**The Family of God**

**Ephesians 2:19**

**October 4, 2020**

1. Introduction
   1. One of the great deficiencies in the church’s theology today is in the area of ecclesiology.
      1. The term *ecclesiology* comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which was the word used in the NT for the church.
         1. This branch of theology, then, is the study of the church.
         2. What does the Bible say about the church?
         3. What is the church?
         4. How should we understand the meaning and purpose of the church?
      2. This doctrine has typically been relegated to such an unimportant status that virtually no one ever talks about it anymore.
         1. Sermons on church government – elders and deacons – certainly don’t draw a crowd.
         2. Sermons about things like church membership, church discipline, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and so on are almost seen as irrelevant to most believers in the church today.
         3. What are the offices of the church?
         4. What should elders and pastors do?
         5. Should we have church membership, and if so, why, and who can be a member?
         6. Most people aren’t too concerned about it so long as when they show up on Sunday everything runs pretty smoothly and people enjoy the service.
      3. The interesting thing about this is that although we rarely talk about these kinds of subjects related to ecclesiology today, we all have our own view of what the church is meant to be and do.
         1. Over the last 7 months of the COVID-19 event, the importance of ecclesiology has become a little more evident as we have seen the practical outworking of this area of theology in the life of many churches.
         2. Does the church have to actually assembly to be the church, or can we be the church from our living rooms watching on tv or on a computer?
         3. Are we the church as scattered individuals, or are we the church when we gather together as an assembly for the preaching of the Word, the partaking of the Lord’s Supper, and fellowship, discipline, and discipleship? Or maybe we are the church in both situations?
         4. In fact, what even makes a church a church?
         5. To answer all of these questions would take an entire study on its own, but for our purposes this morning, I just want to highlight for you how confused the church is today about itself.
      4. While we cannot answer all of these questions this morning, Paul spends a great deal of time in Ephesians on the doctrine of ecclesiology, discussing what the church is and what it is supposed to do.
         1. We’ll unfold some of that this morning, and then this topic picks up again later in Eph 4.
         2. It matters what we think of the church, and one blessing that has come out of the last 7 months is that we all have a heightened appreciation for what the Bible says about the church and the importance of the church.
   2. If we were to sum up what Paul is getting at in Ephesians 2:19-22 about the church, we could put it like this: The church is the assembly where the presence of God is most clearly manifest in the world.
      1. Notice what Paul says about the church in v. 21…
      2. Then he adds this in v. 22…
      3. We are a holy temple in the Lord.
      4. We are the dwelling of God in the Spirit.
      5. That is to say, we are the location of God’s presence in this world.
      6. Clearly, God is present everywhere, as we know from what Scripture says in places like Psalm 139, that no matter where we go, God is there.
      7. However, that does not mean that God is present in the same way in every place.
      8. There is a unique manifestation of the presence of God in His people, in the church, and we as the church of Jesus Christ are to manifest that presence in the local church.
      9. It’s interesting in 1 Cor 14 when Paul is talking about the church gathered together, and a situation arises when an unbeliever walks in to the church.
         1. If the church is using the gifts of the Spirit in a way that accords with the will of God, what happens?
         2. The unbeliever declares that God is certainly among you (1 Cor 14:25).
         3. What does that mean?
         4. Was God not certainly outside the church meeting place, too?
         5. Isn’t God present everywhere?
         6. What is so different and so special about the people of God gathered together as the church that when an unbeliever walks in and hears the Word of God proclaimed and witnesses the people of God worshiping in Spirit and truth, that he falls on his face and recognizes that God is there?
         7. There is no human explanation for it.
         8. It’s not a matter of the building or the geographic location; it’s the assembled people of God manifesting the presence of God on the earth in a way that the unbeliever has never seen anywhere else.
   3. Our responsibility and privilege as the church of Jesus Christ is to manifest the presence of God on the earth.
      1. How do we do that as the church?
      2. Last week we saw the first picture of the church that helps us understand this: we are citizens of God’s kingdom.
         1. Remember what Paul said in v. 19…
         2. We are no longer citizens of earth who are estranged from the kingdom of God but now we are citizens of God’s kingdom with the saints and have become strangers and aliens in the world.
         3. And so we manifest God’s presence as God’s kingdom outpost in the world.
         4. When people walk in the church and see the people of God assembled, it should be almost as if they have left their country and entered an entirely different kingdom.
         5. Of course, many things are similar, such as language, clothing, and some external cultural things.
         6. But there are also some alien elements to it as well, such as the fruit of the Spirit on display among the members, a love for God and His people and His Word, a different way of thinking and talking and living, and an allegiance to the King of glory.
         7. When a church is functioning properly and understands its true identity and purpose, it becomes a manifestation of God’s presence through a manifestation of God’s kingdom in the present world.
      3. That’s just a quick reminder of what we talked about last week.
   4. This morning, let’s go on to the second picture that helps us understand who we are as the church: Paul says that not only are we citizens of God’s kingdom, but we are…
2. Members of God’s Family (v. 19)
   1. Notice the second half of v. 19.
      1. The translation there is a bit confusing.
      2. Perhaps to clear it up it would be better to render it, “And are members of God’s household,” or, “family.”
   2. This language would have been familiar to the Greek reader who understood the nature of the ancient Greco-Roman family.
      1. The household was the most basic unit of society.
         1. It was so important in the secular world that even pagan philosophers argued that the stability of the empire rested on responsible management of the family.
         2. The household became such a dominant and important institution in ancient Rome that even their political structures were modeled after the family.
         3. The emperor himself was viewed as the father, and the empire as his household.
         4. Even the titles of certain government positions were derived from terms that related to the household in ancient society.
      2. Within every household was the householder, the lord of the house, typically the father, who had absolute authority over all of the members of the household.
         1. The typical household consisted, of course, of immediate family members such as the wife and children.
         2. But it also could extend to slaves, freedmen, servants, and other laborers.
         3. At times even some tenants were included in the household.
         4. A household, therefore, could be rather large, especially if the household was wealthy.
      3. Paul uses this imagery of the church in numerous places, referring to it in various contexts over 20 times in this letters.
   3. What is the function of this image as it relates to the church?
      1. First, we need to understand our place in the family.
         1. When we think about the ancient household, to be a member of the household could mean you were a son or a slave.
         2. You might have even just been a tenant paying rent to live with the family, and so there is a broad range of options since the ancient household could be so large.
         3. But repeatedly when we see the imagery of the family throughout the NT, we find that we are not merely tenants or servants or slaves, but that we are sons in God’s household.
            1. For example, look at Galatians 4:4-7…

