

“Formed for God’s Family”
by Rom A. Pegram (9/4/16)

Folks, *we were formed to be a part of God’s family*... Listen to what God’s word tells us: “God is the One who made all things, and all things are for his glory. He wanted to have many children share his glory.” – Hebrews 2:10a (NCV)

God wanted—literally *desired*—a family ... and so He created you & me to be a part of that family! This is *the second purpose of our lives* ... to be a vital part of God’s family—a real asset! That’s really what the Bible is, you know ... a story from beginning to end of God building a family who will love him, honor him, and reign with him (we’re related to royalty, you know) forever! *Here’s our main verse for today*: “**God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his children—this was his pleasure and purpose.**” – Ephesians 1:5 (TEV)

Now, understand something today ... and this will be a healthy theology lesson—learning about God’s nature: *God didn’t need a family*; he wasn’t lonely! In the Trinity, we see very clearly God’s relationship to himself. It’s the perfect example of relational harmony—Father, Son & Holy Spirit ... all interrelating and interacting perfectly! And, we need to study this relationship and its implications; we can learn a lot from it... But, the reason God created a family ... is simply because he desired it; he desired a family whom he could love ... and GOD DOES!!!! Don’t you ever doubt it! So, how does it work? *How do we become a part of God’s family?* Here it is...

There’s no secret handshake ... or any hazing that goes on, when you want to become a part of God’s family. Rather, it all takes place *through faith*. First off, every human being was created by God ... but not everyone is a child of God. We have to make that clear right off the bat! The only way to get into God’s family is to do it God’s way—by being born *again* into it! Now, I always thought—when I was growing up—that that phrase ‘born again’ was really ‘old school’ or something. It just didn’t sit well with me... But, then I came to realize that that was an excellent term to describe what takes place *spiritually* when we do come into God’s family. It’s like this...

When you became a part of your parent’s family, you did so by your first—*physical*—birth. But, when you become a part of God’s family that happens by a second — *spiritual*— birth. As Nicodemus pointed out to Jesus, you couldn’t be born again ‘physically,’ so it had to be some other kind of birth. And, it is. It’s a *spiritual* birth—a new beginning or start into a whole new way of life—a life connected to God and led by God, instead of the mindless wandering that take’s place outside of a life with God. So, there has to be a second birth—a spiritual one—if we are to be a part of God’s family—a child of God...

And the invitation to become a part of God’s family is universal ... but it’s up to each individual (free will) who is of an age of accountability (over 13, say) to choose to be a part of God’s family. And, the one condition of being a part of God’s family—should

someone choose to do so—is ‘faith!’ Scripture (Galatians 3:26, NLT) tells us: “You are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.”

So, the old phrase ... “Believe & receive!” ... is explained here. It’s only through a faith in Jesus as God’s Son—the way to save us from ourselves—that allows us to *receive* God’s inheritance—to *be his kids*... And, here is your family that lasts forever—eternally! You were *formed for God’s family*—your second purpose in this life...

If you stop to think about what we’ve been talking about—God loving us enough to want us to be a part of his family—then you’ll realize that what we’re talking about today, in the context of this second purpose ... is *privilege*! And, if you don’t get it yet, let me spend the next few moments teaching you about the incredible privilege of being a part of God’s family... First:

WE HAVE INCREDIBLE “BENNIES!” Galatians 4:7b (NLT) says, “Since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you.” Ever since that moment you were born into God’s family, you were given some incredible ‘birthday gifts!’

- The family name
- The family likeness
- Family privileges
- Family intimate access
- The family inheritance

Incredible benefits (“bennies”) are available to all who choose to become a part of the family of God! Think of it like this: It’s like being a Michels or Grandé Cheese employee for life! I hear about the great benefits of working for a company like Michels or Grandé ... so there’s my analogy—though that doesn’t come close to what we have in store for us in God’s family. So, let’s take a moment and talk about our ‘bennies’ with God; let’s talk about ‘the family inheritance’ for just a moment...

The family inheritance includes this (like *the reading of the Will*): We get to be with God forever; we will be completely changed to be like Christ; we’ll be freed (ultimately) from all pain, death, and suffering; we’ll be rewarded and reassigned positions of service; and we’ll get to share in Christ’s glory...

Folks, what an incredible inheritance! You are far richer than you realize!!!! Though retirement is an important issue for all of us, it’s really our eternal inheritance that we should be looking forward to and working for... 1 Peter 1:4 (NLT) says, “God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.” Can you think of anything on this earth that comes near to being that priceless? So, we have great ‘bennies’ ... and...

