**A Family Not of Man**

By Nathan Warner

*“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

(John 1:12-13)

“This important verse, therefore, teaches us:

1. that if men are saved they must be born again.

2. that their salvation is not the result of their birth, or of any honorable or pious parentage.

3. that the children of the rich and the noble, as well as of the poor, must be born of God if they will be saved.

4. that the children of pious parents must be born again; or they cannot be saved. None will go to heaven simply because their “parents” are Christians.

5. that this work is the work of God, and “no man” can do it for us.

6. that we should forsake all human dependence, east off all confidence in the flesh, and go at once to the throne of grace, and beseech of God to adopt us into his family and save our souls from death.” (Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, John 1:12-13)

THE NATURAL FAMILY

God created the family, natural and spiritual. Natural families are a product of the natural relationships that God designed between a husband and wife, which produces children, who in turn produce children with their husbands and wives in a cascading, exponential effect so that mankind would *“be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth”* (Genesis 1:28b). God’s design for the family was supposed to be a nurturing, protective environment for the young, so that their emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being would be nurtured until the time of their maturity when they would leave and begin their own families.

Unfortunately, sin corrupted God’s perfect plan for the family. Adam and Eve’s sin not only affected them but also all their descendants. Sin caused separation from the presence of God and has caused widespread breakdown in the natural order that God created for the family. Both the effects of sin on nature and man’s personal sin disrupts the stability and protection of the family causing a wide range of harm including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, orphans, prostitution, widows, etc.

Regardless of the condition of your family, each individual bears personal responsibility to God for their sin. This will result in God’s judgment and eternal separation from His life-giving presence. Fortunately, God has made a way of redemption for mankind, and it also is a family.

THE SPIRITUAL FAMILY

God’s family is of His making and is perceived spiritually. This is the family, or household, of God, which we can only enter if we are born again, which means you must *“repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38). God’s Holy Spirit adopts people into God’s own family.

While all natural families proceed from human sources as designed by God, there is no human source for God’s family. The Apostle John emphasized this with a three-fold statement: God’s children are not born of blood, the will of the flesh, or the will of man.

“NOT OF BLOOD” - HUMAN DESCENT

The Greek here is plural, meaning “bloods” or “bloodlines.” Man’s family bloodlines have been extremely important to him throughout all human history. Many of earth’s wars were fought to position one family bloodline in power over another – or to spread their bloodline over the earth. A bloodline is like a modern surname – it is a line of descent.

For example, in prophecy, the Messiah’s bloodline was to descend from King David, and Jesus fulfilled that through His mother Mary and His adopted father Joseph. But His most important lineage is that of His true Father Who is God. God ensured this happened for the sake of His Word, as He promised to David that one of his sons would reign over the earth forever.

Your family bloodline influences how people treat you. A Rockefeller or Windsor will be treated differently than a Smith or Johnson, because of their family’s name and what it represents. The Jews believed God treated them differently because they were descended from Abraham by blood. This is true in as the Jews were a bloodline chosen by God through His promise to Abraham to live according to His purposes. But they went so far as to believe (wrongly) that tracing your bloodline to Abraham meant you were automatically enrolled in God’s spiritual family.

However, bloodlines mean nothing to the family of God, for irrespective of bloodlines, lineage, and names, Jesus purchased men for God with His life blood. In Heaven we see the Elders sing *“a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation’”* (Revelation 5:9). It does not matter to God if you do not know where you came from, whether you are descended from sovereigns or slaves, or if your family is righteous and Godly – what matters to Him is whether or not you personally are adopted into His spiritual family.

“NOT OF THE WILL OF THE FLESH” – THE WAY OF LAWLESSNESS

Man’s fallen nature is preoccupied with the will of his flesh. This is man’s fee-will to do what he wants, which is *“only evil continually”* (Genesis 6:5b). This “will of the flesh” is patterned after the will of Lucifer who inspired man to be self-willed and rebel against God. Lucifer willed to “do what he wanted” without consequences, and he sought to make himself like God by sheer lust and desire according to his will. In the same way, he inspired us to eat the fruit to also make ourselves like God by giving into *“the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life”* (1 John 2:16). Since that time, man lives to do the works of his flesh, *“which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”* (Galatians 5:19-21).

The will of the flesh is to make us the center of attention – to make us “king of the hill.” Man works these things into his family so that they will carry on these works and not God’s works in the earth. But the truth is that man cannot live according to the will of the flesh and achieve salvation. They are mutually exclusive, *“for the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God”* (Romans 8:6-8).

God’s family of adopted believers does not proceed from the will of the flesh, nor does it live to do the works of the flesh. It is freed from bondage to the will of the flesh and the futility of our ancestor’s ways. In this way, you ought to know *“that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ”* (1 Peter 1:18-19).

“NOT OF THE WILL OF MAN” –

THE WAY OF LAW

Throughout all history, man has tried to make himself acceptable to God by his works, according to his own will. People ask, “What must I do to be acceptable before man or God?” Man answers, “follow this law to do this, and you will be justified,” but it is always according to the will of man, not the will of God. Man tries to remake, or rebirth himself by his own will through his own morality, so that he can “atone” for his sins and “justify” himself before man or God.

