

Gospel Healing for Hurting Marriages

Antioch Bible Church

By Voddie Baucham

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Ephesians 4

Preached on: Sunday, April 19, 2009

Grace Family Baptist Church

8765 Spring Cypress Road

Suite L

Spring, TX 77379

Website: www.gracefamilybaptist.net

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/voddiebaucham

Will you pray with me?

Father, we are so grateful, again, for this opportunity that you have granted to us to be here in your presence, to be here among your people, to be here in this place, that you meet with us for another Lord's Day when we celebrate the resurrected one. Lord, we set our mind's attention and heart's affection on you and praise you for who you are and for what you have done. And, Lord, as we come to this moment where we break the bread of life, we say with the hymn writer, "Feed us till we want no more," which is our prayer. This is the earnest desire of our souls and we ask it because we believe it is in accordance with the will and the nature and the authority of Jesus who is the Christ. Amen.

It is good to be here. It is good to be here, the last of the three services because I am tired. You wore me out this weekend. The first night at the conference I was the third speaker on the first night of the conference and I am sitting there and I am listening to the other two speakers and, you know, and Juan gets up and is from mountain time. And then the second guy gets up. He lives in California, so he is on west coast time. I live in Houston.

How come I got to be the one to wait until 11 o'clock on my body clock to get up here after all these people.

Ok, anyway, all right. But anyway I am not bitter at all about that. But it was an incredible weekend. It really was and this is an unbelievable way to cap it off.

I want to talk to you about something this morning that is very practical, very relevant for us. But it is also an issue that I believe we need to learn how to think about biblically.

A lot of people come to church for a lot of different reasons. Some come just because it is what we are used to doing. It is what we have been taught to do. It is what we have been conditioned to do. Others come for very wonderful, biblical reasons. But one of the key reasons that people come to church and maybe not just for worship to a setting like this, but it is when they are having difficulty within the context of their closest interpersonal relationships. A lot of times couples will come to a church because they are at the end of

their rope. They tied a knot at the end and they are holding on to the knot where the truth be told they don't think they can do it much longer. And there are people all around you who may not admit that, but that is precisely where they are, right now today. There are people seated all around you who spoke things to one another this morning that were shameful, unthinkable, just this morning, perhaps just last night. There are some people who may not even be here with their spouse right now because of this kind of friction. And we come and we have this desperation.

And there are a couple of ways that we try to get around this. And here are those two ways. Over here on the one side—and there is a ditch on both sides of this road. The ditch over here in this neo therapeutic model is just, you know, non directive neo therapeutic model over here that we are all familiar with. We understand that model and that model sounds a little something like this.

“Well, what is your problem? Can you tell me? Can you just put it in your own words, ma'am, the difficulty in your marriage?”

“And, why it is just he just doesn't do this and he doesn't do that and he doesn't do the other.”

“Ok, ok, that's great. Now, how does that make you feel?”

“I just feel so this and I feel so that.”

“Ok. Now you have heard what she said. Now, how does that make you feel?”

“Now how do you see the difficulties and problems?”

“And, well, I just think she is a this... she's a....”

“And how does that make you feel?”

It is horrible.

I tell you why that is horrible. Here is why that is horrible, because when you are talking about your feelings, when you talk about what is in your heart, that would be ok if the Bible didn't teach us that the heart of man is desperately wicked and who can know it?

So here is what that model says. That model looks that person who is egocentric, narcissistic and sinful and says, “What does your egocentrism, narcissism and sin really want?”

Then it looks at the other person and says, “Can you accommodate their sin?”

Ok, great, now what is your egocentrism, narcissism and sin really want?

Great. If he accommodates your sin, will you accommodate his? Wonderful. Go be codependent sinners and see if that works.

In the words of that Texas theologian Dr. Phil, “How is that working for you?”

The answer is: It is not. That is why you have to keep going back paying those people over and over and over again because you discover new sinful appetites that are not being set aside by your partner.

If you can't say amen you ought to say ouch.

Ok?

Well, then here is the other side of the road. The other side of the road is the more directive approach. And the other side of the road basically says, “Ok, here are these sinful behaviors and these sinful appetites. They are bad. This is why they are bad. Stop doing this. Start doing that. Go make it work.”

There's a couple of things wrong with that. Number one, you can do it for a while, some people for a long while. You just make up in your mind, “I am going to do this.” And you go and you do all of those things.

And then after a while you get tired of doing them or forget to do them and your partner says, “See, I knew you didn't really mean it.”

