

Marriage And The Gospel Part 1

Titus 3:4-8

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Take your Bible and turn to Titus chapter 3 with me. And in preparation for this week, I was meditating on the marvel of the human body. And reminded that David speaks rightly in Psalm 139 when he says that he is fearfully and wonderfully made.

As you think about it, the human body is made up of a myriad of different parts. All of them serve their own function. But some of those are of crucial importance. We call them the vital organs. Meaning, of course, without that particular organ, you can't survive.

But I was thinking this week, what is really the most vital aspect of the vital aspects of our body? Is there a part of our body that supports all of the vital organs at the same time? And as I thought on that, really it is our blood. Blood courses through our veins in constant movement, bringing the needed oxygen and nutrients to our body, so that our bodies not only continue to survive, but thrive. Blood is essential to a healthy life.

In fact, in Leviticus 17:11, it says: "*For the life of the flesh is in the blood...*"

Speaking of those sacrifices, under the old covenant, the pouring out of the blood represented the giving of the life of that animal. In the same way that we say of Christ, whom those sacrifices represented, that we are saved by His blood. What we mean is, He shed His blood. He gave His life in our place.

So the blood, then, is so important that we can use it synonymously for our very lives. And that got me thinking on the question, what is the lifeblood of a healthy marriage? What's the one essential ingredient that makes a marriage not only survive, but thrive and fulfill the purpose for which God made it? And this morning, I'm going to argue that the lifeblood of a biblical marriage is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Last week, we saw the design for marriage in Genesis chapter 2. And we saw the corruption of marriage in Genesis chapter 3. And we left off by highlighting that glorious verse in Genesis 3:15, in which we see the seeds of the gospel, that a redeemer would come and crush the head of the serpent.

Today, we're going to remind ourselves of exactly how it is that that redeemer has saved us. What was the fulfillment of that verse in Genesis 3:15? And what I'm going to argue over the next two weeks is that the gospel is essential, really because of two particular categories.

Category number one, **The Gospel Transforms You**. And category number two, **The Gospel Transforms Marriage**. As I said last week, we all get married at the altar, hoping to have a Genesis 2 type of marriage, only to find that all that exists in a fallen world are Genesis 3 type marriages.

But our hope as we look ahead to the New Testament is an Ephesians 5 kind of marriage. Next week, we're going to make our way to Ephesians 5. But between Genesis 3:15 and Ephesians 5, we need to analyze the gospel itself. Why is the gospel the crucial component to a healthy marriage?

There's so many passages we could go to in Scripture that highlight this, but my heart's been turned to Titus chapter 3. So I invite you to turn there with me. Titus 3, we're going to read verses 1 to 7. Paul begins:

"Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. 3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

What we're going to look at is this overarching idea this morning that **The gospel motivates godliness in us as we proactively remember our previous condition and God's merciful redemption.** In these first seven verses of Titus, it really breaks down into two parts. Verses 1 and 2 is **Our Call To Godliness In Relationships**, and verses 3 to 7 is **Our Motivation For Godliness In Christ**.

And so as we begin, we're just going to look briefly at the first of those, our call to godliness in relationships, verses 1 and 2. He begins with this command, remind them, remind them. This is Paul speaking to Titus. Titus has been left in Crete to set in order what remains. He is to put elders in each of these local congregations, but also, he is to teach them, and his teaching here is a reminder. These are things that Paul has already taught, but they're so important that he says, remind them again of what I've already said before.

And what he reminds them of here, specifically, are characteristics that each Christian should exemplify in their interactions with other people in society. He breaks down society into really two categories, governing authorities, beginning in verse 1, and then the rest of humanity in the words that follow.

What we have here are seven instructions regarding our conduct in relationships. Look again at verses 1 and 2. Notice the seven instructions. Be subject to rulers and authorities, be obedient, be ready for every good deed, malign no one or slander no one, be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

Now in context, I think Paul primarily is talking about relationships with outsiders, unbelievers. But because he adds at the end here, all men, these are principles, and we see them, of course, in other places in Scripture, that apply to all of our relationships.

These are qualities of godliness that are to define every Christian, married or single, it doesn't matter, and they're to define us in every relationship we have on the planet. In every relationship, you're to be ready for every good work, you're not to slander, you're to be peaceable, gentle, and to show every consideration.

