

# GOD'S FAMILY

## Marvelous Truth!

**That Believers Are:  
“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,  
of Whom the whole family in heaven and  
earth is named” (Gal. 3:26 & Eph. 3:15).**

*By Ed Stevens*

The family unit in the human race, formed and united by human love, is a most precious and most important organization. A nation's well-being and strength, survival or destruction depends on the unity, order and discipline of its *families*.

### *Two Families Distinguished*

The Bible tells us that since our first parents' fall in the Garden of Eden every human being is located in either of two universal families. One is the natural adamic family; the other is God's supernatural family. Both are entered by birth, the one by physical birth, the other by a spiritual re-birth. Christ said “That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto you, you must be born *again*” (John 3:6,7). Every human being may have this re-birth and thus enter God's family. The process is: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the Word of God* which lives and abides forever” (I Pet. 1:23).

We further read in John 1:11-13 “...But as many as received Him (Christ) to them gave He the power (or right) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” And again, “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, through the riches of His grace (unmerited favor),” and “of whom the *whole family* in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 1:7 & 3:15).

God knew we did not and could not choose to be born into the adamic family of sinful lost souls. He graciously arranged that we can and must choose, however, to be born again through Christ Who is called “the last Adam,” and thus be placed into *His heavenly family*. In the moment of such choice our entire history and guilt in the death doomed earthly family of Adam is, in His reckoning, *blotted out forever!* A descriptive account of the two Adams is given in Romans 5:14-21, where we read: “For by one man's offence (Adam's) death reigned by one; much more they which receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men unto condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For by one man's disobedience (Adam's) many were made sinners, so by the

obedience of One (Christ) shall many be made righteous.” (Christ’s obedience was His substitutionary death for our sins on the cross—Philip. 2:8.)

Now, concerning how to “receive by faith” God’s grace and righteousness in salvation we quote “the gospel,” or good news, as found in I Cor. 15:1-5: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel...wherein you stand: by which also you are saved...how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen of witnesses.”

### ***Re-Birth—A Blessed And Permanent Reality!***

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath everlasting life*, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death *into life*.” “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God *that you may know that you have everlasting life*.” The indwelling Holy Spirit “beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God” (John 5:24; I John 5:10,13 & Rom. 8:16).

“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. Beloved, *now are we* the sons of God, and it doeth 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” (I John 3:1,2).

We can realistically compare God’s new-born babes with natural babes thus: As a normal baby has life and cries, so also God’s babes, for “he that hath the Son hath life” and he cries “Father” in prayer (I John 5:12 & Rom. 8:15). A normal baby thrives on milk, thus Peter wrote “As newborn babes desire the sincere (pure) milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby” (I Pet. 2:2). Natural children possess characteristics of their parents. Believers are told to “put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24). Natural children have love for each other. In I John 3:14 we read: “We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.” And again, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Allow me to ask the reader, Won’t you *always* be a child of your physical father, even though he might disown you? Does it require effort in good behavior on your part to *remain his actual son*? Of course not! So it is in God’s family once a son, *always!* God “disciplines every son whom He receives” (Heb. 12:6), but He never disowns a single one. His Bible believing children can testify: “*Surely*, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord *forever*” (Psalm 23:6). Believers are “the household of God” (Eph. 2:19), which household will never break up!

### ***Family Headship and the Church !***

In this present dispensation, God unites His family or “household” in “*one body*” which He calls “*the church* which is His body” (Eph. 4:4; 1:22,23 & Rom. 12:4,5). We

read in Ephesians 5:23 & 24, “The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Therefore, as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything.” Not only did God ordain that the church be subject to Christ “in everything,” but that the church, as a spiritual organism function in relation to the Head, Christ, just as the physical body functions in relation to its physical head. This is explained in I Corinthians 12:12-27.

The natural earthly family consistently acknowledges and remains united under but one head-of-the-family name before the world. So also is it God’s will concerning His spiritual family to bear only the name of Christ as commanded in Col. 3:17; Eph. 4:1-6 & I Cor. 1:10. Behold, however, the host of diversified sect-names used by professed members of God’s family. This dishonors Christ their head and confuses the world! Little attention is given to Christ’s sincere prayer recorded in John 17:21, “That they all may be one as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me.”

May you consider this question: Does a son or daughter organize their father’s family and choose a name for it? “Preposterous!” you say. May a son or daughter take the unlawful liberty to re-name themselves apart from other members of the family? Of course not! Then what about such activities in the professed family of God, Christendom, with its hosts of different humanly organized churches, or sects, each one named apart by man?

