

God's Child — Or Not?



When God gave the Law to the children of Israel, His first commandment was: "I am the Lord your God.... You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:2-3) Jesus, quoting Deuteronomy, said the same thing this way: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37)

So what? We're New Testament Christians, aren't we? We're under grace, not under Law. The Israelites could not obey God's Law, and neither can we; that's why Jesus had to come and die for our sins.

Yes, that is all true. We are *saved by grace through faith—and that's not our own doing, it's God's gift, and not by our good works, so no one can boast.* (Ephesians. 2:8-9) We're saved from the punishment we deserve; from eternal damnation and death. But we're also saved for something. For what? Why, for Heaven, of course.

But what is Heaven? If you read a lot about it, in the Bible and in various commentaries, you eventually learn that Heaven is simply "where God is," just as Hell is simply "where God is not." To be with God in Eternity is Heaven; to be sent away from His presence forever is Hell, the "outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth" because of the agony of being deprived of the Light of His presence.

So what is required of us in order to get into Heaven? Do you remember what Jesus said to the rich young ruler?

A certain ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to

him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother.'" He replied, "I have kept all these since my youth." When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich. Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." (Luke 18:18-24)

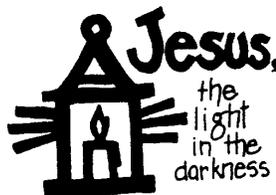
Is Jesus saying that you have to be poor in order to go to Heaven? Not at all; He is simply saying, "You need to love Me (God) more than you love your money." Or, as God said to the Israelites, "You shall have no other gods before me."

Salvation involves more than escaping the flames of Hell. It involves becoming God's child.

We often hear someone say, "After all, we are all God's children." Many well-meaning Christians, even some ministers of the Gospel, say this. They mean that every human being is valuable, precious in God's sight. We are all human beings together, all members of the same "family" in that sense. What they mean is true, but what they say is not. We are all God's creatures, but the Bible says we are not all God's children. We're not all members of His family. The Bible makes this very clear.

You don't get into God's family simply by being born. You have to be born again. You have to be adopted.

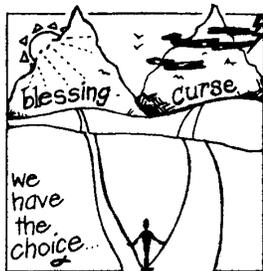
How do you get adopted? You do it by giving yourself to God. You say something like, "I don't want to be the lord of my own life any more. I



haven't done a very good job of it. Jesus, will you please be my Lord?" And then you let Him be your Lord, and you cooperate as best you can with whatever He wants to do with you. And that's how the process begins.

Of course, there's more to it than that. We cannot do anything useful in our own strength. We can't even say "Yes" to Him unless He helps. We need the power of God's Holy Spirit. *"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God (Romans 8:14)* So He tells us to ask, and God will fill us with His Spirit. Have you done that? If not, you need to.

And we need to keep on being filled with the Spirit, as D. L. Moody once said, "because we leak." How do we do that? By staying in contact with the Source of that Spirit. *Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.* (James 4:8) If you take the time and make the effort to get close to God, He will reveal Himself to you in many ways. The more time you spend with Him—praying, praising Him, thanking Him, worshipping Him, studying His word—the more you will recognize His presence in your life. The better you know God, the more you will want to be with Him.



You become God's child by intentionally becoming His.

You have to be careful, though. It's so easy to start out strongly with God, and then start taking Him for granted—still thanking Him that you are saved, but not really living for Him. It's like intending to go for a ride in a boat, but then stretching back and planting one foot on the shore. If you can't get all the way into the boat—if you can't give yourself totally to Him—you need help! God does not appreciate half-hearted allegiance. We need to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength!

In Revelation. 3:16, Jesus tells a congregation of Christians, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth." About the worst thing you can do is fool yourself into thinking you are God's child,

"talking the talk," when you're not "walking the walk."

If you're having trouble belonging totally to God, get on your knees and beg for help. He will quickly give you the help you need. Do what Romans 12:1 says: offer yourself as a living sacrifice to God. Be His. All the way. Every day.

Do you want to be happy?

The world we live in teaches us, and most of us grow up believing, that the way to be happy is to be able to do pretty much whatever we want to do, all the time. A lot of that thinking has to do with money—"if only I were rich ...". But money can't make a person happy. Some of the most miserable people I know, or know of, are among the richest; and some of the happiest are also the poorest in terms of money.