Do you know what's interesting? Maybe this is true in your life as it is in mine. I think oftentimes, it's not outsiders, strangers, the people out there that we find it difficult to practice these things with, it's the people under our own roof. It's the people we live with day to day. It's your spouse if you're married, it's perhaps another family member, or a sibling.

So what I want to do right out of the gate here, is really bring this home to us, and I want you, if you're married, I want you to take the name of your spouse, and I want you to insert it everywhere I pause, and if you're not married, I want you to think of another person, perhaps a person that you struggle with the most to exhibit these qualities. Be ready for every good work towards [pause], do not malign or slander [pause], be peaceable towards [pause], be gentle towards [pause], and show every consideration for [pause].

You see, just this one short sample list, and there are many others in the Scriptures, help us understand how godliness ought to manifest itself in the way that we interact with other people. But the question is, how do we cultivate this kind of pervasive godliness in each one of our relationships? How do we do this?

This is where the gospel begins to shine. It can only happen when we saturate ourselves with meditating on the gospel, and its endless implication for each of our lives. And so we're going to turn our attention now to the section that will really dominate this morning, verses three to seven, our motivation for godliness in Christ. Our motivation. And there really are two motivations here that are given in the passage.

The first motivation is this, **Remember Your Previous Condition**. Remember your previous condition. Look back at verse three, it begins with the word "for". That is, I want you to do these things to other people, I want you to act in this way, for, I want you to think about it this way, here's why, "*we also once were foolish ourselves.*" We once were this way.

Why is it that we should be motivated to treat others with this kind of selflessness, this kind of gospel-centeredness? Well, first of all, we have to admit that the thing that makes it difficult to respond to other people in the way that he's just commanded is the fact that other people sin against us. That's when it's the most difficult to treat someone with gentleness and with patience and to give them every consideration when they're sinning against you.

And so, what Paul begins with here is to help us understand that the way we motivate ourselves to treat other people this way when they sin against us is to remember not their sins, but ours. Start with your own sin before the Lord, remembering that before Christ, you were the same. The same sins that are committed against you that irk you and get up your nose and bother you, that was you before Christ, and it would still be you if God hadn't set His love on you.

In fact, he goes on to give eight descriptions of the life of an unbeliever, eight descriptions of who we were before Christ. We don't have time, unfortunately, to go through them in detail, but here are the eight descriptions of an unbeliever.

They are

- foolish,
- disobedient,
- deceived,
- enslaved to lust and passions,
- wicked,
- envious,
- despicable and,
- hateful.

This is an unbeliever. But not just an unbeliever, this was us before Christ. It's how we lived. It characterized our lives. And in every relationship, but especially in marriage, it is crucial that we don't forget where we come from, spiritually speaking. You cannot forget that you, too, are a sinner saved by grace.

When your spouse sins against you, remind yourself that the reason that seems so strikingly familiar is because you've seen it in your own life. And even after you've come to Christ, though we fight our sin, we battle our sin, and we're not a slave to sin anymore, we still see it in our lives. We still sin against one another.

And so Paul's point is when you look back at who you were before Christ, it ought to foster humility. And humility is the fertile soil of godliness. Humility is the soil in your heart that produces the fruit that you need to live in the way that God calls you to live.

But the second motivation is to **Remember Our Current Position**. Not only are we to remember our previous condition, but we're to remember our current position. And humility is not only fostered by remembering who we were, humility is fostered as we remember how it is we got where we are. How is it that God has saved us? And what Paul wants us to understand is that we were dead in our sins.

When we left Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 last week, there they were, dead in sin, without hope, in desperate need of God to rescue them. And Paul wants us to understand that that was all of our condition apart from Christ, and we can take no credit for the fact that we're in Christ today.

There's humility that's fostered not only in thinking of who we were, there's humility that's fostered in thinking of why we are who we are. And so in verses four to seven, we have three humbling details about our current position in Christ. Let's look at them together.

Detail number one we'll call **The Motivation For Our Salvation**. The motivation for our salvation in verse four. Verse four begins with the word "but", and Paul turns his attention back to that event, that transforming event that is the reason you're not who you used to be

in the previous verse. What happened? We were all of those eight things and more. What happened? This is the “but”. Something took place.

