

BEING THE CHILDREN OF GOD

In the apostle John's gospel account he states concerning Jesus, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11-12). From these few words, we can garner several important facts.

We might first learn that it is up to man to receive Jesus Christ for who He really is or to reject Him. In other words, we have free choice in this matter. "God so loved the **world** (emphasis mine, RCO) that he gave his only begotten Son..." (John 3:16). "Whosoever will" is invited to "take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). Son-ship is offered only because of the great love of God for man. John wrote, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God..." (I John 3:1). If one is not one of the children of God, it is his or her own fault, not Gods.

Secondly, we learn that it takes more than believing in Jesus Christ to make one a child of God. Notice that those that receive and believe have the "power to become the sons of God". If they have the power to become one of God's sons, then they cannot yet be the sons of God. The apostle Paul tells us where that power to become a son of God can be found. He says concerning the gospel of Christ, "...it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (Rom. 1:16). Paul writing to Titus said, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men" (Tit. 2:11). The first word of the next verse is however an important factor in seeing the connection of the grace of God to the power to become the sons of God. It is the word, "Teaching". God's word teaches us how to become one of the children of God, as well as teaching us how to faithfully behave as the children of God.

Though not mentioned in John 1:11-12, the importance of being counted as one of God's children is seen in many other passages in the New Testament. Paul wrote, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..." (Rom. 8:16-17). Peter tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ, "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" I Pet. 1:3-4).

Robert

IS THY HEART RIGHT WITH GOD?

After Philip converted a number of the Samaritans, Peter and John went down to Samaria, laying hands on them, bestowing the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Simon, who before time had been considered great among the Samaritans, but had now been baptized into Christ, upon seeing that it was through the laying on of the apostles hands that the Holy Spirit was given, offered money for the power to bestow gifts upon others as the apostles could. Among other things, Peter told him, "...thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:21). One can really trace any and all disobedience to God to that central problem. For as Solomon said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

In order to be pleasing to God, one must love God with all his heart. Jesus told the rich young lawyer in answer to his question of which is the great commandment in the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37). One who does not so love God is one whose heart is not right in the sight of God.

Jesus told His disciples that the unbelieving Jews were the fulfillment of a prophecy of Isaiah (Matt. 13:14). He then said, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:15). The Bible heart is the part of man with which he thinks and understands. The writer of Hebrews said that the word of God "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). In the parable of the soils, the fourth soil, the good ground upon which the seed fell, sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold (Luke 8:8) was revealed by the Lord to be "...they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). On Pentecost, when Peter preached and those who were pricked in their heart and desired to know what they needed to do, they were told to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:37-38). "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized..." (Acts 2:41). He who does not sincerely seek to know God's will and then upon learning what God would have him to do, obey that word has a heart that is not right in the sight of God. Is thy heart right in the sight of God? *Tilis*