

PP The Return of the King: A Marriage Built on Grace, 10

11/22/2009

Text Colossians 3:12a

How does Jesus Christ transform our marriages?

It's a simple question, but to answer it, we have to get deeper than the surface

What would you think if I spent the entire 12 weeks of this series giving you skills and ideas for a healthy and wonderful marriage but nothing else?

Like some these expert tips I found on the Internet for a good marriage:

**Compliment more than you criticize.*

**Each time you criticize your husband/wife to your friends, tell three positive stories.*

**Always make time for the two of you.*

**Remember that people do fight. It's how you do it that matters.*

**Before starting an argument, consider if it's really worth it.*

**Agree to disagree.*

**Never, ever mention the "D" word (divorce).*

**Do you want to be right or do you want to be married?*

**Always believe that you got better than you deserved.*

**Never use the words 'Always' and 'Never' in a fight.*

These are all good relational skills, but if you are like me, success would be short-lived

Illus The first Christmas tree that Denise and I bought almost undid me. I brought it home and went to put it in our brand new tree stand. Except that the bottom branches prevented the base of the trunk from setting on the stand. The only cutting tool I had was a splitting maul so I began to chop away at the branches. But the base of the tree was slanted so I hacked away at that too. The more I tried to fix it the worse it got. The end result? I had to take clothesline rope and tie the tree to the wall to keep it upright after spinning it against the wall to hide the mangled side.

I learned a very important lesson that has stayed with me every year we go pick out a tree
If the base is off, the whole tree is off

If the heart of selfishness and pride remain unchanged, a satisfying and God-glorifying marriage is still unattainable, regardless of how many skills we try to learn

That's why we have spent these many weeks looking at our problem with sin and need for grace to set our hearts free to love God and the one to whom we are married

If our hearts are off, our marriages are off kilter and they struggle to stand up in the storms of life that blow our way

And this is the target of God's transforming grace

This is why we looked at all the glimpses of grace God had given Adam and Eve right after He handed to them the sentences for their sin

It gave them hope, a future, His blessings, the capability to love one another

You two are in a mess

You got in this mess through trying to rule your own lives

And if you continue to try and do this, you will continue in a mess of sin

You will try to outdo one another in the area of headship

You're going to experience frustration and sorrow in raising a family

*You're going to experience frustration and sorrow in your career
Until you turn to my Son Jesus Christ
And if you do, then His grace will flood your hearts and it will reverse the curse
It will undo the sentence
It will enable you to live in a fallen world, fractured by sin, with hope and purpose and
power and strength
It will enable you to voluntarily climb off that throne in your heart so that you no longer
desire to rule one another to be like Me*

It is grace, abundantly available to those who have a relationship with Jesus Christ
Grace comes into our hearts and it begins to change us from the inside out so that we
want to serve, want to be patient, able now to love and forgive where before we were filled with
selfishness

Grace is the divine initiator, the God-given enablement, and we must respond to it in
obedience

It's not just that we have been given grace, and now we are obligated to give it to others
It is that this grace changes us so that *we want and are able* to love

You see, marriage is based on grace

The vertical grace experienced at the cross of Christ, extending out from us
And not only are marriages *based on grace*, they are meant to be *public displays of God's
grace*

So that when others see the way we love one another in marriage, they are held in wonder
and awe of God's grace and what it can do to change people

I don't know of too many more powerful witnesses to God's grace than a marriage that
was troubled and rocky but becomes beautiful and wonderful of what Jesus Christ does in the hearts of
that husband and wife

So Paul shows us three graces that God has given every Christian husband and wife that
can transform marriages into public displays of Christ's love for His bride, the church

Three God-given graces that form for us a new identity

And next week, God-willing, we will see how this new identity has the power to change
our marriages

Illus Our bedwetting

PP 1-We are God's chosen

***"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved"* Colossians 3:12**

Paul starts to tell us how we ought to live toward each other, what garments we should
put on as we relate to one another, but he immediately pauses to remind us who we are and what we
look like under all these clothes

It's what we look like when we aren't wearing any clothes, spiritually speaking of course

So Paul interrupts himself, to convince us who we are that enables us to love each other

Do you see what Paul is beginning to do?

He is so brilliant!

He is laying a massive foundation that holds up our relationships, especially marriages

If we will build with him, our marriages will change!

The first part of this foundation of grace is that we are God's chosen ones

Do you know, Christian friend, who you are?

Do you really know?

