

# Did God Come Down to Us Or Do We Have to Earn Our Way to Him?

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## I. Introduction

If we become God's children by simple faith and not by our behavior good or bad, does that mean that we can live however we want and heaven is still guaranteed? Is there anything that can jeopardize our eternal destiny and our position as God's children? If nothing can jeopardize it, what's to keep us from living a life of sin?

## II. Is Our Status as God's Children Dependent on Our Behavior Good or Bad?

**What about Revelation 20:11-15?** *Who is the audience?* God's children, i.e., the seven churches, who along with John have been cleansed of their sins by Jesus' blood and whom Jesus made a kingdom of priests for God the Father (Revelation 1:4-6). *What's the context?* After the 1,000 year reign of Christ, Satan is released into the world. He deceives and gathers the armies of the world against the Lord's saints. But God reigns fire down on all of them consuming them and Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire where he, the beast, and false prophet are tormented forever (20:7-10). Next is the Great White Throne judgment where all the dead are judged by Jesus based on their good works (not their sins). But no one makes it based on their good works. Their only option is if they have their name written in the Book of Life. Whoever's not written in this book is cast into the Lake of Fire. But none make it based on this either since if they had life, then not only would their name be in the Book of Life, but they wouldn't appear at this judgment (John 5:22-29).<sup>1</sup>

**What about 2 Timothy 2:11-13?** *Who is the audience?* Timothy, Paul's spiritual child and God's son (1:2). That's not all: Timothy's faith in Christ is genuine (1:5). God appointed him for a special purpose and gave him the power and love to carry it out (1:6-7). God saved and called him with a holy calling not based on his good works, but God's own purpose and grace, i.e., Timothy has been saved from death and given eternal life through his Savior Jesus Christ (1:9-10). *What's the context?* This passage talks about endurance and the consequence for enduring or not; it warns, "If we deny Him, He also will deny us," (2:12). However, Paul's discussion on endurance began in chapter one: he reminds Timothy of his spiritual birth and the appointment God gave him which he should carry out (1:3-7). Timothy must not be like Phygellus and Hermogenes who've turned their backs on the Gospel. Instead he must be faithful like Onesiphorus and Paul, who has endured and suffered for the Gospel of Christ as a pastor and disciple-maker (1:8-18). Timothy should likewise endure hardship as a faithful pastor and disciple-maker, as a good soldier of Christ who'll be rewarded for his endurance (2:1-6). He must be willing to endure all things, including prison, so that he can equip others to endure and be saved from the shame and fate of not reigning with Christ because they turned their backs on Him (2:8-13, cf. 1:12, 18; 4:8). This is not about being rewarded with heaven for your good works (cf. 1:9) or being tossed into hell for your bad works. This is why it says if you died with Christ, if you've been identified with His death, then you will be with Him forever (2:11, cf. Romans 6:3-4). And if you endure by faithfully serving Him, then He'll reward you with reigning. If you deny Him your endurance, He'll deny you reigning with Him (2:12). However, if we stop believing and refuse our faithful service, then Jesus remains faithful. Why? Because we are a permanent part of Him (1:9, 13; 2:1) and to deny us is to deny Himself (2:13).

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<sup>1</sup> People don't go to hell because of their sins but because they don't possess God's eternal life and fail to qualify on their own good works. The murderer who died next to Jesus went to heaven by simply believing in Him, Luke 23:42-43. King Saul went to paradise even though he was wicked at the end of his life, 1 Samuel 28:3-19.

**“What if?” Questions**, the way some Christians behave leads to questions like, “What if they never go to church?” “What if they become a Buddhist?” “What if someone becomes a Christian, but later denies Jesus and leads others to deny Him too?” “What if they live in sin?” “What if they become a Satan worshipper?” “What if they turn their back on their wife and kids?” What if, what if, what if... No matter how we word these questions they come down to one thing: sin. What we really mean is, “Really bad sinners can’t go to heaven. Moderate or infrequent sinners, yes, but not bad sinners.” There are GIANT problems with this logic:

*Sin is not the reason people go to hell.* Why? Because Jesus paid the penalty for ALL sin (1 John 2:2).

*Heaven is not a reward for good behavior.* Heaven is God’s gift which cannot be earned; it is “not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Additionally, we’re incapable of earning it anyway. Why? Because “there is no one who does good, no, not one” (Romans 3:12). Thus, NO ONE deserves heaven, not even the nicest, most sweetest person you can think of.

*God’s standard regarding sin is INFINITELY higher than ours,* the tiniest of sins separates us from God because “God is light and in Him is **no** darkness **at all**” (1 John 1:5). God is not just sickened by murder and adultery, but hate and lust (Mathew 5:21-28). God hates a single lie as much as He hates a single murder (Proverbs 6:16-17). That’s why Jesus had to die for ALL our sins not just the “bad ones” in order to remove the barrier between us and God. Our good standing before God was purchased by Jesus’ blood and the instant we put our faith in His sacrifice, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). Additionally, if you believe that “bad sins” or too many sins keep you out of heaven, which sins and how many? Did God state this somewhere in His Bible, or did we come up with the list and number? God never gives such a list or number anywhere.

