

## ARE YOU A CHILD OF GOD? John 1:12-13

The good news of **John 1:12-13** is preceded by bad news. Verse 10 says, "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him." This is one of the saddest statements in the Bible. But it gets worse. Verse 11 says: "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him." What a tragedy! When Jesus came, the world did not know its creator and Israel did not receive its Messiah. But there is good news. **John 1:12** says: "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." This verse is clear:

- Not everyone is a child of God.
- Not everyone is saved.
- Not everyone is right with God.
- Not everyone has eternal life.
- Not everyone will go to heaven.

There is no such thing as the universal fatherhood of God or the universal brotherhood of man. It is said, "We're all God's children." Is that what the Bible teaches? **Malachi 2:10** says: "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? And **Acts 17:28** says: "For we are indeed his offspring." These and other passages describe God as the Father of humanity in that he created us. In that sense, God is the Father of all creation. **James 1:17** calls God "the Father of lights." But God does not have a personal relationship with the lights. And the lights will not be in heaven. Likewise, God is the Father of all humanity only in the sense that he is the Creator and Sustainer of everything. But not every person is a child of God.

In **John 8:44**, Jesus says to unbelievers, "You are of your father the devil." And **Ephesians 5:5-6** says: "For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let not one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." And **1 John 3:10** says: "By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." There is no such thing as one spiritual family of mankind under the universal fatherhood of God. The only way you can become a child of God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In **John 3:5-7** Jesus told Nicodemus, "Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" Are you born again? Are you saved? Are you a child of God? **John 1:12-13** identifies four birthmarks of a true child of God.

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## I. YOU BECOME GOD'S CHILD IN JESUS CHRIST ALONE.

**John 1:11-12** says: "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." This statement rejects the error of universalism that claims every human is a child of God who is on his or her way to heaven. It also rejects the pluralism, ecumenicalism, and political correctness, that claims all religions are the same and that any religion you choose will get you to God. The text teaches that some people are God's children, while many are not. It also teaches that only people who have the spiritual right to consider themselves God's children are those who have a right relationship with God's Son, Jesus Christ. "Wait a minute," I hear someone saying. "Do you believe a person is going to hell if they don't believe in Jesus, even if he or she is religious, moral, devout, charitable, and sincere?" In a word, "YES." I do not say this because I am intolerant. I believe the Bible is the authoritative and unfailing word of God. And the Bible teaches the only people who have the right to become children of God are those who receive Jesus Christ.

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Here's my key ring. It has nine keys on it. For the most part, they all look alike. However, only one of them will get you into my house. It doesn't matter that the other keys look like the right one or are shaped like the right one. It doesn't even matter that most of them will fit into the keyhole. Only one will get you into my house. Likewise, it doesn't matter how many different religions claim to be of God. There is only one key to heaven. There's only one way to God. There's only one way to become a child of God. You must receive God's only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. **A.W. TOZER** said it well: "Christ is not one of many ways to approach God, nor is he the best of several ways; he is the only way." Bottom-line: You must receive Jesus Christ to become a child of God. In **John 14:6** Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." **Acts 4:12** says, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. And **1 Timothy 2:5** says, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

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Let's say you wander into the local Religion Mega-Mart. Your objective is to pick up a genuine, high-quality religion. What would you be shopping for? Convenience? Politically correct moral teachings? Openness to other beliefs? Uplifting ceremonies? If your answer is yes to any of the above, you would probably walk right past the Christianity aisle. You see, Christianity sets itself apart from other religions, not only because of its message, but also because of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the source, subject, and substance of our message. To be a child of God, you must do more than receive the teachings of Christ. You must receive Christ himself. The word "receive" means to welcome a visitor into your home. It's what happens when someone knocks at your door and you open the door and invite him or her to come in. To receive Christ means to welcome him as an honored guest and

invite him to make your heart his home. Receiving Jesus means that when Jesus offers himself to you, you welcome him into your life for what he is.

- If he comes to you as Savior, you welcome his salvation.
- If he comes to you as Lord, you welcome his rule.
- If he comes to you as King, you welcome his authority.
- If he comes to you as Protector, you welcome his protection.
- If he comes to you as Counselor, you welcome his guidance.

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Let me ask you a question: Have you received Jesus as Savior and Lord? No, I didn't ask about your biblical knowledge, moral standards, or church attendance. I asked whether you have confessed with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believed in your heart that God has raised him from the dead. If you haven't, I plead with you to receive him today! **2 Corinthians 6:2** says: Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." There comes a time when you must decide where you stand with Jesus. No one can sit on the fence forever. In fact, not to decide is a decision. If you don't say yes to Jesus, you are actually saying no. So, receive him today, for Jesus Christ is the only hope of salvation. **Romans 10:13** says: "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

MY HOPE IS BUILT ON NOTHING LESS THAN JESUS BLOOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS  
I DARE NOT TRUST THE SWEETEST FRAME, BUT WHOLLY LEAN ON JESUS' NAME  
ON CHRIST, THE SOLID ROCK I STAND, ALL OTHER GROUND IS SINKING SAND  
ALL OTHER GROUND IS SINKING SAND.

