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The Bride of Christ

By Harold Turner

The Holy Spirit has given several different expressions through which to help us have a better understanding of the relationship between Christ and his church. One of these expressions picturing the beauty and closeness of this relationship is the church as the bride of Christ.

In Ephesians 5:22-33 several things are discussed about the relationship and responsibilities between the husband and his wife. Then after discussing these things the writer states that he is actually speaking concerning Christ and the church.

Shortly after Paul has founded the church in Corinth his enemies tried to discredit his apostleship, and thereby destroy his work. In his second letter to these Christians, Paul said, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Through his preaching the gospel to these, and assisting them in their obedience, Paul had united these in a marriage relationship to Christ.

In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul said, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. 7:4) Here again Paul pictures the church as being married to Christ.

One other Scripture that pictures this relationship between Christ and the church is 1 Cor. 6:15-17, where Paul stated, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I than take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." As two people become one in the fleshly relationship, so we, in becoming a Christian, become one with Christ in the spiritual relationship.

Now let's look at some things about this relationship we have with Christ as his bride.

One of the first things we notice about a new bride is her excitement in taking the name of her husband. Have you ever seen a new bride that wasn't thrilled to be called by the name of her

husband? So it is with the new Christian, he is excited and proud to be identified with his Lord.

Now can you imagine a new bride who would prefer to be identified by the name of some man other than her husband? And can you imagine her trying to convince her husband how excited she is about receiving his name, but that she is going to wear and be identified by another's name above that of her husband? Do you suppose that she could convince him that, after all, there is nothing honored by such a decision of his new bride? Now, can we really believe that Christ would be honored and pleased if we preferred to wear some man-made name, and be identified by it above that of the name he has given us to wear - the name Christian?

The apostle Peter stated that we honor Christ in the name Christian. In 1 Peter 4:16, he said, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name." And James tells us that some "Blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called." What an honor we should consider it to be identified by the name Christian, the most honorable name we could ever receive.

A second important factor about our being the bride of Christ is expressed by Paul in Eph. 5:25-27: "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." When we choose a bride, we not only expect but demand that she keep herself pure and for us alone. We aren't willing to share her with any other person. And neither is Christ. He isn't willing to settle for second place in our life. Neither is he willing to tolerate our friendship to the world. When we place a greater emphasis upon the things of this world than we do upon our relationship to Christ, we are like the wife who chooses the relationship of another man over that of her husband.

No man ever expressed a greater love for his wife than Christ has for his church. He gave himself for it, and purchased it with his own blood, Acts 20:28. Surely it isn't unreasonable for

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Religious Indifference

By Ordell Heavin

One of the greatest hinderances to the progress of the gospel is religious indifference. The masses of people don't seem to care whether the gospel is true or false. They express very little interest in what the Bible teaches. They don't seem to care whether they themselves, or their family and friends, are saved. Though the Bible declares that all have sinned, and that the world is wicked and lost, many just don't seem to care.

Even among those who claim to be Christians, some seem wholly indifferent. They seem unconcerned about the lost world around them. Neither do they seem to care whether the gospel is ever preached to the lost or not. Some don't seem to care about their own influence, or that of the church, in the community. Many are neither hot or cold, but lukewarm, as was the church of Laodicea, Rev. 3:14-19. They seem indifferent about their children's spiritual needs, caring nothing for the Bible School classes. These in reality are against the Lord, and are actually his enemies.

What are the results of religious indifference? Infidelity and general unbelief are the results of indifference. Modernism is getting its deadly influence into the very heart of the nation. The wild assertions of modernists and their high-sounding claims are bearing fruit - evil fruit! They have attacked the inspiration of the Bible, the Sonship of Christ, thus striking at the very tap root of Christianity. Unbelief has poisoned all the avenues of approach to the human heart. Every inch of gospel progress must be contested and won by hard work. The forces of evil and unbelief stand ready to block every approach to a solution of the problem - "He that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16)

What causes unbelief and indifference? One of the major causes of unbelief and indifference is religious divisions. Jesus knew this would be true, and prayed that his disciples might be one, "that the world may believe" in him. (John 17:20-22) Man-designed churches are not a part of Christianity. They are not a blessing to the spiritual needs of the soul, but rather a curse. These have caused indifference toward the church which Christ built, and unbelief in the

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EDITORS: Erwin Cowen
and Harold Turner

RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE

(Cont.)

oneness of his disciples. These have caused indifference toward God's plan of salvation, suggesting that "faith only" and honesty are just as good as obedience to the gospel, by which we are saved. (1 Pet. 1:22, Rom. 6:17-18)

Another cause of indifference is the deep-rooted habits of sin and worldliness in the church. Men have become so hardened by sin that it becomes difficult to turn them completely from it. Hearts have been hardened, and consciences seared to the point that it's difficult to get many interested in a pure life. With many religion is just a surface part of their life. Thus because of those who take spiritual matters so lightly in their daily living, many are turned away from Christianity and will be eternally lost.

