

# God's Great Household p1

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 2:18-22  
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Grab your Bibles and let's go to Ephesians 2 as we talk about "God's Great Household." When you start in Genesis and you go all the way through Revelation, there is one overarching theme and that is God is glorifying himself by saving for himself a people and these people he redeemed for himself that they might know him, treasure him, find pleasure in him and that will glorify him for all eternity. He will make them like himself. So that's the whole overarching story. Now, you have something of an outline of all how God is going to do this through the Old Testament part of the Scripture, then you get to the New Testament and boom, the plan unfolds before us. And then you get to the epistles and you have such a deep and rich outline, an out-laying you might say, of these rich treasures of how God through grace is saving for himself a people.

Now, one of the things that jumps out so strongly in these New Testament epistles is that God's great household included peoples other than Jews. You and I can't comprehend how that's a big deal but trust me, to the people of this day and to the Jewish heritage, this was radical news. How could it possibly be that those lesser peoples, those Gentile dogs, could be a part of God's great household that he has ordained from eternity past he would save and bring unto himself as his unique, chosen, elect, peculiar people? So when you get to Ephesians 1 and 2 through about three fourths of the way through chapter 2, Paul has just unfolded and exegeted out before us so much of the rich treasure of how God saves his own children. Anytime you go to the Bible, it's as if you get to go back in this infinite storehouse of treasure and bring another great treasure out for the children to enjoy but, man, when you get to books like Ephesians, it's like Paul went in there and grabbed great big armloads and brought things out because the rich and glorious treasure of salvation by grace through faith in Christ for the glory of God is so marvelously unfolded in Ephesians 1 and about three fourths of the way through chapter 2.

Now you get to where we are and he says, "Now, what's the end of all of this? What is this going to look like practically speaking?" And that's part of what we're seeing today. We've been seeing that but another dimension of it today in Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 18, "for," you could include that "everything I've said to you is for this purpose,"

18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the

foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Now, look at verse 19. There he says, "you," the Gentiles, "are no longer strangers and aliens," but you have been saved, you have been converted, you have been made a child of God so you are, continuing in verse 19, "fellow citizens with the saints." Now, here the word "saints" is referring to the Jews or the Jewish nation. They were a set apart, consecrated people, peculiar unto God, nationally speaking, that is. But now he says you Gentiles, you were formerly strangers. You weren't of the Jewish nation. You weren't a part of that chosen, elect, special people. But now you've been brought in as fellow citizens. Now, these are just metaphors and terminologies because we're actually more than just citizens, there is a stronger unity that we all now enjoy in Christ Jesus. It doesn't matter your background, once you come to know Christ as Lord and Savior, you are the product of God's work in building his great household and you've become a part of this family. You're not just part of a state and under civil rule, you're part of a family and under house rules. You're a child of God.

Now, he unfolds here how God is accomplishing this in time and space history. First of all, note the agent of the building process, the one who goes out and gets it done and that is the Holy Spirit, because in every real way – now listen to me – God's church, i.e. the local church, us, we are a spiritual household. Brothers and sisters, this is not about us being all from the same culture and the same heritage nationally, culturally, racially or whatever it may be. God's church is a spiritual household and that's why our forefathers, our Baptist forefathers and I have such great esteem and respect and gratitude for our Baptist forefathers because when the European state churches were sprinkling babies and when they would sprinkle those babies they'd say, "They are members now of God's church and they are members of the state," because church and state were one. Well, our Baptist forefathers stood up and said, "No. No. Sprinkling a baby doesn't give them a spiritual new birth. Making them a member of some man-made church entity does not make them a part of God's household. We will preach to our children and preach to our friends and preach to our family members the Gospel, praying and believing the Spirit of God will regenerate their hearts, make them born again, and when this grace comes to them and performs this work, they will have new life." Let's see, Grace Life, I got it in there. "This grace will work on them. That will birth new life evidenced by the repentance of their sins and their new joyous faith in Jesus Christ like we saw from those testimonies in the baptistery, then we know God has added them to his household because you don't just join this thing by being born in a certain country or into a certain family. You are born into this household when God spiritually births new life in you." You see, we took the name Grace Life not to be novel and cool or cute or relevant, we chose the name Grace Life because that's a fundamental foundational concept of what the church is. We are products of grace which births new life and our forefathers built everything we know about Christianity from the Bible on that concept.