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## II. YOU BECOME GOD'S CHILD THROUGH FAITH ALONE.

**John 1:12** begins by telling us that a person must receive Christ to become a child of God. Then it qualifies what it means to receive Christ: "who believed in his name." To receive Christ is to believe in his name. That's what Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailor in **Acts 16**. They were arrested for preaching the gospel. At midnight, they began to pray and sing praises to God. And a great earthquake rocked the foundation of the prison, so that everyone's chains fell off and all the cells opened. When the jailor saw this, he prepared to commit suicide, rather than face his superiors. But Paul cried out to him, "Don't hurt yourself. We haven't gone anywhere." The jailor was so moved that he rushed into their cell and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" **Acts 16:31** reports: "And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.'"

I don't know what's better about that answer, what they said or what they didn't say. They didn't tell him he had to perform good works, go on a pilgrimage, give them money, stop eating certain foods, or start observing certain religious holy days. They didn't even say he needed to join the church or be baptized. He did get baptized that night. And he was probably one of the founding members of the church at Philippi. But that's not what saved him. Those things were the signs, proof,

and response to his salvation. The jailor simply believed and was saved. One moment he was not saved. The next moment he was. What brought him to salvation was simple faith in Jesus. And that's all it takes today: BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND YOU WILL BE SAVED. **John 5:24** says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." **Romans 4:4-5** says, "Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness." **Galatians 3:26** says, "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith."

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What does it mean to believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? In the Bible, a person's name was more than just a way to identify someone or to distinguish one person from another. A person's name represented their nature, character, personality, history, and authority. That's why scripture often shows us God changing people's names when he converts them. It's God's way of saying, "This is what you were. But you are now a new person. So, I'm changing your name to inform you and the world that you are no longer what you used to be." In scripture, your name represents who you are.

So when John says that salvation comes to those who believe in the name of Jesus, he is saying that salvation comes to those who believe that Jesus is who scripture identifies him to be, he accomplished what scripture claims he performed, and he's able to do what scripture promises. This is significant, because there are those who teach an easy believism or cheap gospel that offers salvation without repentance of sin, conversion of heart, or submission to Christ. Consequently, there are many who walk in a false presumption of salvation because they treat the Bread of Life like a cafeteria that allows them to claim salvation, follow the parts of Christianity they choose, and reject whatever parts they don't like. But the minimum a person must believe about Christ to be saved is everything! You must believe in his virgin birth, virtuous life, vicarious death, victorious resurrection, and visible return. You do not have to understand everything before you can be saved. But you cannot reject what the Bible says about Christ and be saved.

**Ephesians 2:8** says: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." Even the ability to believe in the name of Jesus is God's grace gift. That's why you shouldn't debate and argue with unbelievers. Just proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Make sure the practice of your faith doesn't contradict the profession of your faith. And pray that God would soften hard hearts, open blind eyes, and change the minds of those who reject his Son. **John 3:16-19** says: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only

Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil.”

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### III. YOU BECOME GOD’S CHILD BY GRACE ALONE.

Verse 12 states: “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” The word “right” refers to authority, jurisdiction, or freedom of activity. To say those who receive Jesus have the right to become children of God is to say those who Jesus saves are saved for sure. It means those who have salvation can also have assurance of that salvation. Mark it down: Christians have a know-so salvation. **1 John 5:12-13** says: “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.” So when John says that we have the right to become God’s children in Christ, he is proclaiming the assurance of salvation. At the same time, the text seeks to make sure we base our assurance on the right foundation by saying: “He gave the right to become children of God.”

Did you get that? Jesus gives you the right to become a child of God. You don’t deserve the right. You don’t earn the right. And you don’t merit the right. He gives it. The right to become the children of God is a gift of grace. When we speak of God’s grace, it means that God offers salvation to us even though we don’t deserve it. That may sound too good to be true; but it’s the Gospel.

- If I said you could be saved for \$20, who would not pay it?
- If I said you must walk a hundred miles, we’d all line up tomorrow morning.
- If I said God will justify you if you endure a twenty-minute beating, would we not endure the pain and count it a small cost?

But if I say, “Free, free, God’s grace is free,” something in the human heart rebels. But you either take salvation as a free gift of grace or you don’t take it at all. **Romans 6:23** says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” **Ephesians 2:4-5** says, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved. **Titus 2:11** says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.”

**In his book, “God’s Outrageous Claims,” Lee Strobel tells of an acquaintance who called with an embarrassing request: His little girl had been caught shoplifting from the church bookstore, and he wanted to know if Strobel would represent the church so she could come and apologize. Strobel agreed. The next day, the parents and their eight-year-old trooped into his office. Sniffling, the girl confessed, “Well, I was in the bookstore after service and saw a book I really wanted. But I didn’t have any money.” As tears rolled down her cheeks, she continued, “So I put the book under my coat and took it. I knew it was wrong. And I’m sorry. I’ll never do it again. Honest!” Strobel commended her brave confession and asked what she thought the appropriate**

punishment should be. She shrugged her shoulders. Strobel said, "I understand the book cost five dollars. I think it would be fair if you paid the bookstore five dollars, plus three times that amount, which would make the total twenty dollars. Do you think that would be fair?" "Yes," she murmured. She could see the fairness in that. Now there was fear in her eyes. Twenty dollars is a mountain of money for a little kid. Strobel then wrote a personal check for the full amount. He explained: "I'm going to pay your penalty so you don't have to. Do you know why I'd do that?" Because I love you. Because I care about you. Because you are valuable to me. And please remember this: that's how Jesus feels about you, too. Except even more!