And then you say, “You know what? Forget it. I mean, I am trying. You can't even recognize that I am trying here. I am even trying to do what the Lord says I am supposed to do. You know, forget it.”

I get [?] out of you. I am telling you this for the people that you know in your life who struggle with these things, ok? That is who this is for, all right? Let's just go on and get that out here right now, all right?

Here is the second problem. The second problem with that approach is every last one of us has a natural propensity towards works righteousness. All of us desire to save ourselves. We love Jesus and we are grateful to Jesus for dying on the cross. That was just real cool. Thank you, Jesus.

However, what we really want to do is we want to find some things that the Bible tells us to do, work real hard. That is why we use words like rededication. I have dedicated myself and that didn't work so I am dedicating myself again and see if it will work this time.

And so what we really want to do is find something in the Bible that God says to do and we want to do it either out of fear or pride. If it is out of fear we are going, “See, God? I

did this. I did this. Did you see that? Did you see that? I really hope that was good enough for you. I really do.”

That is the kind of person where every negative thing that happens in your life, you are sure it is because you weren't good enough.

By the way, let me just put a foot note here. For that person something bad happens in your life and you immediately start going and looking for what you did wrong to deserve it? Here is the problem with that kind of thinking. That means you actually think that you were worthy of the goodness you received before. God help you, if you think that.

So if it is not out of fear, then it is out of pride. And here is the pride part. Pride says, “I went to the Bible. I found what I was supposed to do and I did it,” so that you can come into heaven, walk through the gates and say, “I am pleased that Christ died on the cross for me. Here are the works that I have added to make his sacrifice sufficient. I am here, God. How does it make you feel?”

Like I said, there is a ditch on both sides of that road.

So what is the answer? I am so glad you asked.

Open your Bibles with me to Ephesians chapter four.

Now Ephesians chapter four we have come to a cross roads. The book of Ephesians is divided into two halves. The first three chapters are about orthodoxy or right believing. The last three chapters are orthopraxy, or right behaving. Or another way to put it is: Chapters one through three are our calling in Christ. Chapters four through six are our conduct in Christ.

The dividing point is chapter four and verse one. Look at what he says.

“I therefore...” Therefore what? Therefore, because of all the things I have said in the first three chapters, “Therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”¹

So first three chapters, here is what salvation is. Here is what Christ has done. Last three chapters, therefore, here is how you live.

Now here is the problem. Because of that works righteousness muscle that we all have and really like to flex, we want to get to the imperatives—those are the things that you are to do—but we want to skip the indicatives, ok?

For those of you, you know, non English majors, non grammarians, you don't like grammar and all that kind of stuff, let me just make that real plain for us all.

¹ Ephesians 4:1.

That is a chair.

That is an indicative. I am indicating what that thing is. That is a chair.

Sit in that chair.

That is an imperative.

You are a holy nation, a royal priesthood.

That is an indicative.

Be ye holy as I am holy, which, by the way, same book of 1 Peter.

That is an imperative.

Here is what you need to hear. Get this, because everything we talk about this morning is built on this principle. The imperatives of the Christian life, the stuff God says do this, the imperatives of the Christian life grow out of the indicatives, not the other way around.

Works righteousness says this. "I will do the imperatives so that I can achieve the indicatives. I am going to do the holiness in and of myself so I can achieve the royal priesthood."

No. It is because of what God has made you that you are able to do what God commands. Ok?

It is to the other way around.

So you have got to sorted away on the indicatives and the imperatives.

Here is the other thing. This is what sin does. If you are hear today and you are an unconverted man or an unconverted woman, here is how we usually think about Christianity. Christianity is a bunch of rules. It is a bunch of dos and don'ts. If you are attracted to Christianity or you are not attracted to Christianity you usually say, "Forget that. I don't want all those dos and don'ts. I don't want all those rules."

If you are attracted to Christianity you say, "Ok, Christianity is a bunch of rules, a bunch of dos and don'ts, so I will keep the rules, do the dos and don'ts so that I can be accepted by God."

Well, as we say down south, "That dog won't hunt."

Folks, if you could accomplish the righteousness that God requires in and of yourself, you would have been the one hanging on the cross, not Jesus. You are ruined, rotten to

the core. In you, that is in your flesh, dwells no good thing. You have never done a good thing in your life if you are unconverted.

“Well, no, no, no, no, no, no. I have done a lot of good things in my life. In fact, a lot of my Christian friends say that I am actually better than a lot of the friends that they have who are actually Christian.”

