

- CHILD OF GOD -

"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."

(Colossians 1:13)



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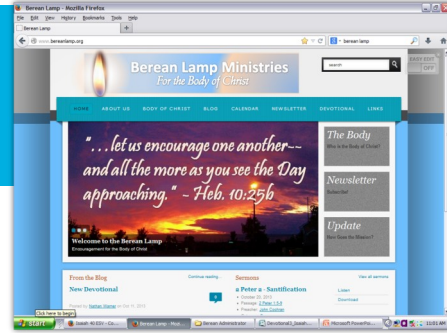


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The Berean Lamp Ministry seeks to:

1. Encourage and strengthen the Body of Christ by providing the means for each of its members to share their spiritual gifts with one another, rooted in the Word of God, thereby growing into deeper union with one another and with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
2. Minister to non-believers; be a witness for Christ and a testimony to His Body in the world.

We would appreciate your help in contributing to the content and in spreading the work of this ministry. Thank you, and God bless.

- Pastor Scott Moller

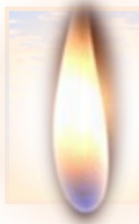
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Becoming Less

By Scott Moller

"Now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

(1 John 3:2 NIV)

In John chapter 3, John the Baptist was confronted with a supposed dilemma. It was brought to John's attention that Jesus was drawing more followers than John. Shouldn't he be concerned? Surprisingly, John responded, *"He must become greater, I must become less"* (John 3:30). John the Baptist understood what we so often forget. Being a Child of God is not about us but about the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The purpose of sanctification and becoming mature Christians is so that the world would see less of us and more of the true reflection of Jesus.

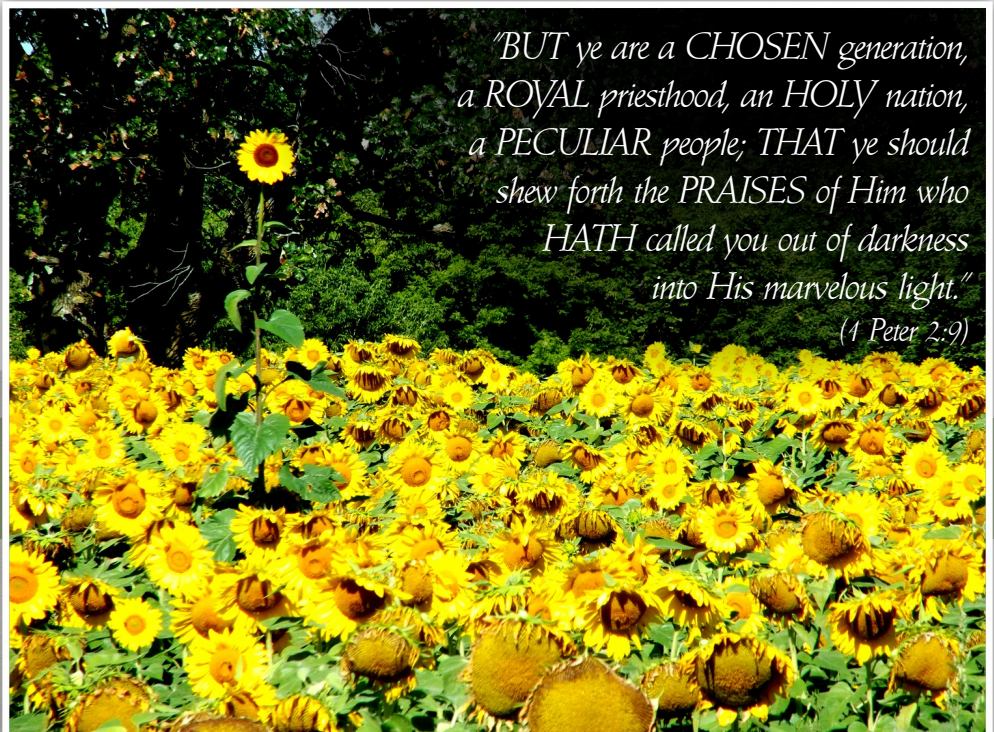
Jesus Christ is the perfect standard of a Child of God. He lived the completely obedient life, for He *"had no sin"* (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus continually set His will aside to be subject to the will of the Father as seen when He prayed to His Father, *"yet not*

my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). And *"being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!"* (Phil. 2:8)

We are to *"fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Heb. 12:2).

The great hope of the Child of God is becoming like the Son of God. The Apostle John gives us the promise that at Jesus' coming, *"we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"* (1 John 3:2b). We will be like Christ in His resurrection, as Paul describes in 1 Cor. 15, for Christ was the first-fruits of the resurrection, and we will follow later.

While in the world, we are subject to the curse of death and mortality, but as a Child of God we will have victory over death through Jesus Christ. Praise be to God!



"BUT ye are a CHOSEN generation, a ROYAL priesthood, an HOLY nation, a PECULIAR people; THAT ye should shew forth the PRAISES of Him who HATH called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."
(1 Peter 2:9)

Adoption into God's Family

By Nathan Warner

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:3-6 NASB)

Even before God founded the earth, He chose to adopt men and women out of His creation to enter His household and become His children. How amazing is that!

WHAT IS BIBLICAL ADOPTION?