Money is not the way to be happy. Self-indulgence is not the way to be happy. Do you know what can really make you happy? Being God's child, and knowing that you are. *God rewards those who earnestly seek Him.* (Heb. 11:6) How does He reward them? By His presence. *You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* (Psalms 16:11)

Doing whatever pleases you will never make you happy. Doing what pleases God will always give you joy, even when it's hard. There is JOY in obeying Him.

I hope this message will encourage you to "get intentional" with God, and allow Him to bring you to the Christian maturity you need. *I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ,* (Phil. 1:6) and you will *come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.* (Eph. 4:13)

Be God's child, in fact as well as in name. Let Jesus be your Lord. Amen.

Brother Roland

Ask me ... Send your Bible questions to me and I'll try to answer them in the "Good News Guide."

Your question may help someone else.

Also, if your address changes, please let me know, so I can update the mailing list.

Brother Roland, P O Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222

The joy of the Lord – What is it?

Adapted from the website of Compelling Truth (www.compellingtruth.org)

The joy of the Lord is a supernatural confidence that God is sovereign, loving, powerful, and for us. It is the inner understanding, granted by the Holy Spirit, that no matter our circumstances, our condition, or our surroundings, God is working things out for our good (**Romans 8:28: And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.**)



The joy of the Lord is evident throughout the Bible, especially in regards to Jesus.

Before He was born, Mary sang of her joy (**Luke 1:47: ... my spirit rejoices in God my Savior**) and Jesus' cousin John, still in his mother's womb, leaped for joy (**Luke 1:44: For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy**). On the night of Jesus' birth, the angels brought "good news of great joy" to the shepherds, announcing the coming Savior (**Luke 2:10: And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.**)

Jesus Himself lived with joy. Once, He said He was like a bridegroom at his own wedding feast (**Mark 2:18-19: Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast."**)—that is unmatched joy! At one point, people accused Him of being too joyful (**Luke 7:34: The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'**). Jesus told His followers that He taught them for His own joy and for a full portion of joy for them (**John 15:11: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."** and **John 16:24: "Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."**)

Jesus' stories often resulted in joy—for example, the shepherd, woman, and father in Luke 15. Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit (**Luke 10:21: "In that**

same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.")

When the church began, it was known for its joy (**Acts 2:46–47: And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. And Acts 13:52: And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**). When Paul wrote about the fruit of the Spirit, he included joy (**Galatians 5:22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ...**). And, there is more. See **Romans 14:17: For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.; Philipians 3:1: Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord; Philipians 4:4: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.; 1 Thessalonians 5:16: Rejoice always; and 1 Peter 1:8: Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,**

This joy of the Lord permeates the Bible. It extends deeper and further than mere happiness, which is temporary. It is constant (**John 10:28–29: I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.**)

Joy is a cornerstone of our relationship with God and that's why He spends so much time telling us about it in the Bible. The joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

Our entire relationship with God, made through the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus, is set on a foundation of joy. (**Hebrews 12:2 - "Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God"**).

God's Love

Why should you want to be God's child?
Because He loves you, and wants you live joyfully in His presence forever!

Puzzle:

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Words:

* GOD'S LOVE IS:

UNCONDITIONAL
COMPASSIONATE
MERCIFUL
PERFECT
FAITHFUL
LIMITLESS
ENDLESS
ETERNAL
STEADFAST FOREVER
FROM EVERLASTING TO
EVERLASTING
UNCHANGING
FRESH EVERY MORNING
REVEALED IN JESUS

NEGLECTED BY THE PHARISEES
GIVEN TO ALL OF US
WITHOUT FAVORITISM
POURED INTO OUR HEARTS
PERFECTED IN US AS WE OBEY
INSEPARABLY OURS

* GOD'S LOVE BRINGS:

SALVATION
RECONCILIATION
RESTORATION
RENEWAL
PEACE
LIFE
JOY

* GOD LOVES

OBEDIENCE
ONE WHO PURSUES
RIGHTEOUSNESS
THOSE WHO SPEAK TRUTH
RIGHTEOUS DEEDS
A CHEERFUL GIVER
JUSTICE
MERCY
HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL
THE WORLD
SINNERS
YOU AND ME