Now the main verb that we're going to get to is the verb in verse five, “*He saved us*”. That's where all of this is driving. But that verb, He saved us, is bracketed in the front by some modifying descriptions and on the back end by some other modifying descriptions.

So let's start with what leads up to that verb, He saved us. And what we see is that there were two aspects of God's character that motivated him to save us. The first one is **His Kindness**. His kindness. “*But when the kindness of God...*” When the kindness of God.

Now what I want you to understand here, notice that this is not an external motivation. God didn't see something in us or in humanity that then drew Him to save us. This is internal. It's describing an aspect of the character of God. His own kindness, who He is, motivated Him to save us.

Kindness is the quality of being helpful or beneficial. It can be translated as goodness, even generosity. In Romans chapter two, Paul reminds us there:

“*4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?*”

So the first aspect of God's own nature that motivated Him to act on our behalf, to rescue us from our position, is His kindness, His generosity. Notice he attributes now to God, this is God the Father, the title Savior. “*But when the kindness of God, our Savior...*” What we're going to find here in this passage is that the work of redemption is a Trinitarian work. The Father, Son, and Spirit work in concert together in our redemption. So that we could rightly say that God is our Savior, Christ is our Savior, and the Spirit is our Savior because all of Them work together in saving us.

Here, the Father is called Savior because He is the initiator. The kindness of God stirred Him up to save us, to initiate this plan of redemption, the plan of all that was planned in the mind of God in eternity past. But not only His kindness, notice it was also His unmerited love that motivated Him. Verse four, “*But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind...*”. His love for mankind.

The Bible reveals clearly that God hates sin, God will judge sin, He is a holy God, and yet at the same time the Bible reveals that God is the definition of love. We know love because we know God. This word here, the phrase “*love for mankind*” is actually just one word in the Greek text, and that word means an affectionate concern for an interest in humanity.

And remember from Romans 5:8, the description of how we were when God saved us, while we were yet what, sinners? Christ died for us? This is the teaching also, the most famous verse in scripture, John 3:16, “*for God so loved the world,*” His love moved Him. But notice, not only is He moved by His kindness and His love, but there's a very particular word that describes how His kindness and love came onto the scene, if you will.

Look back at verse four. *"4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared."* Appeared, that's an interesting word for kindness and love. They appeared. What's he talking about? This is a reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer from long ago in Genesis 3:15. The love and the kindness of God appeared in human flesh. The God-man, Jesus Christ. The very nature of God robed in humanity. It appeared.

Now, when Paul changes gears here and he turns his attention from who we used to be to how we came to be who we are, we might have been tempted to say we were all those things, but we repented and believed. In fact, it's common for Christians to begin here in their explanation. If you say, what separates you as a believer from an unbeliever? You say, well, I've repented and believed the gospel. Now, that is true. We'll get to that in a moment. But that's not what the text says here.

In fact, everything in this passage describes us as passive recipients and God as the actor. Look for one single action in these verses that's attributed to us and you won't find it. You won't find even one. So, the radical change that's taken place in us between the description in verse three and in verses four and following is the action of God. God saw us in our lostness and our sin, enslaved to passions. We were laid before Him like a diamond under a magnifying glass and He was moved to save solely by Himself. It was God that motivated God to save.

But in case you're still holding on to the idea that you had some personal contribution to your redemption, Paul goes on to make his case in verses five and six with a second detail, detail number two, **The Basis Of Our Salvation**. The basis in verses five and six. Here we come to the grand finale or the culmination rather. *"He saved us"*, verse five. This is the high point. This is what he's been driving to and notice again, He saved us. God is doing the action. The result of the appearance of the kindness and love of God in the person of Christ was salvation. The difference maker, if you're a Christian today, what separates you from every unbeliever in the world is the fact that He saved you. It is the divine work of God.

But what exactly did He save us from? You know, we use that phrase a lot and we should. I was saved on such and such a date or such and such a time. That's a very biblical way to speak but we use it so often, I think we can forget what exactly was it that God saved us from. The scriptures are very clear. You can think of it with two Ps. We were saved from sin's penalty and we were saved from sin's power over us. Saved from sin's penalty, the wrath of God for our sin, and saved from the bondage. We were enslaved to our sin.