**Isn’t it dangerous to say to someone, “You can sin all you want, but you’ll still go to heaven”?** First, though heaven is guaranteed, no parent (especially God) would ever say to his children, “You can live however you want.” In fact, it is precisely because Christ has redeemed us and we’re now part of Him that He calls us to live by a higher standard (Ephesians 4), where we’re to be mindful not only of our actions but our thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:5). God wants us to live in the good works He prepared for us not in sin (Ephesians 2:10). Second, God is crystal clear that there’s a consequence for sin. This is James’ point in his letter. If you continue to sin, God may take your life (James 1:15, 21; 5:20). We’re not supposed to live in death; we’re supposed to live in Christ, in life (John 14:6; Romans 8:6; 1 Timothy 5:6). Third, the fact that we are God’s children and sin is no longer a barrier to heaven is not supposed to drive us to sin. It’s supposed to drive us to live every moment with Christ and be pure “as He is pure” (1 John 2:6, 28; 3:3).

**If Christians have a new life in Christ, then why do they live in sin?** God never guaranteed that we would never have long periods of sin. What He does guarantee is that if we walk by means of His Spirit, then we will avoid sin and live godly lives (Galatians 5:16-23). So why do Christians live in sin? One simple reason is rebellion. There’s a battle going on inside us: our sinful flesh wants to sin but the Lord’s indwelling Spirit wants to live a godly life (Galatians 5:17). When we choose to live by our flesh, we’ll disobey God every time (Galatians 5:19-21). The other reason is lack of parenting, i.e., discipleship. What happens when parents fail to show their children how life works at home and out in the world? The child has a very difficult time succeeding in life. Likewise, if no one shows you how to live the Christian life, then you will struggle. You won’t know how to live a godly life, including how to defend yourself against our #1 enemy, Satan, who is cunning, deceptive, and always after you (Genesis 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:8). When you become a Christian, someone is supposed to show you how to do everything Jesus’ way (Matthew 28:19-20).

**If you see God as a Father, you will NEVER doubt your Christianity, regardless of how much you sin,** God is not a Rule-Giver who will disown you if you break too many rules.

Membership in God's family is not membership to an exclusive club from which you'll be kicked out if you break the rules. When God adopts you into His family, it's permanent: it means that He gives birth to you, that He makes you a permanent part of Him and His Son, and He places His Spirit deep inside you (John 17:20-26; Galatians 4:6; 1 John 5:1). Further, His adoption stems from His love and NOTHING can ever separate you from His love, not your sin, not anything (Romans 8:31-39). When you see God relationally, not through theology or doctrine but as a Loving Father, you will realize that your behavior can never jeopardize your relationship with Him. He may discipline you, but He will never disown you. It's like this:

Imagine a Trillionaire, he has a son named Joseph and Joseph is perfect in all his ways, completely obedient to his father. One day, this Trillionaire decides to adopt you and another girl named Sarah. And he says to you, "Lily, you are now my daughter and I am your father. You're not my 'adopted daughter' but my daughter. I see you the way I see my beloved son Joseph; you're as much my daughter as he is my son. One more thing: there's NOTHING that you can ever do to make me disown you, NOTHING."

One day, Mike, one of your father's other kids, takes your father's car, gets drunk and crashes into a minivan with a family of five. They all survive, but they're badly injured. They sue Mike for 50 million dollars and he loses and is forced to pay. But he's got no money. Your father then tells Joseph to pay Mike's bill and Joseph does it without question. Later, Mike gets married and has kids. But one day he begins to flirt with a co-worker and has an affair, in fact, he leaves his wife and kids for this woman. Your father then tells Joseph to take Mike's abandoned wife and kids into his own house to care for them the rest of their lives and Joseph does it without question.

Your sister Sarah then comes to you and says, "Daddy's going to disown Mike for what he's done. There's no way daddy's going to allow Mike to stay in this family."

If you were Lily, how would you answer Sarah? Answering questions about difficult Bible passages, "What if" questions, and sin are difficult if all you see is theology and doctrine. But if you see God relationally, as your Loving Father, then it's easy to answer Sarah's question: "There's no way Sarah. Daddy would never disown any of his kids. Don't you remember what daddy told us when he adopted us? He promised to never disown us, no matter what. In fact, remember our brother David, when he committed adultery with that woman, got her pregnant, and then murdered her husband to cover it up? Remember what daddy did? He told Joseph to pay for the dead man's funeral and to take care of his family and Joseph did it. And then daddy forgave David; he never disowned him. Don't you remember how many times Daddy's done that with all of his kids? Every time we mess up, Joseph's there to pay the price and Daddy always forgives us and gives us another chance." But what if Sarah responds:

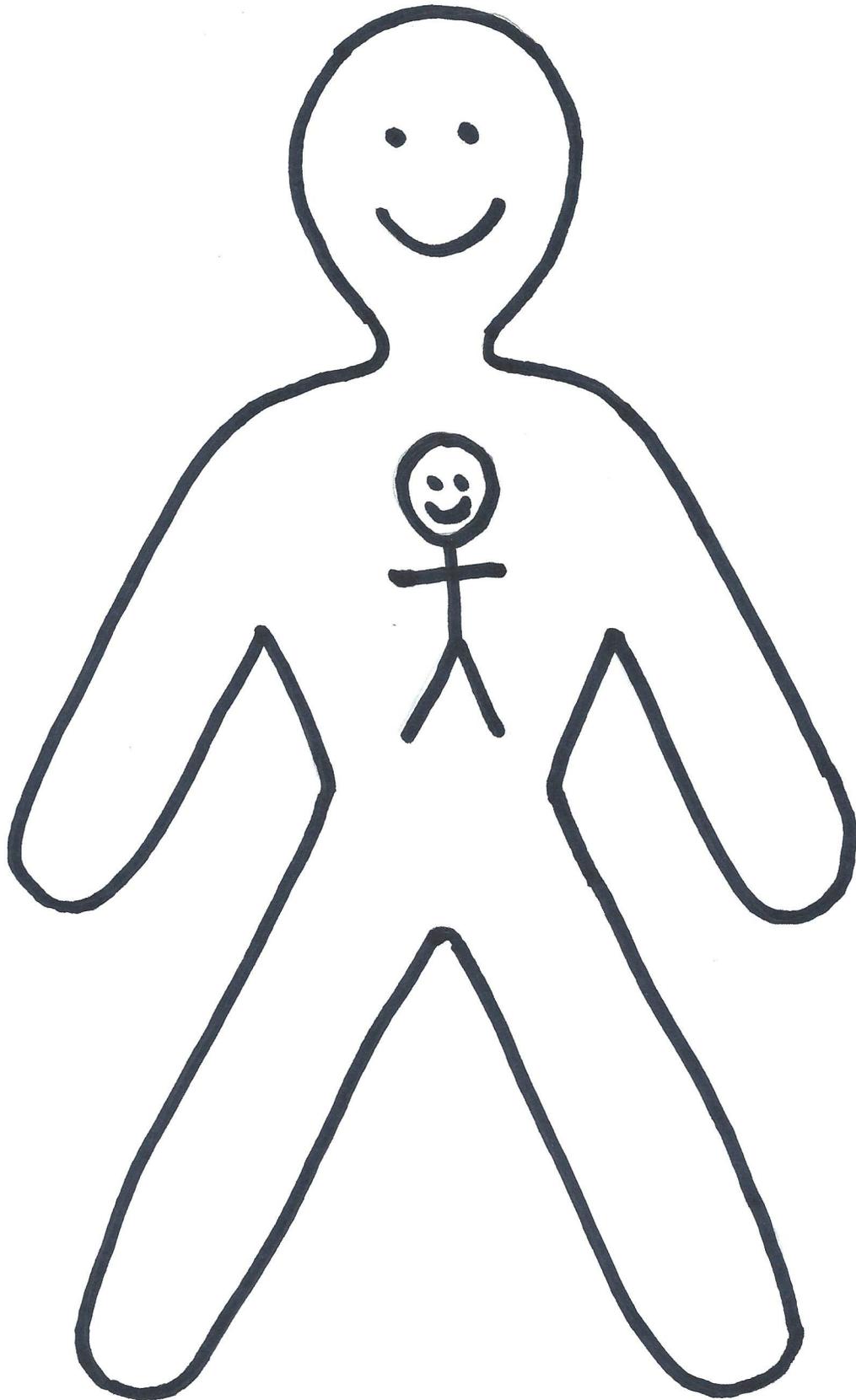
"Yeah, but remember our brother Saul? Daddy kicked him out of the house when Saul ruined daddy's company, ran it to the ground. Daddy lost millions. Daddy kicked Saul out of the house, didn't he?"

What would you say? Easy, "Yes, daddy kicked him out of the house, but not out of the family. Saul is still daddy's son. Don't you remember how Daddy provided for Saul and his sons after Saul lost everything. He gave Saul and his family a place to live and anything else they needed."

### III. Conclusion

*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*

What are the benefits of being sealed  
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## What are the benefits of being sealed inside Jesus Christ, God's Son (Ephesians 1:13)?

1. God chose us before the foundation of the world, 1:4.
2. One day we will stand perfect before Christ in love, 1:4.
3. God adopted us into His family, 1:5.
4. God forgave all our sins, 1:7.
5. God revealed His mystery plan to us concerning His Son reigning over the universe, including every principality and power, 1:9-10.
6. God gave us a part in His Son's inheritance, 1:11.
7. God sealed us inside Jesus through His Holy Spirit, 1:13.
8. God gave us His Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our future inheritance, 1:14.
9. God gave us His Holy Spirit to show us how our relationship with Him and His Son works, 1:17-21.
10. God uses His infinite and mighty power to help us, 1:19-21.
11. God gave Jesus to us to be our Leader, Guide, and nourishment, 1:22-23.