No. You have never done anything in your life. According to Romans chapter three there is none righteous and there is none who does good.

“Now wait a minute. You mean to tell me that an unconverted person has never done a good thing?”

No, I don't mean to tell you that. I don't write the mail. I just deliver it. Paul tells you that I Romans.

Well, what about the unconverted man who actually goes out and he helps rescue an old lady from in front of a bus?

That which is not done of faith is sin.

In order for an action to be ethical it must be a right action with a right motive and the right goal. The only right goals are obedience to God and bringing glory to God. An unconverted man does not do what he does out of obedience to God or to bring glory to God. Therefore, his most righteous acts, Isaiah says, is as filthy rags in the sight of the holy God.

You can't get there from here.

So as we look at these imperatives, understand that the unconverted man, the unbeliever may be able to approximate these things, but can never accomplish them. And the only reason that the converted man can is because the indicatives which come from God alone are true of him and therefore it is God who works in him both to will and to do his good pleasure.

Now trust me. It was very important to lay that theological groundwork so you can understand what we are going to read here in Ephesians chapter four. Let's look here at some of those imperatives, shall we? And this is usually what we do, ok? Here is that ditch over here on this side of the road. Let's find the right stuff that we are supposed to do.

Look at the beginning of verse 25.

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”²

² Ephesians 4:25.

There we go right there. "Speak the truth."

Amen. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Speak the truth. We must speak the truth.

That is an imperative.

Verse 26.

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.³

He didn't say "Don't be angry."

Anger is not a sin. Ok? God is angry with the wicked every day the Bible says, which is why nothing they do is good, by the way.

"Be angry, and do not sin."⁴

Well, what do you mean be angry and do not sin? Well, he kind of explains what he is talking about. One way we sin in our anger is by letting the sun go down on our anger. In other words holding on to our anger.

"I am angry with you and I want you to know it. In fact, I want my anger to be punitive. I will punish you with my anger. So I will hold on to my anger until I feel like you have suffered sufficiently. Thank you very much."

That is what is said. Amen, somebody. That is what is said.

"I am going to hold on to my anger because I want you to know that I am angry. I want to be vindicated by the suffering that you endure as a direct result of my anger that I am spewing out all over you."

The text says when you do that you give Satan a foothold. That is something he can grab on to. That is something he can hold on to you. And he just brings you close to him and he says, "Oh, yeah. Hold on to that anger, because he was wrong. You are righteous in your anger. He deserves this anger. In fact, you might not be angry enough."

What he doesn't tell you is, "I own you." Because the only one who has any right to be this angry about anything is God the righteous one himself which means that right now your anger is actually a form of blasphemy.

Twenty-eight.

³ Ephesians 4:26-27.

⁴ Ephesians 4:26.

“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.”⁵

This is tangible repentance. What do I mean by tangible repentance? Well, if you do something... “I’m sorry.”

Is that tangible repentance? No. That is an apology. It is not repentance. Repentance is a change of attitude that leads to a change in behavior. There is an example of this, for example, in the Old Testament case law. You steal an ox from me, well, what do you do? Well, ok, you give me my ox back or the equivalent in cash and then you go off to jail.

No. In the Old Testament case law you steal my ox from me you give me my ox back plus one of yours.

Why? Because what you did was not just take my ox. You actually deprived me of an ox. So tangible repentance would be you therefore being deprived of an ox. So you give me mine and one of yours. That is tangible repentance.

In other words, a man speaks to his wife like she has got a tail between her legs, says nasty, vicious and vile things to her, is an apology appropriate? Sure an apology is appropriate. But an apology is not tangible repentance. What is the opposite of the nasty, vicious things you say. Perhaps some things that are the opposite of nastiness. Speaking appropriate words in the place of those other words, which, by the way, leads us to the next imperative.

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but...”⁶

By the way, that phrase there in the Greek, “Let no decaying, dying words come out of your mouth.”

But what is the opposite of that?

“Only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”⁷

That is the kind of words we speak.

By the way, we need to make a connection here. The first imperative is that we speak the truth to one another. Now here is what is unfortunate about that. There are some people, maybe not in this room, but there are some people who use that first imperative—speak the truth to one another—as an excuse to be vicious and nasty and biting with their tongue. I am just telling it like it is. Know you are sinning with your tongue is what you are doing. You are crushing another human being with your words. That is what you are

⁵ Ephesians 4:28.

⁶ Ephesians 4:29.