Let's first establish what adoption is not. Adoption is not foster-care (a short-term solution without parental rights). Believers are not trial candidates who live in fear of being thrown out of God's house if they don't behave just right. When we are first brought into God's household, He doesn't say,

"Okay, kid, these are the rules! If you cause trouble or disobey me, I'll kick you back into the system and you can be someone else's problem. I don't have to deal with you – you aren't ultimately my responsibility. But, if you are good and I like you, we can see about making this a little more permanent."

If this was what God meant, He would have stuck with words like "slave" or "servant" to describe us and would never have used words like "adoption" or "son." As Jesus explained, *"Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed"* (John 8:34b-36). A slave has no right to

remain forever in his master's household – his stay there is dependent on his performance and the whims of His master. A son, however, does remain in his father's house forever.

Unlike foster-care, adoption of a child legally means they are permanently attached to the new parent with all rights and responsibilities – it is now a fact that *this* child BELONGS to *that* parent. The parent is declaring they are responsible for *that* child in all circumstances. Adoption also severs all ties to the powers and authorities that the child previously had belonged – those authorities that the children had looked to for protection, love, support, nourishment, and answers in their old life.

Adopted children have been transferred out from under one authority into the power of another authority – their new parent. In this way, God *"has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son"* (Colossians 1:13). Adoption is permanent and legally binding. There is no going back.

Also, the adopting parent promises to raise their new child in the same way as a natural child—with the same love, respect, care, education, and discipline. Just as *"God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:5-7).

God is promising to raise His adopted children in the same way as His only begotten Son Jesus. We are to grow to be like Him.

HOW IS ONE ADOPTED?

The process of adoption comes only through Salvation in Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be "saved." *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16 ESV). In order to be adopted, you must be "born of God,"

“born again,” “born of the spirit,” or “born again through the word.” As Scripture describes it: “*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is **born of God***” (1 John 5:1a), for “*as many as received Him [Jesus], 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).

The Holy Spirit is what re-births us as a new child that can now be adopted into God’s Household: “*Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born** again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?’ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’*” (John 3:3-6).

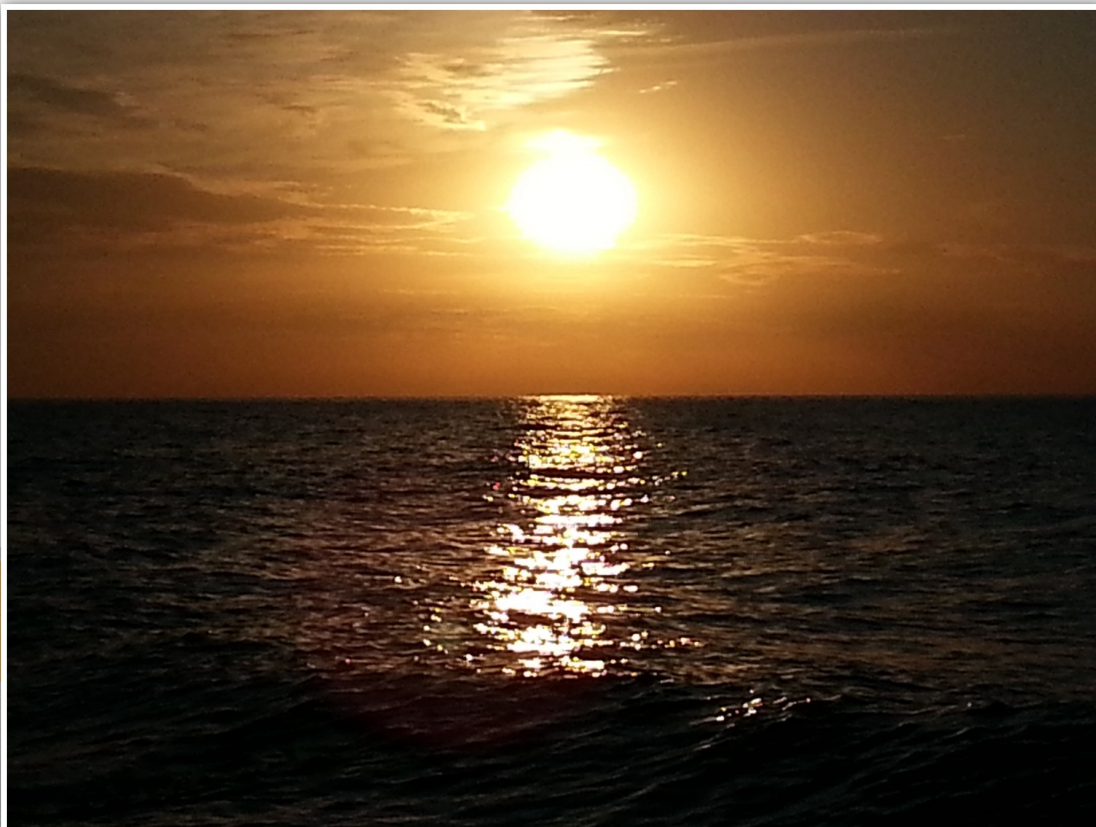
To be born again means to be recreated by

God’s seed: “*You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God*” (1 Peter 1:23); “*therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have been changed. We are a new creature, a new creation that has been born by the Holy Spirit.

HOW DO WE KNOW WE’RE ADOPTED?

