ourselves, how is Christ's Sonship and in what way do we share in this Sonship? What was our condition before being sons in Christ and what is our state now that we are sons? Now we are sons, so what? Do we have any duties and obligations as sons?

OBJECTIVE

Illumined by St. Paul's writings, we would like to help Christians rediscover the dignity that they have acquired in Christ. That we have become sharers in whatever Christ is, whatever he does and in whatever he has. We wish to make ourselves more aware of our sharing in the life of Christ as sons of God that we have become through the incarnate Son. The following work is therefore aimed at a change of attitude. It is a call to appreciate what we are and what we have become in and through Christ. It will highlight the privilege that we have attained, that of being sons of God.

METHODOLOGY

This work is a thematic study on this element of our sharing in the Sonship of Christ in Pauline writings. The primary resource material will be the authentic letters of St. Paul. It is a fruit of personal reading, literary research and personal reflection. Simple language has been used although it has been impossible to disregard technical terminology altogether. We have not been able to bring together all the thoughts of St. Paul on this matter since this little work does not suffice to contain them. We have however tried as much as possible to highlight the important aspects on this matter.

CLARIFICATIONS

I must admit that there were a lot of difficulties in trying to be gender sensitive in this work. I found myself being very limited in doing this since we are talking about Sonship, and Christians are both sons and daughters. Since our topic is about our sharing in the 'Sonship of Christ', I could not help using quite often the expression 'sons of God' in reference to all Christians. However, where the language permitted, we have used both sons and daughters of God. Secondly, all the biblical quotations are taken from *The African Bible*.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST

All that is Christian has its foundation in what Christ is, has and has done. Therefore, before we lay out the Christian privilege of our sharing in the life of Christ, let us look at Christ himself since our Sonship, and our dignity is in the order of his own Sonship. God in Jesus Christ has made us similar to Himself as much as possible by giving us the likeness of his own Son. We therefore begin by looking at Christ, the eternal Son of the Father.

THE SON OF THE FATHER

God is the "Father of our lord Jesus Christ"(2Cor 1:3, Romans 15:6). The one God has a Son, Jesus the Christ. He is the beloved Son (c.f. Romans 5:10; 8:3 Gal 2:26; 4:4-5). This is a fact that Paul frequently asserts: "That God has sent his Son, giving him up for us, calling us into the fellowship of his Son, into the kingdom of His beloved Son".¹ The Son is therefore begotten of the Father as is asserted in Heb1: 5, by quoting Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7: 14; "You are my son, this day I have begotten you" or again:" I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me" (Heb 1:5) The Son of God therefore was not created but generated. He is himself a creator.

"The 'Son' is not a proper noun like 'Christ' is or an appellative which plays the same part as proper noun as does 'Lord'. The word is always used to show a 'connection' (a relationship) between Christ and God".² The word 'Father' usually goes

¹ Boimard M.E, "The Divinity Of Christ in St. Paul", in *Son and Saviour* (a symposium) p. 95-122

² Lucien Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul*, (Freiburg, Herder and Herder, 1958), P.449.

with the word God, which it describes. For instance, “God the Father of our Lord Jesus” (2Corinthians1: 3), though there are exemptions. Therefore, for Paul, God equals the father, and therefore Jesus is his Son.³

THE SON OF GOD

The expression ‘Son of God’ is not so frequent in the epistles. It is used in order to show the connection of God with Christ and by means of this connection, it expresses the validity of the divine interventions through Christ.⁴ St. Paul sees Christ from the resurrection point of view. The gospel of God that Paul preaches is “the gospel about His Son descended from David according to the flesh but established Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:3-4). He who had emptied himself is now exalted. “Placed in the hierarchy of heavenly beings” (Ephesians 1:18-21). He who emptied himself, now at the resurrection acts with divine power.⁵ For St. Paul, the resurrection brought Christ into a new relationship with the people who had faith. As a result of this he was ‘set up by the Father as the Son of God in power with a spirit of holiness’⁶

St. Paul, soon after his conversion, started preaching Jesus Christ as the Son of God. “And he began at once to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20). The Son of God is God, but we can’t assume that in St. Paul’s mind, Jesus was God Himself, equal Godhead with the Father. Yet St. Paul’s belief in the divinity of Christ can hardly be questioned. St. Paul in Philippians 2:5-11 contrasts the

³ *ibid.* P.450

⁴ *ibid.* p. 439.

⁵ Boimard, *Op. Cit.*, p.100, (cf. Matthew 28:18, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me”)

⁶ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Pauline Theology” in, *NJBC*, p. 1396

‘emptying’ with the glory Christ had before incarnation, and the exaltation that he attained at the resurrection:

“ Who though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and being found in human appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name that is above every name...” (Phil 2:6-9)

The word ‘form’ (*morphe* in Greek) means being like. It is similar to ‘image’ (*eikon* in Greek). “*Morphe*” is an outward manifestation of an inward reality. Jesus is therefore the outward manifestation of an inner reality that is God.⁷

The name, ‘which is above every name’, can only mean the transcendent God in the Old Testament, ‘Yahweh’. ‘Seated at the right hand of God’ implied certain equality with God.⁸ Therefore the hymn of Philippians 2:6-11, is affirming the pre-existence of the Son: his pre-existence as God. Though it may appear from Romans 1:4, that Christ only became Son of God after resurrection, it is clear that St. Paul believed in the pre-existence of Christ; in his pre-existence as Son of God and as God. St. Paul puts Christ side by side with the Spirit and with the Father suggesting that they belong to the same order of Being.⁹

“It is clear then that this Son begotten by God before all ages can be no other than God Himself. St. Paul asserts this forcibly in the hymn in the Philippians. Christ was ‘of divine condition’; or to use a phrase closer to the Greek, he was ‘in the form of God; but he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming like men, refusing to cling to that ‘equality with God’ which he could have claimed. Outside his humanity, Christ has no other state of being than a divine state of being. He has his being in God. This means that he has a state of being like God, equal to God. Consequently, he has a strict right, a natural right to the privileges of God; Majesty, glory and power over the universe. His humility consists in the fact that He refused to acquire these privileges other than by the way of submission and obedience”¹⁰

⁷ Lacomara A, “Class notes on the Philippians, 1998,” Tangaza College, C.U.E.A., Nairobi, Pro-Manuscripts, p.5.

