

The Family of Grace

Remind yourself:

Christianity is not merely
-aimed at understanding new concepts
-oriented around new events

Rather, it is a life that is oriented around daily responding to our Divine Lord,
in a way that is directed by the concepts/truths that He has revealed in His Word.

This means that we have not, as individuals or as a church, really been 'Biblical' until we take what we have been studying and respond to it in the way we are living.

The series on the **Family of Grace** is coming to an end--
the life of responding to God based upon those truths must begin in earnest.

It might be helpful to summarize the key points from this series on the **Family of Grace**:

1. The only accurate measure of a 'church' is derived from the Scripture.

We begin with the measure of The One who has established this family.

*His character and majesty define this body of people.

We move from Him to the Biblical statements about the privileges and duties of those in the family.

*Our past/present experiences in a 'church' must not be our measuring stick.

If we accept wrong measurements of the church we will be tempted to think of Christianity
as primarily individualistic, and neglect obedience in corporate matters.

Our thoughts of the church reveal what we really think of our Lord.

*If I have a small view of God I will treat the church as 'useful' (for me, for my marriage or
family, for transforming and rescuing our world).

*If I have a large view of God I will treat the Church as valuable, whether I
personally 'get' anything from it or not.

2. The Church of God is a glorious family.

R. B. Kuiper wrote:

'The Word of God tells us that Christ's church is glorious. Not only does history ascribe to it a past that is in many respects glorious and does prophecy predict for it a glorious future, it is essentially glorious. The Christian church is glorious in its very nature.'

This glory is visible in:

i. The church's origins:

Jer. 31:3

The LORD has appeared of old to me, *saying*:
"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

Hosea 11:4

I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck.

ii. In the alteration of our situation:

Eph. 5:8

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

1 Pet. 2:9-10

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

iii. In the provisions that the the believer can rely upon:

Rom. 5:10

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Rom. 8:32

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

3. The Church is to be distinguished by her response to God, and to other members of the family.

i. The Church is to keep herself single-minded toward her Owner, King, Husband:

2 Cor. 11:2-3

I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

2 Cor. 5:15

... and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

ii. To do God's will the Church members will need to be [**2 Tim. 2:1-7**]:

- a. unentangled like the soldier
- b. diligent like the athlete
- c. patient like the farmer

4. The Church is to live worthy of the 'calling' they have in Christ.

Eph 4.1-6

*That will require us to be humble and gentle toward each other, longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, guarding the unity which the Spirit has given us by promoting peace between each other.

*This unity is an objective truth, based in what the Triune God has done for/in us:

- a) you belong to one body, because we are indwelt by one Spirit and joined by one hope.
- b) you are united with one Lord thru one faith and this had been confessed in one baptism.
- c) You have one God and Father.

5. The Church is to live in such a way as to be a pleasing aroma to God.

Eph. 5.1-2

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

So, Eph. 5:3-6:9 teaches us:

- i. This will require us to put away the stench of the old life. We must keep our thoughts and choices morally pure, we must keep our conversations beneficial, we must not be deceived by those who say it doesn't matter how we live as believers. We must discern what God's will is for the believer, do it, and help other believers obey God.
- ii. This will affect the way a wife responds to her husband, a husband to his wife, a child to his/her parent and the parent to that child. It will even affect the way an employee performs their tasks at work and the way the employer speaks to his/her employee.

Help from a faithful pastor's warnings:

John Flavel (1627-1691) The following is taken from a tract he wrote to his church, entitled *A Double Scheme*. It was made up of 2 tables. The first listed 10 sins that church-members most often committed. The second listed 10 duties which receive 'signal fruits' of God's favor.

The Sins:

1. The first and most general sin of church-members is a defect in their care to prevent all genuine offenses to those who are outside of the church. [Col. 4.5]
2. Idleness in our civil/secular occupations. This brings poverty on themselves and scandal upon the gospel. [2 Thess 3.11, 12]
3. Tale-bearing and revealing the secrets of families in the church. By this many hurtful conflicts arise and the love between church-members cools. [Lev. 19.16; 1 Tim 5.13]
4. The ease with which we receive harsh comments about others. [2 Cor 12.20; 1 Tim 5.19]
5. The neglect of gathering together for worship with the body, allowing trivial diversions to keep them from the meetings. [Heb 10.25]
6. The lack of earnestness and zeal in the corporate worship (public means of grace). This is seen often in a spiritual sluggishness. [Ps 122.1; Gal. 4.5]
7. An irreverence and lightness when gathering for the worship of God. This is often seen in the way we dress ourselves. [Ps 89.7; 1 Cor 11.10; Eccl 5.1]
8. Neglecting the helpful duty of giving needed rebukes, or receiving them, from each other. [Lev. 19.17; Matt 18.15; Ps 141.5]
9. Allowing mutual conflicts and animosities to remain unhealed within the body, and exposing these to those outside the church. [1 Cor 6.5, 6]
10. Allowing an individualistic spirit to develop, focusing too much on personal concerns when gathering with other believers. [Phil 2.21; 2 Cor 11.29]

The Duties:

1. To be often together in acts of Christian communion. Such meetings for prayer, reviewing of sermons, and Christian conference are greatly conducive to building up one another in Christlikeness, which is the principal intention of Christian fellowship. [Mal 3.16; Eph 4.16]
2. To promote the great design of the gospel in our world, helping the ministers of the gospel by privately witnessing and ministering to the careless and needy. [Phil 4.3; Rom 15.30]
3. To humble ourselves in the way we consider the weaker Christians, denying ourselves in what we can, without sin, that they would not be hurt by our freedoms. [Rom 15.1, 2]
4. To be exceeding tender of the church's unity in thought, love, and practice. To avoid all unnecessary and unbiblical divisions. [Rom 16.17]
5. To be respectful toward the Christian of lowest station, esteeming all other believers as more important than yourself, remember that outward circumstances make no difference at all in the eyes of Christ. [Rom 12.10; Gal 3.28; Eph 5.21]
6. To be gentle in receiving rebukes from others, especially when the matter is just. [Ps 141.5]
7. To give of our spiritual abilities, knowledge, and experience to those who can benefit from them, yet without doing so in a way that interferes with the officers of the church. To do so without partiality (avoid being spiritually involved only with close friends you enjoy). [1 Pet 4.10; 1 Tim 5.21]
8. To give from our physical resources to those in the church who are needy. To help them find ways to work and provide for themselves. [Heb 13.16; Eph 4.28; 1 Cor 9.14]
9. To be very intentional in seeking out the needy in the church, doing what is needed to find out their spiritual and physical needs in order to help meet them. [James 1.27]
10. To lovingly put the best interpretation upon the questionable words and actions of other Christians. When there is confusion about words and actions, always take them in the best possible way. [1 Cor 13.7]

Six Benefits of Walking by these Rules:

1. Careful attention to these rules will put a luster on religion in the eyes of the world. [Titus 2.10]
2. This will be used by God to attract and win the unbeliever over to Christ. [Phil 2.15, 16]
3. This will often stop the blaspheming mouths of those who are the enemies of Christianity. [1 Pet 2.15]
4. This will eminently glorify God, which is the ultimate goal of our lives and of the church. [Matt 5.16; Eph 3.21]
5. This will help the people of God to possess an inward peace. [Gal. 6.16]
6. This will secure the covenanted presence of God with, and among us; from which comes the effectiveness of all the means of grace and the stability and glory of the churches. [Rev 2.1, 5]