

The Family of God

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Consider what families mean to us. They are such a precious part of God's eternal program. A healthy family will manifest strong relationships and a real representation of the order of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This booklet speaks of the most important family on earth, and that is the family of God. As you will see in reading these pages, God longs to draw us to Himself and to see us draw together around truth in the life of the Holy Spirit.

Just thinking about family brings to mind one of my favorite songs. When we sing this old Bill Gaither song in church, we encourage those in the service to walk around, greet each other, and have good, old-fashioned, personal exchanges. Read and meditate on the words of this old song, and please take to heart these thoughts on "The Family of God":

*I'm so glad I'm a part of the Family of God,
I've been washed in the fountain,
cleansed by His Blood!*

*Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family,
The Family of God.*

*You will notice we say "brother"
and "sister" 'round here,
It's because we're a family
and these folks are so near;
When one has a heartache,
then we all shed a tear,
And rejoice in each victory
in this family so dear.*

*From the door of an orphanage
to the house of the King,
No longer an outcast, a new song I sing;
From rags unto riches,
from the weak to the strong,
I'm not worthy to be here,
but PRAISE GOD! I belong!*

—William J. Gaither, 1970

Chapter One

"I" FRACTURES THE FAMILY

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

"And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

"And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:7-9).

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Psalm 42:7).

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

"Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7).

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to

the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:12-14).

Families are such an important part of God’s operation in His creation. Follow these thoughts with me very carefully. Lucifer was in a family in heaven. He was created by God and set in his place by God. He possessed an awesome responsibility to lead the host of heaven and all of creation in bringing praises to the throne of God. The Trinity was open and available to Lucifer as he walked in the midst of the eternal counsels of eternity.

Lucifer did have volition. He had to make choices in his areas of responsibility. Even in that atmosphere, there were details of life to perform. Serving God was not automatic; a response was necessary.

In one moment, however, Lucifer lost his sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. No longer was he content with the place where God had put him. His change of attitude resulted in his alienation. That word is an important one to understand. It speaks of someone who denies his origins and who refuses to recognize the debt he

owes. This, I believe, is the essence of iniquity.

Lucifer, who is now known as Satan, forsook the One who made him. He did not originate in himself. God created Lucifer and set him in the place he occupied before iniquity was found in him. At that moment, Lucifer stopped recognizing where he came from, and he also refused to acknowledge that he owed his very existence to the God he had been serving to that point.

The Origin of Sin

This anointed cherub had an awesome job. A number of commentators indicate that Lucifer's chief function was to bring light. That is, he communicated the mind of the Trinity to the rest of God's creation, and then he also stirred and carried the praises of that creation before the Throne of God.

Before he changed his attitude, there was really one will in operation over all of creation. That will belonged to I AM THAT I AM. God introduced Himself to Moses with this title. It represents the always existent, eternal nature of God. He is, always has been, and always will be. The concept of time belongs to our existence. It does not belong to God's. He created time for us, but He reigns sovereign outside of time. He sees the beginning and the end of all things at all times.

When iniquity was found in Lucifer, another will began to operate. "I" will be as the Most High, Satan declared. That new "I" represented a choice to focus attention on self rather than on God. This was the start of competition, comparison, rivalry, and sin. We see from the Bible that a third of the angelic host decided to follow in the "I" adventure with Satan. Volition and responsibility involve choices, and every choice essentially comes down to this one: Do I go God's way or my own way?

More subtle than any beast, the serpent spoke slyly to Eve from his viewpoint. His deception turned Eve from her focus upon God, the One who met and communicated with her and Adam in the cool of the day. Lucifer got Eve to enter into the "I" life apart from I AM THAT I AM.

That decision fractured the order which the Lord had established for the first family. Adam and Eve made a choice, and that choice had a consequence. God meant what He said when He warned the first human beings not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The I AM told them the result would be death. Death came to them, and decay became a part of life.

Frustration, fear, envy, jealousy, and trouble entered the picture on that day. We see that it got out of control quite quickly in the human race. Cain got angry and killed his brother, Abel. The

struggle for oneness in the family continues to this day.

Chapter Two

LIVELY STONES

“Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created” (Ezekiel 28:13).

“And he put them on the shoulders of the ephod, that they should be stones for a memorial to the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses.

“And he made the breastplate of cunning work, like the work of the ephod; of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.

“It was foursquare; they made the breastplate double: a span was the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof, being doubled.

“And they set in it four rows of stones: the first row was a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this was the first row.

“And the second row, an emerald, a sap-

phire, and a diamond.

“And the third row, a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst.

“And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper: they were inclosed in ouches of gold in their inclosings.

“And the stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, every one with his name, according to the twelve tribes” (Exodus 39:7-14).

Ezekiel 28:13 speaks of the covering of stones relative to Lucifer. Then in Exodus, we have the references to the stones that were fastened to the High Priest’s breastplate. These stones have always stood for the characteristics of God. It was not an explanation of the expensive stones in the way that Hollywood speaks of them. Rather, these stones relate to the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Those are the nine stones we see in Ezekiel. The first three stones refer to God’s character that is worked inward. Then, there are three that represent God’s character as it goes outward. The last three speak of His character in us as it goes upward toward Him.