Not everyone who claims to be adopted is actually adopted. This causes a great deal of confusion in the Church, as there are many false converts and false teachers who claim to be God’s children. To make it worse, we cannot tell if other people truly are adopted, because adoption is a “heart condition” that only God can see, for only God sees the exact nature of the heart and the inner work that He has done to change and adopt someone.

But God does tell us there are at least two ways we can know if we are adopted. First,



the Scriptures tells us we know by the testimony of the Holy Spirit indwelling us: *"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"* ***The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God***" (Romans 8:15-16).

Secondly, those who are God's children are disciplined by Him: *"MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES"* (Hebrews 12:5-6).

WHAT AGE DOES GOD SEE HIS ADOPTED CHILDREN AS?

Parents treat their 17-year old children very differently than their six-year old children. A lot of Believers seem to think we are like kids off to college with lots of independence. Scripture actually compares us to little children – young minors.

Jesus told His disciples, *"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3 NKJV). Age here is important because a father is responsible for the welfare of his children who are minors. No faithful father will allow his 6 year-old to run away, nor does he kick them out of his house. To do so would be to neglect the child.

The age of the child is also important in regards to the child's inheritance. Paul tells us, *"As long as the heir is a child [minor], he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into*

our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." (Galatians 4:1-7).

We see here that while a young child is not a slave in his father's house, he is treated no differently than a slave, even though he's going to inherit everything one day. But how is a child treated like a slave? Well, a parent of a 6 year-old is constantly commanding their child to, "Pick up your toys!" "Brush your teeth!" "Stop roughhousing!" "Go to your room!" "Come here!" A young child has no authority in their father's house. He is expected to obey his father without questioning him, even if he doesn't understand why he must do something. If he throws a tantrum or disobeys, he will have to endure the discipline of his father.

In verse 3, Paul explains that before we were adopted, we were children enslaved to the world, but because of Jesus, God has sent forth His Spirit to change us into His Sons, which causes us to cry like a young child looking to Him: "Abba! Father!"

Because we are God's Sons, we are heirs, but because God sees us as little children, we do not differ at all from slaves in His household (we can't have our own way). This helps us unify where Paul sometimes speaks of Believers as slaves to God, but other times he refers to them as sons of God.

Also, we can see here that the Holy Spirit is likely the manager/guardian Paul refers to in Galatians, for the Holy Spirit is raising us up to maturity through the life-long process of sanctification. The end of our sanctification period is "the date set by the Father" when we are to receive our inheritance of eternal life from Him and a place in the Kingdom of Christ. This date will be realized by each Believer at death or at the Rapture.

HOW DOES GOD RAISE HIS CHILDREN?

God will have His way in raising His children. We are under His Holy Spirit's guardianship, raising us up in maturity by the process of Sanctification, making us more like Jesus.

*"Now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in **sanctification**, and the outcome, eternal life" (Romans 6:22). "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14).*

The process of sanctification involves discipline to make us disciplined children: *"MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons...He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:5-11).*

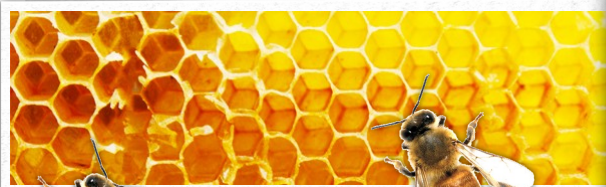
Discipline is not punishment, because punishment involves fear (1 John 4:18) – discipline is to make us disciplined sons so that *"we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:14-16), "so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10).*

WHY IS GOD RAISING HIS CHILDREN UP?

God is raising us up to share in His holiness: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4).* This inheritance is reserved in Heaven, which means none who are alive are mature enough yet to receive the inheritance. For as long as we are still living, the Spirit is still teaching us. During our *"stay on earth"* (1 Peter 1:17b), God gives us challenges, tests, and responsibilities to educate

"A PECULIAR People."

(Titus 2:14b)



By Kevin Tvedt

and train us up for our inheritance in Christ's Kingdom on earth during the Millennium – that we would be mature and responsible sons: *"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ"* (Colossians 3:23-24).

CONSEQUENCES FOR REBELLIOUS CHILDREN

The adopted Child of God still struggles with sin (1 John 1:8) - rebellion against their Heavenly Father.

Although we have been purchased from the god of this world and adopted out from under his authority over our lives, we may at times desire to return to the ways of the world that we lived under when we were children enslaved to it. Like the children of Israel who rebelled against God, longing for the times of their enslavement to Egypt, we also can rebel against our Heavenly Father. But like in any good home, there are also consequences for rebellious behavior in God's Household.

Some of these consequences may come in this life. God may let a disobedient child bear the consequences of their rebellion in order to discipline them. God allows His children to sin like a good parent must allow their child to bear the consequences of their actions so that they will learn about consequences for rebellious behavior—like a child who desires to touch the stove, refusing to listen to their parent who has said, "Don't touch the stove!"

As a Child of God lives this life, our sin can still cause serious difficulties and trouble—broken relationships, loss of reputation, health issues, etc. God does not necessarily prevent us from experiencing these consequences, because we need to understand the dangers of sin.

There are also consequences for disobedience that pertain to our inheritance after this life: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or*

bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). In this life, the Child of God is supposed to be fruitful in their growth as they mature on the foundation of their adoption, building upon it works that please their Father. These things will be tested in God's Holy presence, revealed in their true nature by fire: *"If any man's work which he has built on it [the foundation of Christ] remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire"* (1 Corinthians 3:14-15).

