

**(3) Not habitually living in sin, 3:9 and 5:18;**

**(4) Loving one another, 4:7;**

**(5) Overcoming temptations, 5:4; and**

**(6) Keeping himself, 5:18.**

## **GROWING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

**F. W. Dixon**

**Study 1**

### **BEING BORN INTO GOD'S FAMILY**

Scripture Portion John 1:1-16

There is only one way of entrance into the family of God, and that is by being born into that family. The way of entrance into an earthly family is by physical birth, and the way of entrance into the heavenly family is by the miracle of a spiritual birth, a second birth, a birth from above, look up John 3:38. What a wonderful thing it is that poor sinning creatures such as we are can actually become children of the most High God! We can well understand the apostle John's sense of awe as he wrote 1 John 3:1!

#### **1. BUT ARE WE NOT ALREADY THE CHILDREN OF GOD?**

Are not all people, everywhere, God's children? Is not God the Father of all? In a creative sense He is our Father and we are His children, look up Mal. 2:10 and Acts 17:28. In that God has created us, He is our Father; but when we turn to such verses as John 1:12 and Gal. 3:26, we discover that there is a far more intimate relationship into which we need to come, and into which we may come, where in a spiritual sense we know God as our loving heavenly Father. Christians are only the children of God because they have put their "faith in Christ Jesus", Gal. 3:26. This raises a very important question:

#### **2. HOW DO WE BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD?**

We can only become children of God by the same process by which we become children of our earthly parents, that is, by birth, look at John 1:13, "which were born. Nobody ever became a child without being born a child; and no one ever becomes a member of God's family without being born into that family. How, then, is one born into the family of God? Notice

that in John 1:13 there are three negatives:

**(1) First: "not of blood".**

This means that the birth spoken of here is not the result of human generation; we do not inherit membership in the family of God. We inherit a great many things from our parents, their dispositions, temperaments, and perhaps their features; but there is one thing we do not inherit from them, and that is spiritual grace. Christian parents do not automatically produce Christian children.

**(2) Second: "nor of the will of the flesh".**

No one can make himself a child of God by any amount of self determination or self effort. No amount of decision or resolution on our part will make us members of God's family, for it is "not of the will of the flesh". Suppose I wanted to become a child of royalty. It would not be enough to say: "I'm tired of being a commoner, so I have made up my mind to become a member of the royal family!"

**(3) Third: "nor of the will of man".**

No man can make anyone a child of God. Good men and women can do a great many things to help us. How wonderful it is to have Christian parents and friends who are solicitous for our spiritual welfare! But the most saintly man or woman cannot produce within us a spiritual re-birth. Only God can do that.

These, then, are the three negatives. Now notice that there is one positive statement.

How can I be born into God's family? Verse 13 tells me. I must be "born of God". Only God can make me a child in His family; it is His work, and His work alone.

**3. WE ARE BORN INTO GOD'S FAMILY BY A SUPERNATURAL ACT OF GOD**

There are, however, two conditions which we must meet; in other words, God will make us His children, when? Verse 12 tells us. We must:

**(1) Receive the Lord Jesus; and**

**(2) Believe on His name.**

Let us take the second of these first. What does it mean to "believe on His name"? His name stands for His Person and His work. In Matt. 1:21 and Heb. 7:25 we are told that first and foremost He is the Saviour of all those who trust Him and belong to Him. To believe on His name means to believe that He is all that He claims to be, the Saviour and the Lord of His people.

But we do not only have to believe on His name to become children of God; we have to receive the Lord Jesus into our hearts and lives. What does this mean? It means to take Him, to accept Him and to welcome Him, look up Rev. 3:20. How does a person become a child of God? By believing that the Lord Jesus Christ is able and willing to save him, and by receiving Him, the Saviour Himself into his heart and life. When anyone believes and receives in this way, God constitutes him as His own child. He is born into His family.

If we are to grow up spiritually it is vitally important to make quite sure that we really have been born again Psa. 87:4-6, and that we have received eternal life, 1 John 5:12, for only then will it be possible for us to grow, 1 Pet. 2:2 and 2 Pet. 3:18.

As a postscript to this study, look up the six evidences, or marks, of the truly born again man which John gives us in his First Epistle:

**(1) Believing that Jesus is the Messiah, 5:1;**

**(2) Living a life of right doing, 2:29;**