⁸ Fitzmyer, *Op. Cit.*, P.101-102.

⁹ *ibid.* P.113. (cf. Ephesians 4:4-6, 1Corinthians 12:4-6, 2Corinthians, 13:4).

¹⁰ *Ibid.* P.118-119.

Therefore, St. Paul regarded Christ as God, and as God from eternity. (St. John the Evangelist puts the aspect of Christ as God from all eternity more explicitly (cf. John 1:1ff), while the letter to the Hebrews explains much more the theme ‘Son of God’). The status that the Son enjoyed was one of being equal to God. “ In him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Colossians 1:15-20), i.e. the full presence of God, being pleased to dwell in Christ. Christ therefore having His Being in God has the right to those privileges that are God’s in Virtue of sharing the same nature with the Father.¹¹

As the image of the invisible God, the Son is first of all himself God, ‘for in him dwells the fullness of the deity bodily’ (Col 2:9, cf. also Rom9: 5). For St. Paul then the Son is God’s image, or God made manifest - thus the Son is God. (John 1:1ff expresses the same point, “in the beginning was the word, and the word was face to face with God, and the word was God... No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed him”). If therefore the Son is the very image of the invisible God, and if this invisible God is from everlasting to everlasting, it follows that the Son too, must be eternally God’s image. The Son of God is the well beloved Son: “he delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son”. (Col. 1:13).

“We must come therefore to the conclusion that, St. Paul recognises Jesus as God; That Christ Jesus had always been and continues to be God by nature, the express image of the deity. The one who in his pre-incarnate state exists in a manner equal to God is the same divine person who in his incarnate state becomes obedient even to the extent of death”.¹² But we must always remember that in Paul, the fact that Christ was the Son of God stands out and is made obvious by the resurrection and exaltation.

¹¹ Lucien Cerfaux, *Op. Cit.*, p.509.

¹² *ibid.*, p.105. (cf. Col 1:15,17, 2Cor4:4, Col 2:9)

SENT BY THE FATHER

It is in the very nature of things that the Son should do the work of his Father. The Son of God therefore came into this world because of a mission entrusted to Him by his Father. Because He obeyed, He brings salvation to the whole world. The Son of God was sent to accomplish a mission; to carry out the work of salvation: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son... so that we might receive adoption" (Galatians 4:4-5). He is a gift of God the Father to the world: "He who did not spare His own Son but handed Him over for us all, how will He not also give us everything else along with Him?" (Rom 8: 32).

"Christ's work of salvation was God's work. His death and resurrection fulfil God's plan. God delivered His Son because of His love for men and it is because of the same love that Christ delivered Himself up".¹³ There is thus a common mission for the Father and the Son but the Son is instrumental in fulfilling this mission. In St. Paul therefore, there is a constant shift from the will of God who delivers up His Son, to the will of the Son who delivers himself up.¹⁴

The one who was sent by God, who is Himself God, accepted the lowliness of life among men and the humiliation of his death upon the cross. Towards his Father, the Son shows the obeisance and the submission of a Son. There is in Christ filial obedience to the Father, a free, loving co-operation in the execution of the Father's plan. And since the Son is the heir of the Father's possessions, he has been singled out and sent by the Father on missions of trust. The Father has put all things into the hands of his Son and sent him to take his place because he is the heir of the kingdom. He has delegated to Him all authority in ruling and Judging. The Father subjected all the things to His Son, so that

¹³ Lucien Cerfaux, *Op. Cit.*, p. 509-510.

through Him all things might reach their term and return to their origin: their term and origin being God. Christ therefore carried out his Father's wish.¹⁵

At the end, Christ returns the kingdom to His Father after having accomplished His temporal mission; "then comes the end when He hands over the kingdom to His God and Father..." (1Corinthians 15:24). "He restores all to the Father together with his own sovereignty. Just as the Son after submitting Himself, and by the reason of that submission, remains the Son, so Christians also remain children of God in Eternity"¹⁶

Pauline epistles take Christ's pre-existence for granted. They stress much more his glory at the resurrection. Nevertheless, St. Paul in Philippians 2:5-7 sets forth in plainest terms the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence. He, who dwelt within the infinite glory, took a human life and went to the depths of humility.

¹⁴ *ibid.* P.447.

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 230.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 231.

CHAPTER TWO

HUMAN CONDITION BEFORE CHRIST

It may sound a bit awkward to talk of ‘before Christ’ since as we have seen, Christ is the eternal Son of the Father. He was, he is and he will always be. Therefore, what we intend to look into here is, the human condition before the incarnation, death and the resurrection of Christ. For St. Paul, this would be more of ‘humanity without Christ’. The state of the human person that Paul demonstrates is one marked by weakness, ungodliness, and unrighteousness. For him, human beings were sinners and enemies of God. Nevertheless, all was not sin at creation, for man was created in a special relation with his creator. In this chapter therefore, we shall look at the human condition at creation, the loss of the original state, and the break of this relationship with God. This chapter is only a link between what has been said and what will be said later, and therefore will not rely much on the writings of St. Paul.