A good earthly picture of this is when a wealthy family is gathered together to receive the disbursement of their father's will—the inheritance he has allotted for each of them in his mighty estate. Some of the his children who he deemed worthy by their dedication to his instruction and who proved by their works that they were obedient children will receive large inheritances and responsibilities in the management his estate. Yet some of his children who were not as dedicated and obedient will receive less, and those who did not show discipline and were rebellious will receive nothing at all. This would be a very painful situation. However, all these heirs remain children of their father at the end of the disbursement and remain in his household.

We need to pay attention to the instruction and discipline of the Spirit. There are consequences for rebelliousness – in this life with discipline or after this life with our inheritance.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

Faithful children love their Father. They eagerly obey and learn from His instruction, and they accept discipline because they love and respect their father and want to be pleasing to Him and want to do the works that He does. Faithful children want to be like their father. This should be the motivation of beloved children. *"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children"* (Ephesians 5:1). Even so, amen.

Loving My Father's Will

By Ginny Larsen

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure." (1 John 3:1-3)

I remember a time when I was in Bible college, earnestly seeking God's direction and will for my life. I wanted to do something great for Him. Was He calling me to be a missionary? A pastor's wife? Did He have some fulltime ministry for me? I knew I wanted to give my whole life to serving Him, but how? I

was on my knees at a prayer meeting asking Him, "Lord! Please show me what You are calling me to be!" That still, small voice came to me, simply saying, "To be my child." I had been a Christian for 2 years. I had no idea what the Lord meant by that. "I AM Your child, Lord! What do you want me to be?" was my reply. But in my forty-some years of being a child of God, He has been showing me what it means to be His child. I am His child always, in every walk of life I am in, wherever that leads, and whatever work that calls me to, or whatever circumstance. I AM His child.

What an amazing thing to be actually a child of God – His offspring, His inheritance, His own family. The world wrongfully talks about the "brotherhood of man," claiming God is the Father of all, but the Bible tells us differently. God truly is the creator of all and calls all to be His children, but only those who are born of His seed and have His Spirit abiding in them have become His children. And we don't

*for at one time you
were darkness, but
now you are light in
the Lord. Walk as
children of light
(Eph. 5:8)*

Ginny Larsen

By Ginny Larsen

even fathom at this time what we will ultimately be when our redemption is complete. We only know we'll be like Him!

So what is He like? Sadly, the "church" of today has apostasized from a Biblical Christianity to a postmodern Christianity, and they've made their own "Jesus," whom they've decided is a much better fit for their lifestyle, dreams, and ambitions in this life. They've thrown out the Bible, and created their own "word," and they practice new-age mysticism rather than having the Holy Spirit. But those who want to know the real Jesus, those who want to find Him in truth, know that the one source of finding that is the book He gave us to reveal His truth to us, to reveal Himself to us, to give us a revelation of all that He will do and has done from beginning of time to the end of time in this world. Those who are His true children have something in common – they love their Father's will. They love His Word. It is from this Word and this Holy Spirit that they are born again and receive new life.

When we become His child, it's because of a new birth. It is not a decision to join a church, or to join a Christian mindset, or an ideology, or to start fixing yourself up to look like what you define as a Christian. It is an act of God. It is not an act of man.

"Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and 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'" (John 3:3-6). "But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, 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).

God Himself has to give you that "right" or "power" to make you His child. You cannot just decide, "I'm going to be a child of God from now on. I'm going to follow God's law and go to church, and join with other Chris-

tians and clean up my life." But when we see that we are so completely separated from Him, so lost, and so full of sin that He could never call us His own or have anything to do with us, then we see that He alone out of His own love and His own sacrifice by His blood made the only way that we could be justified before Him and cleansed from all our corruption. We see that He being God, is able to, by His power, remove that sin "as far as the east is from the west" and give us a whole new nature, a divine nature, by coming into our hearts, renewing it, and dwelling there, making us a whole new creature in Christ. It is then we are His child. It is ONLY then.

*"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. **Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him**" (Romans 8:9).*

If we are His child, it is because we are "of His seed," just as we are the biological children of our parents because we are born of the seed of our father. Those born of the earthly seed of their father have characteristics of their father. They will resemble their earthly parents and people will recognize them as being a part of that family. Those who are of the seed of God will also have His characteristics growing in them, so that they will be recognized as part of His family.

*"Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, **for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.** 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" (1 John 3:7-10).*

These characteristics come about in them because of the "seed" in them. Not because of their strong-enough willpower or their strong-enough faith to keep doing the right things or tow the line but because of the Spirit of God

Who now abides in them, Who remains in them forever.

*“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to **be with you forever**, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and **will be in you**” (John 14:16-17).*

Another characteristic of being His child is that the more we grow in this new life, the more we grow to be conformed to His image. We take on His nature, becoming like Him – and like Him, we love our Father’s will. Doing His will becomes our desire, not something we must submit to against our will. We have our fleshly human nature, and there is always a battle with it. The flesh is always lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit strives against the flesh. But His Spirit in us has power to raise us up above those fleshly lusts when we agree with Him and submit ourselves to Him, trusting in His power alone to “raise us up to newness of life.” It’s understanding our position in Him, as His child, and knowing what He has done in us (Ephesians 1 and 2) that enables us to walk according to the Spirit and not the flesh. It is not that we have a strong-enough will, but having been filled with His will through His Spirit, we have a “renewed will” – renewed by the Holy Spirit (Colossians 3:10, Titus 3:5).