What is the remedy for this problem? There are many things involved in the remedy, but the problem cannot be removed or solved apart from plain gospel preaching. There is no place for compromising with error and sin. We must use the gospel to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. We must live the gospel before others that we may both save our own soul and influence others for Christ. In the church we must "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:1-3) We must walk in the light of truth, and uphold this light, for Jesus said that the truth will make us free. (John 8:32) We must work to get people back to the truth, to Christ, the church, and the principles for life set forth in the gospel. For herein is the power and the remedy. (Rom. 1:16)

"Pray and than start helping God to answer your prayers."

Do You Take Your Vows Seriously?

By Frank Pack

There is no more solemn moment in the lives of two people than that moment when before God they pledge to one another their love and willingness to take one another as husband, as wife, "until death do us part." Those are vows made in good faith before Almighty God, and should be regarded in the light of their sacred character.

Marriage is God-ordained and God-regulated. God's will is that a man shall "leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh." (Gen. 2:24) It involves a "leaving" and a "cleaving" together. In building the new home, the former ties to parents are overshadowed by the newer ties of husband, of wife, and God's will is that these two, man and woman, shall become one flesh. Jesus not only used this passage to show God's original purpose for marriage, but he also added to it the command that marriage was to be a permanent, life-long commitment of each to the other (Matt. 19:9). It was not God's original purpose that a man could put away his wife for every cause. No bill of divorcement could erase God's original intent for man in his home life, and our Lord reimpressed that fact by declaring, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matt. 19:6)

Marriage is a union of love, a union of permanence, a union that cannot be broken except in sorrow as in death or in sin and shame. To impress further upon our hearts the nature of this union, and the basis upon which God-regulated homes are to be built. Paul used the relationship between Christ and the church as a type. (Eph. 5:22-33) Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church, and "gave himself up for it." That same sacrificial love, that same yearning for the welfare of the one loved, that same tenderness and affection that Jesus Christ has for the church is the type of the husband's love and regard for the wife. Wives are to reverence their husbands as the church does Christ her Lord. The same desire to do his will, the same profound regard, the same love and honor to the Lord should characterize the wife's subjection to her husband.

Have you ever reviewed the solemn vows you made when you were married? Have you studied the deep and far reaching meanings of those solemn words of promise? First, each promised "to have this woman, this man" as wife, as husband. It was a "taking" relationship, in which you took one another as you were, with whatever faults as well as strengths, willingly, voluntarily, of your own choice, to be your married

companion. Second, it was an "accepting" relationship, for each one accepted the other as his or her married partner, "to live after God's ordinance in marriage." Third, it was a relationship that you took and accepted "for better, for worse, in sickness, in health, in prosperity, in adversity," realizing that those conditions do come in every life. Not always will beauty, and good health, prosperity and gaiety attend your ways, for "into each life some rain must fall."

Fourth, you vowed your undying love and fidelity to each other, keeping yourself only to the other person in marriage "so long as you both shall live." It was a vow of faithfulness to each other, of permanence, of love that should grow and be enriched through the passing of the years. It was not a marriage that should last until mental cruelty, whatever that may mean, should break it. It was not to last until another man or woman should come along who might seem more attractive for the moment. It was not to be ended when adversity should arise and hard times make the flow of money dwindle and financial resources shrink. It was a solemn vow made by both man and woman, that this man and this woman in deep love for each other, having chosen one another out of all others in the world, pledge to love, and to live together for each other until death shall sever the bonds which made them husband and wife. Love made them want to marry each other, but consent in their vows to each other before God and in the presence of witnesses made them husband and wife.

In the light of these vows, it is well to stop and reconsider the sanctity of your marriage. There are those who begin marriage with the mistaken idea that "our marriage will be different, there will be no flaws." Without any ground in reality they approach it with the feeling that no problems do present themselves. Remember that two human beings, not two angels, are entering marriage, and it takes patience, prayer, and the will to work together in solving your problems to build a beautiful home.