What is a sect? It is defined by the original Greek word, “heresy,” which means choice, or dissention arising from diversities of opinions and aims, with a naming apart from others. Very few of the members of God’s precious family realize that “heresy” is sin. The majority live with this sin in their sects. With searching severity, God’s Word teaches that to “join a church of your choice”—a man-devised and propagated so-called “church” (as though the divinely originated, united body, the family of God, does not exist)—is as truly sinful “works of the flesh” as adultery and fornication. This is revealed in Gal. 5:19-21. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, *seditions*, *heresies* (divisions & parties), envying, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.”

### ***No Unbelievers In God’s Family !***

Sect members readily concede that unbelievers are in all probability members with them. However, there are no unbelievers in God’s family, or church, since He, Himself, joins the members. An unbelieving child of Adam is spiritually unclean in God’s sight no matter what they might appear to be in society. “Who can bring a clean out of an unclean? Not one!” (Job 14:4). Therefore, to be joined to a religious organization with unbelievers is to be joined to or to “touch” an unclean thing. God plainly forbids this in II Cor. 6:14-18. Marriage is actually not designated in this passage as is commonly taught, for in I Cor. 7:10-14 the exhortation is given to Christians unequally yoked in marriage not to dissolve the union. Of course a believer is not to marry an unbeliever. However, this passage is talking about yokes in man-made religion. Hear God’s separation command in II Cor. 6:14-7:1, and realize the vast majority of the pagan temples of today have “Christian” names attached to them—

“Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols; for ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and *spirit*, perfecting holiness (separation) in the fear of God.”

Please note the words, “touch not the unclean thing,” meaning have no fellowship with uncleanness. The word “touch” is similarly used in Proverbs 6:29, “Whosoever toucheth his neighbor’s wife (in adultery) shall not be innocent.” It is God’s Word, friend, not mine, that a sect is “unclean” and must be shunned.

Precious is the promise: “I will *receive* you.” The word “receive” here (once so used) means, “to treat with favor.” There is a great compensation experienced by those who obey this separation command. They bask in God’s *special favor* in His intimate fellowship, enjoying peace, comfort and relaxation from worry as well as cared for children of a heavenly Father—“*Almighty*” in every necessity and emergency in life on this turbulent planet.

### ***True Spiritual Life !***

Spiritual life is found only where God put it—in His born-again family, the church of the living God; not in dead works-of-the-flesh sects of which He is definitely not the author (I Cor. 14:33). Anything God calls good works, as soul winning, helping the poor, etc., if done in a sect is and can only be done by members of God’s family found there. Most often the credit is proudly given to the sect instead of to God alone—another reason for members of God’s family to “come out from among them.”

Every creation of God being perfect, men cannot make improvement. Christ said, “I will build My church.” Men say, “Let us build a church—and give it a name.” (Compare the building of Babel confusion in Gen. 11.) Some, indeed, have a “Reformed Church.” Significantly, men’s religious institutions grow in numbers and diversity while apostasy increases! Remember, the grave puts an end to all sect names.

Be assured, no betterment is needed as to God’s family (or church) as a functioning organization. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” “Ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (I Cor. 12:13 & Gal. 3:23). “Speaking the truth in love, grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint (or member) supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15,16).

### ***Where Are We To Worship ?***

But where shall we go “to church”? is the usual question when faced with these plain truths. In the first place, believers are the church, “an habitation of God through the

Spirit” (Eph. 2:21,22). The Bible word “church” means, “a called-out assembly of people.” “Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them,” said our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt.18:20). The Christian household is a small assembly. “The church which is in Nymphas’ house,” we read in Col. 4:15. The first mention of public buildings for worship is found in Tertullian’s 3<sup>rd</sup> century writings. Meeting need not be advertised by a name but simply as to location. In God’s Word believers are called “Christians,” “brethren,” “saints,” “the church,” “the church of God” or “the churches of Christ” (in a large area, for example, “of Galatia”). Other descriptions are, “the church which is His body,” “the body of Christ,” “the house of God,” “the household of God” or “the family of God.” Do you not see how using any one of these descriptions apart from all the others as a banner before the ignorant world is but confusion and ungodly division?