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Galatians 5:16-18).

The more we walk in the Spirit, the more we love what He loves and the more we desire His will and to put away our own will. The more we trust our Father’s will, the more we will love His will. The flesh desires what makes it feel good and comfortable and satisfies its lust or pride. But when we see God’s will and love it, we are empowered to put aside the comforts and desires and pride of our flesh and embrace His will. The more we do so, the

more the love for that will grows in our hearts.

Many times we find a conflict in our soul with our will vs. God’s will. But as His child, we do want His will. We often let the flesh deceive us, however, in desiring to bring together His will and our own, and find ways to manipulate the Word of God to somehow convince ourselves His will is really the same as ours. We convince ourselves that God wants us to be happy and feel good and have a good life, so He must want what we want for ourselves. Even though the Bible may tell us what we desire is sin, we somehow let our emotions guide us into believing a lie. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)*

How dangerous that is! How dangerous it is to get away from His Word - His light that exposes the Truth. We cannot separate His Word from His will. We cannot separate His Word from Him. When we do, we believe the lie that our flesh and its lust have deceived us with. Sin is extremely deceitful and our only way of overcoming it is to abide in His Word, letting that Word and His will fill our spirits. Many of His children don’t resemble Him, sadly, because they have gotten away from listening to their Father’s voice and began listening to the voice of a stranger. If they are truly His children, His Spirit will continually be calling them back to the truth of His Word, and though He may chastise them for a time, it is for the purpose of restoring them, as a loving Father Who chastises the children He loves. He will not let His children go. He will chastise and correct. Many of His children suffer needlessly because of following their own heart rather than their heavenly Father’s. If they are His children, they will never feel comfortable outside of His will.

As His children, we will also suffer with Him, as Jesus suffered in this world. Because the world rejects God, they also reject His children. Because they hate the truth (which is Jesus Himself and His Word), they will hate those who love the truth, who obey, cling to, and keep His Word. Again we have a choice. Will we love our Father’s will, even to suffer

with Him, in order to do His will in this evil world? Will we give up our own will's desire for happiness in this world, possibly losing all earthly possessions or positions, in order to embrace our Father's will and share in the same sufferings Jesus did? Will we share in His shame - the shame of the cross - with Him, Who took on our shame? I think of the shame of my past sins and cringe. I am so grateful that Jesus took all my shame. How can I say no to accepting the shame this world gives me for identifying with Him? As His child, I must take humiliation, ridicule, embarrassment, and all that the world does to me because I am His. I desire to do that with thanksgiving, knowing what an honor it is to be counted worthy to do so. I pray more each day that my Father will enable me to grow in my love for His will, no matter what it costs me. I pray for each of us that during this awful dark hour in this world, we will stand in His light all the more, embracing His will, no matter how much the world

hates us for it.

Father, give us the power to do so, for it is You Who works in us to will and to do of Your good pleasure always. Amen.

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12-13)



By Natalie Warner

THE PRECIOUS RETURN OF A CHILD

(Based upon the parable of the prodigal son, found in Luke 15:11–32)

By Jane Titrud

There once was a young but confident son
Who felt the days serving his father were done.
So, he took his inheritance and moved far away
Where fleshly lust could have its own way.

*Immaturity coupled with self-confidence
Can exalt the flesh at the Father's expense.
Thinking of spiritual wealth as ones due
Can take one to places where sin can ensue.*

The money he squandered, as sin tasted sweet.
But then famine came and left nothing to eat.
So, he worked feeding swine to just stay alive,
But still had no food and could barely survive.

*Sin's lust can consume hefty spiritual sums,
But leaves the soul empty when reckoning comes.
It's wise to respect sin's power to enslave
And remember that works are unable to save.*

His dreams were once lofty, ambitions were big.
Yet, now what he longed for, he fed to a pig.
So, he thought to go home in humble retreat,
Knowing that there he'd have something to eat.

*At times, reality needs to set in
Before one can see the great cost of sin.
At that point what formerly seemed so restraining
Can finally be viewed as life sustaining.*

He did not expect to be welcomed as son
After the scandalous deeds he had done.
But fears and doubts were quickly erased,
For his father kissed him, and they embraced.

*The Father longs to restore His own.
He yearns for all sinners to find or come home.
His mercy and grace are beyond understanding,
But repentance needs no reprimanding.*

He said, "Father, I'm not your son by right.
"I've sinned against heaven and in your sight."
But the father clothed him in best robe and ring—
Then threw him a party that lacked not a thing!

*A child's genuine, heartfelt repentance
Is all that is needed to find full acceptance.
And righteousness that has been reinstated
Is especially worth being celebrated.*

His older brother heard the music and dance
But resented him wasting his inheritance.
So, the father explained and turned things around,
For a son that was lost had now been found.

*Sometimes the vastness of mercy extended
Leaves an unfaltering brother offended.
But the Spirit of God intercedes and implores
For the child of God whom the Father restores.*

The moral of the story, or Jesus' intent,
Was to show God's mercy for all who repent.
For some who thought they were better than others
Resented the grace Jesus showed sinful brothers.