THE HUMAN PERSON AT CREATION

“The wonder of our making is only surpassed by the splendour and joy of our coming to life in Christ”.¹⁷ At creation, God found that everything that he had created was very good (Gen 1:31). More so, man was created in intimacy with God, and on him, blessings were bestowed. Man was created in the ‘image of God’ (Gen1: 27). But as we have already seen, the perfect image of God is his only Son. Therefore to be a real image of God, it is necessary that the human person be conformed to the image of Christ.

¹⁷*The Divine Office*, Psalter week three, Thursday, Morning Prayer, Intercessions.

Christ was not absent at creation. On the contrary, He is instrumental in creation. For “all things came to be through Him” (Jn1: 3,10). He is actually the intended fulfilment of creation.¹⁸ The upward movement of creation was to come to consummation in Christ, for whom all things were made and in whom all subsist. “For in Him were created all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible” (Col 1:16a). God in creating had human being’s destiny as Glory in Him (Gen 2:8-9), but the human person never achieved this intended goal (Gen 3:23). St. Paul doesn’t see much good in the first Adam through whom sin and therefore death came into the world.

The image of God is the term used to describe the ideal picture of Human beings in their original condition soon after creation. It was later to be destroyed through the fall but eventually to be restored by God’s grace in Christ.¹⁹

The original designation of human beings is related to and directed to their final glorification in Christ. And what is this original designation of the human beings? The creation of the human person is God’s special act at the end of creation of the world. He wanted to make a creature in special relation with Himself: in His own image and likeness. Meaning that God wanted to be in close relationship with His creation. He wanted His image to be reflected in His creation and therefore drawing Himself in the life of His creation.²⁰

In the New Testament, (cf. Col1: 15ff; Heb1: 3) Christ is the image of God through whom everything is created. And therefore, already at creation, if the human person is created in the image and likeness of God, he is already configured to Christ. And since Christ is the firstborn of creation (cf. Col 1:15), what St. Paul says in Rom 8:29, “for those He fore knew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that

¹⁸ Peter de Rosa, *Christ and Original Sin*, (Milwaukee, Impact Books, Bruce Publishing Company, 19 67), p.126

¹⁹ Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation, An Ecological Doctrine in Creation*, (London, SCM PRESS LTD, 1985) p.215

²⁰ *ibid*, P.216.

He might be the firstborn among many brothers”, could already be said at the moment of creation, since the image of Christ is the image of God mediated through Christ. Creation of the human person is thus a preparation for incarnation, and incarnation is in turn the fulfilment of creation.

*“As his image, human beings represent God on earth; as his likeness; they reflect Him. It would be one sided if we were to see the likeness to God as consisting solely in the divine commission to rule. As the concept of similarity stresses, the image is also inherently a divine mode of appearance. It is a reflection of His glory, as psalm 8 emphasises and as was so important for Paul. God is present in human beings. He appears wherever the human being appears. The human being is God’s indirect manifestation on earth. To be an image of something means, letting that something appear and revealing it”.*²¹

Human beings are God’s glory in the world. They are created as image of God for the Divine glory. As St. Irenaeus says, “*Gloria dei est homo*”(the glory of God is man). Therefore, it is in glorifying God that the creatures created in the image of God arrive at the fulfilment of what they are intended to be. The human beings therefore are not merely commissioned by God, but they are the way in which he appears in creation. “As God’s image, human beings conform to the presence of the creator in his creation, and as God’s children, they conform to the presence of God’s grace, but when the glory of God itself enters creation, they will become like God and transfigured into his appearance.”²²

Therefore, looking at the state of the sinless Adam before the fall, we realise that the first human couple stands in absolute newness as human history begins. Until the fall, man lived eventfully in a state of complete peace with the creator. His relationship was direct and without an intermediary. According to Gen 2 and 3, we learn that man began in some higher state of life where peace and harmony reigned. He was created in a supernatural state bestowed with sanctifying grace plus the gift of freedom and immortality. Man by nature made in God’s image, was always destined to supernatural glory in the incarnate image of God, Jesus Christ his Son.

²¹ *ibid.* P.218.

²² *ibid.* P.228.

REFUSAL OF SONSHIP AND THE HOPE OF RE-UNION

As we have seen above, the human person was destined for eternal sharing in God's own life and vision. Bestowed with the gift of freedom, he had to choose or reject his supernatural state. In freedom, the human person disobeyed. He consequently lost his glorified state in which he was created. We now look at the failure of freedom of the human person that led him to sin and break his relationship with God. St. Paul in this respect tries to interpret the Genesis story in Romans chapter 5 and 1Cor 15.

The teaching of the church even from Vatican council one, talks of the loss of this glorified state:

*“Man ungrateful to his Creator and Father, freely violated God's command and together with his descendants fell from the supernatural state to which he had been elevated. He incurred the anger and the wrath of God; he lost holiness and justice for himself and for us; defiled by sin, he handed down to the entire human race not only death and corporal punishment, but also sin, the death of the soul. This sin of Adam is transmitted to all his children by propagation not by imitation; and it constitutes every man in the condition of a sinner”.*²³

In Gen 3:1-3, the human person at the moment of temptation by the serpent was well aware of the consequences of sin. Eve makes an explicit pronouncement regarding the one special tree in the middle of the garden. She knew well the divine command and the exact penalty for eating the fruit of the tree, and even for touching it. Eve nevertheless is attracted to the forbidden action and disobeys God's command, drawing Adam into the same. The Genesis story puts it clear that the human person,

²³ Sister M. Charles Borromeo Muckenhirn CSC, *Image of God in Creation*. (New Jersey, Prentice hall, INC, Englewood Cliffs, 1963), P.64.

constituted by God in holiness and harmony and peace, has freely caused his own suffering and death by disobeying an all-loving Creator.²⁴

St. Paul says, “for just as through the disobedience of the one person many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one, the many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:19). It was the sin of disobedience that brought the loss of the supernatural state of the humankind. The human person was created to achieve his goal freely, and in freedom, he chose his own independence rather than free submission. This was a rejection of his true end. Due to this Adam’s act of deliberate disobedience, the human race lost its original intimacy with God. Gen 3:14-24 vividly tells of the results of sin: there is the loss of God’s friendship, disappearance of the special gifts and joys of paradise. The paradise harmony was disrupted by the fall but this was only a beginning of a movement to the new and better paradise in the incarnate word of God Jesus Christ.