⁷ Ibid.

doing. You cannot obey that first imperative of speaking the truth without obeying this one, “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths.”⁸

There is a way you say that thing that is true. And if you don’t say that thing that is true in the appropriate manner, then you are in sin.

“Well, you know, I just speak my mind.”

Well, you see, that is the problem. Speak the mind of Christ, not your mind. Your mind is corrupt from the word go. Your mind is polluted and vile. Don’t you dare speak your mind. Don’t think that much of your mind, first of all. Who do you think you are? You don’t speak your mind. You speak the mind of Christ. There is a way that you speak the truth. You humiliate and disgrace people in the name of just being a truth teller. That is not Christian.

Do we back away from the truth? You better not. Because then you are not obeying that first imperative.

Look at the next one, verse 30.

Some of you all say, “I can’t take another one.”

That’s all right. Hold on. It is going to get a little better, all right?

Verse 30.

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”⁹

That is what we do, by the way, with [?] talk.

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you.”¹⁰

By the way, that also goes back to the first imperative. If I am saying something and it is true, but it is bitter, it is true, but it is slanderous, it is true, but it is angry, I am in sin.

“...along with all malice. Be kind to one another.”¹¹

Don’t say things that are unkind.

“...tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.”¹²

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ephesians 4:30.

¹⁰ Ephesians 4:31.

¹¹ Ephesians 4:31-32.

¹² Ephesians 4:32.

Another indication that an unbeliever can't do these things.

Forgive one another. And let me clarify that because a lot of you when you talk about forgiveness, you know. For whatever reason, you know, there is this phrase in our culture, "Forgive and forget."

News flash. Human beings were not created to forget. A human being who forgets things is actually a human being who is malfunctioning. I mean that in all seriousness. You have Alzheimer's or you have amnesia or something, but it is not normal brain function for a human being to forget things.

Now, God has not commanded you to forget things. And here is what forgiveness means. Forgiveness means I forgo my right to seek vengeance and justice for what you did to me. That is what forgiveness means. There is no need to hear this because there are some of you in this room, your life is being controlled by somebody who is already dead, because you won't forgive him. They are controlling you from the grave because you won't forgive him. There are some of you being controlled by people who live 1000 miles away from you because you won't forgive them. They are going on their happy way, but you won't forgive them.

Why? Because your anger needs to be vindicated.

"They can not hear from me, not get a letter or a phone call. It is their birthday and they didn't get a card from me."

Interesting. You are thinking about them. They are not worried about you.

That is why somebody said unforgiveness is like you drinking forgiveness hoping they die.

There is another matter of unforgiveness. There is tangible repentance.

"Baby, I forgive you."

Ok, you just lied. How do I know you lied? Next argument comes. You bring that thing up from behind your back and stab them in the gut with it.

"I thought you forgave me?"

"Yeah, I forgave you, but I knew you didn't really mean it so I held on to it so I could stab you with it the next time you make me mad."

That is not forgiveness.

Now, here are all these imperatives. Here is the problem. We don't do this stuff.

So here's a couple of options.

Number one, we could just say, "Ok, fine. I don't do this stuff. I am sorry, baby. Please forgive me. Let's go home and we'll do this stuff."

Small problem. You won't.

Some of you can't because you are unconverted, but you won't do it. So here is the question. Why don't we do it?

This is the key. Remember what we were talking about, those indicatives and those imperatives? We looked at the imperatives, but I want you to notice something that for most of us just because of that works righteousness muscle that we like to flex and just because of the way that we read the Scripture, we didn't realize that there were a couple of indicatives here in these imperatives that are necessary.

Look at the first one.

Verse 25.

"Therefore, having put away falsehood..."¹³

By the way, that is an indicative, not an imperative. He says, "Because you have put away falsehood..."

Who has put away falsehood? Well, if you look at the paragraph before it is truly converted people who put away falsehood and it is a result of their conversation. So one of the reasons that we don't do this is because we haven't put away falsehood or because we have forgotten that we have put away falsehood and we have tried to go in and grab it and cover ourselves up with it like a blanket and we are still walking in falsehood. We are not appropriating what is rightfully ours.

Here is the other one.

"Let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for..."¹⁴

Why? Here is an imperative.

Why? Because of the indicative.

"...we are members one of another."¹⁵

¹³ Ephesians 4:25.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

If I am not speaking appropriately to my wife, it is not because I am not trying hard enough. It is that I am not realizing, acknowledging or appropriating the reality that she is not just mine, she is me. We are members of one another.

