

Rejoicing in Restraints, part 4: The Family

Assorted

(preached Pine Grove 8/30/20 Sun PM)

Introduction

On November 2nd, 1977, it began raining in Toccoa Georgia.

7 inches of rain fell over 4 days.

The final downpour occurred on November 5 and dropped 3.5 inches in 6 hours.

It was a massive rainstorm that ended around midnight on the 5th.

About 1.5 hours later on November 6th, at 1:30 in the morning, the Kelly Barnes Dam in Toccoa failed.

It sent 27 million cubic feet of water rushing downstream.

Sadly, Toccoa Falls Bible College was right in the path of the wall of water and 39 people lost their lives as water crashed on them in the middle of the night.

But that is not the worst failure of a dam in history.

That belongs to the Banqiao dam failure of 1975 in China.

What that dam failed, 492 million cubic meters of water rushed downstream killing 171,000 people in cities and towns below the dam.

Needless to say, dams are built to restrain the water behind them.

But they are not fool proof.

Sometimes they fail, and when they do, it is disastrous.

For the past 3 weeks, we have been looking at the restraints that God has built in the world to keep sin from spilling our of control.

As we have learned in the book of Romans on Sunday morning, the sinful nature of man is devastating to the world.

When sin is allowed to be practiced without restraint, the aftermath of that is disastrous.

Don't have to look very far to see the effects of that today.

Cities and businesses destroyed.

Theft and vandalism running wild.

But that is not the only picture of sin unleashed.

Take a look at families around you.

Divorce found in nearly every family.

Adultery and sex before marriage seen as almost normal behavior.

Morality is now the idea of doing what a person thinks is right in his own eyes.

In a real sense, most of the restraints that God has placed in the world are failing.

And we are downstream from them.

So what do we do?

Well, we do what we can, and for the church, we simply honor those restraints in our own life.

We run to patch the dam.

We put our lives in the cracks of the dam.

We try to hold the sin back in our lives by rejoicing in the restraints of God.

We don't push against those restraints.

WE don't join in the rebellion against those restraints.

Instead, we inform the personal restraint of our God-given conscience with Scripture and we then respond to it.

We honor the restraint of family by following God's design for it and carrying out our God-given roles within it.

We honor and submit to the God appointed restraint of government over us.

We love and serve the the God-ordained restraint of the church with our lives and submit to the Lord of the church.

While the world kicks against those restraints, we as the people of God need to make sure we are living within them.

Now, we have looked at the first restraint that God established.

It is the most personal restraint against sin.

The Bible speaks of the conscience of man over 30 times.

And the conscience is a personal internal alarm system that creates internal thoughts that accuse of sin or defend us when we are doing right.

One more thing I want to stress about the conscience is that it is not the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is God and therefore unable to lie.

The conscience can lead you astray if it is not informed by Scripture.

The Holy Spirit is not in every person.

Only believers possess the Holy Spirit, while everyone has a conscience.

The relationship between the conscience and the Holy Spirit is this.

The Holy Spirit informs the conscience.

He trains the conscience in truth.

He strengthens the conscience.

He prompts us to clear our conscience and keep it clean.

This is why I never people to follow their conscience because I don't know how well their conscience.

I will tell Christians to follow the Spirit because the Spirit is going to lead you to the truth of Scripture.

I hear a lot of Christians telling people to follow their heart.

That is dangerous advice especially if their hearts are not informed with truth.

Follow the Lord is much better counsel, and we follow Him by going to His Word and obeying it.

So the conscience is a personal restraint that operates best as people are led by the Spirit of God.

But let's now move to a little broader restraint in the world and that is the family.

Now I don't need to tell you how the family is under attack.

You can see it in the world.

You may even feel the attack against the family in your own life.

You may have even contributed to the attack against the family yourself.

But it is everywhere.

Abortion is an attack against the family.

Adultery is an attack against the family.

Homosexuality is an attack against the family.

Divorce is an attack against the family.

Transgenderism is an attack against the family.

