

Matt.

21:28 & c.

The Two Sons

The man who had two sons is put for God; and His two sons are two classes
 of ~~members~~ of precious immortal souls.

In a very emphatic sense they who have ^{taken it to their hearts} accepted of Christ
 as their Saviour and their Master, are ^{in Scripture} styled God's sons, and
 are permitted to rejoice in this distinction. / But these are not
 His only sons. / He has many others. / Of these the parable now
 before us mentions two classes: which, taken together, represent
 the whole of mankind outside of the family of true Christians.
 Our Lord is addressing the Pharisees - those men who prided
 themselves upon the possession of a righteousness, which,
 with nothing added to it or altered in it, was, as they believed,
 sufficient to entitle them to a safe standing before God.
 With these He contrasts "publicans and harlots" - those who
 rather prided themselves upon having no righteousness
 at all; and, caring but little for human law (only enough
 to keep them out of its arresting clutches) - acted with no
 reference to divine law, whose penalties were too shadowy
 and too distant to give them any immediate concern.

Paralel of the "Two Sins"

Wilsonⁿ Feb. 9, 1879.

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God has thus three kinds of sons: those who trust in χ t
 and follow Him: those who trust in themselves and follow
 the Pharisees: those who trust in ^{themselves} ~~the devil~~ and follow
 the devil: Christians, moralists, profligates: they who
 are resolved to reach heaven in the Bible way, they
 who think to reach heaven in their own way, they
 who are careless about reaching heaven in any way:
 Children who are obedient to their heavenly Father, chil-
 -dren who are ^{insubordinate,} ~~disobedient~~, children who are ^{defiant.} ~~rebelliously~~
 even the worst are His ^{positively hate Him.}
 Yet ~~all~~ ^{are} children still: even those who ~~simply don't~~
~~love Him~~ The parental relation is not destroyed - however
 it may be shocked - by the child's ^{wicked} conduct. | It may
 no longer be a happy relation: but it exists nevertheless.
 For it is with the great Father above as it is with
^{the} ~~an~~ earthly father who is ^{the instinct of paternal} true to ^{at all} natural love. | However
 every deeply his offspring may offend him - however rebelliously

trample upon ~~outrage~~ his authority, and, ^{recklessly} outrage his forbearance
 - the father-heart, although well-nigh broken, still
 holds to the wretched Traitor. / It may be necessary,
 for the sake of the other children, to drive the persistent
 wrong-doer from home, to disinherit him, to disown him
 altogether - yet what anxious thoughts go out after him,
 what affections follow him, what helps are always
 ready for him, what prayers call down blessings upon
 his head! / The much-stretched and ^{greatly-} ^{relaxed,} but ^{is,} not
broken: and, should the wanderer ^{penitently} return, no welcome
 is wanting at the wide-open Door, no smile at the
 cheerful hearth, no delicacy at the well-filled board.
 Who was it that implanted this undying principle in
 the parental heart? / It was God, who took it, ^a ~~out~~, ⁱⁿ
 seed from His own ^{original} ~~infinite~~ fatherhood - and in whom
 it exists with a largeness that cannot be measured.

There are many in our sad world who, for various reasons, have become "outcasts", as, ~~they~~ ^{only} too truthfully, they are styled - so degraded, some of them, as never to be touched except by their own kind - so vicious, some of them, as to be ~~separated~~ ^{compelled to separate} from all companionship except that which the prison affords - so murderously destructive, some of them, as that they themselves must ^{even} be killed.

These outcasts are often such as ~~that~~ not parental affection itself will openly acknowledge, however it may secretly bleed for the lost ones. / Or, they are such as have no known earthly kin - in every sense of the word, orphans, - never met, except with a scowl - never addressed, except with words that resemble a curse: - impatiently tolerated, nothing more: - "tramps" is the modern name for numbers of them: a name that oftener causes a shudder ^{of fear}, than a sob of sympathy.

