

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to be royalty, to be a prince or a princess in the royal family? The castles and crowns and gowns, the suits and swords and servants? When we are kids we all want to be a king or a queen, a prince or a princess. As we get older those dreams fade, but we many of us still like following the royals or watching *the Crown* on Netflix. A couple of months ago the American Megan Markle married into the royal family; it was a pretty big deal. Once an actress and a model she is now a duchess with all the trappings of royalty. But with that royalty comes with responsibility too, doesn't it? Gone are her acting and modeling days, the Duchess is now learning to lead a very different life, a new life with a whole new set of rules and behaviors. She is learning to live according to who she now is, royalty.

But here is the interesting thing. To be a Christian is to part of God's royal family. The Bible calls believers *heirs of God's glory, a royal priesthood, sons and daughters of the Most high*. God has adopted us as his children, made us by grace through faith part of the kingdom of God. Christ is King and the church is his bride, we've married into a royal family! So you can say that Christians are princes and princess of the kingdom of heaven! Think about that, if you are a believer you really are royalty! You might not always feel that way at the moment, but one day you'll be given a crown of glory and Jesus himself said in Luke 22 that we will sit on thrones. To be Christian is to be part of the most royal family of all.

And with that royalty comes responsibility, the responsibility to live in a new way, a way worthy of someone who is a member of the household of God. This is what we are taught in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. After explaining to his listeners and readers everything that God has done for them in Jesus Christ he says in Ephesians 4:1: *I therefore urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called*. Just like the new Duchess must learn to live in a new way now that she is a royal, so we as believers need to learn live in a manner worthy of our identity as princes and princesses of the kingdom of God.

That can be difficult. Old habits die hard and sinful patterns in our lives can be difficult to change. New habits and new patterns of behavior, a life more suitable to the royal family of God – this can be difficult. But with the empowering Holy Spirit in our lives and with diligent, intentional obedience, we can change. You and I can learn to live the life God desires for his children, we can learn to live a life worth of a prince, a princess.

In Ephesians 4:31-32 Paul describes a bit of what that life looks like: *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you*.

The inappropriate behavior, the behavior that we now need to put away as members of the royal household of God includes all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor (or loud protesting), slander and malice (which is the desire to harm someone). Instead we need to learn to act in a new way, a better way. We must be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.

Imagine for a moment that you just tasted something very bitter. Yuck, it tastes terrible! What happens to your mouth, when you taste something bitter? It distorts doesn't it? It twists up, you make a face because of the bitter taste. Well you know what? That can happen to your heart too. Bitterness is a jaded cynical resentment that distorts your heart, twists you up and makes your life ugly. It has no place in the life of a believer.

But that is easier said than done isn't it? Because bitterness tends to grow in our lives like a weed. Weeds can grow in a lawn and take over if you aren't careful. And that happens with bitterness in your life too. It grows like a weed, strangling and killing what is good, taking over, spreading into all of life. If your life, if your heart was a lawn, what would it look like? Do you have any weeds that need pulling?

Maybe your bitterness is about certain people in your family, maybe you are bitter about something that happened at church. Maybe your bitterness is a weed that finds its roots way back in the past. Maybe you are feeling bitter right now as you are listening to this! Friend, God wants so much more for you. Christians, says Paul, put away the bitterness, be done with it, refuse to live that way anymore! Pull those weeds, get out some spiritual round up and spray them dead.

In Hebrews 12:15 we read: *See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.* Listen to that again: *See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.* Bitterness says the Bible, grows in our life when we are distracted from the grace of God. That means the way you kill bitterness is by a renewed focus on the grace of God. So do that, be renewed in the spirit of your minds by a renewed focus on the grace of God. Meditate on the grace in your life, in the life of your church, in your past. Thank and worship God for his grace day after day. Do that and watch those weeds of bitterness, as well as the weeds of wrath and anger and clamor and slander and malice, watch as they begin to shrivel. And then in their place cultivate the flowers of kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. This friends, is how you live as a member of the royal family of God. You can do it!

Paul tells us to *forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.* That is classic Biblical logic. Paul sets our eyes on what Christ has done for us, he sets our eyes on who we are in Christ, the forgiven people of God, chosen, loved, blessed, saved, forgiven, adopted, clothed in the righteousness of Christ and united to him as a church, heirs of the glory of God, a royal priesthood, the bride of Christ, princes and princesses in the kingdom of heaven. This is who we are; this is what Christ has done. So now live in a manner worthy of it.

Most kids and some of us adults dream of being royalty. If you are a Christian that dream, that royalty is now a reality in Christ. And with royalty comes responsibility. So remember who you are. Remind yourself and be reminded of the grace of God, your identity in Christ, the fact that you have been brought into the family of God. And then go out and be kind and tenderhearted and forgiving, as Christ has been kind and tenderhearted and forgiving toward you.

Friends if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you trust him for your life and death, then you are dearly loved, you are royal princes and princesses in the kingdom of God. Learn to live like it. Thank you for listening, until next week the Lord willing ☺