We see this in Ephesians 2:

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, (listen to this) and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

There you have it. There's the bondage to sin, the power of sin over us. We walked in accordance with the pattern of the world. We were bound to our lusts and our passions and

you have the penalty for sin. We were by nature children of wrath. We deserve the wrath of God. So when it says He saved us, He saved us from both the penalty of the wrath of God for our sins and the daily bondage to sin in which we're enslaved to sin.

Obviously it doesn't mean we don't sin anymore, but sin no longer has a grip on us in the sense of bondage, enslavement. We say, well, prove it. Paul goes on to prove it. After giving us this high point, he saved us, he's going to give us four proofs that show that it truly was He that saved us. Proof number one, **Our Salvation Is Not Secured By Human Deeds**. Look back at the text:

"5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness,"

He begins with the negative here to show the truth of this. So there's no confusion. There was no personal righteousness on our part that caused God to save us. And this is important to understand. God was not motivated to save by our works and God did not work in conjunction with our works to save us, as some cults believe, Mormons would teach that, even Roman Catholics would teach that it's our works and the grace of God coming together to produce salvation. No, not one iota of our salvation is by our works.

He says it clearly here, *not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness*. Why not? Well, first of all, we don't have any deeds of righteousness. Isaiah 64:6:

"all our righteous deeds (notice that) all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;

On your best day as an unbeliever, the moment of your life that you would frame and put on your mom's wall for her to look at, it says you were a sinner. It was riddled with sin.

Romans 3:10-12:

10 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;**11** THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; **12** ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

And of course, Ephesians 2:8-9 restates the same thing in a different way:

"8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Now here in Ephesians 2, the passage I just read, here we're introduced to the concept of faith. Let's talk for a moment about the role of faith and repentance in salvation. Do we have to respond to the gospel? Absolutely. Absolutely. The Bible's riddled with the gospel call. In Mark, for example, Mark 1:15, the first message in Mark that Jesus preaches is a gospel call. Repent and believe the gospel, he says. Absolutely, repentance and faith are essential in our responding to the gospel and yet, did you catch that there in Ephesians 2, faith is attributed as a gift of God there. He says, and that not of yourselves, it's the gift of God.

In fact, the Bible also attributes repentance to God as a gift. In Acts chapter 11, remember in Acts chapter 10, the Gentiles, the first Gentiles are responding to the gospel after Pentecost and Cornelius gathers his family and Peter preaches the gospel and they get saved. Some of

the Jews are upset with Peter because of going into a Gentile's house and preaching the gospel but when he explains what happened, listen to verse 18:

"18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

Even repentance is a gift. So absolutely, we respond in repentance and faith but dear Christian, we respond because of the work that God is doing in us and He even gives us the gift of faith and repentance.

So if it wasn't on our, based on our works, what was the true basis of our salvation? This is proof number two that He saved us. **Our Salvation Was An Exercise Of God's Mercy.** Look back at the passage, verse five *"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy,"*

We've already seen earlier that the attributes of kindness and love motivated God to save. Now we see that it was also His mercy working in divine concert with His kindness and His love and this expression of salvation to us.

Most often when we talk about salvation, we use the word grace to describe what God has done and certainly that's an appropriate word. It's going to show up here in verse seven. But grace and mercy go hand in hand. They're not exactly synonyms. They have a lot of overlap but they seem to emphasize different sides of the same coin whereas God's mercy is this idea of God desiring to rescue us from the wrath we rightly deserve. It's God taking pity on us to rescue. Grace is God desiring to do good to those who deserve wrath. Those two come together in the gospel. And so God is motivated by His mercy, His compassion. He took pity on us to rescue us, to pull us out from under the wrath we rightly deserved.

You know this is where the character of God is in direct contrast to the character of fallen man. Fallen humanity all around us is often happy to bestow favor and to take pity on those who have fallen on hard times undeservedly or by circumstances that were outside their control. It just happened to them. We need to be kind to those people. Even an unbeliever would say that.

But God looks at sinners who are in a muddy pit of misery that they dug with their own hands and jumped into with their own two feet. And part of that muddy pit of sin includes their willful rejection of God, the rejection of His word, and thumbing their nose at His authority. Understand our personal sin is directed at God. It's personal to God. It flies in the face of God. That's why David would say in Psalm 51 in his repentant psalm against you and you alone have I sinned. Even though of course he sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah and others in that process. He understands my sin first and foremost was a personal affront to you, God.