Therefore, according to Paul, just as the sin of Adam affected all his descendants negatively, in the same way, the death of Christ has a universal effect on redemption:

“Therefore, just as through one person sin entered into the world, and through sin, death, and that death came to all inasmuch as all sinned. But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by that one person’s transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ overflow for the many. For if, by the transgression of one person, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ”
(Rom 5:12,15,17).

According to St. Paul therefore, if God permitted Adam’s sin, it was only in order to heal its ravages by even greater love and generosity. The Easter proclamation expresses this in a strange but wonderful way: “O happy fault, oh necessary sin of Adam, which

²⁴ *ibid.* P.67-68.

gained for us so great a redeemer!”²⁵. God is glorified for permitting Adam’s sin, which was the occasion for the new Adam. “For just as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be brought to life. Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one”(1Cor 15:22, 49). As all human beings are incorporated in Adam (cf. Rom 5:1-6), so all will be incorporated in Christ. The human person was allowed to cut himself off from God, only to be taken back into even closer union with God in the person of Jesus Christ. The fall is therefore in a way the beginning of the story of salvation, the promise of redemption of which the fall became the historical occasion.

Paul recognises that human life is a gift of God, yet life before the coming of Christ is one lived according to the flesh. The human person lived in a state of existence that was under the influence of sin, an existence in the flesh and condemned to death. Without Christ, the human person is hopelessly doomed. Sin rules over him, and the flesh is incapable of resisting. Life and justification are beyond his reach. Sin, flesh and death dominate his state of life.²⁶

Paul is interested in human redemption, but to understand this, it becomes necessary to talk about sin. Christianity includes redemption from sin and hence, the ruling factor of a life that is not Christian is sin. For St. Paul, sin is disobedience to God’s will: A revolt against God that brings about our enmity with God, which ends up in death. This sin is a prevailing factor among all men and women, and they are hopelessly lost without Christ (Cf. Rom 3: 23).²⁷

²⁵ ‘Easter Proclamation’, in, *The Sunday Missal*, Collins liturgical, London, 1984.

²⁶ William Grossouw, *In Christ, A Sketch of the Theology of St. Paul*, (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), p. 15.

²⁷ *ibid.* P. 16.

Paul sees a close relationship between sin and the flesh. The desires of the flesh are opposed to those of the spirit and they lead man to do evil and consequently to Death, (Cf. Gal 5:16-17, 24; Rom 6:19; 8:6-7). The situation of man is thus tragic; “having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12)

The humankind was morally weak. St. Paul talks of a progressive degradation of the humankind. This depravity of the humankind is explained by its general refusal from the beginning, to listen to the call of God, which echoes from created works.²⁸ “For although they knew God, they didn’t accord him glory as God or give him thanks. Instead, they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened” (Rom 1:21). Without Christ therefore, all are under the “power of sin” (Rom 3:9), and are opposed to God. They are “hostile to God” (cf. 2Cor 5:19, Rom 5:10, 8: 5-7). A human being without Christ therefore remains one who has not been able to achieve his destined goal: “for all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). From Rom 1:16-3:20, St. Paul talks of a humanity lost without the gospel.

However, as said earlier, sin was an occasion for God to express his love for us: “for Christ, while we were still helpless yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly”(Rom 5:6). Let us therefore conclude this chapter with the words from the book of wisdom, which exhorts us not to sin, for we belong to Christ; “if we sin, may we still be yours, for we know your power. But we will not sin, because we know that we belong to you” (Wis15: 1-3).

²⁸ Lucien cerfaux, *The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul*, (New York, Herder and Herder, 1966), P. 230.

CHAPTER THREE

NATURE OF OUR SONSHIP – Humanity in Christ

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As a proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out 'Abba Father'. So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir through God." (Gal 4:3-6)

Having been separated from God through the sin of our first parents and through our own individual sins, we were unable to create a new relationship with God by ourselves. If God was not to call us back to himself, then we are lost forever. Nevertheless, after the fall, all was not lost. And although we fell into the depths through sin, we were to be raised to a status higher than that of the angels. We were made sons through the eternal Son. And being sons, we also became heirs with Christ. In the following chapter therefore, we shall look at the restoration of our union with God and the nature of our new status as sons of God.

Christ's salvific activity has brought about a new union of humanity with God. It has introduced a new mode of existence into human history in which Christ and the Christian form as it were a symbiosis. We share in this new life by faith and baptism, which incorporate us into Christ and his church.²⁹

RESTORATION

We have seen how the human person in sin is doomed and incapable of taking himself off from this situation. He cannot redeem himself. He lives in enmity with God, subjected to the wrath of death and is excluded from eternal life.³⁰ In front of this dark

²⁹ Fitzmyer, *Op. Cit.*, p.1407.

³⁰ William Grossouw, *Op. Cit.*, P. 36.

reality and in the midst of this absolute helplessness, St. Paul sees Christ coming into the scene as a great benefactor of the humankind.³¹ He henceforth talks of ‘redemption in Christ’: his redemptive death plus the individual sanctification of the human person now incorporated into Christ.

“You were dead in your transgressions and sins... and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest. But God who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved) raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:1-7).

