

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES

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The Right To Become Children of God

John 1:11-12

Who has the right to become a child of God? Someone may say, "why everyone, of course." Others may claim that just a certain number of people have that right. We want to study the question, first from the viewpoint of man, then in the light of God's holy word.

The Universalist: The universalist believes that everyone will be saved. God is so good that He would never condemn anyone to eternal punishment. Now there is no doubt that God wants everyone to be saved. It is also true that God is a God of love and compassion. But God also demands obedience on the part of man. We are told in 2Peter 3:9 that "God is not slack concerning his promises as some count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance." God wants all men to come to repentance. The fact that God is not willing for men to perish, is in itself an indication that some will. In Hebrews 5:9 the scripture says that "God is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." Note: "to all them that obey him." What about those who do not obey him? He, obviously, is not the author of eternal salvation to them. Second Peter 3:7 says "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Some men are going to be lost. The doctrine of universal salvation is not true.

Foreordination and Predestination: This doctrine holds that certain people are predestined to eternal life, while others are predestined to eternal punishment. The church creed that teaches such an idea states: "By the decree of God, or the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestined and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished."

This creed overlooks and fails to recognize the free moral agency of man. In the design of this creed man has no power of choice. His eternal outcome is fixed even before he is born and he can do nothing to change it. If predestined to eternal life, he cannot lose it. If predestined to eternal punishment, he cannot ever be saved. What a terrible and pitiful doctrine. If we believed such, we would have to conclude that regardless of how sincere one sought the Lord, if he had been in that number foreordained to punishment, there would be no way for him to ever be saved. Who can believe this how one becomes a child of God?

Total Depravity: Others teach that everyone is born in sin. That we inherited the sin of Adam and as a result enter this world in a depraved state. On the other hand the scriptures

teach that sin is a transgression of God's law, and that we become sinners when we break the Law of God 1John 5:16. We do not inherit sin, but are responsible for our own sins. Ezekiel 18:20 "The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Babies and young children are not sinners. One becomes a sinner when he/she reaches the age of accountability to God. At that point knowing right from wrong, they choose to do that which is wrong and thus sin. But no one is born into such a state.

Just how does one become a child of God? Note carefully our text John 1:11-12 "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." The ones who have the right to become children of God, are the ones who "believe on his name." Now note that the scripture did not say "those who believe on his name ARE the children of God." Just believing on Christ does not make one a child of God. In order to prove that, note the following scriptures:

John 8:31 "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him if ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples." These Jews believed on Jesus. However in order for them to be disciples, they must "abide in His word." Did they? Notice what verse 44 says: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will do ." As believers they had the right to become children of God. But they did not exercise that right. They failed to follow Jesus. Hence they were of the devil.

John 12:42-42 "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they would not confess him..." For fear, for popularity they refused to confess Jesus. As a result they were lost, even though they believed on Jesus. Believing gave them the right to become children of God, but unfortunately they did not complete their obedience.

Acts 26:19-29 In these verses Paul preaches to Agrippa, a king. He asked him "believest thou the prophets, I know thou believest." Agrippa was a believer. However, his reply to Paul was "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." He was not a Christian even though he was a believer. He was just "almost" a Christian. Almost is not all together. Almost is not good enough. There are a lot of almost Christians. People who believe, but do not follow through with gospel obedience.

Let us not notice some believers who actually became Christians. We have this account in Acts Chapter 2. After they heard the word of God they cried out "what must we do?" They were convinced of their sin. They realized that they had crucified the innocent Christ. They now believed that he was indeed the Son of God. Being in the grip of conscience, they wanted to act upon that knowledge. Peter told them in v. 38 to "repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Christ for the remission of sins..." When they did this, they were saved according to verse 47 and they were added to the church. This was a situation where the believers became children of God. Paul said "for we are all the children

of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Galatians 3:27

"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are new" 2Corinthians 5:17. When one becomes a believer, he/she has the right or power to become a child of God. As a believer they should repent of sin, confess Christ and be buried in baptism for the remission of sins. Then and only then are they children of God. Just believing did not make them a Christian. It did not save them. It did not add them to the church. It did not put them into Christ. But it did give them a right to become a child of God by complying with the words of Christ, by abiding in His word and thereby becoming one of His Children.