*No one deserves nor comprehends grace,
But we know the Father whom someday we'll face
And that pride is a sin like any other,
So we must not resent a repentant brother.*

Another thing here the LORD helps us to see
Is that leaving the Father means insecurity.
For apart from the Father, we'd be lost and dead.
Yet, a child who returns will be found and fed.

*The Father and His angels gladly rejoice
Over every soul who makes the right choice.
The choice is one between life and death
And concerns each one 'till the very last breath.*

A Scriptural Primer: CHILD OF GOD

Our identity as a child of God through Jesus Christ is how the Father sees us. This beautiful reality begins with ADOPTION. It is at this moment that everything changes for us, for prior to this moment, we lived as slaves under the authority of satan's kingdom, but we are now transferred out from it into the Kingdom of Heaven by becoming children of God the Father. Before this moment, we are all "dead" to God because of sin and the FALL—we are children of the world enslaved to satan's kingdom:

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:1-10 NASB).

THE SON OF GOD

Adoption was made possible by God's Son coming into the world. Jesus Christ is God's only "natural" Son. Jesus made our adoption possible by purchasing us from our slavery to

satan by payment with His own life. Because of sin, we were separated from God's protection and under His judgment. Jesus took the place of each of us before God's judgment and took the penalty for our sins—death and complete separation from God. Yet, death could not keep Him, and He rose again. In His death, God's Son "exonerated" from judgment and penalty everyone who accepts His substitution for them, and in His resurrection, He intercedes for everyone who has come to God through Him. We have been reconciled to God through Jesus! Jesus freed us from satan's enslavement of us through sin's condemnation resulting in death: *"Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed'" (John 8:34-36).*

"By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9).

"But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:9-10).

"Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

In God's mercy, He has always desired mankind to be reconciled to Him in love: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!" (Luke 13:34).*

ADOPTION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

The Jews didn't understand "adoption" because they believed "God's children" were those in Abraham's bloodline. They believed that their salvation came by their genetic relation to Abraham. This is why Jesus confronted them and said, *"And do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham"* (Matthew 3:9).

Paul explains that genetics has nothing to do with what makes a Believer: *"Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, **be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.** The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU' So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer"* (Galatians 3:6-8).

The Children of God are not a family of particular genes or bloodlines. They are not a family planned by mankind: *"He [Jesus] 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 1:11-13).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:3-6).

Jesus revealed to Nicodemus that the children of God are born again by the Spirit: *"Jesus an-*



swered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into 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 be amazed that I said to you, "You must be born again." The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit'" (John 3:3-8).

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the **child** born of Him" (1 John 5:1).

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27).

When we receive Christ, God's Holy Spirit "adopts" us. He changes, guards, manages, and leads us: "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:14-17).

As adopted children of God, we are heirs to an immeasurable inheritance, beginning with eternal life (a free gift of grace through Jesus Christ) and additional "gifts" and "crowns" (given to us for our works for God on earth). We are adopted while still living in the world, and while we are here, we are "little children" or minors in God's eyes: "And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and

said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven'" (Matthew 18:2-4).

"But Jesus said, 'Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'" (Matthew 19:14).

This means we are not yet "of age" to receive our inheritance (hence why we do not have eternal life presently), and we are commanded to obey God in all things as a slave or bondservant. Paul makes sense of this in Galatians when he says, "As long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father" (Galatians 4:1-2). Like any six-year-old, the adopted child of God cannot have their own way. Perhaps the guardians and managers here refer to the Holy Spirit, which Paul said in Romans "leads" the Sons of God. Paul then compares God's management of His children to when we were children of the world before adoption: "So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:3-7).

It is important to note that only sons received an inheritance from their father in Jewish custom, which is why Scripture refers to all Believers as "sons" regardless of whether they are male or female, because all God's children will receive an inheritance from their Father:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great

mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4).

While we live in the world, we eagerly await the manifestation of our inheritance, for though we have been adopted by God, we are still subject to the Fall and struggle with our flesh nature, groaning within ourselves: *“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:20-23).*

THE WORLD HATES GOD’S CHILDREN

“And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also” (Galatians 4:28-29).

CHILDREN ARE TO IMITATE THEIR HEAVENLY FATHER

Jesus is God’s only “natural” Son. We are adopted, yet God treats us no differently, and we are to follow the example of Jesus, the “first-born” (Romans 8:29). Jesus perfectly imitated His Father, as we are to do also:

“Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works

than these, so that you will marvel. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes” (John 5:19-21).

“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).

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Ephesians 5:1-2).

A child is raised to do the works of their father. *“They [the Jews] answered and said to Him, ‘Abraham is our father.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham’” (John 8:39).*

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain” (Philippians 2:14-16).

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called **sons** of God” (Matthew 5:9).*

“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10).

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:44-45).

“Therefore do not be partakers with them; for

you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:7-10).

Proverbs gives children good direction: *“Give me your heart, my son, And let your eyes delight in my ways” (Proverbs 23:26).*

LEARNING OBEDIENCE AS SONS

“In the days of His flesh, He [Jesus] offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:7-9).

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your

behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY’” (1 Peter 1:13-16).