Without Christ, the sinner was helpless and unable by himself to return to God. But through the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, human beings have been ‘justified’. They now stand before God acquitted / innocent. Paul puts it clear that this justification is the gratuitous and unmerited gift of God in Christ.³² “For all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3: 23-24). It is God who has made us righteous despite our own sinfulness; as it is written, “And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ... namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them...” (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

Through the blood of the Son of God, human sin has been cleansed. In the O.T (cf. Leviticus 16:15-19), the blood of expiation removed a person or an object from profane use and united them intimately with Yahweh in a sacred pact. The same thing has happened to us. We have been washed of our sins and intimately united to God through the shedding of the blood of his Son. Through the Son we were made sons of God. Before the shedding of Christ’s blood we were all alienated from God. We were not only

³¹ *ibid.* P.37

³² Fitzmyer, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1397

alienated but we were slaves to sin. In Christ, we have been freed and justified, (cf. Romans 3:24).

What was gained by humanity by the coming of Christ surpasses by far what was lost through sin. Redeemed humanity received much more than what was lost by sin. "For the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of one person, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:15-17). We are now at peace with God and our destiny is glory (cf. Romans 5:1-2). Therefore, humanity's union with God through Christ is a living reality.

God in Christ has created the whole humanity anew. "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). "So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christ came and died on the cross to ransom mankind from slavery of evil and restore humanity to its original dignity as children of God. Through his death, mankind is enabled through faith to enter into communion with God. Romans 5:1-11, gives an overview of the justified Christian: having been reconciled to God, will share in Christ's risen life. The Christian now is at peace with God and live in hope of God's glory.³³

INCORPORATED INTO CHRIST IN BAPTISM

It is in baptism that we are created anew in Christ. It is in it that we are constituted sons and daughters of God. It is this initiatory rite that incorporates the person into Christ and the church. The condition of Christians as sons and daughters of God

³³ *ibid.* p. 844.

through faith is owing to their baptism 'into Christ'.³⁴ "For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). In baptism, the Christian is identified with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

It is faith that has accomplished our access to Sonship, and faith implies baptism. We were baptised "into Christ" (Galatians 3:27). In the verse that follows, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28), St. Paul lays down the principle of the dignity of the human person as the child of God and the basic equality of all human beings in that spiritual union of divine Sonship.³⁵

A new relationship has been established between the Christian and God, a new situation that God has brought about in Christ. Before we were enemies of God; but Christ died 'for us'. He was "handed over for our transgressions and was raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). He died to restore us to God.

SONS IN THE SON

Jesus is the 'Son of God'. We can be sons and daughters of God only if we share in the life of the Son. We become sons of God in and through Christ. Therefore our Sonship is a participation in the Sonship of the Son. The purpose of incarnation was the acquisition of humanity as God's sons and daughters. We thus accede to our participation in this rank by the Son's incarnation.

³⁴ *Ibid.* P. 1408.

³⁵ Montague George T. *The Living Thought of St. Paul*, (Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966), p.49.

Man's life was transformed by the inauguration of the kingdom of God by Christ. Christians who are united to God's only Son will become his sons in a relationship beyond comprehension. The title 'son of God' is theirs personally. In the old times, this privilege was only reserved to a group of people, a race, Israel (cf. Romans 9:4-5). Now in reality, and no longer legally or symbolically, it will belong to them, and to all who believe in the Son, as participants in the very nature of the Son of God.³⁶ It was God's plan that we be sons of God ourselves; "For those he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, so that he might be a firstborn among many brothers"(Romans 8:29)

It is God who takes the initiative to call us to union with him in the Son. Out of his faithful love, he did not let us die in our sinfulness but called us to life with him; "God is faithful and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9). For all of us, it means that we are raised up to the rank of sons of God. We have become adopted sons, but our adoption is formally dependent on the Sonship that is Christ's.³⁷

CO-HEIRS WITH CHRIST

Paul does not consider the association between the Father and the Son only in terms of likeness. He considers it in terms of concrete effect: inheritance of a blessing. The concept of Sonship is thus bound up with that of inheritance. "The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs (*suykleronomai*) with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him" (Romans 8:16-17). Therefore we are now legally heirs.

³⁶ Lucien Cerfaux. *The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul*, p. 67

³⁷ *ibid.* p. 444.

Christ is ‘the heir’ to all things. The inheritance is the kingdom and Christ is its heir. But now, all of us who believe in the Son have a share in this inheritance. God carries us even here below into the kingdom of the Son of his love. Therefore, to be a son is to be an heir. And since we have become sons in Christ, we therefore share in everything that Christ is, that he has and that he does.

ETERNAL INHERITANCE

“What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, God has prepared for those who love him” (1Corinthians 2:9). St. Paul is aware of the fact that what we are at present is already a great privilege: for we are sons of God. But he is also much more aware of the fact that something of great value lies kept for us in the future. For now, we only see things as in a mirror but then; we shall see him face to face; “at present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face” (1Cor 13:12a). St. John expresses the same sentiment in his first letter; “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he really is” (1John 3:2).

All our privileges as sons will be ours to enjoy in eternity. We are already heirs but still have to possess our heritage in all its fullness and with all its richness; we are already sons but still have to enter into a greater and more intimate knowledge of the Father. We already receive these gifts by anticipation, but they will be fully ours in eternity.³⁸ These gifts that await us and which are prepared for us transcend all human understanding.

³⁸ *Ibid.* P. 324.

