

*“For Whoever Does the Will of God,
He is My Brother and Sister and Mother.”*

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Remember the previous paragraph. Jesus notes how those who are for Him are a part of His kingdom. Those who are against Him have committed an unpardonable sin. The issue in our present paragraph is not whether you are in His immediate family by physical descent, but if you are born again and have pledged your allegiance to King Jesus.

What is interesting about this statement is what is not said. **First**, our union with Christ is not based on one's social standing. Whether you are a Pharisee, tax-collector, scribe, or sinner, none of these things matter as it relates to one's inclusion in God's family. **Second**, our union with Christ is not based on one's financial wherewithal. Whether one is rich or poor, financially strapped or independently wealthy, none of these things matter as it relates to one's inclusion in God's family. **Third**, our union with Christ is not based on one's genealogical alliances. One's pedigree has no bearing on whether or not one is included in God's family. Such preferences often related to heritage are of no consequence when it relates to one's inclusion in god's family. **Finally**, our union with Christ is not based on gender. Whether you are male or female, rich or poor, bond or free, all may be included and no one will be excluded if the right path is chosen.

How then does one become a part of God's family? The text makes a simple statement, "For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother." Such simplicity forces us to ask the question, "Is Jesus teaching a works salvation in His response?"

The Gospels always show an unbreakable link between the heart and the hand. The link between the mouth and the heart is indissoluble. Salt water cannot produce fresh water and apple trees do not produce pears (James 3:11, 12). Thus, one's work can testify to the new birth. Although good soil produces good fruit, it is possible for bad soil to produce a fruit that looks good but is artificial and plastic (Matt. 7:15-23). As we will note in 4:1ff, good soil produces fruit; bad soil does not.

The issue is not one of work's righteousness, but a righteousness that works. All good soil produces good fruit. Both "good" and "fruit" are necessary words when speaking of righteousness. First, all fruit produced by good soil is good fruit. Good soil cannot produce bad fruit or fruit that is less than morally correct. Second, all good soil produces fruit. It is impossible for good soil not to produce fruit. The quality of the fruit is never an issue. The quantity of the harvest is. Yet the size of the harvest produced by the soil lies outside the soil. Some soil produces "thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold" (Mark 4:8).

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Thus the criterion for inclusion in God's family is not how much fruit one produces. One's good work is not causal but consequential. The assumption Jesus makes in Mark 3:35 is one's present inclusion in the family of God. Doing the will of God is produced by God working in and through the will of man. Such compliance with God's will is because one is a part of God's family. Such compliance does not produce the relationship; it is only a sign that such a relationship already exists. We would be grievous in our thinking if we veered from "by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone" salvation. It is only as we embrace by faith the person and work produced by grace, that we can do the will of the Father. The first part, "by grace," causes the second part, "doing the will of God." The first part, "by grace," makes it possible for Pharisees, tax-collectors, rich and poor, Jews and Iraqis, male and female to be included in the family of God. It is the children of God who now do the will of God.

Today let us come with humility and gratitude that God in grace would choose us to be a part of His family. Let us thank Him that we can call Jesus our brother. May the weight of this truth overwhelm us with a deep sense of self-abasement and selfless celebration. May we, like King David, dance without shame before our God.