

Faithful and Fruitful Marriage: Prepared By God (Eph 1-3)

- A Redeemed Culture #6

Introduction - Last week we made clear that we will not redeem the culture around us without redeemed marriages, families, and homes within. We cannot export what we do not have. We need to take this a step further; we need to peel back to a deeper layer. You cannot export into your marriage what you do not have in yourself. You cannot obey the law of God; you cannot be a godly husband or a godly wife or godly parents or godly children unless you have a fundamental orientation towards God which only comes from Him. You cannot obey Ephesians 5:22-33 unless you have been given Ephesians 1-3.

The Structure of Ephesians: Good News First! – The passage on marriage found in chapter 5 is not a series of commands without a context. And the context did not simply begin at 5:21, or 5:15. It began at 1:1. We think that we are in control of what we do, but we are never in control of who we are. And all *doing* proceeds from *being*. Only apple trees produce apples (Matt 7:17-18). Indicatives and then imperatives. Being and then doing. Good News and then Good Living.

The Temptation – Some people, drawn more to ‘check-the-boxes,’ pragmatic sermons, find Ephesians 1-3 a bit of a yawner. “Let’s get to the practical stuff.” But it doesn’t take a whole lot of counseling before you run into plenty of people who have ‘tried everything,’ and nothing is working. It doesn’t take long before you find people who feel ‘moralized’ by certain types of passages of scripture or sermons on them, but not fed. This is often because they have not come to the scriptures in evangelical faith, but with some sort of guilt (I should try harder) or pride (I have done all that is humanly possible). This is what the law does (Rom 3:20, 5:20). Without faith, the law only points out your condemnation and exacerbates your situation. This is the problem for unbelievers, but believers slip into this temptation as well (Gal 3:3).

To the Praise of the Glory Of His Grace (Eph 1-3) – If I had to summarize Ephesians 1-3 (and maybe the whole book), that would be the phrase I would use. It begins the section (1:6) and ends the section (3:20-21). God has done a glorious work of grace and He has done so to magnify His glory. This is why you have been saved, and this is why you have a new life in Christ on this earth. For those who have ears to hear, this is why you are married.

Vv1-6 – It is God’s work of choosing, predestining, and adopting us as His children. It is not our work. He did it before the foundation of the world and He did it in love and He did it to the praise of the glory of His grace.

Vv7-12 – In Christ we have been redeemed, purchased from our slavery to sin, and forgiven of our sins. And we have been given an inheritance in Christ – we have riches innumerable in Him – and all to the praise of His glory.

Vv13-23 – We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; since it is all His work and none of ours, and since He doesn’t do imperfect work, we are guaranteed by His Spirit that His work has been and will be perfectly accomplished. Jesus Christ, having been given all dominion and authority, and being our Head, has given that to the church, which is His body. The world is ours.

Vv2:1-10 – We were dead, unable and unwilling to respond to God’s call – by nature children of wrath, lost in our sinful lusts – and God made us alive in Christ Jesus – it is all by grace through faith and even that faith is a gift of God so that no one can boast. And we have been saved to good works, but even those works He prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (by grace through faith).

Vv2:11-22 – Having been reconciled to God, we have been reconciled together, Jew and Gentile, everyone in the same covenant, in the same temple, for we are the temple with Jesus as the cornerstone. We have been given peace with one another for we have all been humbled to the same level at the cross. He is our peace and that peace spreads out all around us in body-life.

Vv3:1-13 – This is the mystery revealed, that which was in shadows has been made clearly known. Jesus Christ, who made the world, has remade heaven and earth, giving us unsearchable riches. He has put down the principalities and powers of the heavenly places. He is Lord of all and we are in Him.

Vv3:14-21 – Big idea of this prayer: 1) You cannot understand what God has given you in Jesus Christ fully – God must give this to us, and again and again. 2) You cannot “do” what is required of you (“Walk” in chapter 4ff), unless you have become something first. And Paul teaches us to pray to pray for the impossible – comprehension of the love of Jesus Christ for us.

A Close Look at Eph 2:10 – This verse mentions ‘walking’ in the pre-pared works of God. The command to ‘walk’ is used 5 times in chapters 4-5 (4:1, 17, 5:2, 8, 15). Everything God is commanding you, He is giving you. Everything you are commanded to do has been accomplished, prepared for you, in advance, by your heavenly Father, who called you, redeemed you, washed you in the blood of His Son, and set His Spirit upon and in you. And, lest you wrongly question God’s working of grace in you because you aren’t living this way, remember – Paul was writing to Christians just like you and had to instruct, admonish, and rebuke Christians just like you. And this didn’t make his message any less true.

Good Advice, or Good News? – When it comes to problems in marriage, it is often the case that there are only two persons involved, or that you are acting as though there are only two persons. In those cases, you have forgotten your first love, or you have never met Him. Good advice is not bad, but it only becomes good when received on the heels of the Good News. Our resolutions and fierce determination to change will not work. The Christian life is not fundamentally about resolutions. It is fundamentally about resurrection, redemption restoration, and revival – and all the gracious work of God. We cannot export what we do not have.