Well, even those who are the most, ^{justly} despised by their fellow
men - the most deserving of being shunned by respectabil-
ity - ~~and~~ ^{the} most rightfully avoided by the virtuous - even
these are precious in the sight of God - for they are His
sons and daughters, even yet - bearing marks of His image
traceable still amid all that moral waste - and capable
- yes - they -
of a sonship equal to that of any O. T. Manasse or A. T.
Saul whom ^{has ever} ~~have~~ returned ^{to} their divine Father's bosom
by the ^{home-} drawings of almighty grace. | Per. do you not
remember that passage ^{where Paul} ~~in Paul's~~ says to the Corinthians: "such
were some of you" - i. e. "thieves, drunkards, extortioners, idolaters"
and much else: - ^[he adds] "but ^{but} ye are washed, ^{but} ye are sanctified, ^{but} ye are
justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit
of our God" - and ^{afterwards} ~~then~~ speaks of them as being "temples of
the Holy Ghost." | He can make stars out of clods; and out
of those who are not yet devils such as shall be only less than angels.

Now, there is surely nothing in the ^{nature} character of God more teaching
 or more inviting than this, His fatherliness, that extends to
 all, even ^{to} the lowest of mankind, and that hovers around
 each son & daughter of our race with a yearning ^{solicitude} ~~self~~,
 which has no parallel in the whole history of human
 love. | When, \therefore , ~~the~~ ^{Christ} ~~Lesson~~ came and declared that He
 and the Father were one, He showed this oneness, not
 alone in the works and wonders which proved Him Divine,
 but in the fact that He sought out the Zacheuses &
 the Magdalenes of society, and poured forth His sym-
 pathies into the surprised souls of leprous sinners whom
 the world had been taught to abhor; ~~and~~ ^{thus} impressing
 everywhere that lesson which had never before been
 learned: of mankind's universal brotherhood: a lesson
 which ^{is} now a ^{fundamental} ~~prominent~~ doctrine of our ^{practical} ~~Christian~~
 Faith, ^{and} as ~~practical~~ as the doctrine of God.

Yes - God is our Father.

But ^{God} ~~He~~ is not less ^{is He an authoritative} ~~an~~ Rule because He is a

Father. | In fact there is no authority so absolute as that of a Father, in comparison with which the authority of a master, a magistrat, or a monarch is but a shadow.

"All earthly forms of authority, whether belonging to the political, civil, or social relations of men, are accidental and official - created by men themselves, for their own purposes, and so may be modified or entirely abolished by the same power that created them."

| But the authority of a father over a child is founded in nature - is a divine constitution - ~~and~~ ^{is not} ~~and~~ ^{amongst men}

^{mere} a voluntary arrangement agreed upon ^{to serve a given end,} and ^{which} they are at liberty to continue, or to terminate, as they ^{shall} please: it is an essential authority which

no power can set aside. | This ^{idea of Fatherhood is,} accordingly, ^{is} the selected type of the supreme rights of God, and of that ^{supreme} ~~unmovable~~ authority sovereignty which belongs to Him. | God is, indeed,

styled

a King; but He is more: a Father-King. | His Kinghood is a figure, His Fatherhood the profoundest reality. | He may justly be compared to a King, but He is a Father. // I submit these observations to your minds, for the reason, partly, that men are disposed to presume upon the fact that God is, ^{after all, only} their Father: thinking of Him as thus a fountain of soft and easy indulgence, as many an earthly parent is: and that ∴ they may treat Him with a certain off-handed slightness, as if He ^{Somehow} belonged to them. | But, my main ^{reason for} ~~purpose in~~ bring-
 -ing, ^{so distinctly} to view God's parental authority is, because this parable of ^{the "Two Sons"} points to it with so direct a hand. | He ^{here} says to each Son, "go, work to-day in my vineyard." | It is not a request, but a command. | It is not an entreaty, but an order. | It is not the expression of a desire, but ^{the exhibition} ~~that~~ of a will. | It is intended to be compulsory: an injunction laid upon the necessity for obedience: a claim, not for a moment to be disputed: - a law of duty.