Everything that God designed for the family is under assault since sin entered the garden of Eden.

Now what we are going to do over the next week or two is look at God's design for the family.

We will begin in Genesis and end in the NT.

And we want to see how we can best fulfill God's design for the family in the world.

Now before you assume that you are fulfilling that design for the family by simply being a two parent home with kids, let me assure that God's design for the family goes way beyond that.

In fact, what God's design for the family has often been ignored in the church.

And when that happens, there is little hope for the family outside the church.

WE must as believers make it a priority to have families that honor the Lord and His Word.

It is not enough to say we know what the Bible says and yet fail to obey it ourselves.

If we hope to have our families serves as restraints from sin in our lives and in the world, we must begin with our own obedience to Scripture.

So tonight, we want to begin with a biblical view of the family, and then we will see how that family should function in the world.

Now before we get started, let me offer some fine print.

And the fine print is this.

Not every family is the same.

Not everyone in the church is even married.

Some are single by choice and that is not sinful.

Some are without children which is also not sinful.

Some of you have been divorced.

Some of you are from divorced homes.

Some of you may have disobeyed God's design for the family in other ways.

I recognize all that.

The Lord knows all that.

But two things.

God's grace covers our sin, and obedience starts today.

Don't give up in being the family that God has called you to be.

Don't be defeated before you start.

Confess and repent of previous sins related to the family and start fresh tonight.

Seek to obey the Lord and HE will be honored.

With that said, let's turn to the book of Genesis.

Should be no surprise to most of you that God's design for the family begins in the very beginning.

We will call this....

I. The Foundation of the Family

In Genesis 2, the Lord provides a detailed amount of day 6 of creation.

On day 6, God made man.

Genesis 1:26- 31 gives an overview of day 6, but Genesis 2 provides the details of day 6.

And if you will look at verse 15 of Genesis 2, we read what God did with Adam after he was created.

Verse 15..

***15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.
16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;
17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not [n]eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."***

So God creates man and puts him to work.

Work would be pleasant before sin, and Adam surely enjoyed working in the garden of Eden.

God then gives a command.

Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

If you do eat from it, you will die.

Again, there is no sin and death at this point.

Just enjoyable work and one command to keep.

But then note verse 18..

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [of] suitable for him."

For the first time in the history of the world, God identifies something that is not good in creation.

And that is the fact that man is alone.

Now understand, it is no coincidence that God just gave Adam a command and then said it is not good for him to be alone.

Even in sin free world, companionship helps us obey.

Eve is going to a helper to Adam and though her help will come to him in various forms, she is clearly tied to the notion of helping Adam obey the command.

You could even call Eve a restraint on Adam's desire to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now again, Adam has not sinned, but it is still not good for him to be alone with a command from God in his life.

Now if you follow Genesis 2 down to verse 24, you find the wedding verse..

24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

And though marriage has many purposes in God's plan for the world, one purpose for marriage and family is to restrain our desire to disobey God.

And if this was true in a perfect environment, how much more is that true in the sinless culture of our day.

Now, you know the story of chapter 3.

The serpent tempts eve to eat from the tree, and how does he do it?

He isolates her from her husband.

Eve was created to restrain Adam, but he fails to restrain her.

So they both end up eating and we know the rest of the story.

Sin is now unleashed in the world and the sin nature of Adam and Eve has been passed on to everyone who has been born since they are the father and mother of all the living.

But sin has not changed God's design for the family.

In fact, God preserves the world's first family.

Adam and Eve remained married.

I mean, who else is out there to choose from?

But they have children.

Turn to Genesis 4.

Verse 1..

Now the man [a]had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to [b]Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a [c]manchild with the help of the Lord." 2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Not only is your spouse a restraint on sin, but children also restrain us from sin.

I mentioned a few weeks back that children become a deterrent to sin.

Though families with children are broken up by sinful things, many dads and moms are restrained from sinful things by children.

Now I also want you to notice how far the restraint of family goes..

You know the story of Cain and Abel.

Abel brings an acceptable offering to the Lord, but the Lord rejects Cain's offering.