WE CAN TAKE PRIDE IN THE FAMILY NAME! In Matthew 28:19 (NLT), Jesus instructs us to “...go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” There’s the ‘family name’—Father, Son & Holy Spirit ... God! Is that a name you take pride in? It should be...

I saw an incredible example, a few summers ago, of what a ‘family name’ is really worth and all that goes with it! In July one summer, Jane and I finally—after many years of wanting to—had a chance to visit the Biltmore Estate, outside of Asheville, NC. (For those of you not familiar with the Biltmore, it happens to be the largest single-family residence ever built in these United States.)

Folks, talk about ‘pride in the family name!’ *Vanderbilt* ... What images does that conjure up for you? Probably an image like this (*show Biltmore*)... George Vanderbilt, youngest grandson of business tycoon Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, was given \$5 million dollars when his grandfather died ... and another \$5 million dollars when his father died. Two things to notice: He knew, very much like his grandfather & father, how to make money with money ... and he had plenty. And, this was during a day when there weren’t any income taxes to speak of... Lavish homes were a trademark of the Vanderbilts ... and The Biltmore—which he began to build in his late-20s, was the crowning glory ... designed after a French châteaux. This whole structure ... and his 125,000 acre spread ... just shouted that HE WAS PROUD TO BE A VANDERBILT! Do you see where I’m going here today?

Guess what? *None of the magnificence of what we experienced at the Biltmore ... or even what George Vanderbilt knew in his lifetime ... even compares to the eternal riches we can know in relationship to our Heavenly Father!*

In the Church today, the greatest expression of ‘taking pride’ in this new family to which we belong ... is our *baptism* (not a mansion!)—literally our initiation into the family of God. So, why is *baptism* so important? It symbolizes God’s ‘second purpose for your life—participating in the fellowship of God’s eternal family!’ Now, *it’s important to realize that baptism doesn’t make you a member of God’s family; only faith in Christ does that!* But, baptism shows that you are a part of God’s family—that you’ve chosen freely to be a part of it. It’s somewhat like a wedding band, it is *a visible reminder of an inward commitment made in your heart...* Did you ever think of it that way?

So, how important is your baptism to you? Is there a healthy pride there? How many of you have your baptism certificate framed and on display somewhere (or do you know where it is)? Folks, we can ‘take pride in the family name’ ... but do we? Aren’t you proud to be a child of God? ‘Which leads me to my final point today...

WE’VE BEEN BLESSED WITH LIFE’S GREATEST PRIVILEGE! Hebrews 2:11 (CEV) says, “Jesus and the people he makes holy [set apart for God’s purposes] all belong to the same family. That is why he isn’t ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.” Please ... please ... please ... let that amazing truth sink in!

But, if it’s not sunk in yet, let me say it this way: In God’s eyes ... *we have all grown up on the right side of the tracks!* In the world’s eyes, we could consider ourselves Vanderbilts ... or Rockefellers... It’s that kind of thing ... only ETERNAL! Forever, we get to be a part of God’s family ... and, especially if you’ve never had this feeling before,

know this: GOD IS PROUD OF YOU!!!! Folks, I've been places—public places—where I'll see acquaintances or church members ... and they suddenly 'duck out of sight' for whatever reason. I don't know if it's that their crowd isn't a 'church crowd' or 'isn't used to seeing pastors in public places' or what ... but, I know the feeling of people *NOT* being proud of you (hazard of the job). On the other hand, I've been plenty of places ... publicly ... where those I'm with can't wait to introduce me to others ... and let them know that I'm their pastor, what my life stands for, etc. There's a huge difference when someone wants to *avoid* you ... or when you know that someone is *proud* of you!

But, *you'll only get one of those scenarios from God*; GOD IS PROUD OF YOU!! There's the greatest privilege of being a part of God's family—the pride God takes in you, as his child...

So, here's the 'second purpose of our lives.' WE WERE FORMED FOR GOD'S FAMILY—created to be a vital part of this body, with Christ as the head! *Being included in God's family is the highest honor and the greatest privilege you will ever receive!* Nothing else comes close... So, folks, whenever it is that you might feel unimportant ... unloved ... or insecure about *anything*, just *remember to whom you belong!* WE WERE MADE FOR GOD'S FAMILY! It doesn't get any better than this...