

FAMILY PETS

Every morning, I would wake up and have Sally follow me downstairs. Every day, as I worked in the office, she would come and lay on the chair next to me. Every evening at eight o'clock, she would come into the office and stare at me, because she knew it was time to stop working. Sally wasn't just our pet. She was family.

The Bible has some things to say about the relationship between humanity and the animal kingdom. Before the flood, animals and humans had a different relationship than we do today. In Genesis 2, God brought the animals to Adam to see if any of them could serve as a companion, but *"there was not found a helper comparable to him"* (Gen. 2.20). Though they were not compatible, animals and humans coexisted together in harmony. After the flood, God changed that relationship to be more adversarial (Gen. 9.2). Since then, animals were meant to serve our needs by providing food and clothing.

Animals were also given to serve another purpose. They were companions. Not in the same way that humans provide companionship (Gen. 2.20), but we can still form a bond with our pets where they become part of the family. Consider the parable of Nathan. He told of a man who had a *"ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him"* (2 Sam. 12.3). This was a man whose lamb was part of the family. It is any wonder that David was so outraged when he was compelled to kill his lamb for food (2 Sam. 12.4-6).

Just like our children, we care for our pets. We give them food and water. We stay up with them when they are sick. We take great delight to see them excited when we have a new toy or a treat. They are disruptive when they are bored and want to play as you are trying to work. Sometimes, when they are a little too much, we send them outside to play or send them to bed early. And there is something special about having our dog or cat curl up next to us and snuggle.

We talk often about the provisions of God. He blesses our lives with food, clothing, and shelter (Matt. 6.31-33). His provisions go beyond our most basic needs. He gives us friendship and companionship in the form of our pets. Pets are more than just animals that coexist in our homes. They are part of our family.

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"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"
-Mark 16.15

May 5, 2024

MEETING TIMES:

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS : 9:00 AM
SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP: 9:50 AM
SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP: 6:00 PM
WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS 7:00 PM

MUST I FORGIVE THOSE WHO DO NOT SEEK IT?

Often the question is asked, "Do I have to forgive those who have sinned against me, even if they do not ask for forgiveness?" A quick review of some critical passages will answer that question.

The manner in which we are to forgive is *"even as God in Christ forgave you"* (Eph. 4.32). Therefore, we need to understand how God forgives before we can know how we ought to forgive another. In the parable of the unforgiving servant, a servant owed the king a large debt. The king was not inclined to offer forgiveness. He was prepared to sell his wife and children and throw him in prison to pay the debt (Matt. 18.25). What changed the king's mind? In verse 32, the king says, *"I forgave you all that debt because you begged me."* Forgiveness was conditional upon the plea of the servant.

What about us? Is our forgiveness conditional? Notice a statement made by Jesus: *"If your brother sins against you, rebuke him. If he repents, forgive him"* (Luke 17.3). However, while we are not obligated to forgive unless they repent, we do not have the right to hold a grudge, show resentment, or anger. These are separate from forgiveness. Though we may not forgive unless they seek it, if we are to be forgiving in the same way that God is forgiving, we must be eager and ready to forgive (Ps. 86.5). Forgiveness is a blessing we are to always be ready to give. CLP

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THE SPECIAL PEOPLE OF GOD

1 PETER 2:9

INTRODUCTION:

1. We put great effort to identify the Lord's church in contrast to other churches. How are God's people identified? (1 Pet. 2.9,10)
2. The book of Ephesians helps us understand the church.

I. THE CHURCH IS SPECIAL

- A. The church is special because of our connections.
 1. **EPHESIANS 1.22,23:** *"the church, which is His body"*
 2. As the body, we are all connected. (1 Cor. 12.20)
- B. The church is special because of our inclusiveness.
 1. **EPHESIANS 2.11:** The Gentiles were the uncircumcised.
 2. **EPHESIANS 2.12:** They were not part of God's people.
 3. **EPHESIANS 2.13-15:** *"But now..."* Because of Jesus, anyone can be added to the Lord's church. (Gal. 3.28)
- C. The church is special because of its origin.
 1. **EPHESIANS 3.1-5:** Paul has been employed to share the mystery of God to the Gentiles.
 2. **EPHESIANS 3.6:** *"that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body..."* This is the mystery.
 3. **EPHESIANS 3.11:** *"according to the eternal purpose..."* This was part of God's plan all along.

II. THE CHURCH HAS RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Since the church is a special group of God's people, we are expected to behave accordingly. (Eph. 4.1)
 1. Seven dispositions we are to display. (Eph. 4.2,3)
 2. Seven doctrines we are to hold. (Eph. 4.4-6)
 3. Seven positions of responsibility we are to fulfill.
- B. Are you fulfilling your responsibilities?
 1. **EPHESIANS 4.11:** *"And He Himself gave some to be..."*
These are responsibilities given to us by Jesus.
 2. **EPHESIANS 4.11:** *"apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers"*
 3. **EPHESIANS 4.12:** *"for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry"* There is work for all of us to do.
 4. **EPHESIANS 4.16:** When we all make a contribution, it *"causes growth of the body"*

CONCLUSION: Are you part of God's special people?

TAKE THE NAME OF JESUS WITH YOU

Names have meaning. Today, we might name our children after a grandfather, great aunt, or someone else who had a special place in the family. In Bible times, names were given that characterized something about the individual. It may be the circumstance (Gen. 25.26), a physical trait (Gen. 25.25), a personality trait (Gen. 5.29), or even the feelings of the parent when an individual is born (Gen. 29.35). Jesus was called by several names, and each one expresses a nuance of His identity. He is Jesus, a name that means, "Savior" (Matt. 1.21). Consider another name given to the Son of God, the name "Immanuel."

The name, "Immanuel" is only found three times in the Bible. It is found in Isaiah 8.8 in reference to the saving of Judah from Assyrian destruction. It is found in Isaiah 7.14 as a Messianic prophecy. And it is found in Matthew 1.23 as the fulfillment of the prophecy. It is unnecessary to go into the original language to understand the meaning behind the name. The Holy Spirit provides us with a translation. In the opening chapter of Matthew, the Old Testament prophecy is quoted and applied to Jesus. Then the Holy Spirit adds this commentary: *"which is translated, 'God with us.'"* (Matt. 1.23).

Though we never read about Jesus being called, "Immanuel" outside of the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah and its fulfillment in Matthew, the significance of its meaning is fully felt in the gospels. Consider the beginning verses of John. He describes the Word who was not just with God in the beginning, but *"the Word was God"* (John 1.1). Then a handful of verses later, we are told that the deistic being known as the Word, *"became flesh and dwelt among us"* (John 1.14). Later Jesus is talking with Philip and said, *"He who has seen Me has seen the Father also"* (John 14.9).

For a time, deity lived among us and learned what it meant to be like us. Jesus came to understand temptation (Matt. 4.1ff). He felt the emotional and physical pain of rejection and suffering (1 Pet. 2.21-25). He learned what it was like to want something different than what God wanted, and still say no to what He wanted in preference to obeying God (Heb. 5.7,8; Matt. 26.39). After praying that God would save Him from death and being denied His request, He cried out, *"My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?"* (Matt. 27.46). Jesus, God in the flesh, felt what it was like for His soul to leave the body in death.

The next time you experience a challenge, a hardship, or a rejection, and you feel like no one understands, take the name of Jesus with you. Remember that deity came in the flesh in the form of Jesus to experience everything that you go through, and He understands (Heb. 4.15).
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