, as becomes a Father's love

It is, indeed, ^a tender bidding: "Son, go." | But all the same it is the laying down of law, as becomes a Father's supremacy. "Go-work" for me - "in my vineyard" as if he had ^{an unquestionable} a right to You must ~~work~~ not only do my will, but do it unto, ^{my enrichment} and which You are a son, it is true, but ^{as such} you do not belong to your-
-self: you are, ^{altogether} mine; and I demand your labor on my behalf.

But is this ^{actually} the fact? | Does God thus claim, ^{for his own purposes,} the whole time and energies of His earthly children: yours and mine, &c. Unquestionably, - just as any ^{human} father may claim these of his children: ^{with this important difference in God's favor, that His rights are} until they rise into manhood, and become in their turn heads of families, ^{children are, if he wishes it,} they are bound to work for the father, ^{so} just as he shall require: ^{of course} only, they are never not under obligations to do wrong - i.e. They must never disobey the ^{First} Great Father who is above all other fathers, ^{(these very fathers being His sons (subjects))}

We and all we have are His - absolutely and forever.

I know that is the folly of some to suppose that

They are at liberty to criticise ^{divine} ~~The~~ ^{to find fault with them,} ~~Command,~~ and to honor
 only ^{Such} ~~those~~ of them ^{as} which they shall deem ^{worthy of their} good
 attention. | No. | We are free ^{and just so far as} to ask: ~~are~~ ^{no further than} this and that ^{are}
^{His} ~~Command:~~ | But, when thus assented, we possess no more
 right to disregard them than we have to wage war agt.
 His ~~thru~~ life. | His laws may be distasteful to us - may
 even seem harsh, and ^{dissatisfying;} ~~be distasteful~~ but we dare not
 set them aside. // It may, however, be safely, and always,
 taken for granted that whatsoever He bids us do is for our
own welfare as truly as it is for His ^{best} benefit - or as ^{He} ~~word~~
 it - for His glory. | The son cannot faithfully help the father
 to increasing fortune without ^{himself} ~~sharing~~ ⁱⁿ its advantages. | The
 more the head of the family acquires, the more his entire
 household is bettered. | The higher he rises, the higher they
 rise. | When, ∴, God demands our all to be employed in
 His service, He demands this as well for our sake as for His.

We shall have the richer inheritance. / Take for illustration
 the bidding of the parable: "work in my vineyard." / What is this
 vineyard: / I answer: ^{this} it is that the soul is God's vineyard, and ~~it~~ ^{it} needs
cultivation. / Man's great work is to till ^{his own soul} ~~it~~ into beauty and
 fruitfulness, - to break up its hard ground, to uproot its noxious
 weeds, to develop its ~~natural~~ ^{entire} resources, and to build walls
 for its defence. / In other words, each man's first and
 chief work is to get his soul renewed, and made into a
 fit habitation for the Lord Almighty to dwell in - is to ob-
 -tain a sonship in the heavenly Father's family far above,
 and far different from, ~~the~~ ^{his} sonship
~~that~~ which he has by nature - is to become a Christ-like son -
 is to grow within ~~he~~ himself a vine whose fruits shall
 be those of God's own Spirit, - is to set an example of willing,
 of cheerful, of unstinted obedience, to each and every
 precept of the gospel, - is to ^{act} live in view of the divine
 favor - is to lay hold - through Jesus' atonement, of everlasting life.

And why should a man thus work - why become a ^{thorough} Christian
 - why join hand and heart with the ^{active and stirring} members of God's Churchly
 family - why help on the redemption of a lost world? -

That God's ^{Saviour-love} glory may be spread and magnified, and He
 Himself be enriched by the increase of jewels in His treasure
 house of grace? | Yes, surely. | The father desires this at
 the hands of His children. | But, then, what riches does the
soul itself gain by labors so self-rewardful? | It gains
 everything that is worth the having. | It gains eternal wealth.
 It gains heaven. It gains itself: a value greater than
^{many} golden worlds. | It gains heaven. | It gains God. | And
 it loses - only - sin.