There’s a lot going on in this passage that is fascinating, but the main point to see for our purposes is that we have received the adoption as sons.

We are members of God’s family, and not just as those being tolerated to live with the family for a fee, but we have been brought right into the family to be the sons of God.

In fact, we are sons in a greater way than anyone was in the Old Testament.

They old covenant saints were sons as well, but they were under the Law, which meant that they were not treated any different than slaves.

They did not have all the rights and privileges of sons.

But now that Christ has come and redeemed those under the Law, we now have the adoption.

We now receive the full benefits of being sons of God’s family.

We are no longer regarded, like old covenant believers, as slaves, but now we have come to a full sonship.

And God provides evidence for our sonship in the gift of the Spirit in our hearts.

We reflexively now relate to God as our father, and the Spirit of God cries out in our hearts, “Abba! Father!”

When the believer hears Jesus teach His disciples to pray, “Our Father,” that makes sense to our hearts because we have the Spirit within our hearts testifying to us that God is our heavenly father.

This becomes one element in the assurance of our salvation, doesn’t it?

Do we know that God is our Father in heaven?

Do we have that internal testimony of the Spirit who comforts our hearts with the knowledge that God loves us and has made us His own children?

You may have said a prayer or made a decision at some point in your life to follow Jesus, but let me ask you this morning, does the Spirit testify with your spirit that you are a child of God?

Do you know this internal confirmation of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you if you belong to Christ?

Does your heart recognize that God is your loving Father because of what Christ has done on the cross?

If not, I would ask you today to go to God in prayer and ask Him to reveal your hear to you, and to give you this great assurance that He is your Father, or to open your eyes to your own spiritual condition if He is not, and to bring you into His family through faith in Jesus Christ.

Our place in the family of God is that we are God’s sons.

* + - * 1. We see much the same thing in Romans 8:14-16…

Notice how again Paul insists that we are sons of God!

We are not like those under the old covenant who were identified with slaves until this new covenant should come.

We are now fully sons of God with all the privilege that goes with it, and we know that because God has given us the greatest gift of all when He put His Spirit in our hearts.

There is no higher privilege, no greater privilege any man or woman can have, than to have the very Spirit of God dwelling in your heart.

People today are obsessed with privilege.

If you have it, you should feel guilty about it, and if you don’t have it, you should feel envious of those who do.

But for the Christian, who is a child of God, the only privilege that we care about is the presence of the Spirit in our hearts.

There is no greater privilege in the world than this, to be part of God’s family, to be in God’s household, and to be in His household as His children, as His very own sons.

And the glorious truth of the gospel is that this privilege is available to all who will call on the name of the Lord!

It’s not just for white people or black people or young people or old people or rich people or poor people, it’s freely offered to all people!

