

PP The Return of the King: Dressed for Marital Success, 11

11/29/2009

Text Colossians 3:12-14

Last week we saw who we are: chosen, holy and loved

We are **'God's chosen ones'**, meaning that He set His sights on us and invited us to His Team, putting us behind our captain Jesus Christ

We are **'holy'**

God has taken us out of the world, the east, the common, and set us apart into His service exclusively for His purposes

And we are His **'beloved'**

We are His treasures, whom He sings over in delight

And now Paul tells us to pull out the dresser drawer of our character and put on the articles of clothing that are available to all God's chosen, holy and loved ones

There is a lot more in the phrase **'Put on then'** than we might realize:

It's not a suggestion, or a request, *it's a command!*

And they all have to do with personal relationships

PP In fact, **'Put on'** literally means to envelope, meaning we need to pull on, like a full wardrobe, these virtues of grace

PP **'Put on'** is a verb in the Greek, written in a tense that means we are to initiate the action, now, with urgency!

God has transformed us by His grace and given us a new identity and supplied these clothes

They are available to us, but we must put them on and live in them

PP So **How do we dress for marital success?** or for any relationship for that matter?

And here is where I have included in your outline, a way to evaluate yourself as to the evidence of these character qualities in your marriage, or if you are not married, in your friendships

You can do this by answering the question: **Do I regularly demonstrate these graces toward my spouse? (or friends)**

PP 1-'Compassion'

The virtues God loves are character qualities that affect relationships: the church, friendships, and importantly marriages

The first virtue Paul gives is compassion

Did you know that this word is plural?

Not, *Show your act of compassion once and you're done*

Over and over, the response to pain and suffering is one of compassion

PP **'compassion'** in the Greek means to have the bowels yearning

The bowels were regarded as the seat of emotions, the deepest part of a person

We say it this way: *my heart aches for you, or it is gut-wrenching to see you suffer*

It's to have a heart that breaks and aches for the distress of others

Husbands and wives, how compassionate are you with each other?

Teens, do your hearts ache when your own family is in distress?

The most accurate measure of a heart of compassion is with our own families

God's chosen, holy and loved children are filled with this grace, and we need to put it on
Did you know that in Paul's world, suffering of animals meant nothing to anyone?

The physically handicapped and the weak just did not survive

There was no provision for the Elderly in that ancient Greek culture

Those who suffered from mental illnesses were cast off and unloved

It wasn't until Christianity spread through the world that the world knew mercy

William Barclay wrote that *"It is not too much to say that everything that has been done for the elderly, the sick, the weak in body and in mind, animals, children and women has been done through the inspiration of Christianity"*

Now remember, you are to evaluate yourself in each of these areas by answering the question: **Do I regularly dress in compassion toward my spouse/friends?**

PP 2-'kindness'

PP 'kindness' is compassion in action

Kindness is the same word used of wine which had grown mellow with age and lost its harshness

It is the disposition that does not respond to hurtful people with hurt but instead returns to them gentleness

Josephus, the Jewish historian used it to describe Isaac, who dug wells and gave them to others because he would not fight over them

Jesus used this word when He said in Matthew 22 that His yoke is easy

"...God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance" Romans 2:4

It might be a smile, a hug, a kind word, a gift of money, a taking the children so a couple can go out

The kind husband is as concerned about his wife's good as he is his own and vice versa

Are you married to an unbeliever, or one who is away from the Lord?

Nagging, berating, criticizing never works to bring them to Jesus Christ because they are Graceless

Kindness can, because it is the very expression of the heart of Jesus Christ

Compassion feels and kindness acts

PP 3-'humility'

Humility is what John Stott calls the *"rarest and fairest of all Christian virtues"*

Illus "Years ago, Ruth Bell Graham, wife of the renowned evangelist, was asked if she and Billy always agreed on everything. *'My goodness, no!'* she said. *'If we did, there would be no need for one of us.'*

Friends, this was to the Greeks a word of contempt spoken about the Christians

William Gladstone, prime minister of England, remarked *‘while humility is the sovereign grace of Christianity, the Greeks had no symbol in their language to denote it.’*

Any word they had similar to it was cast in the light of weakness or meanness

It was used of the cringing submission of slaves

But to the Christian, chosen, made holy and loved, it is one of our chief virtues

PP It means low lying

It doesn’t mean to think less of ourselves, but to think of ourselves less and others more

Jonathon Edwards said *‘true humility does not put ourselves down, but lifts others up’*

We are to dress in humility with one another, and especially with our spouses

Humility, the exact opposite of pride, seeks to lift our spouses up and not ourselves

Recognizing their worth and not our own

Bringing out their beauty and not our own

Humility refuses to lower or diminish by demeaning and criticizing

Who better to dress in humility than those who have been chosen though undeserving, made holy and rescued from the power of sin and given a life of person, and dearly loved though we hated God?

