

Series: Ephesians
Title: The Whole Family
Text: Ephesians 3: 14-15
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Ephesians 3: 14: For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15: Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,...

Here the apostle Paul begins to express to the Ephesian church what his prayer is for them. He begins saying, “for this cause”

Ephesians 3: 14: For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ , 15: Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

One cause is: you are the family of God, of the household of God—Ephesians 2: 19: Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Subject: The Whole Family

One of my favorite descriptions the Holy Spirit gives of the church of God is of the church being “God’s family.” We know “family” refers to the church of God because Paul says so in verse 21: “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages.” This description is so common throughout the scriptures that it would seem impossible to miss.

Proposition: It is very comforting and reassuring for believers to be reminded that we, together with saints in heaven and saints in the earth are the whole family of God.

I. FIRST, THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS WE HAVE AS OUR COMMON UNION IN THIS FAMILY

God is Our Father

First, we all have one heavenly Father—**Ephesians 2: 14: I bow my knees unto the Father**

Matthew 23:9: And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

God our Father wrote all our names in the Lambs book of life before time began. Every saint in heaven, every believer on this earth, every child that shall be called, God set us apart in divine election before the world was made in Christ by his grace!

Illustration: My earthly family has a book of genealogy that goes way back. But my heavenly family has one that goes back all the way to eternity.

Think of that brethren: the faithful in our day had our names written on the same page with departed saints of old: the weakest written in the same book as the strongest: Abraham, Issac and Jacob; the unknown written in the same book as apostles and martyrs: John, Paul and Peter.

Christ is our Elder Brother

Also, our common union is that we all have one Elder Brother—**Ephsians 2: 14:...I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

Romans 8:29: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Saints in heaven and saints on earth are one whole family in our Lord Jesus Christ. No matter our former classes and races the saints in heaven and on earth now own one common paternity in one family. It is because Christ became our Covenant Head when the Father entrusted us to him in eternity.

In time, we were all represented in Adam. In Adam we all died legally. Of Adam we all died spiritually being conceived in sin. Each of us in this family still on earth has the constant struggle with sins which we hate. But before time, before God made the first Adam, God set up the last Adam—Christ Jesus in eternity.

Application: What a comfort this is! There has never been a moment that every elect child of God was not represented by Christ: in eternity past, when Christ walked this earth, when we were yet dead in sins, even now in glory—“he everlives to make intercession for us.”

And everything Christ did for us, when he walked this earth, we did in him. When he put away sin, he put away the sin of his particular family alone. Now, through faith, Christ righteousness is our righteousness, his resurrection the pledge of our resurrection, his eternal glory the source and guarantee of our eternal glory.

We Have the Same Name

Thirdly, we all have the same name—**Ephesians 2: 15: Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.** The whole church in heaven and earth wears Christ’s name: “Christians.” The LORD our Righteousness is Christ’s and is our name. (Jeremiah 23: 6; 33:16)

By his blood, Christ not only broke down the middle wall of partition between us Gentiles and the Jews, but between his family on earth and the saints in heaven.

Colossians 1:20: And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

We are Born of the Same Holy Spirit

In our experience we are each born a second time of the Holy Spirit and given faith in Christ. The way we entered our first family was either by birth or by adoption. All who are in the family of God enter this family by both. All are born of the same Father: all must be born of same Holy Spirit; must be born of same incorruptible seed, word of God and all God’s elect were predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself. Therefore our union in this family is all of God that God might receive all the glory!

John 1: 12: But as many as received him, to them gave he power [privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

A child bears the image of their father. So it is in the family of God. Each born-again child shares the same image with each other and with our heavenly Father. The new man created in righteousness and true holiness is continually renewed in knowledge “after the image of him that created him.” (Col 3: 10)

Be sure to get this: the same spirit that is in the saints above is in the saints below. Our spirit is of God just as theirs is. They no longer reside in a body of death—they are spirits of just men made perfect. But we are born of the same spirit, made partakers of the same divine nature, having both escaped the corruptions which are in the world through lust. (Heb 12: 23; 2 Pet 1: 4)

Believer, you are a member of God's family. God is your Father. Christ is the Firstborn among many brethren. You are His sons and daughters, sisters and brother in this family.

Romans 8:14: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

1 John 3:1: Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Brethren, we are nearer to the saints in heaven than we are to the ungodly with whom we dwell in this life. We are in one covenant headship with just men made perfect, but not with the unregenerate. We are fellow citizens with the glorified, but we are strangers and foreigners among the wicked in this life. And we are as much God's sons and daughters right now as those already with Him in heaven.

1 John 3:2: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

The text does not speak of two families but of **“the whole family in heaven and earth.”** The saints in heaven appear to be separated from us, but in reality we are all one in the family of God in Christ Jesus. Death does not separate believers in the family of God.

Psalm 116: 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

Christ conquered sin and death on the cross for all the elect of God. Therefore, death is no longer the enemy of God's saints. Nothing is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ or from one another.

Romans 8: 35: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36: As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37: Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38: For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39: Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul prays here that his brethren might know this love of Christ more and more.

