

I wonder how many of you watched Prince Harry and Meghan Markle get married earlier this year. Some people really like royal weddings; other people are not that in to them. Either way this last royal wedding was particularly interesting because Ms Markle was an American actress, an outsider to the whole world of the British upper class. As you can imagine, for anyone joining the royal family, and especially outsiders like Ms Markle, now Duchess Megan, there is so much to learn and adapt too. Now that she has married prince Harry she has to learn to live her life in a very different way. From curtsying to her husband's grandmother to what she may do and not do or say in public, there are all kinds of behaviors and habits that she must acquire now that she is become part of the royal family.

There is an interesting parallel there for the life of the Christian. When God chooses us in his love to become his children, when by his grace he works faith in our hearts we become members of his household, the household of God, heirs to the kingdom of God. If King Jesus is the royal bridegroom and the church is his bride you could say we have married into royalty. By God's grace, through faith, Christians are princes and princesses of the kingdom of heaven!

And that has huge effects on how we must then live and act. Just like Duchess Megan must now learn how to act as the royalty she now is, the same is true for us as believers. We need to learn the new behaviors and habits of the family of God. These new behaviors and habits are not something we learn so that we can become members of God's household; they are behaviors and habits we must learn because we now are members of God's royal household. 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 now learn to live in a new way.

That is exactly what the structure of Paul's letter to the Ephesians shows us. The first three chapters of the letter tell all about how God has made us his children, the last three chapters tell us how we should now live that we are part of the household of God. Chapter four states it clearly: *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. That involves getting rid of some old sinful behaviors, and adopting some new Christian ones.

One of the new Christian behaviors we must learn is how to properly deal with our anger. Paul says it this way in Ephesians 4:26-27: *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.* So the inappropriate behavior, unbecoming to a member of God's royal household, is sinning in anger and letting the sun go down on anger, that is, holding on to it. This is a behavior we need to put off, get rid of, avoid, stop. The new behavior worthy of a child of God is being angry without sin, and not letting anger drag on.

Often times we think of anger as a sin, but while it is true that anger can be sinful, it is not always the case. Anger is an emotion, and like any emotion it can lean in a good direction or in a bad direction. There is, for example, good or righteous anger. Righteous

anger is anger about and against evil and sin and suffering in this world. The Bible gives us examples of the righteous anger of God and the righteous anger of Jesus.

Bad or unrighteous anger is anger that leans in a sinful and selfish direction. Unrighteous anger often comes from frustration with the fact that God's providence doesn't always take into consideration our well-laid plans. We want this or that to happen, but God decides otherwise, so we get angry. Bad or unrighteous anger gets upset and sins; it insists on its own way, it seeks to harm others through retaliation or revenge. Maybe you can see that in you own life. Bad anger sometimes shows up in our lives when we go over in our mind what we would like to do to this person or that person, imagining us really giving it to them. Other times anger gets expressed with passive aggressiveness. We might avoid others and make their lives difficult in subtle ways.

And then there is the ole silent treatment, where we don't say anything but it is obvious we are angry. At other times anger might explode aggressively; it comes out yelling and screaming, hitting or slapping.

Stop that, says Paul. Get rid of this sinful anger, that's not how the royal children of God act. Learn, as children who are loved by God, to act differently. If you get angry, be angry like God, with righteous anger, anger that seeks the good and rights of others.

And don't let the sun go down on your unrighteous anger. Do not let your anger drag on, don't play it over and over in your mind like a song on repeat, don't let it simmer from one day to the next. Deal with it sooner than later. Unrighteous anger is, says Paul, an opportunity the devil will use as to cause trouble. One Bible translation says it like this: *don't give the devil a foothold*. Anger gives the devil a place to put his foot and to climb his way up into your life. Don't give him that chance. Remember who you are in Christ, and when you feel anger rising, when your thoughts turn in that direction then stop and pray and do something else. In some cases you might have to do this every five minutes!

Easier said than done, right? If you are listening to this and anger is a really difficult issue for you, please seek the help of others Christians to deal with your anger. Maybe your anger has roots that go down into dark places, if so you'll need help to deal with that. And if you have a spouse or a loved one who tells you that you have an anger problem, listen to them, don't shrug it off, deal with it. It's your responsibility, so do it, get help, put in the effort, and don't ignore it.

And remember this. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered the righteous anger of God against sin on the cross. He did that so that by grace through faith you could be saved from the wrath of God, so that you could become a member of God's royal family, a prince or a princess in the kingdom of God. That means that fighting anger in your life is not something you do to earn God's love, its is something you because you are loved by God in Jesus Christ. You are an heir in the kingdom of God! So get out there, learn how to live like royalty, learn to live as the prince or princess that you are. Thank you for listening, until next week the Lord willing ☺