Paul says, put on humility, it is a beautiful garment of Christian virtue

And resist the tendency to think of these in the context outside of family, it starts at home

Parents, let us dress every day in humility with our children

Children, dress in humility with your parents and siblings

PP 4-‘meekness’

We are accustomed to hearing the word meek and thinking of someone who is mousy

But the real meaning of the word couldn’t be more different

PP **‘Meekness’** is gentleness undergirded by steel-like strength

It is strength under control, but not on display for all to see

It’s the choice to waive rights, setting them aside for the good of the other

Aristotle defined meekness as the happy mid-point between too much and too little anger

Moses was filled with meekness: *“the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.”* **Numbers 12:3**

Meek, yet he decisively and rose in anger at the proper time

A meek husband is one who can lead courageously and graciously without lording it over his wife, who courageously and graciously leads without dominating her

A meek wife is one who can give her strength and support to her husband without demanding her way, who is willing to give up her rights for her husband

A marriage filled with meekness allows nothing to divide, nothing to disrupt their love

Whether that be another person, a sinful habit or a career path that consumes them

They determine to deal with conflict before it divides and destroys

Meekness is gentleness that disguises true grit

PP 5-‘patience’

PP **‘Patience’** literally means long-tempered

It’s the ability to persevere through something that is distressing or unfavorable

In marriage, it is the exercise of endurance so that your spouse’s refusal to change never

drives you to despair or cynicism
Patience is a restraint that refuses to become upset or speak sharply to your spouse when their conduct is wrong and unhealthy
Our marital love should reflect God's covenantal love which patiently endures our sinful and foolish hearts without casting us off
Patience is the persevering confidence that if I wait a little longer, God's mercy and grace will come
It is the strength to suffer for a long time without giving up on God and giving in to bitterness

PP 6-'Bearing with one another'

This means to cease-fire but more than that, to support and support each another
It is the turbo button, for those '*extra grace required*' people
Make allowances husbands and wives for each other's faults
'But Tim, you don't understand how many times I have to do this, nothing ever changes in my mate.'
God's answer is you are chosen, holy and loved by God
His mercy, which is new every morning with you, floods your hearts continually so that your mercy can be new every day with your spouse
Constant irritation, constant criticism is hardly redemptive and always reveals a heart that is demanding, grace-less and bitter
So God in His wisdom gave you a spouse that will force you to see this and you will be miserable until you receive His grace and extend it in your marriage

PP 7-'forgiving each other'

Illus A couple married for 15 years began having more and more disagreements. But they wanted to make their marriage work so they agreed on an idea the wife had. For one month they planned to drop a slip in two "Fault" boxes. The boxes would provide a place to let the other know about daily irritations. Things like "leaving the jelly top off the jar," "wet towels on the shower floor," "dirty socks not in hamper," and on and on. After dinner at the end of the month, they exchanged boxes. His wife had submitted many of his faults to him and they reflected on what he had done wrong. Then the wife opened her box and began reading. All the slips were the same, the message being: "I love you!"

Unforgiveness is gracelessness, which is the refusal to drop the charges
This moves us to the core of what it means to forgive each other

PP 'forgiving' is the Greek word charizomai (grace)

God's grace is His willing action to remove our sin and no longer count them against us
To know how deeply God has loved us, chosen us and made us holy empowers us to willingly and freely forgive others

PP The Psalmist tells us that *"as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us."* **Psalm 103:12**

The usual explanation of this is that unlike the North and South directions, the east and west have no poles
Therefore God removes our confessed sins infinitely away from us
But it is doubtful that David knew anything about poles
David undoubtedly knew what we learned about the compass reading East
There is an infinite distance, spiritually, between the East and the West
To live in the East, the world, away from the presence of God, is to live in unforgiveness and the wrath of God
When we turn to Christ in faith, God takes us out of the world, cancels the ruling power of sin and wipes out our record of guilt, bringing us into His covenantal people
To forgive our spouses like God forgives us then is to be willing to remove the charges, refusing to hold them against each other
To in effect, draw our sinning spouse out of the east and into the west of peace and joy
On the other hand, unforgiveness is to usurp the place of God Who alone has the right to judge and pronounce guilt and drive people into the east
But love forgives, and it ties together all the rest of the clothing of grace

PP 8-'put on love'

"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

Everything is made up of atoms. These are little particles that move around in perpetual motion, attracting each other when a little distance apart, but repelling each other when they are squeezed into each other
Sounds a lot like marriage doesn't it
The natural tendency in a marriage of two sinners is to repel and experience conflict
This is why we must put on every day the belt of grace called love
None of the pieces of this wardrobe will stay in place without it

Illus Josh McDowell talk about the three kinds of love. There's "I love you if," "I love you because" and "I love you in spite of." The first two are conditional—"I love you if you lose weight." "I love you because you are so smart." They are examples of contract love. The third one is an example of covenant love. "I love you in spite of your weaknesses. I love you in spite of your faults. I love you in spite of the fact that you don't always love me." That's the only kind of love that will last for a lifetime. Conditional love won't make it because what if she doesn't lose weight? What if one day he can't think straight? What then? Will you still love her then? Will you still stand by his side? God's love is covenant love. It doesn't depend on us. Likewise, the covenant love that holds a marriage together is love that doesn't depend on the other person.

Keep belting on love, over and over, each and every single day
Friends, this is our wardrobe, and we are commanded to dress fully and to live as the chosen ones, made holy by Jesus Christ and dearly loved by our heavenly Father

Pray

PPApplication

This week, each of you take this outline, and your self-evaluation, and discuss the results with your spouse (or close friend). Be honest and try not to be accusative or defensive. Focus your discussion more on your own evaluation rather than the other person's.

Each day this week, keep these 8 articles of grace with you by consciously dressing in them in the morning. Use your lunch breaks, and your commutes to remind you of who you are (chosen, holy and loved) and your responsibility to live out grace in your relationships, especially in your family.