That's a perfect illustration of what it means to be saved by grace. Distill of the theological terms, doctrinal definitions, and exegetical explanations, and the gospel is essentially this: WE OWED A DEBT WE COULD NOT PAY. AND JESUS CHRIST PAID A DEBT THAT HE DID NOT OWE. **2 Corinthians 5:21** says: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

I HEAR THE SAVIOR SAY, "THY STRENGTH INDEED IS SMALL!  
CHILD OF WEAKNESS, WATCH AND PRAY, FIND IN ME THINE ALL IN ALL."  
JESUS PAID IT ALL, ALL TO HIM I OWE.  
SIN HAD LEFT A CRIMSON STAIN – HE WASHED IT WHITE AS SNOW.

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#### **IV. YOU BECOME GOD'S CHILD TO THE GLORY OF GOD ALONE.**

Verse 12 tells us how to become a child of God: Then verse 13 tells us what cannot make you a child of God: "who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor the will of man, but of God." The three negative statements in this verse expose the wrong way to become a child of God. First, you do not become a child of God through human descent. It is not of blood. Salvation is not come through family lineage. It's not in the genes. There are a lot of things we get from our parents. Salvation is not one of them. Likewise, you do not become a child of God by human desire. It is not of the will of the flesh. The will of the flesh cannot save you because the flesh cannot will to be saved. Freewill isn't really free. You are free to do what you want. But you are not free to do what you ought. The will is in bondage to sin that separates us from God. So the flesh will never will to be saved. And you do not become a child of God through human design. It is not of the will of man. Human determination accomplishes remarkable things. It took man to the moon. But it cannot take man to heaven. We have no more to do with our spiritual birth than we did with our natural birth.

When my mother gave birth to me on February 11, 1973, reality was established for me independent of my participation. I didn't have anything to do with it. I didn't say, "H.B. Sr. and Ellen Louise seem like nice people. I think I'll choose them to be my parents." I did not say, "I think I want to be a boy, instead of a girl." I didn't say, "I want to be born with asthma. I would like to be short and dark-skinned. And make sure I'm born in Los Angeles." I had nothing to do with it. I found out what happened after the fact. Likewise, in my spiritual rebirth, I had nothing to

do with it. It wasn't because I was a preacher's kid. It wasn't because I grew up in church. It wasn't because I was special in any way. God alone was responsible for my salvation. God did it all. Verse 12 says we must believe and receive Christ. But verse 13 makes it clear that receiving and believing is not what saves you. We are born "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor the will of man, but of God."

- Salvation is of the Lord.
- Salvation is a work of God from first to last.
- The power of regeneration rests with God alone.
- Divine sovereignty produces the new birth, not human effort.
- Becoming a child of God is exclusively an act of God.

Salvation is all of grace that it may be all of God. And it is all of God that it may be all to his glory. In his comments on this verse, **JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE** spoke of the "SEESAW" principle of theology. You know how a seesaw operates. When Johnny is down at the bottom, Suzie is up at the top. And when Suzie is down, Johnny is up. But they cannot both be up at the same time. And that's the way it is with salvation. You and God cannot both be up at the same time. If you exalt self in your thinking, so that you are able to take care of yourself spiritually and eventually inch your way into heaven, God will be down and there will not be much need for him. But if you are down where you should be, then God will be up where he belongs. God's children are saved to the glory of God alone. Yes, we are saved in Christ, who is the Son of God. We are saved through faith, but faith is a gift of God. We are saved by grace, but that grace is God's unmerited favor. We are saved through faith, but that faith comes from God. **Romans 11:36** says: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone to the glory of God alone.

DOWN AT THE CROSS WHERE MY SAVIOR DIED  
DOWN WHERE FOR CLEANSING FROM SIN I CRIED  
THERE TO MY HEART WAS THE BLOOD APPLIED  
GLORY TO HIS NAME!

I AM SO WONDROUSLY SAVED FROM SIN  
JESUS SO SWEETLY ABIDES WITHIN  
THERE, AT THE CROSS WHERE HE TOOK ME IN  
GLORY TO HIS NAME!

O PRECIOUS FOUNTAIN THAT SAVES FROM SIN  
I AM SO GLAD I HAVE ENTERED IN  
THERE JESUS SAVES AND HE KEEPS ME CLEAN  
GLORY TO HIS NAME!

COME TO THIS FOUNTAIN SO RICH AND SWEET  
CAST THEY POUR SOUL AT THE SAVIOR'S FEET  
PLUNGE IN TODAY AND BE MADE COMPLETE  
GLORY TO HIS NAME!