Having been created anew in Christ (c.f. Romans 6: 4), we are destined to share in the glory of God, that we fell short of because of sin (c.f. Romans 3:23). The transforming power of the risen Christ glorifies the Christians, giving them in advance a share in the glory that he, as one raised from the dead, now enjoys with the Father (cf. Romans 8:30). At the *parousia*, the glory of the Lord will extend to all his saints: the Christians. “When he comes to be glorified among his holy ones and marvelled at among all who have believed” (2Thess 1:10).³⁹ The Christians will share in the triumph of Christ raised from the dead and in the glory of the Son of God.

Therefore, the destiny of the Christians is glory. In this life, the Christian lives in the hope “that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Romans 8:21). There is in Romans 8:8-23, a theological description of the glory that awaits Christians, who are already children of God, at the resurrection. “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are nothing compared with the glory that is to be revealed for us” (Rom 8:18). The glory that is proper to the Son will be manifested in us. We shall be free from all corruptibility. Although Paul does not mention the rank of the sons here, it is implied.⁴⁰

The privilege of the Christians is Sonship: eschatological and present Sonship. We are truly sons now, but we await its fulfilment and glorification in heaven. “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly bodies to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself” (Philippians 3:20-21). Our commonwealth is in heaven. And while here on earth, we are a colony of free heavenly citizens.⁴¹

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 441.

⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. 323-324

⁴¹ Fitzmyer, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1399

Then, "we shall continue to be with the Lord, and we shall rediscover our fellowmen as sons of God like us, in the Father and in the Lord. All those relationships for which we were created - relationship with the Father who desired many sons, relationship with his Son in whose image we were made, and with our brother Christians, all sons of God and brothers of the Son of God will be consecrated in eternal glory." ⁴²

Therefore, the glory is ours even now, but it has not yet been manifested and does not involve the glorification of our bodies, as it will at the resurrection. After the resurrection, at the end of time, we will experience total integrity in a much higher way than Adam. "If until now believers were subjected to perishability, that will no longer be true at the resurrection because they will then participate in the eternal essence of Christ in that they will be stamped with the image of the resurrection of Jesus Christ"⁴³. The knowledge of the father, implicit in our rank as sons of God, itself lacks that plenitude and final clarity which result from contemplation face to face. Our knowledge of God will be at its climax when we shall see him as he really is.⁴⁴

The end of our life's journey is eternal life. St. Paul puts it in different ways, some of which include: "God will be everything to everyone" (1Corinthians 15:28). For St. Paul, it is clear that the Son remains the Son, precisely in that he subjects himself to the Father. In the same way, Christians in him remain sons of God in eternity. Then, "we shall see him 'face to face'" (1Corinthians 13:12). The face-to-face vision of eternity is knowledge, thus the eternal existence of the Christian is the act that God creates in his intelligence so that it may know him face to face.⁴⁵

We therefore conclude by saying that, in Paul, three themes are united: heir of God, Son of God and possessor of glory. We were lost in sin but God in Christ redeemed us and made us his sons and daughters. We are therefore heirs of God. We have been

⁴² Lucien Cerfaux, *Op. Cit.*, p. 231

⁴³ Udo Schnelle, *The human condition, Anthropology in the teachings of Jesus Paul and John*, (Edinburgh T&T Clark, 1996), p.100.

⁴⁴ Lucien Cerfaux, *Op. Cit.*, P. 232

⁴⁵ L. Cerfaux, "Paul's Eschatological Message to the Nations" in, *Readings in Pauline Theology*, ed Michel J. Taylor (New York, Alba house, 1975), P.36

incorporated into Christ and have become partakers in the life of Christ the Son. We are co-heirs with the Son and we await our manifestation and glorification as sons at the end of time. Even now, we are being transformed into the likeness of the Lord. (Cf. 2corinthians 3:18). But the fullness of our privileges as sons is ours to enjoy in eternity. (Cf. Philippians 3:211).

CHAPTER FOUR

OUR LIFE AS SONS

After knowing that we are legally sons of God, who share in the life of the Son in many different ways, we would like to see more of our relationship with our Father, plus the role of the holy spirit in our lives. We need also to be aware that our union with Christ means new life. We will try to see how we ought to live as sons. But since we have already seen our reconciliation and redemption in the Son, we shall concentrate more on the divine Fatherhood of God and the sanctification through the spirit and the way we ought to live as sons

GOD'S FATHERHOOD OVER US

“For we are all sons of God, and through faith and grace in baptism, we have put on Christ so that God sees only His Son in us and treats us accordingly”.⁴⁶ It is God's will that we should be his sons in Jesus Christ. And now that we are sons, will God despise us, or will he not treat us as he would treat his own Son? For the Father Himself says to us, “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me says the Lord Almighty” (2Cor 6:18). He therefore takes care of us as he takes care of his own Son.

Paul testifies on many occasions that we are indeed children of God. We are children of the promise and the descendants of Abraham, we who live a life of faith in God and in his Son Jesus Christ. For “it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God but the children of the promise are accounted as His descendants” (Rom 9:8).

⁴⁶ Lucien cerfaux, *The Christian in the Theology of St Paul*, P.325.

We Christians are the real purpose of the Father's plan. God desired to have many children, the Christians. We might almost think that the rest of the mankind is neglected, but we must decide to share his attitude. As a true Father, all his attention is centred on his sons, the Christians, but in reality, the plan which seems to include only his sons is part of a wider scheme which is also being realised; that of the salvation of the whole world.⁴⁷

God's Fatherhood of the Christians may be explicitly compared with His Fatherhood of his Son. Paul attributes to God the feelings of a human father. God loves his Son. He loved him even at the moment that He delivered Him to death for us, and from this fact, we also conclude that He loves Christians. The Son is the "well beloved Son" (Col 1:13, Eph 1:6). The Son is the heir of the Father's possessions, so are the Christians. Our communion with the firstborn Son moulds us into the image of the Father, in humility and obedience as legitimate children.