Cain pouts, and then rises up and kills his brother.

Verse 9..

9 Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

The great irony of the question is that Cain was his brother's keeper.

He was responsible in a sense for his brother's whereabouts.

Cain was supposed to act as a restraint even on his brother's life, but Cain cut off that restraint.

And the family has been attacked once again.

However, God still preserves the family and promotes the help of family.

When God sent the flood on the world, he preserved a family to repopulate the earth.

And though Noah's family wasn't perfect, God used that family to preserve human life on earth.

The rest of the book of Genesis tells the story of Israel through the family of Abraham.

And all throughout the first 5 books of the Bible, the stories of families are told.

The Bible often uses the world household but it is the idea of the family unit.

And though there is always family drama, the point is clear.

Society is stabilized by family.

And to be clear, family is always father mother and children.

This is never up for debate in Scripture.

Yes, there are families with no children in the Bible.

There are single people in the Bible.

There are widows in the Bible.

But by and large, family is Scripture is one man and own woman for life having children.

And those family units stabilize and preserve society.

Now marxism claims that one man and one woman staying married and raising kids is the result of capitalism.

They say that family teaches kids to submit to authority so that they will enter the workforce and submit to the bosses.

They claim that the two parent family became popular is the 18th century as a way to pass on wealth to children.

They claim that family creates classes in society of rich and poor.

Therefore, families must be dismantled and this is why liberal and socialist and communist leaders seeks way to undermine the family.

But understand church, family is God's design to stabilize society, to restrain sin, to promote peace.

Family has been around ever since the garden of Eden and though families are not perfect, they are God's best for the world.

But as I said earlier, it just a matter of a man and a woman getting married and having kids and staying married.

That is the least you can do to honor God's design.

In fact, there are many two parent homes where the husbands and wives stay married and have kids, yet the family is not honoring God or restraining sin.

There are atheistic two parent families with kids.

There are Islamic two parent families with kids.

There are Buddhist families and Mormon families and Catholic families that stay married and have kids.

But that alone is not enough.

So don't pat yourself on the back yet.

WE know must look at the function of the family..

II. The Function of the Family

In other words, how does the Lord desire a family to operate in the world.

It is just get married, have kids and cross your fingers?

And the answer is clearly no.

So how is the family to function?

This leads us to a text that we are going to spend some time in for at least one more week, so turn to the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 5:15 to be exact.

I want to read this passage to us and get our appetites ready for what is to come.

15 Therefore [a]be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 [b]making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, [c]for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to [d]one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our

*Lord Jesus Christ to [e]God, even the Father;
21 [f]and be subject to one another in the [g]fear
of Christ.*

*22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to
the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the
wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He
Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the
church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought
to be to their husbands in everything.*

*25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also
loved the church and gave Himself up for her,
26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed
her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that
He might present to Himself the church [h]in all
her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such
thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.
28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives
as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife
loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own
flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ
also does the church, 30 because we are members
of His body. 31 For this reason a man shall leave
his father and mother and shall be joined to his
wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This
mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference
to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each
individual among you also is to love his own wife
even as himself, and the wife must see to it that
she [i]respects her husband.*

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Conclusion

I would encourage you to be reading this with your family over the next few days.

Read it with your kids and your spouses and ask the Lord to reveal what you need to do to make your family all that it needs to be in terms of honoring the Lord's design for the family.

We will begin to dig into it over the next few weeks.

There will be lots to see and be challenged with in Ephesians 5 and 6 and other places in Scripture.

But as we watch the destruction of the family in our culture, may we as believers preserve God's design for the family in our own homes.

I get really frustrated with believers who point fingers in all sorts of directions in terms of what is happening in our world.

But all the while, their own lives and families don't reflect what God commanded in His word.

It is hard to try and fix the world when our own lives need fixing first.

So let's aim to see what our families need to be before complaining what other families aren't doing.

Ultimately, Christ has come to secure our futures but also to change us in the present, and may He do much work in our homes.

Let us pray.