

8.18.19 ~ Ephesians 3:13-21, What's in a Name?

In **Ephesians 3:2-12** Paul reminds us of the great mystery, that being, God in us, the church (God's people forming one body, with Christ as the head). Paul encourages us therefore, that we should be confident in approaching God, at any time.

Read Ephesians 3:13... Paul asks these believers not to be discouraged by what he has had to suffer in the name of Christ; many of the believers were grieved by Paul's imprisonment and continuing hardships as he preached and ministered among the people. Paul doesn't want them to lose heart over this; for he is a servant of God and suffering is part of the job description (see **2Corinthians 4:8-9, 16; 11:24-28**).

Paul often compared his temporary suffering on earth with the eternity he will have with God in heaven, along with all those who belong to God (see **Romans 8:18**).

Read Ephesians 3:14-15... Paul now returns to the prayer he originally started in **verse 1**, proclaiming that we have been given God's name [as believers and followers of God's Son, we are Christians], having been born-again by God's Spirit, at the moment we trusted in Jesus Christ (**John 1:12-13; 3:3-6**).

The Bible does not teach a One World-One People, Universal Fatherhood of God-Brotherhood of Man, theology. Yes, God is the Creator of all, but He is only the Father of those who have been saved, by faith, through the shed blood of Jesus Christ; through whom we are all made members of God's family; in fact, we are called Christians.

God wants every member of His family to realize that our most distant relative isn't a mortal man, but God Himself.

Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.'" **27**, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Genesis 2:7, "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." **18**, "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'" **21-22**, "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man."

All other humans, after Adam and Eve, were born of human parents; but Adam was formed out of the dirt of the ground, and Eve was formed using some of

Adam's flesh, which God had made from dirt. Our most distant ancestor is God Himself!

Have you ever researched your human ancestral heritage? By using your father's surname and your mother's maiden name, you can trace your family heritage, and it can be quite interesting.

For some people, their earthly ancestry is a serious subject; and if they can trace their heritage to some prominent persons or to some very early historical roots, they seem to acquire a sense of prideful connectedness to someone important or they claim some inherent right based upon a "my people have been here longer than your people" attitude.

For the Jews, their ancestry through Jacob and the twelve tribes of Israel back to Abraham, their patriarch, is of profound importance; for it is through Abraham that they claim their special rights as God's people; in fact, they claim justification with God based upon some human ancestral blood line relationship with Abraham.

But Paul makes it clear (**Ephesians 3:14-15**), that Christians, those called by the name of God's One and Only Son, derive their name and their family heritage not from some mere human's name or a human family's ancestral history, but from God Himself.

The priority in Scripture is not about being related to Abraham (the patriarch of Israel) through his bloodline; but it is about being related to Abraham (the man of Faith) through the righteousness that was credited to him because he believed God (see **Romans 4:1-3**).

What Abraham believed God about (cf. Genesis 15:6), was that God would give him numerous descendants (the pre-eminent being Jesus Christ), through whom all people of the earth would be blessed; even though, at that time, Abraham had no son, and both he and Sarah were of old age, yet Abraham believed God (see **Romans 4:19-25**).

Abraham was a man of faith, he is the true spiritual father of all those those who trust and believe in Christ (**Galatians 3:26-29**).

True believers and followers of Christ are given their eternal surname from God Himself-- **Christian** means "adherent [close follower] of Christ," and it is used three times in the NT (**Acts 26:28**, becoming a Christian; **Acts 11:26**, living as a Christian; **1Peter 4:16**, suffering as a Christian) -- those three aspects of Christianity seem to stand out the most in the Scripture.

Read Ephesians 3:16-19... Paul wants us to grasp [take hold of and really understand] and appropriate [apply to our lives] all that we have been given by our heavenly Father, in Christ (cf. 2Peter 1:1-3).

God not only provides a special name for those who are born into His eternal family, but He expresses His love for us and graciously equips us with everything we need to enjoy this life on earth, and to trust Him for eternity in heaven.

Paul is trying to impress upon us all that we have been given in Christ, as God's children, recipients of this great mystery-- that God sovereignly purposed to have an eternal relationship with us, not because of any inherent goodness, not because of any ancestral heritage, and not because we deserve it or could ever earn it. God has done this, because He loves us so much (see **Ephesians 2:1-10**)..

Jesus Christ is the plan, purpose and provision of God for everyone who will believe. Paul prays for us to be strengthened in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, for it is only God Who can reach in and heal the inner person, giving life to our spirit.

Our birth into God's family occurs when we repent of our sins, confessing Jesus as Lord, believing in our heart that His death on the cross made full payment for our sins, and His resurrection from the dead demonstrated proof that He alone has authority to grant forgiveness for sin and eternal life.

At the very moment of hearing and believing the message of Christ, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in us, making us God's possession (cf. Ephesians 1:13-14).

Your life as a Christian will not be dull or boring, nor will it be without pain, persecution, and struggle; but your Father in heaven, Who has given you His name, has also provided all that you need, now and forever through Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:12-13, "I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Read Ephesians 3:20-21... Paul encourages us to have confidence in God "who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think," this is "according to the power that works within us," through God's Holy Spirit.

Paul makes it very clear that everything to be done through the church," (i.e., the body of believers of which we are members [spiritual body parts] and Jesus Christ is the head), is to be done for God's glory, "throughout all generations, for ever and ever!"

Colossians 3:17, "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

If you are not a believer and follower of Christ, I urge you to repent of your sin, to trust God to forgive you, save you, and grant you eternal life; while providing you a new name, Christian, given by Almighty God, the Creator and Sustainer of

the Heavens and the Earth and all that exists, for He is the Lord, Savior and Judge over everything for all of eternity, and yet He knows you, loves you, and wants to be your Father, and for you to become His child, in and through Jesus Christ (cf **Romans 10:9-10, 13**).

And all God's children said? Amen!

Pastor Mike

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