

THE CHURCH: THE FAMILY OF GOD

INTRO.:

1. Throughout the N.T. the H.S. chose many different words to describe the church and the different aspects of the church.
 - a. There is one word that describes the relationship that is to exist in the church more than any other word.
 - b. While this word is never used directly in connection with the church, the idea is found throughout the scriptures.
 - c. The word I am talking about is “family.”
2. Notice with me how often this idea of family is stressed in the N.T.
 - a. We are called the household of God.
 - 1) 1 Tim 3:15: “*But in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*”
 - 2) Eph 2:19: “*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household.*”
 - b. We have God as our Father (Eph. 3:14; 4:6).
 - c. We have Christ as our brother (Heb. 3:6).
 - d. We are all called the sons and daughters of God (Rom. 8:14-17).
 - e. And we are all brothers and sisters.
3. On one occasion during His ministry, Jesus emphasized this principle.
 - a. In Matt. 12 Jesus’ mother and brothers came wanting to speak to Him, but He responded: Vs. 49-50: (Read).
 - b. From this response we can learn that if we wish to be related to Jesus spiritually, we must do His Father’s will.
 - c. Simply, if we wish to be brothers and sisters to Christ, and God’s children, we must obey the commands of God.
 - d. It is our mutual submission to God that becomes the glue that binds us together as a family.
4. So let us look at what the N.T. teaches about God’s family.

LESSON:

- I. 1st: God has only one family.
 - A. In 1 Tim. 3:15 Paul said the church is “*the household of God.*”
 1. The term “*household*” does not refer to a building, a place of worship, etc.; but rather to a relationship – such as a family.
 2. The church is the family of God.
 3. The church which Jesus promised to build and which came into existence on Pentecost is God’s family.
 - B. It goes without saying that God has only one family.
 1. The fact is that God is not a polygamist
 - a. A polygamist is a man who has more than one family is a polygamist.
 - b. And polygamy is not only a violation of the laws of the land, but also of the law of God.
 2. Thus, since God cannot violate His own laws, He is not a polygamist, and thus has only one family.
 3. The church is His family.

C. It also naturally follows that God is not immoral – that is, He does not have any children outside of His family.

1. There are no illegitimate children in God’s family.
2. All of those who are a part of His family are those who have come into it in the exact same way, through spiritual birth.
3. Sadly, there are many in the world today who are claiming to be God’s children, who are not.
 - a. Many are taught that as long as they believe on Jesus and join the church of their choice they will be saved; i.e. a part of God’s family.
 - b. But what they fail to realize is that such is not possible.
 - c. To be a member of God’s family, one must come into it in the way that God prescribes.
 - d. Anything different would make them illegitimate.
4. In a few minutes we will look at how one is born into the family of God.

II. 2nd: In the church we see the family relationships.

A. God is our Father.

1. He is not only our Father, but He is our perfect Father.
2. 1 Cor 8:6: “*Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.*”
3. Eph. 4:6: “*One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*”
4. Paul said that when we receive the H.S. at baptism, it enables us to approach God and call Him, “*Abba, Father*” (Gal. 4:6).
5. Let us notice 4 of the characteristics that make God a perfect Father:
 - a. He provides for us.
 - 1) Through His word He provides us the knowledge of what can bring us joy and what can hurt us.
 - 2) He provides us with “*every spiritual blessing*” to enjoy (Eph. 1:3).
 - 3) He provides us with “*everything we need for life and godliness*” (2 Pet. 1:3).
 - 4) He provides us with everything that is “*good and perfect*” (Ja. 1:17).
 - 5) And notice that all of these things are provided to us just for the asking (Matt. 7:11).
 - 6) They are all provided for us because God loves us and wants the very best for His children.
 - b. He protects us.
 - 1) He has promised us that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13).
 - 2) He has promised to stay with us and strengthen us, even if all others forsake us (Matt. 28:20; 2 Tim. 4:17).
 - 3) He has given us a sharp, deadly weapon to defend us and help us in our fight against Satan – His word (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).
 - 4) And He has charged the angels of heaven to minister to us (Heb. 1:14).
 - c. He corrects and disciplines us.
 - 1) Like any good, loving father, God will use chastisement when He needs to correct us and bring us back into the way.
 - 2) Heb. 12:4-11: (Read).
 - d. And most importantly, He loves us: John 3:16; 1 John 4:7-11: (Read).
 - 1) Because of His love for us, He will do whatever He can to see that we spend eternity with Him.
 - 2) All that is left is for us to accept, or reject that love.

B. Christ is our brother.

1. He is like the older Son over God’s household (Heb. 3:6).
2. As an older brother, He has already gone through it all before us.
3. He has been tempted in every way that we will be, and yet remained sinless (Heb. 4:15).