No one can say, “I am in a class of people to whom this great privilege of being a child of God was never offered.”

Those who do not have this great privilege are those who refuse to have this great privilege because of their own sinful and stubborn hearts.

Our place as believers in the household of God is as sons of God through Christ Jesus.

* + - * 1. The Apostle John agrees with this in 1 John 3:1 when he writes…

God is the Father!

And He loves us so richly, so deeply, so truly, that He has made us His beloved children!

And such we are, John says.

We are in God’s household, He our great Father and we His true sons.

That makes us alienated from the world, but that just identifies us even more with Christ!

* + - 1. We are no longer strangers and aliens, the Apostle Paul tells us in Eph 2:19, but we are citizens of God’s kingdom and even members of His family, and not just remote and distant relatives but God’s very sons!
    1. Second, then, we need to understand not only our place in the family but the blessings of being in the family.
       1. Just as being part of a household in ancient Rome had certain blessings attached to it, so being in the household of God has blessings we enjoy.
       2. One blessing common to members of a household was the blessing of provision, and we see that as God’s household, we enjoy His provision for us.
          1. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made this point in Matt 7:9-11…

Jesus draws the parallel between a sinful householder and our heavenly Father who is perfect and good.

A sinful householder, sinful as he is, unless he is deranged, will give his children what they need when they ask him.

How much more than will God, our heavenly Father, give to us as His children the things we need when we ask Him!

He gives good to us.

He provides for our needs.

And He does this not in some abstract way but as our Father because we are members of His household, even his sons.

* + - * 1. At the end of Philippians, Paul wrote this in Phil 4:19…

God will supply all of our needs.

We don’t need to be worried or fearful, because we are now part of a family, and the head of our family provides for His household.

In fact, thinking of God’s provision for us led Paul right back to God as Father in v. 20…

* + - * 1. James also reminds us of God’s provision for us as Father in James 1:17, writing…
        2. God is our unchanging Father who provides good things to His children, and one immense blessing of being part of the family of God is divine provision.
      1. Another blessing we have as God’s children is divine protection.
         1. In the ancient world, the householder was responsible to provide security and protection for those who were in his household, and we see in Scripture that God does that abundantly for us, His children.
         2. Perhaps the most stirring illustration of this comes from the teaching of Jesus in John 10 when He issues this I am statement: I am the Good Shepherd.

The good shepherd pictured not only care for the sheep in providing what they needed but it especially pictured protection of the sheep from danger.

That’s why Jesus said in John 10:11-15…

There’s a difference between a hired hand who is watching over the sheep and a good shepherd.

A hired hand and the sheep do not have the household relationship we are talking about with God and His people.

They are joined only by economics, and when the economics turn unfavorable, the hired hand runs away and abandons the sheep.

He affords them a very limited amount of protection.

But the good shepherd is not like the hired hand.

The good shepherd is not bound to his sheep by some economic contract, but by an intimate knowledge of his sheep and a love for his sheep.

He is genuinely concerned about the welfare of the sheep because they are his sheep.

And so the good shepherd, you see, when danger comes and threatens the life of his sheep, lays down his own life to protect the sheep and to save them from danger.

He doesn’t run away like the hired hand who is only concerned to protect himself.

He is willing to die to protect his beloved sheep.

And Jesus says that He is our Good Shepherd.

He went to the cross not to purchase a potential salvation, but to protect us from eternal condemnation by dying for us.

He has given His life, laid it down for us willingly, because we belong to Him and He died to give us this divine protection.

* + - * 1. Jesus expands on this even further in John 10:27-30, saying…

Jesus now indicates that He Himself protects us with divine protection.

He has given us eternal life and we will never perish.

He will ensure that, He will see to it, because He is the good shepherd, and the good shepherd doesn’t lose any of his sheep.

No one will snatch them from Jesus.

And then Jesus adds this in vv. 29-30…

We see that Jesus is not only our Good Shepherd, but God is our Father.

And our Father is greater than all.

And not only will no one ever snatch us from the Father’s hand, no one ever can snatch us from the Father’s hand.

We are eternally protected by our loving Father who is greater than all.

The amazingly glorious thing about our household is that our householder is the greatest householder there is!

And so we have the greatest protection there is!