And yet, in spite of all of that, the fact that we're in this muddy mire of sin that we made for ourselves, God comes down and He rescues us. He shows mercy to us in that pit of despair. All we can say to this is hallelujah, what a savior. Amen. What kind of God is this to pull us out of our own pit that we made for ourselves?

And in context, don't miss this, this is the point. God's mercy towards us should compel us to express mercy to others. Let me ask you, if you're married this morning, is your treatment of your spouse characterized by unmerited mercy? Because that's how God's love is characterized towards you and towards me.

But not only is the Father active in our redemption, the Holy Spirit is active in our redemption. This is proof number three, **Our Salvation Was Applied By The Holy Spirit**. So far, we've seen the Father initiating our redemption, motivated by His kindness and His love and His mercy, but now we have to ask ourselves, how does that plan of salvation get applied to us in real time? How does it happen in our lives?

Well, it happens as the Holy Spirit acts upon us through what we call regeneration. And that's what is brought to our attention now:

"He saved us... according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,"

This idea of being washed and made clean is all throughout the Scripture. We see it in an amazing way in 1 Corinthians 6. He says:

"9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (to which many people say, Amen. And then verse 11 comes) 11 Such were some of you;"

Such were some of you. What happened? How come we're not like that anymore? "*but you were washed,*" There's our word. You were washed. You were sanctified, justified. This is the idea. Regeneration is this, you're washed clean. You're made new. The new life is planted in you. New spiritual life.

This is the definition of regeneration given by Burkhoff: "Regeneration is that act of God by which the principle of the new life is implanted in man. And the governing disposition of the soul is made holy." This is regeneration. You were dead in your sins. You needed new life. Through regeneration, the Holy Spirit gives you that new life. He regenerates you. He washes you and makes you new.

This is what Jesus referred to when He was speaking to Nicodemus in John 3. And He says there:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

This is why Ephesians 2 describes it this way. Verse 5:

"5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, (God) made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved)

He regenerated us. He gave us the new life, the new birth that we needed, which is why it would go on to describe us in 2 Corinthians 5:17 this way:

“17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature;” You've been made new. You've been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit breathes new life into us. And our dead hearts begin to beat.

Another way of saying it is this renewing by the Holy Spirit. God gives us new life, and that always results then in a changed life. You can't be the same anymore because the new governing disposition of the soul has been changed fundamentally.

This is why Paul will insist that believers adorn the doctrine of God in the book of Titus. Put it on. That is not that you just put Bible verses on you. Live it out is what he means. Adorn it. Make the doctrine of God attractive because you live in accordance with it. It was the Holy Spirit who brought about this transformation, this regeneration.

You know, this plays into the topic of the will. Many debate over the will as do we have a free will or is our will bound? And if you want to read two books with opposite titles that make the same point, you can read Martin Luther's book *The Bondage of the Will* and then read Edward's book *The Freedom of the Will*. *The Bondage of the Will* is much easier to read, by the way. You'll find they make the exact same argument.

What are they saying? Well, our will, we make free choices in life, but our will is bound to our nature. Before Christ, we are dead in our sin and so we act, we make our choices in accordance with that nature. It is dead. That's what Luther means by the bondage of the will. Our choices are bound to our nature. But when we come to Christ, when we're regenerated, we're made new, we're given a new disposition of the soul, now we make choices in accordance with that new nature. Not in perfection, but in the direction of our lives.

It all starts here with the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. And notice in our passage that God was not stingy when He gave the Spirit to us, but it says, verse six:
“6 whom He poured out upon us richly”

He poured the Spirit out upon His people richly in regeneration. When God does a thing, He does it completely, to the uttermost. So if you want to think about how God has saved us in summary form, God elected us in eternity past, He regenerated us in time by the Spirit, He effectually calls us through the preaching of the gospel, we then respond in repentance and faith, which are also gifts of God, that results in our justification, our adoption, our sanctification, and our future glorification. But all of it falls under one banner. He saved us. God did it.

