

## **PP** The Return of the King: Marriage Restored, 12

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Text Colossians 3:15-18

Illus John Wesley once stumbled on a bridge and sprained his ankle. His friends carried him to the house of Mary Vazielle on Threadneedle Street, a widow with several children, who cared for him until he healed. Wesley ended up asking her to marry him. But the marriage was a disaster. Mary liked a quiet, comfortable home, and it was difficult for her to travel with her husband and stay in uncomfortable inns. She began to oppose John's ministry, giving certain personal letters to his enemies, and even making additions to them that made them worse! Once she even pulled her husband around on the floor by his hair! His unhappy marriage encouraged him to work even harder and be away from home even longer. Finally, she left him.

Marriage can be truly beautiful and it can also be tragic

The reason for the latter is what we saw in Genesis 3...sin

Adam and Eve chose to sin and pursue their own selfish ends and they received for it a sentence that has been passed down to every man and woman since

Every woman, to the degree that sin reigns in her, will want to usurp the authority of her husband and rule over him

Every man, to the degree that sin has mastery in his heart will attempt to dominate her with a harsh rule

Every marriage, to the degree that sin reigns in the couple's hearts, will dance this cycle of difficulty, until Jesus Christ leads them free by His grace

But there is good news, and it is the gospel of Jesus Christ

The sacrifice of the perfect Son of God has provided the antidote for the curse of sin, the key to the prison bars that have held husbands and wives prisoners

And not only are they set free, but their prison clothes of fig leaves are exchanged for a brilliant wardrobe of grace that will restore their marriage to one of beauty

And we saw this wardrobe last week: compassion, kindness, meekness, humility, Patience, forbearance, forgiveness and over all these the belt of love

It's the fashion choice for the chosen, holy and dearly loved people of God

They look great on God's people and when we will obediently put them on, the result is a marriage that is supremely satisfying and glorifying to God

### **PP** 1-A marriage of peace

One of the results of dressing for marital success is a marriage ruled by peace

*"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body."*

To be full of peace is more than merely have an absence of conflict

**PP** It is the property and gift of Christ: *"May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless His people with peace!"* Psalm 29:11

**PP** *'peace'* is a word that means to join or bind what has been separated

Peace between us and God is a pre-requisite for peace with each other

It is the peace of Christ that must rule in our hearts, it keeps us one

**PP** The Greek word for **‘rule’** was used in the Greek athletic games for the umpire whose job it was to arbitrate over them and make rulings in difficult situations

Not once, but continually let it rule in our hearts

Have you ever had a conflict with your spouse, went away from each other for a time, and that sick, uneasy feeling just gnaws at you?

Christ, our Umpire, is whistling and telling us we are out of bounds, and to get back in the game and play right, and as far as it depends on you, be at peace

He is saying, look at your heart! Yours, not hers or his

This is the peace of Christ at work and it should alert us to the fact that we have dropped the belt of love and the wardrobe of grace is out of place

The feeling of losing peace should move us to humble ourselves to respond rightly

Marriage is full of conflicts, the big three being finances, communication and sex

But there are thousands of other opportunities to display grace with each other

And when we have differences of opinions or motives, the peace of Christ must step in and realign us to His desires

His ruling is the one which counts, even if it goes against our own

And we will see in a moment that He rules through His Word and His peace guides us through conflict to a place where we can humbly give up our perceived rights and unite around His desires

## **PP 2-A Marriage of thankfulness**

***“And be thankful...with thankfulness in your hearts to God...giving thanks to God”***

Thankfulness is powerful for the simple reason that it destroys pride and preserves peace

Did you know that we cannot be genuinely thankful and at the same time full of pride?

Thankfulness is the realization that I have been given something good

In marriage it thankfulness continually reminds us that the goodness of God can be seen in the one He has led you to in marriage

Thankful people are deeply aware of receiving what they didn’t deserve!

How often do you express thankfulness to God for the gift of your spouse?

*If you knew my spouse, you wouldn’t tell me to thank God!*

If you begin to thank God for him or her, you will develop an appreciation for the gift that person really is for you

Illus A woman seeking counsel from Dr. George W. Crane, the psychologist, confided that she hated her husband, and intended to divorce him. "I want to hurt him all I can," she declared firmly. "Well, in that case," said Dr. Crane, "I advise you to start showering him with compliments. When you have become indispensable to him, when he thinks you love him devotedly, then start the divorce action. That is the way to hurt him." Some months later the wife returned to report that all was going well. She had followed the suggested course. "Good," said Dr. Crane. "Now's the time to file for divorce." "Divorce!" the woman said indignantly. "Never. I love my husband dearly!"

**PP** A thankful heart creates praise and a life of praise is twin to a life of devoted, loving faithfulness

Thankfulness is the profound amazement at the charity and love of God that aches to be presented back to Him in an increase of devotion and service

And it works the same way in marriage as thankfulness produces devotion and service

### **PP 3-A marriage centered on God's Word**

***"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."***

**PP** That word '*dwell*' means to live in a home and keep it

The word is the great theme throughout God's redemptive story as He has purposely moved in human history to dwell right at the center of His people

Friends, what Adam and Eve lost as they were driven out of the garden of Eden, we have regained through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ

And letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly allows God to exert His sin-killing power in our hearts to free us to love Him and each other

It gives Jesus free access to every room in the houses of our hearts

The office where the money is managed; the garage where hobbies are pursued, the bedroom of intimacy; the living room of hospitality and the den of your choice of entertainment

Is God's Word active in the hearts of you and your spouse?