By the way, that happens two ways. When we get to chapter five beginning at verse 25—our time is running from us here, but let's see this here.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.¹⁶

In other words, my wife is not just part of me, but I am actually through the way that I treat her and nurture her, presenting her to myself so when I am not doing these imperatives with my wife, I am actually inflicting harm upon myself.

And look at the next part of the text. Look at what it says.

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."¹⁷

So reason number one that the husband or the wife does not practice these imperatives is because we are not realizing or appropriating the reality that we are members of one another in marriage.

But it gets worse.

Go back to chapter four beginning at verse 11.

And he [Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love...¹⁸

¹⁶ Ephesians 5:25.

¹⁷ Ephesians 5:28-31.

¹⁸ Ephesians 4:11-15.

Does that sound familiar? That is one of the indicatives of the members of the body of Christ. So that imperative of the way that we speak to each other in that last paragraph, comes from the indicative of what the members of the body of Christ do when they speak to one another.

Look at this.

“We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”¹⁹

My wife is not just a part of me in marriage. She is also a part of the body of Christ as I am a part of the body of Christ.

So when I despise my wife and I am not building up my wife and I am not doing these imperatives with my wife here is what I am saying to Jesus. “Jesus, this is a part of your body and I despise this part of your body. I love you, but I hate your toe. I despise it. I want to crush it.”

In other words, when I am at odds with my spouse and not practicing these imperatives I don’t have a behavioral problem, I have a worship disorder. The same is true of the wife. Look at chapter five verse 22.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands,”²⁰ because they are worthy of submission because they have accomplished all the things that God says a husband is supposed to accomplish before the wife will...

No.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”²¹

Why? Because of an indicative. The husband is the head of the body as Christ is the head of the Church. An imperative and an indicative.

Submit to your husband. Why? Because of who God says he is.

“No, I am not going to submit to him.”

Why?

“Because I disagree with God. God says he is my head. However, he may have met God’s qualifications for my submission. But he hasn’t met my qualifications for my

¹⁹ Ephesians 4:15-16.

²⁰ Ephesians 4:22.

²¹ Ibid.

submission. Therefore, God, I out rank you which means I am violating the First Commandment because there is another God besides you and that God is my standard.”

You have got a worship disorder. You are in sin. You are a blasphemer. Oh. You are an idolater.

And unsubmitting wife is guilty of idolatry. Who is her idol? Look in the mirror. A husband who doesn't love his wife is guilty of idolatry.

Who is his idol? Look in the mirror.

But does this not change the way we look at those imperatives?

I am going to go home and I am going to rededicate myself to trying harder to do all of these things.

No, no, no, no, no no, no.

Jesus, please forgive me for not worshipping you appropriately and not recognizing that this woman that you gave me, that I have brought into my bosom is a part of me in marriage and is a part of your body and therefore I should love her and cherish her and nourish her because she is your gift to me and she is a part of you. Forgive me for despising you through despising her.

It changes everything, everything.

I have had men that come to me and I speak very plainly to men who come to me on these issues because we don't get it. Men will come to me and say things like, “You know, I am through. I am finished. I am done. She is not this. She is not that. She is not the other. I am not fulfilled. I am not happy.”

To which I respond, “Suck it up and go love your wife.”

“No, you don't understand, brother.”

“No, I do understand. You said for better or for worse, right? This is worse. Go love your wife. You said sickness and health, right? This is sickness. Go love your wife. You said till death do us part. She is still living. You are not through yet. Go love your wife.”

“Yeah, but you don't understand, brother. There is no way that God would want me to remain in this marriage and be unhappy.”

“Really? Let me see if I get this straight. The spotless, sinless Lamb of God, the Father crushed and killed for sin that was not his own, but you he wouldn't want unhappy. Who do you think you are? Unhappy may be right where God needs you to bring maximum

glory to his own name. She is a member of his body and she is a member of you. You should sooner cut off your arm than abandon that woman.”

If your arm wasn't doing what you wanted it to do, whatever you wanted it to do, would you cut it off? Go love your wife because God commanded you to.

You have a command from God.

“Husbands, love your wives.”²²

Go love your wife.

“You don't understand, brother. I don't even feel like that anymore. I don't even see her as my wife anymore.”

Ok, fine. The Bible says, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Your wife is your closest neighbor. Go love your neighbor.

“Well, she is not even my closest neighbor anymore. I have moved out.”

That is fine. Jesus says, “By this all men will know you are my disciples if you have love one for another.”²³ Go love her because she is your sister in Christ.

“I don't even think she is saved.”