II. WHY HAS GOD BROUGHT US INTO THIS FAMILY?

For the Preaching of the Gospel of Christ

First, the primary importance is the furtherance of the gospel. Since it pleased God to save his people through the foolishness of preaching: (1 Cor 1: 21) there must be brethren assembled which make up the church family. they all must be given hearts to see the dire need of the gospel. There must be one among them with the same heart who is made a preacher

God gives us that need by saving us through the preaching of the gospel—not only in the first hour but continuously as we assemble to hear Christ preached. So Christ assembles his church and “sets the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” 1 Cor 12: 18) So by his church, Christ accomplishes the Father's will of saving through the preaching of the gospel.

To Learn in the Heart

Another need for this church family is to teach us in a practical way, in our daily affairs with each other, by experience, the truth we hear preached in his gospel. The church family in earth has the same difficulties that a secular family has. Each member is a sinner. We are more selfish than we should be. At times, we say things we

shouldn't, do things we shouldn't, to others and to one another. But by putting us together in his family our Father teaches us to love one another in spite of our faults. We are constantly taught by our Savior to love one another.

John 13:34: A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

1 John 4: 7:...for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

How are believers to love one another?

1 John 4: 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11: Beloved, if God so [after this manner] loved us, we ought also to love one another.

If God's love was conditioned upon us first loving him then no sinner would be saved. God chose whom he would in Christ by free and sovereign grace, not because of anything in us. God loved his own in Christ for the sake of Christ even when we did not love God

Believers do not have to be given a cause to do things for our brethren. If I have to be given a cause to do something for my brethren, it will promote a legal spirit in my own heart. God loved his elect even when we were not loveable.

Also, God loved by giving his best—he gave his only begotten Son who got the job done—he is our propitiation. So ought we to give the best to those in the family of God, even when they may not be as giving or as loving toward us. Gracious love is loving one another for the sake of Christ.

Also, we learn to forgive one another. Who is our motive for forgiving one another our faults?

Ephesians 4: 32: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Illustration: In a secular family the youngest, little fellow is always making mistakes. His older brothers and sisters may be frustrated by him at sometimes. His father may have to correct him. But they would never think of kicking him out of the family.

Each and every one of us in the family of God—in this earth—are little children in understanding, at best: "For now we see through a glass darkly," and "we know in part." (1 Cor 13: 12) So we will mess up and frustrate one another. But rather than exalt ourselves over another, we bear one another's burdens, speak of Christ to one another, pray for one another, wait on Christ to teach our brethren as we need to be taught.

In addition, we are in this family to help one another get through our mutual troubles in life; and to rejoice with one another—we are one family in one body in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12: 24: For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour [commanding us to look out for] to that *part* which lacked: [in most in need] 25: That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. [the same care as we would have for ourselves: for our fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers] 26: And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27: Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

And we are not alone, God our Father and Christ our Head is working in the midst of his family. The apostle Paul said, "work out your own salvation [one translation is the "business of your lives"; in your generation] with fear

and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you [in you individually & in you as his family, his church] both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Php 2: 13)

So these are a few examples how Christ teaches us in a practical way the things we hear preached in his gospel.

Illustration: Imagine an orphan in an orphanage studying about the love of a father, mother, obedience of children toward their father, the children working out their trials with their brothers and sisters—he could learn all about it from a book—just as you can read all about God’s family from this book. But until that orphan is in a family it is all head knowledge. Likewise, Christ puts us in his church family so we can learn the gospel in the heart, by experience. The wisdom of God to save through preaching through his church is amazing wisdom.

To Remind Us of the One Thing Needful

Let me give one last reason God put us in this church family because the continual hearing of the gospel of Christ, greatly humbles us and constantly reminds us that Christ is the one thing needful.

Illustration: Families do not eat together at the table as regularly in our day as they once did. Satan tries in every way to erode every picture of God and his family. But when a family eats together, the Father calls and no matter what the children are doing they have to humble themselves; they have to put down their other activities; they have to come to the table.

In our daily occupations and activities we are like children playing. Two days a week, God our Father calls us to the table. We must humble ourselves, drop our toys and come to the table. God reminds us, we must eat this Bread from heaven—Christ is more important than anything else—the “one thing needful.” (Lu 10: 42) Job said, “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.” (Job 23: 12)

So let’s remember to follow Paul’s example. The whole family is assured here that God our Father hears our prayers through Jesus Christ. Our faith to come to God is in Christ. God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, in Christ, God is the Father of the whole family of CHRIST, in heaven and in earth. So when God the Father hears his Son, God our Father hears us.

Hebrews 7:25: Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Romans 8: 15: For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

God our Father is faithful to give what each child in his family needs. Our Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 7: 9...what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10: Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11: If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

So as we, or our brethren, have a need, always be doing as Paul is doing here for his brethren, ask your Father in Christ!

Hebrews 4: 15: For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Pray to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named—asking him to strength your brethren by His Spirit, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith, that they might be rooted and grounded in love, that they may be able to comprehend the vastness both of God’s love and of the whole family of God in heaven and earth. And remember...

Ephesians 3: 20: Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21: Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Amen!