You see, the work of salvation – listen – is the work of God. Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship," not yours and his, "we are His workmanship," and God's direct work in making us his child or saving us, and in this metaphor he's building here, making us members of his great household, is the work he does through the Holy Spirit of God. Now, his point to these folks is, "You Ephesians are of Gentile heritage but now God is showing that he had intended from the very beginning; yes, he had a special role for Israel but he intended above and overarching above that, that he would have a great family that would be his own children and he would save people out of both the Jewish heritage and out of Gentile heritage to be in this great household."

So verse 18 he says, "for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father." So the Holy Spirit is inseparably interconnected, if you will, to the work of God the Father and God the Son in making us the family of God. Now, all, Jew, Gentile or whoever you may be, are equal in God's household. All differences, all divisions, all enmities are dissolved when we become born again and therefore a member of this household. What we now have in common is exceedingly greater than anything that in the past separated us and that's the thing we need to keep telling ourselves and that's why we abhor any concept of racism or sex or divisions that the world might put on there. We are a radical contradiction to everything the world understands about people coming together.

Some years ago, it started with I think the Willow Creek Church in Chicago and we went to one of their conferences to learn what they were doing years ago. No, no, no, we went to Rick Warren's conference, the same thing. But anyway, we went to their conference to find out, Rick Warren's conference, what they were doing and they taught the first thing you have to do is have a target audience. You've got to study the demographic of your culture. Now, these churches are in metropolitan areas with millions of people and so they'd say, "Here's our target audience, people from 18 to 37, and they are all kind of like this and this and this. So we're going to design a church that will appeal to that demographic and they'll want to come to church and then when we get them coming, we are going to love them, we're going to meet their needs, we are going to preach the kind of sermons that says how to have the best dog and how to have the most loving children or whatever it might be." You think I'm being silly but they preached on dogs and pets before because people like that stuff. "So we're going to do all these things and then when we've got them here, we're going to bushwhack them with just a little bit of the Gospel and get them saved." There's only one problem with that: from the very beginning, only, only, only God is allowed to target the audience. We preach the Gospel to all men. We witness to all men. We plead with all men. We exhort all men everywhere to repent and believe and leave it to God as to whom he will birth into his kingdom, amen? We don't know what that is.

You remember, Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher of London, the most published author in history, he has had more of his stuff written and published than anybody else and I think it's amazing that if you preach the word, how God uses you through the ages because Spurgeon is still loved and beloved because he was so rich in preaching the great doctrines of the faith. But Spurgeon used to say, "We can't worry about who God has

chosen and elected, we've got to go and witness to everyone in order for all to repent and believe." He said, "Now, if God had put a yellow stripe on the elect's back, we could run around and pull up their shirttails and find out who the elect were." But he didn't do that.

We just have to preach to all because God, look, God has a way of saving some from this neighborhood and then some from that neighborhood, some from this racial background and some from that racial background, some that came from this kind of demographic, some that came from that demographic, and bringing them altogether and they love each other and the world looks at that and says, "How did that happen?" You see, I can look at the Willow Creek model or the other model, what's the name of it, Steve? What's Rick Warren's thing, church? Saddleback Church. When they identified their demographic, they called it, "Here's Saddleback's sound. Here's the guy we're trying to win." Do you know what kind of guys we're trying to win? Lost sinners. That's the only kind of guys we're after is lost sinners. Red, yellow, black and white, young, old, it doesn't matter and God may make a certain segment receptive to the Gospel but we can't do that. I'm saying all of this around the context of God's household is a spiritual household. It's not about you going to church with people who are like you.

Let's remind ourselves of this spiritual household that God builds, just the bigger broad picture of it. First of all, back to chapter 1, verse 18. Again, we often use this way to organize, it's good to remind ourselves that salvation was planned. I'm sorry, verse 18 of chapter 2, "for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father." The Father was the one who planned this great movement of saving for himself and for his Son this great household. Salvation provided through the Son, of course. Verse 18 clearly says "for through Him." He is the provision. We'll amplify on that in just a moment greatly. Then, of course, salvation applied. Salvation planned by the Father, salvation provided through Christ the Son, salvation applied through the Holy Spirit. Look at it there in verse 18, "through Him we both have our access in one Spirit." So we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Now, the great overarching point Paul wants to emphasize to this Gentile church is those who receive salvation whether Jew or Gentile, black or white, male or female, slave or free, are united as one regardless of any earthly distinction. Earthly distinctions are swallowed up in heavenly unity.

