

Titles of the Church (#3)
The Household of God
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Today we are going to study another title of the church.

^{NASB} **Ephesians 2:19** ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household (Eph 2:19 NASB)

In this passage Apostle Paul tells the Ephesian church that they are “of God's household.” What does God's household mean?

God's Household means God's family

First let's look at the word “household” in English dictionaries:

- Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “household” as the people in a family or other group that are living together in one house
- Oxford English dictionary defines “household” as a house and its occupants regarded as a unit

According to English dictionaries, people who live in a household may or may not be of the same family. In other words, so long as they live in the same house, they are called a household. But the New Testament was written in Greek, in which the original Greek word for “household” is *οἰκεῖος* (*oikeios*). Greek-English dictionaries define “*oikeios*” as members of a family. Therefore “household” in this passage means family or kinship; they are not just people living in the same house.

In this passage, Ephesians 2:19, Paul is saying to the Ephesian church that they are of God's household, which means God's family, with each Christian being a member of God's family.

God is Our Father

In the four gospels, the Lord Jesus mentions again and again the term “your Father in heaven”, and he teaches us how to pray:

^{NASB} **Matthew 6:9** ⁴⁹ Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.’ (Mat 6:9 NASB)

Indeed that was exactly how I prayed, “Our Father in heaven,” when I first came to Yahweh God. At that time there was no one guiding me. Even though I did go to church, I was reading the Bible and I came to believe in God all by myself; therefore I just followed the Lord Jesus’ statement word for word.

^{NASB} **Romans 8:15** ¹⁵ For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” (Rom 8:15 NASB)

This passage clearly says we are adopted as sons of God and we cry out “Abba! Father!”

A Privilege to address God as Father

Many Christians don’t realize how big a privilege it is to address God as “Abba Father” or “Father in heaven”! Such an intimate relationship with God is one that people in other religions don’t have with their so-called god or gods. Buddhists don’t address Buddha as Father; Muslims say it is blasphemous to address Allah as Father; Chinese and Hindus don’t address their deities as their fathers.

Even among the Jews, very few directly addressed Yahweh God as their Father. Throughout the history of Israel, only a few individuals such as David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah addressed Yahweh God as Father.

^{NASB} **Psalms 89:26** ²⁶ He will cry to Me, ‘You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.’ (Psa 89:26 NASB)

The word “He” in this passage refers to David; this passage is saying that David cried out to Yahweh God as Father.

^{NASB} **Isaiah 63:16** ¹⁶ For You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us And Israel does not recognize us. You, O LORD (Yahweh), are our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Your name. (Isa 63:16 NASB)

Here Isaiah cried out to Yahweh God as Father.

The Jews know Yahweh God as their Father in the sense of being the Creator for they are made by God’s hand. They also know God as their Father in the sense of Redeemer:

^{NASB} **Isaiah 64:8** ⁸ But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand. (Isa 64:8 NASB)

Even though the Israelites know that God is their Creator and their Redeemer, they don’t address Him directly as “our Father in heaven” or “Abba Father” in the way the Lord Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6:9. Indeed the Jews in the days of the Lord Jesus were very upset when he referred to God as “my Father”; they wanted to kill him just because of that.

^{NAU} **John 5:18** ¹⁸ For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. (Joh 5:18 NAU)

Here this verse says that when the Lord Jesus called God his own Father, the Jews saw that he was making himself equal with God, and wanted to kill him.

Why didn’t the Israelites address Yahweh God as their Father?

Indeed in the Old Testament, very few individuals such as David, Isaiah, Jeremiah dared to address God as “Father”.

^{NAU} **Psalm 89:20 – 26** ^{"20} I have found David My servant; With My holy oil I have anointed him, ²¹ With whom My hand will be established; My arm also will strengthen him. ²² "The enemy will not deceive him, Nor the son of wickedness afflict him. ²³ "But I shall crush his adversaries before him, And strike those who hate him. ²⁴ "My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him, And in My name his horn will be exalted. ²⁵ "I shall also set his hand on the sea And his right hand on the rivers. ²⁶ "He will cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' (Psa 89:20-26 NAU)

The word "he" in the last verse 26 refers to David; he addressed Yahweh God as "my Father". And in 1Chronicles 17:13 Yahweh God said of Solomon, "He will be my son, I will be his Father":

^{NAU} **1 Chronicles 17:13** ^{"13} I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. (1Ch 17:13 NAU)

But Solomon himself did not address Yahweh God as his Father. Indeed in the later years of his life, he was influenced by his foreign concubines and he turned away to worship other gods.

From these passages we can see that since ancient times, Yahweh God wanted the Israelites to call Him "my Father", but they did not obey it; they even wanted to kill the Lord Jesus when Jesus called Yahweh God his Father. What was in their hearts? Why is it so difficult to call Yahweh God as "Father"?

^{NASB} **Jeremiah 3:19** Then I said, "How I would set you among My sons And give you a pleasant land, The most beautiful inheritance of the nations!" And I said, "You shall call Me, My Father, And not turn away from following Me.' (Jer 3:19 NASB)

The key word in this passage is "following". It says that if the Jews had addressed Yahweh God as their Father, they would not turn away from Him, but would follow Him. Yet they didn't want to follow God's way; this rebellious attitude affected their hearts, and what's in their hearts is manifested in their outward behavior. That's why they didn't want to address God as Father.

Are We Truly Close with God?

I am very close with Yahweh God my Father in heaven because He knows my heart through and through. He is much closer to me than my own parents were. Even though my parents loved me very much, they didn't know me as deeply as Yahweh God my Father. I would pour out my pain to Him when people attack me and insult me, He would encourage me and accept me, and He would correct me and lead me in the righteous way. I would come before Him for guidance when I don't know which way to turn, I don't have to hide anything from Him.

But it seems to me that many Christians don't enjoy their time with Yahweh God; they have some kind of fear towards God. Apostle John says that "perfect love casts out fear":

^{NAU} **1 John 4:18** ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. (1Jo 4:18 NAU)

If you are not close with God, you won't hear God's voice or be in tune with His guidance. In these last days we have to be able to distinguish God's voice from the enemy's voice.

The Church Should Be a House of Prayer for All The People

The family of God ought to be communicating with God just as children communicate with their father. Prayer is our communication with God. Is the church a house of prayer?

If the church constantly communicates with God, then when non-Christians come into the church, they would sense the presence of God there, which is what I talked about in my previous sermon. The presence of God is something that the world doesn't have. The non-Christians would sense that the church is not just another social gathering if the presence of God is in the church.

^{NAU} **Isaiah 56:7** ⁷ Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples." (Isa 56:7 NAU)

This passage says that God's house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples. Our God always has in mind salvation for all the peoples.