4. And just as in our physical families, where we imitate our older brother or sister, so also in this spiritual family we are to imitate Christ.
5. Peter tells us that he left us an example so that we could follow in His footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21).

C. As Christians, we are all God's children.

1. We are His true sons and daughters.
 - a. Rom. 8:14-17: (Read).
 - b. Gal. 3:26-29; 4:7: (Read).
2. These passages teach that not only are we sons and daughters of God, but we are also heirs of God.
 - a. All that God has is ours by inheritance.
 - b. Of all the people on earth, we are the most privileged and blessed.
 - c. God's wealth, power, etc. are all at our disposal, just for the asking.

III. 3rd: Being a child of God there are certain obligations He has placed upon us as a part of His family.

A. We are required to separate ourselves from the world.

1. In 2 Cor. 6:17-7:1 we are commanded: (Read).
2. John also said that as God's children, we will want to be like Him: 1 John 3:3: "*And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*"
3. God calls for all of His children to turn their backs on the world and its ways, and to become like Him.
4. If we choose to follow the world's ways, rather than God's, we show by our actions that we do not really love Him (1 John 2:15).
5. Such actions, rather than showing we are God's children, show that we are His enemies (Ja. 4:4).

B. We must obey Him.

1. 1 Pet. 1:14-17: (Read).
2. In His family we have been set free from sin so that we can serve Him through love (Rom. 6:16-18).

C. We must love our brothers and sisters in Christ and strive for unity with them.

1. John 13:34-35: (Read).
2. 1 John 4:20-21: (Read).

D. And, of course, it goes without saying that as His children we must wear His name.

1. The importance of the name we wear cannot be minimized.
 - a. Some would start questioning my sanity if I started calling myself "Richard Thorsen."
 - b. And many eye-brows would be raised if Carol started calling herself, "Carol Wells."
 - c. Why? Because there is something in a name.
 - 1) We are the Rogers family, or Rogers clan.
 - 2) The name Rogers designates who we are.
2. The same thing is true when we come to God's family.
 - a. We must wear a name that brings Him honor and glory.
 - b. It was under the name Christian that the early disciples sought to glorify Him (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16).

IV. 4th: Notice some of the blessings that await those who are a part of God's family.

A. We have the privilege of being able to talk to Him any time through prayer.

1. God is never so busy that He does not have time for us.
2. In fact, the scriptures encourage us to go to Him constantly in prayer (1 Thess. 5:17).
3. To help us in our prayers, He has given us:
 - a. Our older brother to mediate for us.
 - 1) Heb. 4:14-16: (Read).
 - 2) And He has promised to do for us whatever we ask (John 15:7).
 - b. The H.S. to intercede for us: Rom. 8:26-27: (Read).
4. As a result of these facts, Jesus promised: Matt. 7:7-11: (Read).

- B. We have God's constant care.
1. In Phil. 4:6-7 Paul told us what the results of praying to God would be: (Read).
 2. Simply, God cares deeply for each one of His children.
 3. Because He cares for us He has provided for both our temporal/physical (Matt. 5:45; 6:24-33); and spiritual needs (Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3).
 - a. When tempted, He provides us a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:17).
 - b. As we strive to draw closer to Him, He provides us the H.S. to help us (Gal. 5:16).
 - c. And to encourage us daily, He has given us the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - 1) Heb 3:13: *"But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."*
 - 2) Heb. 10:23-25: (Read).
- C. We have been made heirs of God (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 3:29; 4:7).
1. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.
 2. Some of the blessings this heritage brings are:
 - a. Forgiveness of sins.
 - b. No condemnation.
 - c. The right to pray to Him at any time.
 - d. The right to worship Him.
 - e. The right to spend eternity with Him in heaven when we die.
 3. Peter said: 1 Pet. 1:3-5: (Read).
 4. NOTE: These blessings are reserved only for God's children.
 - a. Those outside of the family of God will have no inheritance with Him.
 - b. Only those in the church, God's family, will enjoy the blessings of God's heritage.

CONC.:

1. The church is God's family, and as such it has some special privileges.
2. Seeing what the Bible has to say about those who are in God's family, there is only one question left, "How do I get into that family? How can I become a part of God's family?"
 - a. In John 3:3 Jesus gave the answer: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*
 - b. Just as one must be born into a physical family, so also we must be born into God's spiritual family.
 - c. In John 3:5 Jesus further explained this birth: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."*
3. In Acts 2 we find a group of people who obeyed this message and became children of God.
4. Vs. 38 tells us how that they did it: (Quote).
5. The only question left is: "Are you a part of God's family?"
 - a. "Have you been born again?"
 - b. "Have you been born into His kingdom, His church, His family?"