Remember, Lucifer was created. He was perfect and bright and wise. Yet, he made a choice of

dissatisfaction. He wanted something for himself.

Now, there were three stones that Lucifer did not have for his covering, and these are particularly related to the work of Jesus Christ. In the ancient world the ligure was a gem that related to obedience. Jesus was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, during His ministry on earth (Hebrews 10:7; Philippians 2:7-8).

The agate stone included many stripes and colors, which referred to the many-faceted grace of God. This gem stood for the Lord's diversity and how we are healed in the cloud and incense of His presence.

The other stone that was on the breastplate, also not listed with the nine stones of Lucifer, was the amethyst—a clear purple stone that referred to the hypostatic union of Christ, the union of divinity and humanity in His person. As the Son of Man, Jesus never became intoxicated with the details of His life here. Our Lord was never overwhelmed because His perfect humanity totally trusted in God the Father.

Christ's covering did not cover Lucifer's fall. His death could not redeem Satan, but Jesus did redeem us. As a result, we are now "lively stones." We are filled with God's Spirit and fitly framed together.

Part of a New Building

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

“In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

“In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

We are now part of a holy habitation that is linked to the Chief Cornerstone—Jesus Christ. The cornerstone represents the most significant stone in any building. Every other block must be correctly related to the corner. If a block is off in its correlation to the cornerstone, then the whole building will become crooked and compromised. It becomes a dangerous building because it is not square and right.

The family of God is a great building. Any family can be a great household, a great building. The husband and wife nourish and cherish each other. Each one develops an inner life with God. There is confidence because the home is set upon the foundation of truth. Good self-images

develop with a wonderful plan. In this kind of family, children learn what real life is all about. Their training, their development, their spiritual life, their practical life, and their responsible life come through the covering of a family.

Chapter Three

ABBA, FATHER

Family means a lot to me. I was one of seven, and my father died when I was three years old. We had huge long table and I had my place. My brothers always made sure that I was in my place, or they would put me there. It was wonderful.

My mother rose up very early every morning and worked her heart out to raise this family. I can never remember her raising her voice. Every Saturday my dear mother would bake beans with pork and fix some homemade rolls and homemade pies. When she was in her mid-70s she could hardly move her fingers because of arthritis, but she never quit. I have so many precious memories that I will always cherish.

Made Heirs with Christ

“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made

under the law,

“To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

“Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Galatians 4:3-7).

Even though I had a wonderful family to grow up with, I always wondered what it would be like to have a dad. Then, I got saved. I found Christ, and God became my Father. Now the Holy Spirit witnesses to me that I am a son. I am a child of God. I have no reason to fear because underneath me are His everlasting arms.

It is a beautiful thing to know that in the depths of our hearts we have a heavenly Father. This Father knows us and hears us and sees us. By His power, we have been placed into a precious, sacred family.

Our Father is the God of all comfort, the God of all grace, the God of all patience. Our Father is the God of all. No good thing will He withhold from us! He will never leave us, nor will he ever forsake us.

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the

grace of God should taste death for every man.

“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

“Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Hebrews 2:9-12).

Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call us “brethren.” Christ sings with us in the midst of the great congregation that He has called out from the world. In Song of Solomon 4:10, the bridegroom speaks to the bride saying, “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!” He was saying, as Christ is saying to His family, His Church, “You are everything to me. You are my family forever.”

This is the deep calling unto the deep. God’s deep love is drawing out things that we never knew were inside of us. Just as a father or a mother’s gentle ways can bring out the best in their children, His gentle way with us makes us great.

CONCLUSION

We are complete in Christ. We are perfect in Him. Jesus is our Savior. He is our Brother, too. We say, as He said and as He taught us to say, "Our Father" when we pray. Having not known my father, who died when I was very young, I have really seen how important it is to know my heavenly Father. He is the Father for all those who are fatherless.

We are so dearly loved by God! The promises He gives us are always "yea and amen." He calls us to go forth. And we go forth. We have other places to touch, other countries to reach. New cities are there, waiting for us to pioneer. God has opened up so much for us. Yet, there is so much more for us to do.

We can shine for Him and not whine about our situations and circumstances. Start with today, and just plan on shining and not whining. In your families, at your jobs, in your churches—shine on and refuse to whine.

The Lord has hid us with Christ in God. We are complete in Him who possesses all power

and all knowledge. We can bloom as we rest in His love. We will bloom and not live in the gloom. Our life will be one that looks up and away from this world to a city whose builder and maker is God.

That is our purpose. That is our calling. That is our life.

God Really Cares For You

Jesus loves you deeply. However, the fact that all have sinned separates us from God (*Romans* 3:23; 6:23). Still, God cares for you and He provides a way to share His love with you.

Jesus Christ's love for man was so great that He came and died on the cross for all the sins of mankind. He shed His blood for you so you can be forgiven and have eternal life.

The only thing He requires of you is to come to Him in simple faith trusting His character and love for you, and accepting Him as your Savior. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (*Acts* 2:21).

Simply pray, "*Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I receive you as my personal Savior. Thank you for loving me so much that you died for me so I can have eternal life with you. Amen.*"

He promises that He will never stop loving you and that He will never leave nor forsake you (*Hebrews* 13:5). Develop your relationship with Him by reading the Bible, praying, and attending a good Bible-believing church.

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