



And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Gen 2:7)

The reverential tone and tenor of this classic hymn is beyond comparison. I remember hearing my mother sing this hymn while I was yet too young to understand the power and force of that Breath made reference to in this hymn of both prayer and worship. Lyrics were written by Edwin Hatch and published in 1878 to the tune of *Swabia*. Other tunes include Trentham, Dominica, Carlisle, Aylesbury, and Kingston. The words are perfectly metered for both the musical score and the spiritual biorhythm of the heart.

Breathe on me, Breath of God

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Blend all my soul with Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew, that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do. Long ago, perhaps longer ago than any reader can remember, God breathed the breath of life into our ancient father, Adam. Through that breath, we became living souls as well as Adam, and we inherited the same deadly sin from Adam which he purchased before the ill-winded Tree. That first breath became contaminated with the noxious fumes and soiled soul of that first father in pristine Eden. But the intentions and Creations of God are not subject to suppression. That breath given Adam was one of a physical life, and that physical life was thwarted by intentional disobedience. But God has a better life in mind for those who respond to His calling and love. That breath comes on the silken wings of the Holy Ghost.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure, until my will is one with thine, to do and to endure. When this mortal body dies, it cannot abide in that wonderful form in which God created that body. It decays and returns to the dust from whence it came. The bones are morbid testimony that the body was once clothed with flesh, muscle, and red blood. But our Lord can restore the sinews and connective tissues to those bones by calling back to their temple those millions of atoms and molecules which were dispersed at death. In the Valley of the Dry Bones, the prophet Ezekiel saw the skeletons of many scattered abroad there. The Lord commanded Ezekiel to speak to those dry bones – the same command that the dead ars of Lazarus heard and responded to, and the same to which you and I will respond on that happy dawning of Eternal Day. ⁵ *Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.* (Ezek 37:5-6) The sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost “draws us nearer, nearer, nearer, Blessed Lord, to the cross where thou hast died,” in the words of that venerable old saintly hymn-writer, Francis Crosby. That Holy Ghost draws us ever nearer that Source of Breath that is both Eternal and Merciful.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly thine, until this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine. Truly, we are fully the Children of God the moment we are aware of our calling and election. But children do not remain children – they grow in strength and wisdom. Fed on the milk of the simple Gospel, they are weened to the solid meat of the fullness of the mystery of Christ that His Word reveals by and by. As we are sanctified more and more by the nourishment of God’s well-studied Word, we become more and more like our Father in Heaven so that our neighbors and companions can see the stark resemblance of our features to those of the Father. The light on the face of Moses at the base of Sinai was not one made by fire or heat, but fueled by the closeness Moses had been to God the Father.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I never die; but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity. If we hope to go to Heaven, we must shed our filthy garments of sin. But perfection is a state reserved for Heaven alone. So how do we approach the Bright and Heavenly Way bearing the threads of sin left over from a life that once was forfeit? We must, like Adam and Eve, have some garment to cover our nakedness. That garment is the brilliantly White Robe purchased by our Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary. We enter on His righteousness and not our own. We will receive a second breath that is more glorious than the first breath of Eden – that breath that offers more than physical life, but spiritual life imparted by the Holy Spirit! This was granted in the Apostolic Blessing: ²¹ *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* ²² *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: ²³ Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.* (John 20:21-23) In this world, we are burdened with bodies of clay; but in Heaven, with bodies that are spiritual and of great resemblance to our Lord. We will bear strong resemblance to the Father who bore us.

Here is a story that I have shared before concerning our resemblance to our Father (no additional charge):

A seminary professor was vacationing with his wife in Gatlinburg, TN. One morning, they were eating breakfast at little restaurant, hoping to enjoy a quiet, family meal. While they were waiting for their food, they noticed a distinguished looking, white-haired man moving from table to table, visiting with the guests. The professor leaned over and whispered to his wife, “I hope he doesn’t come over here.” But sure enough, the man did come over to their table. “Where are you folks from?” he asked in a friendly voice.

"Oklahoma," they answered.

"Great to have you here in Tennessee." the stranger said. "What do you do for a living?"

"I teach at a seminary," he replied.

"Oh, so you teach preachers how to preach, do you? Well, I've got a really great story for you." And with that, the gentleman pulled up a chair and sat down at the table with the couple. The professor groaned and thought to himself, "Great... Just what I need another preacher story!"

The man started, "See that mountain over there pointing out the restaurant window. Not far from the base of that mountain, there was a boy born to an unwed mother. He had a hard time growing up, because every place he went, he was always asked the same question, 'Hey boy, Who's your daddy?' "Whether he was at school, in the grocery store or drug store, people would ask the same question, 'Who's your daddy?'

He would hide at recess and lunch time from other students. He would avoid going in to stores because that question hurt him so bad. "When he was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to his church. He would always go in late and slip out early to avoid hearing the question, 'Who's your daddy?'. But one day, the new preacher said the benediction so fast he got caught and had to walk out with the crowd.

"Just about the time he got to the back door, the new preacher, not knowing anything about him, put his hand on his shoulder and asked him, 'Son, who's your daddy?'" The whole church got deathly quiet. He could feel every eye in the church looking at him. Now everyone would finally know the answer to the question, 'Who's your daddy'. This new preacher, though, sensed the situation around him and using discernment that only the Holy Spirit could give, said the following to that scared little boy

'Wait a minute!' he said. 'I know who you are. I see the family resemblance now. You are a child of God. With that he patted the boy on his shoulder and said, 'Boy, you've got a great inheritance. Go and claim it.'

With that, the boy smiled for the first time in a long time and walked out the door a changed person. He was never the same again.

Whenever anybody asked him, 'Who's your Daddy?' he'd just tell them, 'I'm a Child of God'."

The distinguished gentleman got up from the table and said, "Isn't that a great story?"

The professor responded that it really was a great story!

As the man turned to leave, he said, "You know, if that new preacher hadn't told me that I was one of God's children, I probably never would have amounted to anything!" And he walked away.

The seminary professor and his wife were stunned. He called the waitress over and asked her, "Do you know who that man was who just left that was sitting at our table?"

The waitress grinned and said, "Of course. Everybody here knows him. That's Ben Hooper. He's the former governor of Tennessee!"