Man seeks atonement or justification because we all know we do unacceptable things, and we seek a way to justify ourselves according to someone’s law (of our own making or a religion or organization), so that we can say, “I’ve done more good than bad in my life.” This even applies to the atheist, as his “moral law” may require him to “save the earth” or champion “social justice” to be justified for his “sins” according to his will or the will of his peers. No matter your persuasion, we all seek to justify ourselves by man’s laws, because the requirements of God’s Holy Law are too difficult to achieve, for it does not allow any sin in man if he is to be accepted as a child of God.

Therefore, man cannot atone for his own sin, much less the sins of others. Man’s morality can never measure up to the requirements of God’s Law. Man cannot be born into God’s family by the will of man, regardless of whether that will is our personal will or the will of religions, organizations, fraternities, governments, etc.

SLAVERY TO NATURAL ORIGINS

For most of world history, children were born to take over their family’s purpose, keep the family name going, and preserve the bloodline. There has been a sort of slavery to your ancestry. If you were born into royalty, you were automatically to serve in that capacity. There were few, if any ways out of this. If you were born to a cobbler, chances are you would become a cobbler. In most cases, the will of your family determined your position in society. Sometimes, the society made a decision for the child. For example, if you were born out of wedlock you were automatically “illegitimate,” a “bastard” to the world system.

There is a bond in family and a pressure to submit your will to your family’s will – to carry on the family line – to fill your father’s shoes or slip into your mother’s apron. We live to do the works of our father and mother. You are raised being told, “This is who we are, and this is what we do,” and your father’s works were your inheritance. There is enormous pressure to live up to your family’s will—to carry on the ways and beliefs of your ancestors. The world tries to tie you to the identity it has created for you. This is true whether you are born American, Chinese, Russian, or Japanese as well as atheist, Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslim. The world tries to tie you to the natural, fleshly situation you find yourself in. Most peoples in the world are heavily influenced by their heritage, ancestry, family beliefs, and inheritance. The decisions they make often come after some consideration about who their parents are, what their name means in the world, what their decisions will do to that name, and how it will affect their inheritance in the world. To bring the world’s shame on your family name still drives people to such extremes as suicide.

At the same time, the world looks askance at people who don’t have families or who come from “low” bloodlines. Every culture and society has its “rejects,” who are determined to be so according to the will of man. Historically these have been orphans, prostitutes, slaves, widows, outsiders, etc.

Yet, your natural origins have nothing to do with the Kingdom of Heaven—you could be born into a brothel and grow up as a cult priestess and still be eligible for adoption into God’s Kingdom on equal footing with all other adopted Believers. God has made a point of showing that your natural origins or background have no bearing or influence on your position in God’s family. Firstly, He illustrated this in the line of Christ (the rightful King of all the earth) where we find a redeemed prostitute (Rahab), a slave (Joseph), a widow (Ruth), and an outsider (Ruth) with Jesus Himself being “adopted” by his human father Joseph. In God’s Kingdom, your origins do not matter to how God treats you. They also should not affect how you are treated in the Church.

Believers are not bound to the nature of their birth, the ways of their ancestors, or the will of their natural families (except where your new Father proscribes honor, respect, or obedience—but never at the expense of your identity in your adopted identity as a child of God). Where the world once told you, “This is who you are, and this is what you are supposed to do,” God now says, “You are My child, imitate Me.” Where your father told you, “This is who we are, and this is what we do,” God now says, “This is who you are – this is how you are to behave in my family.”

“FAMILY” CAN BE AN IDOL

Unfortunately, many in the Church have taken the attitude of the world when looking at the outcasts of society. Some idolize their “ideal” family and put it on a pedestal which raises judgment against those who don’t meet their standards. Throughout history, Christians have appropriated the world’s views and been guilty of looking down on people because of their birth or circumstances.

In recent years, idolizing the “ideal” family has become prevalent in some Christian circles where they have almost placed a stamp of “salvation” on fulfilling the Genesis command to be fruitful and multiply, at the expense of teaching personal accountability to God and responsibility to respond to God for salvation. They see raising a family as preeminently important in their Christian walk, even at the expense of the Gospel.

Others stress the importance of a lineage of Godly men and women in their family, a bloodline of Believers, rather than focusing on the saving grace of Jesus Christ in each person’s life. This attitude automatically puts Christians down who are the first Believers in their unbelieving families—as if a “Christian” bloodline somehow changes our position in God’s Family. This is an affront to the Gospel of Jesus Christ! For the Scriptures clearly say *“there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28).

Yet, many Christians have an entitled attitude because of their human origins. They feel that because they came from “good, godly, Christian families” they are a step up in Godliness and nearer to Heaven. Others believe that because they were brought up in a Church and share in that heritage, they are automatically part of God’s household.

However, the truth is that you cannot become part of God’s family by these human methods, and your salvation does not rely on anyone else—it is between each man or woman and God.

HOW DO YOU BECOME GOD’S FAMILY?

Unlike a natural family in which you have no control over your origins or parentage, God’s family is one of adoption – a process by which anyone can become a child of God and claim Him as Father. But in order to be adopted, something had to make it legally possible. In order to open a way for adoption to be possible, Jesus had to stand in our place of condemnation under God’s Law and take upon His sinless self the righteous judgment due us for our sin, *“so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”* (Galatians 4:5).

To be adopted, each person must personally *“repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 2:38), *“so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name”* (John 20:31). This life comes by the gift of the Spirit, which causes us to be born again as a new creation in God’s family, *“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!’”* (Romans 8:15) *“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are* ***son****s of God”* (Romans 8:14).

You can only enter the family of God through Jesus Christ, for the Father *“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 1:5-6). Even so, Amen.