For St. Paul, the human relationship of a father to the son is above all a relationship of Love; "As you know, we treated each of you as a father treats his children" (1Thess 2:11, C.F also, 1Cor 4:15, Gal 4:2). Having therefore been made sons of God through the Son, we are loved by God as he loves his own Son. The Son is thus not jealous of our being sons. On the contrary, he rejoices for being "the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29), but also because it is his own doing that we have become Sons and sharers of the divine life with Him. His will is that we know and love the Father.

SPIRIT: THE GUARANTEE OF OUR BEING SONS

"So that we should have no doubt of our true identity as sons of God, the Father sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts, that Holy Spirit who is of the Son, and who

⁴⁷ *ibid.* P.326.

speaks in us as the Son speaks; we pray as he prayed".⁴⁸ This prayer of the Holy Spirit in us is nevertheless conscious, and it is our prayer in a certain manner. The Holy Spirit expresses within us son-like feelings, which are the feelings of the Son of God for his Father. It is only for the reason that we are sons that God has given us the Spirit of his Son. Our true identity is therefore that of sons of God and the Holy Spirit guarantees this privileged situation. "As a proof that you are Children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying out 'Abba Father!' so you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child, then also an heir, through God" (Gal 4:6-7). The Spirit makes us children of God. We are in Christ and Christ is in us through the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit reveals to us the gifts that God has kept for us. He is thus granted to us in order to prepare us for our future glorification, which will complete our resemblance to the risen Son of God and will be our investiture as sons.⁴⁹ The Spirit too helps us to appreciate our true rank as sons of God and be proud of it. "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, through which we cry 'Abba Father'" (Rom 8: 15). We have received the Spirit of Sonship. In being guided by the spirit of God, the Christians are sons and not just servants (cf. Rom 8:14ff, Rom 6:5-7:6), and even much less slaves who live out of fear. They can therefore look forward to the inheritance of sons, which will be the full proof of their Sonship according to the pattern of the mystery of Christ's life.⁵⁰ This Holy Spirit is the pledge that we are sons: "the one who gives us security with you in Christ and who anointed us in God; he has also put his seal upon us and given the spirit in our hearts as the first instalment" (2Cor 1:21-22). This indwelling Spirit is already a pledge of the day of redemption: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30). He is also the source of our hope for sharing in the eternal glory of God:

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p.324.

⁵⁰ Charles Giblin S.J. *In Hope of God's Glory*, (New York, Herder and Herder, 1970), P. 389.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith, to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope for the glory of God. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us”
(Rom 5:1-2,5).

The Spirit of the risen Lord that has been imparted into us, grounds our hope for the achievement of God’s glory, the new creation that is our inheritance in His Son’s life. The baptised Christian becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1Cor 6:19), and an adopted child of the Father in virtue of communication with the Spirit, “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God” (Rom 8:14). The Spirit so received is the constitutive principal of filial Adoption, and the dynamic source of Christian life and conduct.⁵¹ Those who are in Christ Jesus are now able to fulfil the just conduct of the law by the interior principle of the spirit.⁵²

NEW LIFE AS SONS

Christianity according to St. Paul is a norm of action, a mode of existence or rather a way of life. Christian virtues and life of love are the result of the new life that we have attained in Christ through baptism.⁵³ Christianity is therefore a principle of life from where all other things flow. Nevertheless, it must be noted that Christianity is not essentially concerned with morality. But from our union with Christ flows the human responsibility to live a truly Christian moral life.⁵⁴ There is a lot of moral instruction in Pauline epistles especially in Thessalonians. St. Paul asks the Christians to live in a way that would please God (cf. 1Thess 2:9-12; 4:1-2).

⁵¹ Fitzmyer, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1408.

⁵² Charles Giblin, *Op. Cit.*, P. 390.

⁵³ William Grossouw, *Op. Cit.* P. 92

⁵⁴ Raymond F. Collins, *Preaching the Epistles*, (New York, Paulist Press, 1996), P.69.

Our life as sons must reflect that of Christ through whom and in whom we have become sons and daughters of God. St. Paul in different exhortations, demonstrates the way in which the children of God should live. As we have already seen, the Christian is incorporated into the life of Christ. He now lives 'in Christ'. There are a number of prepositional phrases that express Paul's ideas of this intimate union of Christ and the Christians. They express the effects of our faith and baptism.⁵⁵

- *dia* – 'through' "through Christ", which expresses a mediation of Christ
(Cf. 1Thess 5:9, Rom 1:5)
- *eis*- 'into' "into Christ", it expresses the movement towards Christ. It means that in faith and baptism, one is solemnly introduced to Christ.
(Cf. 1Cor 15:22, Rom 7:5, and 1Cor 9:20).
- *syn*- 'with' "with Christ", suggests the identification of the Christian with the suffering death and the resurrection of Christ and his association with him in the eschatological times (cf. 1Thess 4:17).
- *en*- 'in' "in Christ", first of all it implies the influence of the Lord in the practical and ethical areas of Christian conduct. Christ dominates the life of the Christian. Secondly, it expresses the close union of Christ and the Christian (cf. 2Cor 5:17, 13:5, Gal2: 20, Rom 8:10). One therefore belongs to Christ; he is of Christ.

