

Family Month - 2024 Children of God

I. Introduction

- A. April is Family Month where we will celebrate God's gifts of marriage and families. Marriages and families are under constant assault by the Devil because they are the bedrock of human civilization. When the family is weak there will be a ripple effect that echoes throughout society. This year we are going to focus especially on the importance of raising our children in the fear and admonition of Christ.
- B. Before we can really live out God's calling on our family units we must first evaluate where we are in relationship to God, Himself. Before we consider the ways in which we should raise the children in our homes and church towards Jesus we must make sure that we are children of God, ourselves. Easily the most-used metaphor in the Bible to describe God's relationship with us is that of a Father and His children.

II. The Path to Becoming a Child of God

- A. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12 - 13)
 - 1. John says that certain people can "become children of God." Now it would be easy to look at these two verses and say, "well this fits our topic today" and go about our business. However, the key to understanding biblical passages is to understand them in their context. So we know that our target is to understand verses 12 and 13 but to understand them we need to go back to verse 1.
- B. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:1 - 5)
 - 1. John takes us all the way back to the beginning and says that Jesus, the Word, was with God and was actually God.
 - 2. There is a theological controversy that has dominated modern Christianity which essentially hinges on whether God determines all things or if mankind has free will. I find both of those extreme positions to be faulty for various reasons but what I want to point out is that no matter what theological camp we find ourselves in, we must understand that salvation begins with God, it begins with Jesus. Keep in mind we are working our way back to verses 12 and 13 which describe becoming a child of God.
 - 3. Watch how John puts Jesus as foundational to that.
 - a) Jesus is the Agent of Creation
 - (1) No matter what else we may say, we must understand that we owe even our existence to God. Without God creating us we would have no story. Our story is a part of His story.
 - b) Jesus is the Life Giver
 - (1) "In Him was life..."
 - (2) "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10)
 - c) Jesus is the Light Giver

- (1) The Bible uses the metaphor of light to represent moral purity, holiness, as well as giving direction.
 - (2) The Light of Jesus is “still shining” and the darkness could not overthrow it.
 - (3) “There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.” (John 1:9)
 - (4) Jesus is an eternally powerful lighthouse that still beckons people to the safe harbor of the gospel.
- C. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light, which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. (John 1:6 - 9)
1. The John mentioned here is John the Baptist, not the author of this gospel, John the Beloved. Why did God send John the Baptist? “He came as a witness, to testify about the Light.” “He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.” Notice the phrase between those two though: “so that all might believe through him.” John the Baptist’s ministry was meant to bring people to believe in Jesus.
 2. How does this help us answer the question, “how does a person become a child of God?” Not only has God created us and beckons us to life by the Light of Christ, He also has revealed Himself through preachers and prophets.
 3. But what does it say? “The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” - that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him in whom they have heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!” (Romans 10:8 - 15)
- D. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:10 - 13)
1. So the Creator, the Life Giver, the Light comes into the world He created but “the world did not know Him.”
 2. There is a play on words used in verse 11. He came to His own [creation] but His own [people - the Hebrews] did not receive Him.
 - a) Obviously there were hundreds of Jews who did receive Christ. John simply means that the majority of the Jewish people and their leaders rejected the Lord Jesus.
- E. Now we come back to verses 12 and 13: But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12)

1. Notice that this verse is intended to be a direct comparison of those who “did not receive Him” in verse 11. There are people who will not receive Jesus and there are people who will. I believe that each of us is responsible for that decision. You are responsible to receive Christ as your Lord and Savior. No one else can do it for you and you cannot claim that God has not given adequate information or revelation.
2. But what does it mean to receive Jesus?
 - a) The idea here is to welcome or celebrate His coming.
 - b) John gives us another key to understanding what receiving Jesus looks like: “even to those who believe in His name.”
 - (1) In the ancient world, someone’s name was equivalent to their nature, existence, and purpose.
 - (2) Those who receive Christ are those who believe in His name, in who He is and what He has done.
 - c) It is only those who receive Christ, believe in Christ’s name, that are given the right to become children of God. You cannot demand to be a child of God. You cannot earn it or deserve it. It is a gift of grace that God decides to offer to those who put their faith in Jesus.
 - d) In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13 - 14)
 - (1) Hear the gospel
 - (2) Believe in Jesus
 - (a) The word ‘believe’ has a much deeper meaning in Greek than it does in English. We use ‘believe’ mostly as an word to describe intellectual activity. For example, whether or not someone believes in evolution or Santa Claus. However, the Greek word describes a dependent relationship. It could be translated as “trust in” or “rely upon.”
 - (b) To believe in Jesus is to “rely upon” or “trust in” His life, death, and resurrection for your salvation.
 - (3) Be sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit
3. John sums up this section by saying that these people who receive Jesus “were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”
 - a) Not by blood - this is not an inherited quality. Each person must receive Christ personally.
 - b) Not by the will of the flesh or will of man - this is not an earned quality. You can’t work hard enough, you can’t be good enough to make God offer you this gift. He has offered it because of His own mercy and lovingkindness and we must accept His gift on His terms or be eternally lost.

III. The Purpose of Being a Child of God

- A. To say it simply, the purpose of a child of God is the same purpose of everything else in creation: to glorify God.
 1. Our Works

- a) “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14 - 16)
 - b) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)
 - c) Even so, faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. (James 2:17)
2. Our Words
- a) For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things out not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh. (James 3:7 - 12)
 - b) “For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.” (Matthew 12:34b)
3. Our Witness
- a) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Peter 2:9)
 - b) Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses abasing them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:17 - 21)

IV. The Provision of Being a Child of God

A. Gifts

- 1. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:7 - 11)
- 2. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (James 1:16 - 17)

B. Grace

1. For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (John 1:16 - 18)

V Conclusion and Application