

Just two months ago, people around the world watched Prince Harry and Meghan Markle get married. Royal weddings are always a big deal, but this one was particularly interesting because Ms. Markle was American and not at all someone from the upper classes of English society. For anyone joining the royal family, and especially an outsider like Ms. Markle, there is a huge learning curve. Apparently the royal family has employees whose job it is to train people like the new Duchess on how to act now that she is royalty. Joining the royal family means there are all kinds of protocols to learn, all kinds of new behaviors and ways of doing things.

That is kind of similar to what happens when you become a Christian believer. In Ephesians 2:19 believers are described as members of the household of God. God in his grace has adopted us as his children, made us by grace through faith part of the kingdom of God. If you are a believer then you are royalty! Christians are princes and princesses of the kingdom of heaven! And because that is who you now are as a believer, you have to learn to act like royalty; you have to be trained to live in a new way. It is not that Ms Meghan Markle had to learn to act in certain ways so that she could become a member of the royal family, it is because she is now a member of the royal family that she must now learn to behave in new ways. That is true for Christians too. It is not that God asks us to act in a certain way so that we can become his children. It is because we are his royal children, by grace through faith, that we must therefore learn to behave, to live in a new way.

That is exactly the logic that we find in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The first three chapters of the letter to the Ephesians tell all about how God has made us his children, his church. The last three chapters tell us how we should now live that we are part of the household of God. In chapter 4: 1 we read, *I therefore urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.* We need to learn how to walk in a manner worthy of our identity as princes and princesses of the kingdom of God; we need to learn now how to live as members of the royal household of God.

In Ephesians 4: 22 Paul tells us to put off our old self, which belongs to our former manner of life, and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. There are two yous, says Paul, two selves; there is the person you used to be as an unbeliever with a former manner of life, and there is the new you, the new self, the person you are now in Christ. What you must do, says Paul, is live according to your new identity, according to the new self. Don't go back to the old manner of living like someone who puts on an old piece of clothing. Live the new life you have, put it on like a new piece of clothing: own it, live it, act like the person you have now become by grace through faith in Christ.

Maybe you are listening to this and you grew up in a Christian home and you don't remember ever being an unbeliever; that is beautiful, but Paul's words are still true for you: put off the old, the worldly, the ungodly, and put on the new, the godly way of life.

That can be hard to do. If it wasn't hard Paul would not have had to write these verses, would he? I'm sure it will take time and practice for Duchess Meghan to adjust to

living as royalty. She'll have to put in lots of effort, she'll have to get over any of her own awkwardness and selfishness, she will have to keep on learning what it means to be a royal. It's the same for Christians, we have to learn to live this new life, to put on the new self and fight against the old self, to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, to bend our will to the will of the Lord and live like we ought to live now that God has made us part of his household.

The great thing is that there is some truth to the old saying: *practice makes perfect*. God gives us his spirit and as we apply ourselves he helps us to change, to live differently. You can change; your life can be different than what it is! You can improve; you can learn to become more godly. You aren't condemned to a spiritual life that always stays the same. By God's grace through the work of the Spirit, if you dedicate yourself, you can experience spiritual growth in everyday life. You can learn to live like the prince or the princess that you already are.

Here is one example of how you can do that. In Ephesians 4:25 Paul describes an aspect of the old life, the old self that we need to avoid and get rid of, and then a new behavior of the new self that we need to put into practice now that we are royalty. This is what he says: *Therefore, having put away falsehood let each of you speak the truth with his neighbor.*

So the inappropriate behavior we should put off or stop or avoid is falsehood, any kind of lying. The new behavior we should adopt is telling the truth. You know from your own life that we tend to lie or stretch the truth for various reasons, most often to protect ourselves or to gain certain advantages for ourselves. We lie to save face for example, to avoid embarrassment or trouble, to not look bad, to cover our own mistakes or sins, to avoid the consequences of our actions, or maybe to impress people. You know this is true in your own life, don't you? What are the things in your life, or the areas in your life that falsehood and lying tend to happen? Why do you do that?

Falsehood, stretching the truth, telling half-truths, hiding the truth, or outright lying, this is an old self behavior; this is unbecoming of someone who is now part of the household of God. It is not appropriate for a Christian. When you are a prince or a princess you no longer need to protect yourself or lie to get advantages for yourself because you are, we are, under the protection of Christ and we have all the advantages we need as his children. When you are God's child, you do not need to save face, cause you have been saved by Christ! You don't need to lie to impress other people, because in Christ God is impressed with you and that is all you need. We don't need to hide our weaknesses or cover up our mistakes, because all of our weaknesses and sins have been covered by the blood of Jesus.

So go out and do that! Put away falsehood and speak the truth. Don't do it to earn the love of God or to be accepted as his child. Do it because in Christ you are already loved, because by grace through faith you are his royal child. So friends, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and then go out and live like the prince or the princess that you are! Thank you for listening, until next week the Lord willing ☺