All these phrases express the dynamic influence of Christ on the life of a Christian. The Christian now lives in Christ.⁵⁶

Unlike the self-sufficient life of virtue proposed by some philosophies, Christian life is a life sustained by faith and divine grace. We live by faith: the same faith by which we have already been justified. This faith is a "vital personal commitment,

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

engaging the whole person to Christ in all his or her relations with the world, other human beings and God”⁵⁷

For St. Paul, his very own life was already dissolved in the life of Christ. The life that he lived was the life of Christ living in him: “Yet I live no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself up for me” (Gal 2:20). Therefore, the Christian can be truly defined by his own union with Christ. This union must be manifested by our personal lives especially by our love.⁵⁸

Therefore, being sons, we can't live the way we want. We must live upright lives at the example of Christ who is our elder brother and our saviour. In many different occasions, St. Paul gives the Christian code of conduct. Here we shall only mention a few exhortations for the Christian living: “So be imitators of God as beloved children, and live in love as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma. Immorality or any impurity or greed must not be mentioned among you, as is fitting among the holy ones” (Eph 5:1-3). Love must therefore dominate the life and the relations of the Christians. They should also live in purity of life as God's chosen ones. Above all they should be examples to all. Through their lives, Christ should be manifested to the world. St. Paul thus asks the Christians to “do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like the lights in the world” (Phil 2: 14-15).

⁵⁷ Fitzmyer, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1407.

⁵⁸ Lucien Cerfaux, *The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul*, p.372.

St. Paul calls on the Christians to shun their old life of sin that they were used to when they were outside Christ. "That is what some of you used to be; but now, you have had yourselves washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1Cor 6:11). They should not indulge in the various sins that he lists in 1Cor 6:9-11. People who indulge in these sins will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Christians should also live in endurance. As a farmer prunes the fruit trees to make them yield more, so the Father chastises us to make sure that we live accordingly as sons and daughters. He is only disciplining us as the letter to the Hebrews remarks:

"You have also forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons: 'my son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he acknowledges.' Endure trials as 'discipline'; God treats you as sons. For what 'son' is there whom his father does not discipline? If you have no discipline, in which all have shared, you are not sons but bastards. Besides this, we have had our earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not then submit all the more to the Father of the spirits and live?" (Heb12: 5-9).

Therefore, adversity should not drive us to despair. Those who are not loved in this special way are not tested. The Lord's ministry of correction verifies our sonship⁵⁹.

This is how St. Paul summarises the whole of Christian life: a human person who was lost and helpless, a slave of sin and of the flesh, the enemy of God excluded from the blessings of communion with God and from the messianic promises, and who is now through faith and baptism a child of God, a brother of Christ, and one endowed with the Holy Spirit and above all a heir of the heavenly glory.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Raymond, Brown, *Christ Above All, The Message of the Hebrews*, (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1982), P. 233.

⁶⁰ William Grossouw, *Op. Cit.* P.98.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

We have become sons of God through our faith in Jesus as Saint John points out; “Those who believed in him, received power to become sons of God” (John 1:2). A son bears all rights. Many people might need to see the president but the son of his would go straight. There is also a great difference between a child and a son. A child will need provisions but a son will need rights. A son will enjoy inheritance and can sue the father in the court of law if he violates his rights.⁶¹

All riches that God has are for his sons. All the power that God used to create the whole world is with us and for us. All knowledge that God used in designing and beautifying the universe is with us. We have the mind of God and therefore we are meant to do exploits. (Cf.. Daniel 11: 31-32). God is our Father. The Son of God is god. “You are gods, sons of the most high”, (psalm 82:6)

What we have been therefore trying to see is, Christ as the beloved Son of the father in whom we Christians have become sons and daughters of God. We saw also the human misery without Christ, which helps us to understand what redemption in Christ means. We have thus seen the splendour of the redeemed person, who has been raised to the state of a son.

It is through Christ that we have gained this privilege of being sons and daughters of God. Therefore we need to know him in whom we live. We need to grow in intimacy with him, since, he is not only our friend and elder brother but he is our very life. Our life

⁶¹ T.D Jakes, “Crossing from Provision to Progress”, in, *The Ministry*, Eagle edition part III, Nairobi Kenya, 2000, p.6

is hidden in his,” for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God”(Gal 3:3). God has made us shares in the life of the son and therefore we look forward to our inheritance with Him and we wait to be glorified with him, where we shall reign forever with Him.

Being sons, the life that we live is already in union with Christ. We have become children of the light. Our lives must reflect the life of the Son. Our conduct as Christians must therefore reflect a people transformed by God.

Some might think that these are only beautiful words, and beautiful words are no more than words. One may ask therefore, what are the practical implications of this work? Or, do we come to any practical conclusions? The change of attitude that is the aim of this work is the basis of our lives as Christians. The quality of our actions is determined by the attitude with which we do whatever we do. If we consider ourselves worthless, we shall accomplish very little. If on the other hand we recognise our dignity and our potentials, we shall put ourselves into working and we shall live in hope and in joy. We shall spread the same things to all those that we encounter. In this broken world, a world in which many people are losing faith in God and in other human beings, the Christian hope that our faith in Christ gives us can renew the world. But this hope can only be given to the world if only Christians themselves recognise it and express it in their own lives. They can then give it to the world in which they should be light and salt. Above all, we must say that Christianity should reveal itself to the world through love. “This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

This work therefore is calling on the Christians to rediscover their privileged state as the sons and daughters of God and consequently live in holy pride, and most of all manifest it to the world. My prayer at this point is the prayer of St. Paul, that we may be able to understand the love of God for us in Jesus Christ:

“For this reason I kneel before the father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power through his spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and the length and the height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with the fullness of God” (Eph 3: 14-19).

With all these privileges however, Christians must not take it easy and rest and enjoy life. They must work and strive with these precious gifts of God in order to increase them a hundred fold (Cf. 1Cor 9:24-27; 10:1-5). We must not therefore let the graces that we have received from God go to waste. In this regard, Paul writes the following in the second letter to the Corinthians: “Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says: ‘in the acceptable time I heard you, and on the day of salvation I helped you’ (2Cor 6:1-2). To the Ephesians he writes: “Watch carefully then how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of the opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of God” (Eph 5:15-17).

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