"Go (then) work to-day in my vineyard," is at once the
 most imperative and the most affectionate command
 that could be given: for it means both God's glory and
 our own. | And it is laid upon both good and bad alike -

- upon those who think themselves the best and upon those who know themselves the worst. /

But, how far is it obeyed? / For, whilst it ought to receive an instant obedience from every one so soon as it comes to be understood, - and whilst no one can presume to disobey it without flying in the face of an authority that is infinitely rightful, - yet it is a command not forced upon any. / Having uttered it, the father ^{leaves his} ~~the~~ two sons alone; there ^{is} ~~was~~ no further interference; the whole matter ^{is} ~~was~~ left to their discretion, - that the consequences, one way or the other, might be their own. / ^{For} Forced obedience is none. / It must be hearty, or not at all. / Indeed, this is

the command: "Go, work:" but work, not as a slave - as a ^{work diligently but work not sullenly. Work because you find it} ~~child~~. / ^{a pleasure to thy Co.} Well, how was it obeyed? I have already

described the Characters of each of the two sons: The ^{son is the Pharisee:} one, morally upright, the other, ^{the publican: is, ~~of~~ flagrantly} morally depraved. ~~but~~ both ^{same} having the ~~same~~ father. The worse of the two, when told to go into the vineyard, replies - "I will not." / But,

~~not~~ notwithstanding his refusal was so warm and so insolent,
 "he afterwards repented and went." / The other, though,
 what of him? / Surely his better heart will at once ^{yield} respond
 to the bidding! / And so it does, ^{to all present appearance,} ^{in words} and even more, for ^{in person} this ^{person} answered
 with greatest respect:
 and said, "I go, sin" i.e., "I am already going, I am just on the
 way there, now: I do not need to be commanded to do this thy
 most reasonable will." / But, ^{after all,} ^{one true step} then, he didn't go at all. / The
^{worse} ^{despite his badness,} bad son, ^{despite his goodness,} did his father's will - the ^{better} good son, made only a
pretence of doing it. / Now, whom it is this ^{worse} bad son represents
 we have seen in those "outcasts" who ^{in their day} ^{was spoken} had ^{been} thrown off all
 religious restraints ^{almost} until, ^{no one} except their heavenly Fa-
 ther ^{will we think} would speak kindly ^{of them,} ^{or expect} any thing good
 from them - and the ^{better} good son we see pictured in the
 conduct of those who ^{were} are every way respectable and
 in every society respected - but yet who ^{were} are not of Christ's
followers, and ^{very} need the same bidding into the vineyard

^{Soul-searching,}
 by ~~the~~ ^{you} ~~you~~ ^{over to,} souls ^{need the order to do right as ^{truly}}
 where ~~souls~~ ^{souls} are made over again, as did the most abandoned
 of men. | Tell, however, ^{your} these moral men - these ^{your} reputable
 citizens - these ^{your} careful abstainers from whatever is openly
 wicked - these men of honesty and of honor - these men whose
 decencies of behavior seem ^{oftentimes,} quite as praiseworthy as those
 of the best church members - tell them that they need
 to ~~work~~ ^{do} ^{much} ^{work} ~~which~~ which they have not yet done before
 all can be made ^{smooth} ~~right~~ as between them and their divine
 Father - and their reply is, "not so, behold we are already
 righteous enough." "We go, sir": we are already on ^{right} ^{the} way.
 | You cannot get them to see their
^{or that} ~~our~~ ^{abstinence from} ^{of you} ^{is not} ^{reformation}
 hearts - to understand, that morality is not holiness;
 - to perceive that the ^{as well as the outward a look of fairness} inward man requires a renewal,
 - to comprehend ^{profound} the lesson, "except ye be born again ye
 cannot enter the k^m of hⁿ" - to feel, in short, that
 they are still sinners condemned to of God, and must
 remain such until Christ is taken for their Saviour