GOD DISCIPLINES—CORRECTS, INSTRUCTS, EDUCATES—HIS CHILDREN

Under the Holy Spirit’s guardianship, we are being sanctified (cleansed, set apart) for God: *“Now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in **sanctification**, and the outcome, eternal life” (Romans 6:22).*

God sanctifies His children by raising them to be educated and disciplined in His ways so that they will be useful and fruitful in His Kingdom. *“You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.’ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not dis-*



*“BLESSED are the PEACEMAKERS, for they shall be CALLED sons of GOD.”
(Matthew 5:9)*

cipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:4-11).

“For whom the Lord loves He reproves, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights” (Proverbs 3:12).

“A wise son accepts his father’s discipline, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke” (Proverbs 13:1).

WE ARE BEING RAISED—NURTURED, EDUCATED, INSTRUCTED—TO BE LIKE JESUS

The Holy Spirit’s purpose in managing the children of God in sanctification is to raise them to be like the “first-born” Jesus Who was perfectly sanctified for God.

Jesus is the “first born” and is set over God’s household: *“Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end” (Hebrews 3:5-6).*

We must be in God’s Word, for it nourishes us and sustains us to grow in Christ: *“Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1 Peter 2:1-3).*

We should apply ourselves to the Holy Spirit’s leadership and instruction in the Word. In this way, we will mature so that we will be useful and fruitful to our Heavenly Father both in this life and in the inheritance He has for us in the eternal Kingdom of His Son: *“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you” (2 Peter 1:2-11).*

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:1-3).

God desires His children to grow in maturity to be like His Son—for this reason, **God has instituted the Church:** *“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming”* (Ephesians 4:11-14).

Faithful parents make their children do things that are uncomfortable for them, but which are necessary for them to grow in maturity. God is a faithful parent and everything He does and allows in our lives is for our good (even if it feels hard to us): *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us”* (Romans 8:28-34).

GOD PROTECTS AND KEEPS HIS CHILDREN

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just

as it is written, ‘FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35-39).

“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

“But Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:24-25).

“For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

“That in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:5-8).

THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE ADOPTED WON’T LAST FOREVER

The “Church age” (from Christ’s ascension to the present day) is a time of God’s mercy and grace – it is a time of reconciliation in which

anyone who receives God's Son can be adopted into God's household. But this open time of adoption will not last forever: *"While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them*" (John 12:36).

Destruction of the world's kingdom and judgment of all the wicked is coming. But the adopted child has nothing to fear: *"Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober"* (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6).

COMING INTO OUR INHERITANCE

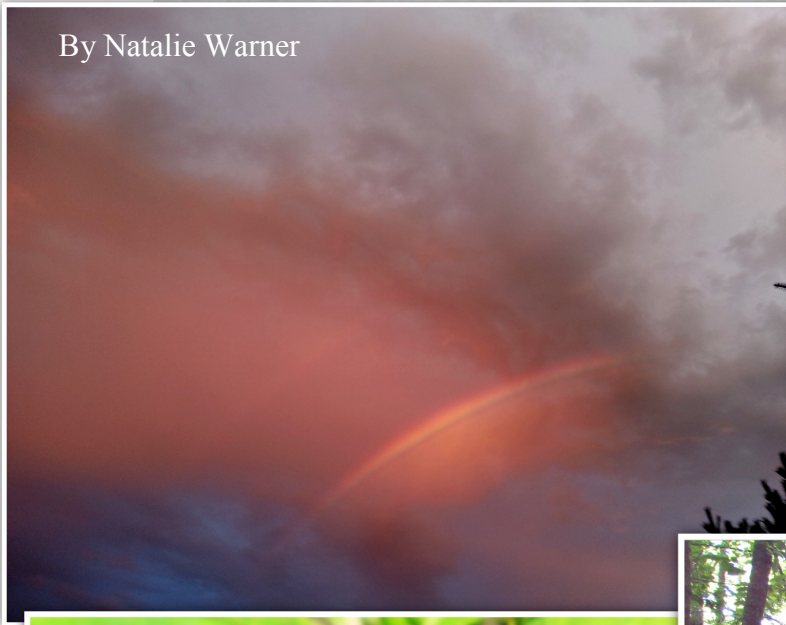
"But those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:35-36).

"Then He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death'" (Revelation 21:6-8).

"GIVE me your HEART, my son, And let YOUR eyes DELIGHT in my ways."
(Proverbs 23:26)