Now, some of the brethren may irritate you a little bit. You may not like some of the brethren as much as you like some of the other brethren. Usually God has put some of those in your small group to help you grow a little bit and get over you. "Well, I just don't like ...." Well, who are you, the final authority on earth? If they contradict you, is that a problem? Here's my point: we're all sheep growing together. And when you get this in your heart and you are grateful for the grace that saved you and you love what God loves, you'll love the church and you'll love each other. Now, it it doesn't mean, there are certainly many times every week when brethren in the church need to repent of some things and do better and that's what we're supposed to do is help each other down that road, but we never depart from one another because what we are, what God has done, God brought us together. This thing of you joining a church, well, you actually don't join

a church, you try to discern where God joins you, what has he joined you to. This is his household. You seek the will of God in this. Of course, you follow the Scriptures and I think it gets very clear what kind of church God is joining you to. So we may not see eye to eye on everything, we don't have to agree on everything, but we do not break with one another regardless of any worldly differences because our spiritual unity is far greater than all of those differences.

So the agent who builds the household is the Spirit of God. This is a spiritual household. He does the work through the means of the Gospel. Now, secondly, the provision for the household, of course, is Jesus Christ. The provision for the household and you might just amplify this out to say it is a Christ-centered household. Look at verse 20, "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets," here's the phrase, "Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone." So we are Christ-centered. In other words, Jesus Christ permeates the whole household. He is indeed our all in all.

As a matter of fact, turn over to Colossians. Go through Philippians and go to Colossians 1 and Paul has a great statement here about the all in all, if you will, of Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:13, look at it there, "For He," that's Jesus, "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image," that's Jesus, "of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him," Jesus, "all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. He," that's Jesus, verse 17, "is before all things, and in Him," Jesus, "all things hold together. He," Jesus, "is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He," Jesus, "Himself will come to have first place in everything." Go ahead to verse 19, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him." So if someone were to ask, "Why is it all about Jesus? Why must he have the preeminence in everything? Why must everything be of him, by him, through him and for him?" Well, he said it in the last verse, "it was the Father's good pleasure." In other words, God the Father said, "In doing my great work and primarily that great work of building for myself a great household of people whom I would love and treasure and who would love and treasure me for all eternity," he said, "I chose to accomplish this justly through the means of my Son, Jesus, who is the Christ."

Now, "God, why did you choose to do it that way?" He said, "It just gave me pleasure to do it that way." That's what he means, "That just pleased me to do it that way." I like God, don't you? As if there is some sort of objective external manual out here or some code of ethics that we and God all have to adhere to. God doesn't have to adhere to anybody's code. He is the code. He is the standard. He is the definition of what's right and good and holy. He said, "I just chose to do it that way and I chose for all the glory, all the preeminence, all the emphasis, all the glue that keeps the household together is my Son, Jesus Christ."

So he says here in our text back in Ephesians verse 20 that, "Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone." Now, here Paul uses this metaphor of the stone that is the first stone the

builders would lay in building a building, and his point being that everything in God's house he is building has to square with the corner stone. If you don't build your building square with the original corner stone, the building will not stand. It will fall and that is his point. Look, anything and everything – I might should say it this way – everyone who is going to make it for eternity as a part of God's household has to be squared up in line with Jesus Christ. He's not just part of the way, he's not a stone in the wall, he's not just the structure, he's the very foundation beginning point. It all depends on him.

In verse 22 of chapter 1, notice what it says there, "And He put all things," that's "He," God the Father, "put all things in subjection under His," Jesus, the Son's, "feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church." So Colossians told us a while ago he created all things so he is the source of our physical existence, and then he is the one who provided our salvation, and he has, if you will, unleashed the Spirit of God, the third person of the Godhead, to enact that salvation experience in our lives but it started with Jesus' provision on the cross. He is the source of our physical life, he is the source of our spiritual life. He is our foundation we stand on, and he is our head we function under. It's always all about Jesus. He is the provision and in Paul's metaphor here, the corner stone of this great household. He's to be the object of our worship. He is the one we serve and the one we obey. It is all about him and it is not about us. It is under him and for him that we live and we breathe and we have our existence. Those who are born into his family increasingly know him, love him and embrace him.

