

"In Christ and His Church"
Ephesians 2 and 3

In God's economy, the individual is not central. The people, the nation, the family of God is central. In the New Covenant, that would be the church. The church, therefore, is central to our living as expressions of the Most High God. None of us, in other words, is a "self-help project."

To be baptized into Jesus Christ is to be baptized into a community of shared life. There's really no choice to make about "joining" a church, we were immersed into the church. There is no choice to make between God and His church. When we placed faith in Christ we chose Christ AND His church! We moved from one family (Adam) into another family (Christ). In fact, when Paul speaks of "the one new man" (Eph 2:15), Christ and His family is that "one new man." We are never given the option of following God and ignoring His family.

When God opened Himself to us He opened His community, His family to us. His is a family characterized by love (Eph 3:17-19). A covenant love that is overcoming, incorruptible, and cannot be used by evil. It is personal, up close, addresses needs and makes a difference in others. In a community, a family, we learn how to live by His Love, We personalize it, get up close with one another, address the needs behind one another's faults, and make a literal difference in each other as we abide in the love of Christ.

It is in this family context that we discover a change not only in our "beingness" but also in our "belongingness." Union with Christ is union with one another! This is a significant part of the mystery of Christ in us. (See Eph 2:14-16: "made both into one," "made the two into one," "reconciled both into one.") As a family, we share Life in common that is far from common. So uncommon, Paul invented three new words in Ephesians 3:6 for this new created community - "joined-together heirs," "joined-together members," "joined-together partakers." We all share in His life so equally that to be brought near to God in Christ is to be brought just as near to one another!

Meaning what? Don't boast of your oneness with God if you disregard your oneness with others. Never forget that what happens to one of us happens to or for all of us. (See Eph 3:1,13) And always keep in mind that love never lives alone, unto itself. Our operational oneness with God must lead us to seek relational oneness with others. (Aren't you glad God's did?) And, oh yeah...

...apparently, in God's way of doing things, individualism and isolation are not conducive to growing up His children!



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GREETINGS

No one can stop us from loving with the love of God. Others may not recognize or receive His Love, they may outright reject it, but, they cannot block our objective to be lovers.

When our objective is to change others, fix others, control others, even convert others, we may end up frustrated and fatigued. And that mostly due to the fact that we set up a goal others can too easily block. It may be the main reason many of us are angry and cynical and burned out on "church." Internal stress builds quickly when we see little or no return on our investments.

What if our objective is to love and not convert? To look with love and not for it? To contribute to an atmosphere that makes it as easy as possible for others to love and not to point out their unloving ways? Will they change? Agree with our theology? Listen to our opinions? Who knows!? But, I believe our stress, our anger, our cynicism may be reduced to more manageable levels. And, I'm guessing that we'll be more at peace, experience more joy as we get in step with God's intent to love others in to being!

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