His righteousness
 and, openly and gladly acknowledged as their one and only
 hope of ~~salvation~~ everlasting life. / All this is like speaking
 to them in an unknown tongue. / Having no sins that
 are big enough for them ^{or dark enough for them to be afraid of,} to see, ~~they~~ ^{they} think they have none
 worth talking about. / Repentance is :: an absurdity, so far
 as they are concerned - a coming to the cross for pardon
 an extravagance - a prayer for mercy on infatuation - a ^{better} life
 of faith an unreasonable ^{expectation} dream. / ^{"We} ~~They~~ are safe just as we
 are. / We cannot, indeed, say that we love God, and that
 to dwell forever in the light of His presence is a hope
 more precious to us than every other. / We cannot say
 that we would rather keep close company with God's
 people, esteeming their society, however humble its mem-
 ber-ship, as sweeter than that of the most lordly worldlings.
 We cannot say that we prize the work which Jesus \times L^t
 has done for our ~~works~~ ^{souls} as containing the deepest call

that was ever made upon our gratitude, and that to do His will is a business ^{more} ~~above~~ absorbing ^{to us} than all else. | We cannot say that to get to that heaven which the gospel reveals, where eternal worship is eternal ^{glory, and} ~~glory~~ joy where ~~eternal praise~~ & perpetual freedom from sin is perpetual joy. | We cannot say aught of this; but we can say that our ^{daily} conduct is above all human reproach - and ^{we} ~~are~~ content.

We do not ~~want~~ ^{ask for} mercy, we ~~want~~ ^{want} only justice. | Ah - there is no such fault as counting we have no fault:!

But it is not thus with the openly wicked. | In them there is a handle of which the gospel may more easily lay hold. | They can be convicted of evil; because, in them the fatal disease of sin has become an outward manifestation - has taken a decided shape - can no longer be denied, with all its cancerous blotches, there, upon the very surface. | ~~Ah - there is no such fault as~~ Hence, far oftener than is the case with those whose external characters are fair

and winning, are these confessedly ^{corrupt} bad ones persuaded
 to ^{cry} seek for the Physician of souls and his balm of healing.
 Of course it is far preferable to be ^{formally} studiously moral
 than to be flagrantly vile. / But, if this morality is satisfied
 with itself; if cold and loveless and proud; it imagines
 that it wants nothing, and so refuses to submit itself
 to the righteousness ^{which is} of faith - then, far better that a ^{godless} man
 should have his eyes open to perceive his misery and
 guilt, even though it must be by means of manifest
 and grievous transgressions, than that he should still con-
 tinue in ignorance of his true state, and never find
 out what it is that he yet lacks. to make ^{him} all he
 ought to be. // It cannot be wished that any of you,
 my hearers, were less good than you are - but, would to
 God you were aroused to seek for ^{that divine} goodness which
 only xt. can give: for that saving righteousness which

and whose only trust is ^{God alone} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~himself~~

is found only by the soul whose trust in itself is all gone.
 Believe me, all that is valuable in time and happy in
 eternity, depends upon your living ^{in God's fear} ~~in Christ~~ and ⁱⁿ working
 for Him. // Oh, have we been sent into this world, merely
 that we may indulge our appetites, build ^{tottering} fortunes, rise
 to social influence? | ~~But is it not~~ ^{Are we not here} rather that we should
 cultivate, each of us, a character that will prepare us
 for, and secure to us ^{an} endless blessedness beyond the grave.
 And reflect that the difficulties, connected with this needful
 work, increase the longer it is neglected. | The farmer
 may wait for a more suitable time to till his land
 - the mariner for a more propitious breeze - the merchant
 may defer his contracts to a more auspicious day -
 almost every enterprise may, with good judgment,
 be postponed. | But not this ~~of~~ to which the gospel
 summons. | The voice is: "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard."
 The law of duty knows of no to-morrow.