That's one of the beautiful ways God shows over the test of time those that are truly his because if you're in a decently healthy church where the word of God is preached hopefully in spiritual power, you will know those who belong to God because they will increasingly know him, love him and treasure him as he is presented through the preaching of the word. You will just see it and you'll just kind of see. Now, I'm not saying every week's the same and every week's grander than before. I'm just saying over the process of time, that growing love for Christ, that growing humility and awe and gratitude and thanksgiving and honor for all that he is and all that he's done for us. I mean, I know you do and I hope you do, but I certainly in my study have times when I am contemplating what the Scripture teaches me about Jesus Christ that I am reduced to tears. You just cannot enunciate it. You just can't verbalize it. You can't mentally comprehend it. Oh, to get to heaven, oh, to get to heaven and finally have a perfect mind and perfect eyes and perfect ears, not infinite but perfect, so that I can begin the eternal quest of immeasurable pleasure of learning and taking in all that there is to Jesus Christ and one million years after I've been in heaven, he's so vast and infinite in glory and wonder it will be just like I'm starting again. It'll be like you'll wake up in heaven, you wake up in heaven, I don't know, it's a figure of speech, it's an anthropomorphic expression, alright? You'll wake up in heaven and you'll say, "It was so much pleasure yesterday being around Jesus, and today will prove to be better than it was yesterday." And that's the way it's going to be for all eternity. Your pleasures in Jesus for eternity are radically beyond your comprehension.

Don't you feel sorry for all these cult groups that Satan has devised where they think the great pleasure of eternity is having sex? Now, sex is a wonderful gift God has given us,

as the Song of Solomon says, "Drink deeply, my lovers." If you're married, enjoy it, work at it, indulge deeply. That's what God made it for, but I'm telling you, when you die, it's not going to be about human relations and sexual pleasures. The first moment in heaven will exceed all of that times a thousand. Isn't that good? Isn't that good? We can glorify God for the pleasures he's given us down here in common grace and be thankful for it and just know that I haven't even touched the hem of the garment of the glories of the pleasures God has for me in Christ Jesus. You say, "Pastor, that's just too wonderful!" It is! It is! It is! So we're humbled again, we're grateful again, we're thankful again for Christ. For Christ. Are y'all okay?

He's the corner stone. One day the entire universe will know him, worship him, honor him and obey him. Now, I'm not saying all of them will do it from the heart but every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. I mean, look, the moment he unveils himself, he's resurrected all the dead, the righteous and the unrighteous, he unveils himself before them in glory, the moment they see him unveiled they will fall on their faces on bended knee worshipping him because they are compelled with the awesome glory and majesty of his presence to do so. We will do it with rich joy. They will do it under coercion of the very magnitude of his presence because they can do no other. It's impossible. You listen to me: there are no strong men before Jesus Christ. They're all weak and failing before him. He's the corner stone. The walls and the arches of this great household he's building that we get to be a part of, all must line up with the angle of the corner stone.

A couple of cross references here and we'll be done for tonight. Matthew 21:42, "Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" The Jews believed they were God's great household and then God sent Jesus, his Son, into the world and God said, "No, you guys have missed it. Here is the real foundation to the house God's building." And they stumbled over that. They thought, "This can't be. This can't be right." Well, look, it was all in the Old Testament text, they just had misread it and misunderstood it in their fleshly lust and not looking to the Spirit to guide them.

1 Peter 2:6-8, "For this is contained in Scripture: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone,'" that's Jesus, "'And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.' This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, 'The stone which the builders,'" that's Israel, "'rejected,'" that was the religious leaders mainly and many of the people, "'this became the very corner stone.'" What a stinging indictment against Israel and those who rejected Jesus. "And, 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.'" You know, actually the way that verse translates out, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense meant that God in his wisdom intended they would be trapped by that revelation. Now, it doesn't mean God was malicious in that, but because of their own wicked hearts, self-indulgence, and lack of spirituality, God said, "I'm going to send them the real corner stone and it's going to trip them up because they can't see the truth."

I just think it's going to be a glorious joy in heaven to meet up with Amos and that little remnant of godly followers of Jehovah in Israel and Judah who didn't go the way of worshipping in the Jehovah-Baal bull cult, and then all through the ages, holy prophets and holy remnants of people who loved Jesus and loved the promise of his coming even before he came and looked to him by faith in the future and believed on him, and we'll all be in heaven one day, all of those from the Old Testament age and all of those through the church age and all those yet in the future of us, and all be together one day as God's great household and you'll say, "How did this work? Who pulled this off?" I'm telling you, the provision was Jesus Christ. He got it all done. He got it all done.