By Natalie Warner

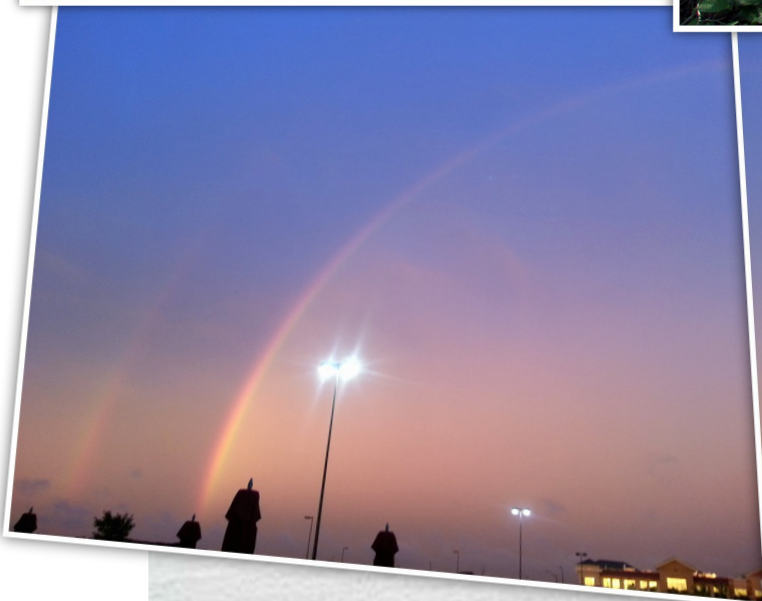


By Maria Madsen

By Maria Madsen



By Maria Madsen



By Nathan Warner

A New Relational Life

By Lynn Warner

When a child is born into the fallen world (Babylon), he begins the daunting task of organization in a place of sin and chaos. The sudden, chaotic entry into the unknown brings with it awareness of a new physical world of moving shapes, sounds, and sensation. The baby begins learning relational patterns to help him organize these chaotic experiences and begins to relate to people and the environment. His first relational pattern begins to be organized and established by bonding to his mother. But because he was born into a fallen, sinful world (and he is also a morally fallen creature) these relational patterns are flawed by sin. He is not able to have a **proper** relationship with his mother, with God, with others, with animals, with plants – with any of God’s creation, even including himself.

Proper relational patterns are built on trust, but unfortunately in the fallen world trust is easily broken. Trust is learned through Truth and Love (faithfulness). “Truth” is fidelity to reality (Fidelity: “faithfulness to a person, cause, or belief, demonstrated by continuing loyalty and support”). Truth gives us assurance – it conforms us to reality, which is the true nature of things. It is assurance that words, thoughts, and actions conform with what is real – this gives the individual assurance in their identity as it relates to reality. When we are surrounded by Truth, we mature in integrity and wholeness. When we trust someone, we are declaring our assurance and confidence that their commitment to us is true – it is part of reality. It is the reliance of the mind and heart on the integrity, justice, and friendship of another.

We cannot trust those who have deceived us. To “accept” someone or want the “best” for them is not the same as truth—it is not enough for trust to fully develop. If someone deceives us by ensnaring us in false words or acts, misleading us and causing us to believe what is false (or not believe what is true), we

can’t trust them. Even if they claim to love us, without trust we can’t let our guard down and be “real” – there will be walls preventing proper relational patterns to develop and mature.

The world lies to us. So, a child born into a morally, relationally fallen world begins and continues to relate to people and the world around him in broken ways. His character is engraved by the fallen world, and his actions regarding right and wrong often bring harm, because his ways are enslaved to sin.

A child born into God’s kingdom is given power or authority to become a child of God, as seen in John 1:12: *“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”* (KJV). This second birth is born of water and the Spirit, as Jesus describes in John 3:5-6: *“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* Jesus also told Nicodemus that one must be born again before he can see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3): *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Those that are “born again” have a new spirit, a new relational intent to know God in Truth.

In this new birth, the new spiritual child begins moving into a new awareness of reality through his exposure to Truth—he now sees his own fallen, relational nature and the consequences, which lead to death. He is now aware that Jesus has saved him from eternal death—eternal separation from God. And he begins to be aware of God’s motivation to save him and its tremendous cost, as revealed in John 3:16-17: *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.”*

The Truth is essential for trust, and trust is essential for healthy, maturing relationships

with those we love. We must be able to trust another to know and be known by them. To trust God, we must have Truth, and God has given us three wonderful gifts of Truth: First, He gave us Jesus, Who said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, but by Me"* (John 14:6). Second, God gave us the Holy Spirit, the very Spirit of Truth, concerning Whom, Jesus said, *"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come"* (John 16:13). Finally, God gave us His Word – Jesus prayed to His Father, *"sanctify them through thy Truth, Thy Word is Truth"* (John 17:17). Jesus doesn't just speak grace and truth to us, He lives them out in everything He does because He is full of them as described by John in John 1:14: *"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt*

among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten, full of grace and truth."

The child of God thus begins to learn righteousness and moral truth through his new relational life with God Himself – through Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God's Word. He is growing to know God better, as Jesus defined eternal Life in John 17:3: *"And this is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."*

God always speaks the Truth in His Word; we are exhorted to trust Him, love Him, and have a real, abundant life relationship with Him. We learn to know Him, as He knows us, and when we are in Heaven, we will know as we are fully known. Our relationship with Him overflows into our relationships with others and God's creation. Our character is being engraved to become more and more like the character of Christ, and our actions in regard to right and wrong bring healing instead of harm.



**November/December Newsletter Theme—
THE FATHER’S WILL
Submission Deadline: November 27
Publish Date: December 6**

The Father’s Will...

- What is the Father’s will for mankind?
- What is the difference between our will and God’s will?
- Why can’t man do the will of God apart from Christ?
- How do we do the will of God?

Verses on The Father’s Will (from the NASB version)

Matthew 7:21 — *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.”*

Matthew 12:50 — *“For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”*

Matthew 26:39 — *“And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.’”*

John 6:40 — *“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”*

Acts 22:19 — *“And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.’”*

Galatians 1:3-5 — *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.”*

John 1:12-13 — *“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, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

Further Out—Jan/Feb 2017: CREATION