One final proof that God saved us, **Our Salvation Was Purchased By Jesus Christ**. He says here in verse six:
“through Jesus Christ our Savior,”

How is it that the Father could show mercy to us and still be just? How could the Father, when we are truly sinful, be merciful to us? There had to be a payment. Not only that, there had to be a perfect life, there had to be perfection to offer that payment, and Christ did them both. He lived in our place in perfection. He offered that perfection on the cross to pay

for our sins. It was through Christ, a Trinitarian work, the Father, Son, and the Spirit. And so it is, it calls the Son the Savior here in verse six, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

But all of this was for a reason. This is building to something. In verse seven, we have a third detail. This is the result of our salvation. Look at verse seven:

"7 so that (he saved us) so that (a very specific result) being justified by His grace..."

Now, before he gets to the result, he adds this descriptive statement, we're justified by His grace, which is just another layer to this argument that He saved us. If you're not familiar with the theological term justification, just picture a courtroom. It's a legal term. It's a legal declaration of righteousness.

It is God, on the basis of what Jesus has done, pointing to the sinner and saying, this one is righteous because he's wearing the righteousness of that One. And that One's going to take the sin of this one. There's this great exchange in which God not only puts our sin on Christ, but he puts the righteousness of Christ on us. And therefore, the Father brings down the gavel and says, justified, declared righteous. We're justified by His grace, by God's own desire to do good to those who deserve His wrath.

But what did this justification by grace bring about? Here's the culmination.

"7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Now this is astonishing, Christian. Would it not have been enough for God just to forgive us of our sins? Would that not have been more than enough? And yet He hasn't stopped there. He goes on to say that in the gospel and bringing us to Himself, He also lavishes upon us an inheritance. We become heirs of a spiritual, eternal inheritance, eternal riches.

It's spoken of in places like 1 Peter 1:3-4. He did this to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and it's reserved in heaven. In Matthew 5:34:

34 *"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'*

We inherit this kingdom. God even gives gifts and rewards to us for obedience. It's unfathomable that He would be this gracious to us. But this idea of being heirs of God carries with it another idea that, really, I think is the point, the most encouraging point. Because in the normal family structure, who inherits from the parents? The children. The children inherit from their parents.

The idea of making us heirs coincides with our adoption. We are children of God. That's the reason you're an heir. You have an inheritance because He's made you a child. It's incredible that God would call us sons and daughters, not just redeemed to a right relationship with Him, not just a warm friendship, a familial relationship. You are my son. You are my daughter. He purchased you and He adopted you and He gave you the full rights of His own children.

The glories of heaven will not be the inheritance in any material sense, though heaven will be glorious, but Christ will be the glory of heaven. The relationship with God the Father as His children. And you can take it to the bank that you're an adopted heir of God because he says it's according to the hope of eternal life. And the hope of eternal life is as secure as the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's not a wishful thinking kind of hope. It's a secure kind of hope. And so you who are saved, if He has saved you, you are an heir and that is your hope and it's eternal hope because Christ has paid for it. This is what God has done for you if you're in Christ. This is the good news of the gospel.

So not only are we to be humbled by thinking on our life before Christ, we're to be humbled as we think about how we came to Christ. The gospel is dripping with grace from beginning to end and when we meditate on these great gospel truths, it produces humility to the core of our being and that humility motivates us to obedience in how we relate to one another.

The gospel transforms you, transforms me, and therefore it transforms our relationships and it certainly transforms the covenantal relationship of marriage, covenant between one man, one woman, for life. So in our final minutes here together as we draw this to a close, I want to take some time and just talk about specific implications of the gospel for marriage. How specifically does the gospel impact our marriages and we will add to this next week so this is not exhaustive but I want you to think specifically of a few things.

The gospel is central to a biblical marriage because number one, **Your Greatest Problem Is Sin**. Your greatest problem is sin. I'm going to speak to the unbeliever and then I'll speak to the believer.

If you're an unbeliever here this morning, your greatest need in this life is to be rescued from the penalty of God's wrath for your sins. Marriage will never be for you what God intended for it to be because you are not in Christ. You're still a slave to your sin and you do sin's bidding and you're powerless to do anything else. The reason the gospel is central to marriage is because sin is the problem.

And for the believer now, by God's grace, you've been granted forgiveness, you've been released from the penalty of sin and the power of sin but we understand that we're still entrenched in this daily battle with sin, are we not? And so even for us in Christ, the greatest threat to our lives and to our marriage is sin. The difference is now you've been washed, you've been regenerated and made clean. The new life has been implanted in you so that by God's grace, you can grow to walk in holiness and to be more like Him.