That's cool. Jesus said, “Love your enemies.”²⁴

So she is your wife, she is your neighbor, she is your sister in Christ, she is your enemy. It really doesn't matter. You have no choice. Go obey God and love your wife.

Here is why you don't feel like it, because you have forgotten or you have not appropriated the indicatives of Scripture.

“I just can't love her.”

That is because you are incensed. You don't realize that she is part of the body of Christ and what you have just said is, “Jesus, I can't love you, not this part of you, because this part of you is not making me happy right now and since I am the center of my universe if you want me to love you, you make me happy with this part of you and then maybe I will give you some love because your blood shed on the cross is just not enough reason for me.”

²² Ephesians 5:25.

²³ John 13:35.

²⁴ Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35.

How dare I not love my wife? How dare I think so much of myself? How dare I be so egocentric and narcissistic as to look at that woman who has given me her youth, her life and say to her, “Because I am not pleased in this moment, I am done with you,” especially when God has commanded me to wash her with the water of the Word? So in large part who she is not is a result of the investment I haven’t made.

And you run and tell that.

I haven’t disciplined you appropriately. I haven’t loved you the way the Lord commanded me to love you. As a result you haven’t become what I really want you to become. So I am finished with you.

How dare I? How dare I?

We don’t have a marriage problem in our culture. We have a worship disorder. Whatever is going on in your marriage, it is a direct result of one or both of you not understanding, not appropriating the realities here in this text. The problem is not with what your wife isn’t doing or what your husband isn’t doing. The problem is Jesus Christ is not magnificent enough to you. He is not majestic enough to you. And above all else, he is not sufficient for your egocentric, narcissistic, sinful fleshly desires. And you will not worship him. You refuse to.

You refuse to look at him like Job did and say, “though you slay me yet will I trust in you.”

“Naked came I into the world and naked I shall leave. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

We are not saying that to him, no, no, no, no, no. We are saying, “I am the center of the universe. How dare you not satisfy me? How dare you? How dare you allow me to live in difficulty and discomforts? After all I have done for you.”

That is why the ditch on the self righteousness side of the road is so dangerous. We think far too much of ourselves and far too little of Christ. He is to be adored. He is to be worshipped. He is to be magnified. He is to be loved. And once we understand that our relationships with our spouse is a means through which we do that, it changes everything.

Would you bow with me?

And as we bow before the Lord I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that there are those of you in this room right here today who have said, “I am done.”

My prayer for you today is that you would readjust your focus, readjust your gaze and gaze upon the majesty and magnificence of Christ. If you have given up because that is not where you were [?], ok. You have given up because your focus is not on the indicatives. You have not worshipped him for who he is and for what he has done in

your life. He has redeemed you from the pit. He has satisfied your soul. His divine power has given you everything you need for life and godliness. And yet you have chosen to focus your gaze on the imperfections of one who was never intended to be perfect. Don't you dare walk away. Don't you dare give up. Don't you dare lose hope. Don't you dare because to do so is not just a rejection of your spouse here on earth, but it is a rejection of the bridegroom, Jesus Christ who, in case you were wondering, laid down his life for his bride when she was still yet an adulteress and is in the process of sanctifying her though she still from time to time wanders off pursuing other lovers. He shed his blood for her. He is seated at the right hand of the Father forever making intercession for her and is going to come back for her, not to condemn her, but to embrace her and to bring her into himself, into his bosom, to carry her off to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Not because she is worthy and she has satisfied him in every regard, but in spite of the fact that she is not and she cannot.

She is precious to him, not because of what she provides to him, but in spite of what she cannot provide to him. He makes her precious because of the price he pays.

Oh, God, don't miss this. Don't miss this. Don't you dare miss this. Don't you dare miss the one who loves you beyond your ability to comprehend it.

Father, as we bow before you we recognize, acknowledge and confess our unworthiness. We also recognize and confess our utter hypocrisy in being a spouse who is unworthy and yet at the same time being on the verge of rejecting a spouse who is unworthy. May we fix our gaze upon the magnificence and the majesty of Christ trusting you to work in us both to will and to do your good pleasure, rejoicing in the indicatives of Scripture that in turn allow us and empower us to rejoice even in the imperatives, that we [?] you not out of fear or out of pride, but out of gratitude to the one who redeemed us from the pit.

Help us to hear and to heed what you say to us today and bring glory to yourself through our lives we pray in the name of the magnificent one, the majestic one, the bridegroom, the lover of our souls who died to redeem us and lives to reclaim us. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.