You are the chosen one of God

Under all these clothes Paul is about to tell us to put on, we are beautiful and awesome
and glorious to look at

It's the you in God's eyes, the new man or the new woman in Christ

Your new nature, who you truly are now that Christ has saved you by grace

You might say, *'but I don't understand why God would choose me, I have failed so many times, I have messed up my life so much.'*

You are now speaking the language of grace

Even if you have made a mess of yourself and your marriage, grace can change, it can
restore, it can heal

That is what grace is and it's what grace does

Grace doesn't look at what you bring to the table, it looks at what God is willing to bring

PP ***"The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you..."***

Deuteronomy 7:6-8

He chose us

For all of us who have stood against the wall when captains picked their favorites for
their teams, the humiliation of not getting asked to dance, we know the power of being chosen

It is relieving

It is powerful

It has the power to convince you that you are important, precious, wanted, loved,
beautiful

PP ***"For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you," 1 Thess. 1:4***

PP ***"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies."***

Romans 8:33

No one can make a charge stick against God's chosen people because it is God Who
clothes us in righteousness

Satan can stand there next to you and point out all your failures

People can act as the voice of Satan and remind you of all you have done wrong

But no charge can stand against God's people, simply and wonderfully because He has
chosen you

Grasping, believing, and living this truth unleashes us from fear, and doubt and shame

Did you know that people are weighed down with shame cannot really love?

Shame forces us beneath fig leaves, and behind trees to hide and cover and conceal

God's choosing you tenderly takes off those fig leaves and dresses you in beautiful
radiant garments of grace and His gracious hand gently leads you out from behind trees

This is freedom!

And it then gives us the ability to love our spouse, our children, our friends
Not fearing their judgment, because God chose me and there are charges against me

PP 2-We are holy

Paul gives us another description of who we are...*holy*

We are set apart for God, entirely for His purposes, to be His holy people

No longer in the east, no longer in the world, no longer '*common*' but chosen and called
out from it

Brought into His family so that He can dwell among His holy people

Adam and Eve were driven out from the presence of God, but those in Christ were made

holy and brought back into His presence to enjoy Him forever

PP The Bible unavoidably links God's chosen people with holiness: "*you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...*" 1 Peter 2:9

And we have been given a purpose as His Holy people, to "*you are a chosen race,*

PP *a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*" 1 Peter 2:9

This is holiness, set apart for God and given purpose

Remember, Paul is telling us who we are before he tells us how we ought to live

Do you want a marriage built on beauty and clothed in grace, then you must know who
you and your spouse are in Christ

When God chose believers out of the world, as He did the nation of Israel, He drew them
to Himself to be His people

But if we are holy, why do we still struggle and sin toward each other in our marriages?

Or in our friendships?

Listen to how John Piper explains it?

PP "[Holiness] is first a position and a destiny before it is a pattern of behavior"

We are not practically there yet

We need to become holy in life because we are holy in Christ

When I entered full-time ministry I became a pastor but I knew very little about how to
pastor

For 17 years I have been learning to live out what I am, and I will continue to learn

Husbands and wives, if you have put your faith in Christ alone, He has showered you
with grace and made you holy

You no longer wear filthy garments, instead, you have been dressed in righteousness

And God has taken you out of the world, out of the common, you are no longer a world's
statistic

You are numbered among the chosen and God has given you a purpose, and one of those
purposes is to love your spouse so well that the world stands up to take notice and sees Jesus Christ in
you

PP 3-We are God's beloved

I heard a Christian author speaking to women and telling them that nothing will establish
their identity more than who it is they love

Granted that who we love will influence how we see ourselves

But Paul says something that would disagree with this speaker and author
He says that our nothing builds the foundation of our identity more than the One Who
loves us more than any other
We are God's '*beloved*'
This is the third description of who we are in Christ
God the Creator of the universe made you, set you apart for Himself, has given you
purpose and is smitten by you
God is for you brother and sister, not against you
We need to be amazed and blown at this
He calls us by name, knows how many hairs are on our heads, listens to our secret
thoughts, watches over us at night while we sleep
God treasures you Christian brother and sister
You are His beloved, we are His bride, the church, made up of saints made holy by the
blood of Jesus

These three building blocks to Christian identity are the fountainhead for a loving and
gracious marriage
They are the muscle that pumps intimacy and forgiveness throughout our marriages
We need to hold on to them and never let them go
We are chosen by God, made holy and dearly loved by Him
It is the inner confidence of the heart that enables us to live in grace toward each other
We are not what the world says we are, not what cruel demeaning people say we are
We are what God says and He says we are chosen, holy and loved!
I am eagerly looking forward to next week as we examine the way these three graces
enable us to live
They have direct effects on the quality of our marriages and any relationship we are in

Pray

PP Application

Take some time together (without distractions) to reflect deeply on what it means to be chosen, made holy and loved by God. Get below the surface and discuss these aspects of our Christian identity:

Do you live like you are chosen?

Do your thoughts confirm that you are loved?

Does your life evidence that you are taken out of the ways of
the world and given eternal purpose?

Talk through how these truths impact your marriage.

Are those all around you seeing a marriage that powerfully
proclaims the excellencies of God?

Why did our *God Who chooses* bring the two of you together?

What does He want to accomplish in you and through you?

And finally, how well, honestly, are you partnering and
cooperating with Him in His goals for your marriage?