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We Are Part Of An Extended Family

GALATIANS 4:4-7

Introduction

1. Over the last few weeks we have looked at the significance of our lives as Christians.
2. During that time we have examined both the blessings we enjoy and the responsibilities which go along with them.
3. Last week we looked at what the apostle Paul says to us in Romans 6:16-18:
 - a. Prior to our obedience to Christ, we were “slaves of sin” (v. 17).
 - b. Now, as Christians, we have been “freed from sin,” and have become “slaves of righteousness” (v. 18).
4. As a result, we are people who gratefully serve our Lord.
5. Tonight, in our final lesson in this series, I want us to look at the fact that concept of community in our lives as Christians.
6. What I mean by this is the fact that God’s Word constantly speaks of our connection with one another.
7. As with all our other lessons, this connection includes both blessings to enjoy and responsibilities to fulfill.
8. Let’s look closer at who we are in this body which Scripture calls “the church” and how we can honor our Lord in our togetherness.

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I. Our “Togetherness” in Christ

A. THE EARLY CHRISTIANS WERE OFTEN TOGETHER

1. The early Christians were often together.
2. It isn't long after the addition of the three thousand souls on the day of Pentecost that Luke records these words in Acts 2:44, "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common."
2. Two verses later, Luke adds this: "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart" (Acts 2:46).

2a**B. WE ARE PARTICIPANTS TOGETHER IN OUR COMMON JOURNEY**

1. The word "fellowship" is often used to describe their participation.

"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42, NASB95)

"God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:9, NASB95)
2. As Christians, you and I are described as . . .
 - a. "Fellow citizens" (Ephesians 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," (Ephesians 2:19, NASB95)
 - b. "Fellow heirs, fellow members, fellow partakers" (Ephesians 3:6)

"to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel," (Ephesians 3:6, NASB95)
 - c. "Fellow workers" (Philippians 4:3)

"Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women [Euodia & Syntyche] who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel,

together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.” (Philippians 4:3, NASB95)

d. “Fellow servants” (Colossians 1:7)

“just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf,” (Colossians 1:7, NASB95)

e. “Fellow soldiers” (Philippians 2:25)

“But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;” (Philippians 2:25, NASB95)

- ❑ The driving point in all of these passages is that you and I share together in the work and the rewards of our lives in Christian.

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C. WE ARE PART OF A CLOSE-KNIT FAMILY

1. Our Lord considers us His brothers and sisters (Mark 3:33-35).

“Answering them, He said, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! “For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”” (Mark 3:33–35, NASB95)

2. God considers us His sons and daughters (Galatians 4:4-7), His household (Ephesians 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,” (Ephesians 2:19, NASB95)

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D. WE ARE MEMBERS OF CHRIST’S BODY

“Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27, NASB95)

1. His body is the church of which you and I are a part (Ephesians 1:22-23).

“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22–23, NASB95)

2. Not only are we individual members of His body, the church, we are also members of one another (Romans 12:5).

“so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” (Romans 12:5, NASB95)

3. Though we do not all have the same function within the body (Romans 12:4), God calls each of us to contribute (Ephesians 4:15b-16).

“. . . we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:15b-16, NASB95)

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II. Our Responsibilities Within Our Spiritual Family

A. THE ATTITUDES WE DEMONSTRATE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER

1. High regard for one another (Philippians 2:3; 1 Corinthians 12:25-26)

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;” (Philippians 2:3, NASB95)

2. Concern for each other (Philippians 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:25-26)

“do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:4, NASB95)

“so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:25–26, NASB95)

3. Honesty toward one another (Ephesians 4:25)

“. . . speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another” (Ephesians 4:25).

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4. Appreciation for each other’s work in the kingdom of our Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,” (1 Thessalonians 1:2–3, NASB95)

5. A peaceable spirit which seeks to build others up (Romans 14:19).

“So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.” (Romans 14:19, NASB95)

6. Gentleness toward one another (Galatians 6:1).

“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1, NASB95)

7. Patience and a forgiving spirit (Colossians 3:12-13)

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” (Colossians 3:12–13, NASB95)

8. Love (John 13:34-35; Philemon 1:7)

“For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.” (Philemon 7, NASB95)

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B. THE ACTION WE SHOULD TAKE

1. Identify yourself as a member of this church family (Acts 9:26)

“When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.” (Acts 9:26, NASB95)

2. Submit to the oversight of the elders who shepherd us (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:17).

“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction,” (1 Thessalonians 5:12, NASB95)

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17, NASB95)

3. Attend and participate in our assembling together (Hebrews 10:24-25).

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but

encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”
(Hebrews 10:24–25, NASB95)

4. Engage personally and directly in our work:

a. Evangelism (Acts 8:4)

“Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.” (Acts 8:4, NASB95)

b. Edification (Romans 14:19)

“So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.” (Romans 14:19, NASB95)

c. Benevolence (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35)

“And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.” (Acts 2:44–45, NASB95)

5. Help maintain unity within our family (Ephesians 4:1-3)

“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1–3, NASB95)

6. Extend courtesy and hospitality (1 Peter 4:9)

“Be hospitable to one another without complaint.” (1 Peter 4:9, NASB95)

Conclusion

1. There is a hymn which we sometimes sing which speaks of us as "God's Family." I would like to share that with you.

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2. Over the last seven months I have grown closer to a number of you than I have been in the previous nineteen years.
 - a. We have worked together here at the building and out in our community.
 - b. We have shared much laughter and tears together as we have helped our friends and neighbors affected by the flood.
 - 1) Three men riding down the road singing together in the cab of a box truck.
 - 2) Six brothers and sisters in Christ sitting in a truck broke down on the side of the road outside of Linden.
 - c. I wouldn't trade anything for the time I have shared with so many of you over the last seven months.
 - d. I believe the tragedy we have been seeking to relieve has drawn us closer together as God's family.
3. In addition to the joy we experience from our fellowship with one another, there is also the encouragement we receive to remain faithful to our Lord and His cause.
4. Tonight, if you are a Christian who has lost his or her way, I hope something which God has allowed me to say will draw you back to Him and His family.
5. If you are someone who has never submitted to Christ and asked Him to wash away your sin, please do so tonight.
6. The blessings which await you, along with the responsibilities, are like none you have ever known.