* + - 1. Divine provision and divine protection are two of the many blessings we enjoy as members of God’s household, as God’s children.
      2. On the way home or over the lunch table today, see how many other blessings you can think of that we enjoy because we are part of the family of God!
    1. As the church, then, we are the family of God as sons of God with all the attendant blessings of being in this family, but we also must note that being part of the family of God comes with certain responsibilities as well.
       1. Everyone in the family had a responsibility; they were all obligated to contribute in some way to the good of the family.
          1. One of the things that was clear was that in a household, there were many different tasks that needed to be accomplished.
          2. And that meant that in a large household, there were many different roles to accomplish those tasks.
          3. Paul put it like this in 2 Timothy 2:20-21…
          4. Our responsibility as members of God’s family is to be ready for every good work, ready to serve the Master.
          5. The word translated Master here spoke of the head of the household and has an emphasis on the authority of the Father.
          6. We have a responsibility to our Father, who is our Master and Lord, to be useful in the family, to contribute to the wellbeing of the family.
       2. When you think about the responsibility of a family member to the family, the most basic responsibility is love.
          1. What should mark a family as a family is their love for one another.
          2. John puts it like this in 1 John 3:10-11…

What is it that marks out our family as separate and distinct from the world?

It’s the love we have for God manifest in obedience to Him and the love we have for one another.

In fact, this message of love is the basic Christian message, that we should love one another.

It was one of the first things, John says, that these Christians were taught, to love each other.

* + - * 1. Jesus Himself taught this lesson to His disciples in John 13:34-35…

What is the mark of being in the family?

Love for one another.

Love for other believers.

* + - * 1. That’s why John could add in 1 John 4:20 that if we say we love God but don’t love our brother, in reality we don’t love God.

We aren’t displaying the mark of the family, which is love for the other members of the household.

The most basic obligation we have as members of God’s household is to love God and to show our love for God in our love for one another.

* + - 1. Another responsibility that comes out in all of this is the responsibility we have to obey our Father in heaven.
         1. There is a reason that the father in the ancient family was sometimes called the lord of that family – because he had all authority and the family was obligated to obey him.
         2. So it is for us in God’s household: yes, God is our Father, but as our Father, we must also insist that He is our Lord and we are to serve and obey Him.
         3. That’s the point the writer of Hebrews is making in Hebrews 12:4-11, where he tells us that God disciplines us as His sons.

Why does God do this?

Because He wants to produce in us holiness, obedience to His word and to His commands.

It says in Hebrews 12:10 that God disciplines us as His sons so that we might share in His holiness.

This discipline, we learn in v. 11, yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness in our lives.

And the goal of all of this, what we should strive for in our walk with Christ, in v. 9, is to be subject to the Father of spirits.

We should be subject to our heavenly Father.

That is our goal, that is our aim, to obey the head of the family, to submit ourselves to His lordship and sovereign rule.

We are to do that as citizens serving our glorious King Jesus and we are to do that as loving children submitting to our gracious heavenly Father.

* + - * 1. In fact, it is this family likeness that Paul uses in Ephesians 5 to call us to this kind of obedience.

He says in Eph 5:1…

Just like children who love their father imitate their father, so you should as children who love your heavenly Father seek to imitate Him!

You should want to bear the family resemblance and be just like Him in all the ways it is appropriate for a creature to resemble God.

That means in v. 2 that we walk in love.

And that means in vv. 3-5 that we reject all kinds of evil and vice.

And it means in v. 10 that we seek to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

* + 1. Being part of God’s family comes with immense blessing and with immense responsibility!
       1. We have God’s protection and provision.
       2. And we are also called to love and obey our heavenly Father so that we might bear the family resemblance and represent our Father in heaven in such a way that He is glorified in His household!
  1. When we think about these things, we recognize immediately that the church does not belong to us, but to God.
     1. If the church is made up of those who are citizens of His kingdom and members of His family, then the church must belong to Him.
     2. And that means that our every decision as a church must begin with this all-important question: What does God want us to do in this situation?
     3. How would God have us respond?
     4. What decisions would honor our Father in this circumstance?
     5. How can we as a church seek to obey Him and manifest His kingdom and His holiness in what we say and do as a church?
     6. How many church conflicts could be resolved if people would stop treating the church like it belonged to them and lived in the church recognizing that it belongs to Christ!
     7. Sometimes people will ask me, “How many people attend your church?”
        1. And I always want to answer and say, “None! I don’t have a church!”
        2. Only Christ has a church!
        3. I don’t have a church, and I don’t want a church because only Christ is able to run the church.
        4. And that mindset has to become deeply ingrained in us, that this assembly of believers is under the authority of our Father and of our King, the Lord Jesus Christ.
        5. And what’s more, they exercise that authority through the written word found in holy Scripture.
     8. A biblical ecclesiology begins with this: We are His: His kingdom and His family.

1. Conclusion
   1. There is something very special about this verse and what follows, because the imagery of a kingdom and a family coming together points to something greater than each of those institutions individually.
      1. I’d love to tell you what that is, but we’re out of time.
      2. So you’ll have to come back in two weeks for that as we continue to work our way through this amazing passage of Scripture.
   2. Gospel call, prayer room.