Now that we are in this battle with sin, we must rule over it by the sword of the spirit which is the word of God cutting down every temptation that comes. And so if you desire to have a godly marriage that's progressively becoming more and more of what God designed, the key is to go to war with your personal sin. Go to war with sin. And the gospel will continue to transform you and as it transforms you, you'll notice it's transforming your marriage and now we begin to have a marriage that resembles what God intended.

Listen, if you want to work on your marriage, the place to begin, first and foremost, is not with communication techniques or how to control your breathing when you're angry. The

key to a biblical marriage is personal godliness which means the efforts that will most benefit your marriage are your efforts, by the grace of God, to be more like Christ. Christlikeness ought to be the focal point of our efforts. So the gospel clarifies for us where the battle for marriage really is. It's a battle against sin for personal holiness.

But secondly, the gospel is central to marriage because **Your Only Hope Is Christ**. Not only is sin the real problem, but Christ is the answer to the problem. So back to the unbeliever, understand that while you are currently in a state of being dead and lost and hopeless in and of yourself, you ultimately are not without hope because of the hope that's in Christ. Jesus Christ, as we've already said, lived the perfect life and offered it as a sacrifice on the cross and rose again from the grave on the third day. The Bible says if you will turn in repentance and faith, believing that Jesus Christ is who He says He is and that He's your only hope of salvation, you will indeed be saved. And that new life is going to be imparted to you and the gospel then will be what permeates your life and your marriage.

But maybe you're sitting here this morning and there's a stirring in your heart because you're beginning to realize that perhaps the real reason that your life and your marriage are so broken is because you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe when we read that list of eight things at the beginning of the message, you looked at those and you said, that's not who I used to be. That's who I am. I'm still a deceiver. I'm still full of envy. I'm still hateful. And I'm a disgrace. Understand, there is no hope for your marriage in and of yourself. The hope is in Christ. Turn to Christ this morning and be saved. And receive the new life, the new birth. And then in Christ, there's hope not only for you, but for your marriage as well.

What about for the believer? For us, Jesus is everything. He is our hope. Moment by moment, He holds us. He sustains us. He's the reason we have confidence that God, having begun His work in us, will not stop until it's completed. So we trust Him with every ounce of our being. It is our hope in Christ that beckons us not to give up when marriage gets hard. Because there's hope in Christ. Don't look at your spouse. Don't look at yourself. Look to Christ. There's always hope in Christ because He's the remedy to the problem, which is sin. He's the remedy to the sin of your spouse. He's the remedy to your sin.

Life is hard because of sin. Marriage is hard because of sin. Christ is the solution to sin. And so, He's the hope of marriage. In fact, He's your hope even if your spouse never changes. Because though they do not change, He will not fail to change you. And He will not stop His work in you.

In fact, He's even our hope when our spouse is taken away, either in death or by their own selfish pursuit of sin. Either way, it's Christ who holds us fast. The hope is not in the institution of marriage. The hope is in Christ. So, Christian, turn your eyes again to Him.

And then finally, the gospel is central to marriage because **Your Current Calling Is Godliness**. Your current calling is godliness. What I mean by that is all throughout the Scripture, when the gospel is described, it ends with a description of how we are now to live. It even happens here in Titus 3, verse 8. He goes on to say that Titus is to teach these things so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds.

Understand, the call to salvation is a call, ultimately, to imitation. After the new life has been planted in us and forgiveness has been granted and we've been made new, it's a call to imitate the Savior. So let the gracious love of Christ breed humility in you that permeates your heart and then begins to grow the fruit of obedience.

Christ comes to us and says, now, love as I have loved you. Serve as I have served you. Pray as I have prayed. Forgive like I forgive. Show mercy like I show mercy. The call to godliness is a call to imitation, to be like Christ. And one of the primary human relationships that God has given to us in the world to demonstrate the gospel is the gift of marriage. And so it is that we must press on. As Paul says...

“20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

The encouraging thing is God not only calls us to obedience, He equips us for that obedience and fills us with the Spirit and admonishes us, encourages us through the word. Christ lives in us. And so it is that we can say that the gospel is truly the lifeblood of marriage.