The Father was pleased to crush him, Isaiah the prophet said, and he would render himself as a guilt offering. And the Bible says he will see his offspring and he will prolong his days, that's Isaiah 53. It means that everything Jesus came to perform, he does it perfectly. When we get in heaven one day, all the way back to the garden of Eden, all the way up to the rapture, even the millennial kingdom, every – listen – every single one that Jesus came to rescue and make a part of the house will be there. "Of all that the Father gives me," he said, "I lose nothing." That is just so good. I'm telling you, he is a faithful, unthwartable, impregnable, stalwart, perfect Savior and Lord. He's the provision that secures this great household. He saves us, he keeps us, he'll glorify us one day and we're all going to be there together.

Paul's point to these Gentiles, "It's not because you're a descendant of Abraham because none of you were, it's your union with Christ that is the sole essential condition of being a part of that household that will last forever and ever and ever, God's great household."

Now, let me give you one closing exhortation: do you know Christ as your Lord and Savior? Do you know Christ? Sir, you must cash in your church membership ticket. You must cash in your weak, phony, going through the motions baptism. You must cash in your trust in ethics or moral reformation. Cast all of that as dung and rubbish at the feet of a bloody cross and say, "O Christ, I take you and you alone to save this wretch that I am." And do you know what happens when you do that? Tomorrow in some form or fashion you'll do it again. And tomorrow afternoon while you're driving down the road, the Spirit of God will speak to your heart and in some form or fashion you'll do it again. Then on Tuesday morning, you'll cast your eyes toward heaven when you wake up and you'll be just thinking about things and you'll think, "Oh, look at me, a wretched sinner. O Christ, you're my hope." And joy will fill your heart. Do you know, in a real sense you just get saved all the time. Now, I don't mean you get saved as far as justification. That's done the moment you believe, but your sanctification, you are being saved because you keep on casting your heart and your hope on this absolutely unfailing, perfect, never being conquered Jesus Christ.

Ma'am, do you know – listen – do you know Christ as your Lord and Savior? Young person, do you know Christ is yours? You may be sweet, you may be kind, you might be respectful, do you know Christ is yours? You must know that. I exhort you today, I ask you today, I plead with you today, I command you today to turn your faith to Christ. You may have never told him, you may have told him 100,000 times or at least it seems like



it, but I want you to do it again tonight, "O Christ, my hope is you. Christ, my joy is you. Christ, my confidence is you. It's you. It's you. It's you."

I told you so many times before, if I come to your deathbed, there's a joke around the church, "If Brother Jeff shows up, you'll know you're dying." You know, Larry Lang, bless his heart, Larry Lang is one of the sweetest men I know. You know, he fell out of his tree stand and broke everything below his waist and somebody said, "I think the pastor is coming to see you." "Oh, no, I hope he's not coming!" That's what he said. If I come to your deathbed, oh please, child of God, please friend, please, please, please don't say, "Pastor, I prayed that prayer." Please don't say, "Pastor, I walked to the front." Oh, please look at me and say, "Pastor, my hope is Christ. It was my hope is Christ way back there at the youth camp when it started. My hope has been Christ when I went to work. My hope has been Christ as I raised my kids. My hope has been Christ when I failed and I was embarrassed and ashamed and couldn't believe what I did, but I kept casting myself on Jesus and said, 'You're my hope.'" I'm telling you, I want to hear, I want to hear, "He's my hope. He's my hope." "Preacher, I did what you said." I don't want you to do what I said, I want you to trust in Christ. Trust in Christ. All the rights, rituals and motions in the world in churches cannot save you but Christ can.

I think that's one of the reasons why God saved me in my car driving through Columbia, TN as there was nobody there to get things mixed up with. I couldn't walk down the aisle because I was driving a car. Somebody said, "Did you pray a prayer?" Well, I just erupted in prayer, just erupted in prayer to God and it hasn't stopped yet. They said, "Did you call on Jesus to save you?" I still am. Amen? It's not something I did, it's something I became. I became a repentant who looks to Jesus. Sir, you tell me, you tell me, tell me one good moment when you didn't need Jesus. I can take your best minute and it's full of hell. Every minute you need him as Savior and I'm here to tell you every minute he's sufficient to be your Savior and keep you saved all the way to glorification. I love Jesus. I love everything about him. The more I learn, the more I love him and I know you do too. What a Savior, to let me in on this great, big, wonderful, eternal household.