Are you able to see your fault and pride in conflict or is it always the other's fault?

Do you experience godly sorrow because of your behavior?

Are you experiencing a relentless encouragement to sacrifice what you want for your spouse's needs or desires?

A greater desire to serve him or her?

Are you listening to your spouse more than you speak?

An ever-growing appreciation for the one He has led you to in marriage?

God's Word feeds the Christian soul, nourishing and strengthening Christian couples to love one another

Husbands and wives who do not center themselves on the Word of God have no strength to dress in the wardrobe of grace

When the Word of God dwells in us, our lives live out our faith: ***"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."***

Everything that comes out of our mouths and every thing we do, should bring glory to the name of Christ

Husbands and wives, we should so clothe ourselves in the wardrobe of grace, that when people look at our marriages, they see the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church

Our marriages ought to live out our faith so well that people are attracted to God

### **PP 4-A marriage restored**

***“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.”***

In Paul’s culture this would have produced a shock!

A woman was a thing, no legal rights whatever, easily discarded like unwanted trash

She never appeared on the streets alone, never went shopping

In Greek society, respectable women lived in seclusion and complete servitude and chastity were demanded of her

Under Jewish and Greek law, the privileges belonged to the husband and the duties to her

The practical effect was that husbands became dictators and wives little more than servants who tended to all his needs

But Christianity restored marriage to its rightful, beautiful state of gracious partnership

Wives are helpmates and husbands gracious leaders

Marriage was no longer for convenience, but for joy, intimacy and mutual satisfaction

This is a direct restoration from the effects of sin in marriage of Genesis 3:16

There, Eve would try and rule her husband and Adam would respond in a harsh and dominating way

Here we see the original intent of marriage restored through Christ as chosen, holy and loved believers wear the wardrobe of grace that Christ has provided

Because of the wardrobe of grace, because we have peace ruling in us, because we are thankful for each other and because the Word of Christ dwells in us, wives ***‘submit’*** and husbands ***‘love’***

Paul is not telling women to ***‘submit’*** and climb into a life of servitude and bondage

It’s not a noun but a verb, a lifestyle choice

***‘Submit’*** doesn’t mean that women are inferior to their husbands, or lower in quality

This was the great lie of Greek culture

Or that Submit doesn’t mean that wives are doormats to be stepped on by their husbands

Wives have the same worth in God’s eyes as their husbands

**PP** *It does mean to voluntarily place oneself under another’s authority and remain in place*

Not compelled or forced and badgered into submission, but willingly and lovingly

She is not to dominate or lead her husband but follow his leadership as long as it does not compromise her loyalty to Christ, part of what it means ***‘as is fitting in the Lord’***

At the same time, and I would argue that courageous and gracious leadership takes the initiative, husbands must continually love their wives

Love is a verb, meaning that it is the action of cherishing something or someone as precious

**PP** Men, God is so serious that we love our wives that he tells us ***“live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel...so that your prayers may not be hindered.”*** **1 Peter 3:7**

Men, wives who struggle to submit to their husbands almost always do so because at sometime in their lives, men have not loved them and shown them honor

The very first man to look at to see if this is true, is you

Resist the tendency to automatically blame her dad or any other man

You are the greatest redemptive tool in the hands of God to free her from the chains of her past and bring into the freedom of her position in Christ

If she is not walking in that freedom for grace, it's often because you are not convincing her that she is precious and treasured  
It is unthinkable for a husband to demand submission from his wife if he is not radically loving her, and equally unthinkable for a wife to refuse to submit to her husband and yet demand his love

Friends, this series has aimed at convincing us that the problem in marriages is most fundamentally, sin  
God has done all we need to free us from the mastery of sin: we are the chosen, holy and dearly loved people of God  
He has entered into our marriage covenants with us, and has promised to help  
But we need to pull on the wardrobe of grace and love one another  
Husbands, love your wives as Christ does the church  
Wives, respect your husbands and submit to them as the church does to Christ

And we will have marriages that are supremely satisfying and glorifying to God!

### **PP Application**

Each week, choose one of the following and apply it consistently:

- Date regularly
- Find reasons to laugh in joy, even in the face of difficulty
- Hold hands when you walk together
- Listen more than you speak with each other
- Surprise each other in creative expressions of love
- Pray together
- Study God's word and share with each other what He is teaching you
- Find ministry opportunities that allow you to serve *together*
- Share one reason you love each other every day
- Go to bed together
- No conflict is worth losing your marriage
- Ask for forgiveness rather than say sorry when sin is involved
- Choose an amount of money neither can spend without the other's agreement
- Post the 8 articles of grace on your bathroom mirror and put them on morning  
noon and evening
- Make God smile by the way you love each other

Pray!