

Dear Family,

I often ponder the unfathomable privilege of salvation and **adoption** into the very family of our good God. *Behold what manner of the love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called the children of God!*

Being part of God's family immediately directs our attention to the "otherness" of His ways. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My thoughts higher than your thoughts, says the LORD.* Being part of God's kingdom is not like being part of a genuinely great human institution, only better. It is altogether different. We must constantly remind ourselves, and one another, of this **radical re-orientation** which the holy Gospel demands of us. Horatius Bonar, a Scottish Presbyterian contemporary of Charles Spurgeon, expressed this "otherness" with profound clarity. Please read the following with care, and more than once:

The revelation of "the Christ" embraces in it the revelation of the church in *Him*, as *His* temple, *His* body, *His* bride, *His* present witness on earth, and the watcher for *His* return in glory. **This church**, even on earth, *is no mere association of men holding certain opinions* – no mere corporation favored with certain privileges – but a body chosen and called out of a world of darkness.

Its legislation *is divine*, not human. Its laws are not its own ideas of expediency and order, but the commandments of its Head. The essence of its constitution is not socialism, nor republicanism, nor despotism, nor anarchy, *but an unearthly organization*, founded on entire subjection to its heavenly Head; an organization working itself out in order, unity, growth, fruitfulness, love, and zeal.

Its ministers are *not philosophers*, nor lecturers, nor theorists, *nor humorists*, nor orators, nor priests, but *messengers* of God's free love, *expositors* of the Word, *shepherds* of the flock, and *executors of government and discipline*.

Its members are not politicians, nor lovers of (worldly) pleasure, nor worshippers of gold, nor men who are trying to make the best of both worlds, but men alive from the dead, through the power of the Holy Ghost, possessors of a heavenly peace, bearers of a cross, yet heirs of a kingdom; strangers upon the earth, yet citizens of the New Jerusalem, which cometh down *from God out of heaven*.

Many of us are now beginning to comprehend the mass of the visible church and the rare jewel of the invisible Church. Brothers, I love to read books on productivity and management skills, they have their valued place, but let us diligently strive to see the Church for what it is – the very kingdom of God. Let the Bible be . . . well, our Bible! Let the Holy Spirit be our Guide, and Strength. Let Christ be our Hope and our Lord, and let God's Glory be our purpose, in *everything*.

This sounds great. Yet this will require that we unlearn some practices which we have grown up with. God does not call our men to be more reverent, manly, wise and tender than the neighbor next door; He calls us to the incomparable reverence, manliness, wisdom, and tenderness *of Christ*. We must learn of Christ and to do this, we must learn of the whole counsel of God, the Word of God. Let us devote ourselves in 2009 to this

end. Vibrant daily devotions, engaging Lord's day worship, and diligence in the evening Bible study will move us in this God-oriented "otherness".

As you *continue* your season of **fasting and prayer** in January, plead with God for a great move of His Spirit in you, in your family, in RCRC, in our community. Pray specifically. Let our theme remain:

This is the LORD's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.

I would like to have a time for testimony on the last Lord's Day evening of January as we reflect on our cry for God's mercy and favor. God promises to honor those who will honor Him. *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*

Please pray for our visitors, Bob and Nina Buric, and for Ruth Kash, and continue to pray for Bill and Peggy Schade. May God unite their hearts with ours. And don't forget dear Gary and Linda in Phoenix (*we love you guys!*). Pray for one another's devotions.

Also, pray for Fitz and Ann as they return this week.

Will Coggins turned 15 on Monday!!!! May he increase in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and God's people.

Please pray for me. I have DELIGHTED in this season of prayer and fasting. Pray that the Holy Spirit would come upon me mightily this Lord's day in the preaching, teaching, prayers, and in much love and fondness for each of God's dear lambs.

God is good, and God is good to me,

iBob