Spiritual, obedient Christians acknowledge as did godly Abraham, that they are themselves “but dust and ashes.” They see that it is not in the description of God’s people (as listed above), or by invented names, they must carry on, but only in “the name that is above every name,” the “name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philip. 2:9; Col. 1:18 & 3:17). Martin Luther is known to have said, “Do not call yourselves ‘Lutherans.’ Who is Luther but miserable dust and ashes. Let us call ourselves ‘Christians’ (Christ-ones), after Him from Whom our doctrine comes.” Yes, and we might add our salvation. Thus we do all in Christ’s name simply as a Christian family.

“O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together. Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness—or separation” (Psalm 34:3 & 29:2).

The fellowship of separated Christians meeting on the ground that there is only “one body,” or church, and only in Christ’s name, will grow as to numbers through personal work and testimony. Their children and succeeding generations reared “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4) will enlarge such assemblies. The Holy Spirit provides elders, or ministers, who are to be recognized as such when they have the qualifications of this office as described in I Tim. 3 and Titus 1. So-called “presiding elders” are not mentioned. The word “bishop” simply designates the office of an elder (Titus 1:5,7), not higher rank as commonly believed. This error of rank, from early times has hurtfully divided an equal brotherhood, giving rise to a priestly order, or “clergy” over “laity” and finally, a “pope” over all. Condemnation of this evil is found in Matt. 23:8-12 and I Pet. 5:3.

### ***Common Family Possessions and Activities !***

Truly, in God’s family we can say, “The lines (allotments) are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea I have a goodly heritage” (Ps. 16:6). First of all we have in common our Father’s Word, the Bible, giving us instructions for walk and worship in this present dispensation and wherein things are written of His people “aforetime, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). The Bible is a “family album,” with a roster of heroes of faith (Heb. 11). It contains “exceeding great and precious promises” and tells of a coming great family re-union above and of a glorious future in eternity, with our Father’s angels being servants as “ministering spirits” (I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51-57; Rev. 21 and 22 & Heb. 1:14).

God's family has a common teacher, the Holy Spirit. What they learn from Him they all learn alike! "He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13 & I John 2:27). All truth is not always accepted, sad to say, resulting in divisions.

God has also given to His one universal church (not sects) "gifts" in "evangelists, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11,12). These men are made servants to the whole body of Christ, whereas local "overseers" are appointed by them (Titus 1:5), and function in each local assembly in God's family through the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). What loss there is to God's children scattered in various sects when these God-ordained men are not recognized and heard!

Doing "all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father by Him" as commanded in Col. 3:17, God's separated children become "ambassadors for Christ" (representing heaven) and are "workers together with Him" (II Cor. 5:19 & 6:1). They are jealous over God's family "with a godly jealousy, fearing lest their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus" (II Cor. 11:2,3). They pray "for all saints" (Eph. 6:18). Sectarians are narrowed down to : "our people," "our church," "our preachers," "our work," and "our missionaries." Every Christian missionary anywhere is in his activities a participant in the functioning of the entire body of Christ (see Eph. 4:11,12 quoted above, and Col. 2:19).

### ***The Family Budget !***

In God's family there is also a "family budget," to supply "the necessity of the saints" and to support those who minister the Word and therefore, "should live of the gospel" (Rom. 12:13; I Cor. 9:14 & Gal. 6:6). All this is Scripturally observed in giving "as every man purposed in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:7). It is well known that covetous sect builders loudly preach the "necessity" of the Mosiac, legalistic tithing of a past dispensation.

God's separated children actively endeavor "with all lowliness of mind to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" and to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Eph. 4:2,3 & Philip. 1:27). They have concern for the family reputation and for the honor of its Head in heeding the command, "That ye speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). They heed the admonition: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as you see the day (of Christ's coming) approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

### ***God's Family—A Foretaste of Heaven !***

When such Christians meet others who "walk in the light" (I John 1:7) they are aware of precious kinship and acquaintance in Christ and have warm fellowship together as—a little foretaste of heaven. Their meeting can have a family spirit. They exclaim with David, "behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. 133:1).

Friend, we ask you, can one have more or do more in a puny religious sect than what you have just read concerning God's great family? There is no comparison!

*Are You A Member of God's family ?*

Are you in God's family? If not, why not let God place you there—forever, by accepting His Son as your personal Savior? God says, “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation (II Cor. 6:2). Eternity starts when the heartbeat stops! No second chance hereafter! (Prov. 29:1 & 11:7). To die in rebellious unbelief results in eternal existence in the place “prepared for the devil and His angels (Matt. 25:30), in “outer darkness”—“the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 13).

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31). Then, “Be ye separate”—in God's blessed family.

THE END