Another mistaken idea that so many carry into marriage today is the notion, "If our marriage does not work out, we can always get a divorce." How deadly an attitude! How foreign to the will of God! Marriage is not to be entered lightly, for it is a life-long commitment of each one to the other. It is not a "lark", not something we do to spite someone else, not an episode in a life thrilling for new adventures and experiences, not a legalized means of exploiting human

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THE BRIDE OF CHRIST (Cont.)

The Cost of Discipleship

By Glynn V. Purdy

him to demand that we keep ourselves pure and unspotted from the world. His request is that we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service, and that we be not conformed to this world, Rom. 12:1-2.

Another responsibility that we should gladly accept is that of fruitbearing. In Rom. 7:4 Paul said, "That ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." This fruit obviously refers to that of reproduction. As the bride we are the instrument through which Christ is able to save the lost. He has given us the seed for this reproduction, which is the word of God. It is our responsibility to bring this seed into contact with the fertile hearts of the lost. Through this method the church is able to reproduce itself.

Therefore, when we become the bride of Christ we receive his name to wear and uphold as the most precious name on earth. We are to keep ourselves pure and unspotted from the world. We are to be faithful unto Christ in all things, and be the reproducing instruments of Christ in the world.

The greatest honor, the greatest privilege, and the greatest blessing we can ever hope to enjoy is extended to us in the opportunity to be united with Christ as his bride. It's sad that so many people take this invitation so lightly and indifferently. Nothing on the face of this earth should be compared with this opportunity. When this life is over only the bride will be able to receive and enjoy the eternal inheritance of the Lord.

We become married to Christ in somewhat the same way we would to another. For example: the young lady meets a boy, she learns more about him, and as she does her love and faith begins to grow toward him, she begins trying to change her life to please him, and she tells others about her feelings for him, but she is not yet married. We must learn about Christ (John 6:45), when we do our faith will begin to grow (Rom. 10:17), our love for him will lead us to begin changing our life to please him (Rom. 2:4), and we will begin telling others about our feelings for him (Acts 8:37). However, we are not married to him at this point anymore than is the young lady. There is another step to be taken. The young lady must be united with him in the marriage. So we must be united with Christ. This is accomplished when we are baptized, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27) At this point we become his bride, and we must fulfill our responsibilities which he requires of us. When we do this he assures us that we can and will share

During the personal ministry of Jesus many of his followers were freeloaders. They accepted no personal responsibility and contributed nothing to the cause of God on earth. They ate the bread and fish and looked forward to Jesus restoring the old kingdom of David and throwing off the yoke of Roman authority. So, when Jesus began to explain his true mission and that his kingdom was not of this world, but rather he would die and rise again to purchase and head a spiritual kingdom, "From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." (John 6:66) ISN'T THAT TRUE TODAY! As long as many disciples are on the receiving end they "walk" with the crowd! But if there is any work or sacrifice, they "walk no more."

JESUS PUT A PRICE ON DISCIPLESHIP.

After Peter had acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God, and had explained his mission to his disciples, he then gave the price of discipleship. "And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23) There you have it. Are you willing to pay the price?

IF ANY MAN WILL.

There are no draftees in the Lord's service. This means that if any man wants to follow, has a mind to follow, wishes to follow, or chooses to follow Christ. Therefore each, of his own volition, heard the good news, examined it, believed it and chose to accept it, knowing the PRICE for success! Then why should some members of the Lord's church expect others to carry them all the way to heaven? They must be begged, encouraged, pushed, pulled, and handled with care all the days of their lives. No work, no sacrifice, no interest, just "dropper-inners." It is your desire to go to heaven I am sure, but do you really, really want to? If you are serious, there is a price to pay.

LET HIM DENY HIMSELF.

This is the MAIN decision. Once a person learns that he belongs to God, soul and body, having been bought by the blood of Christ, and that he is only a servant of the Lord, then he is ready to serve. To present his body a living sacrifice to the Lord, giving himself completely. From then forward, it is not my will but the Lord's will that shall have preeminence at all times. No more

the eternal inheritance with him in glory. The invitation and opportunity is extended to all, "Whosoever will, let him come."

decisions to make as to whether to attend the worship of the church, as well as everything the Lord commands. Once self denial is a fact the other is easy. Who comes first in your life, Christ or you? When this is settled in the Lord's favor, then the rest will follow in proper order. **TAKE UP HIS CROSS.**

Oh, but that is the problem! The religious world tells us that Christ came to bear the cross for us. He died for our sins. He paid the price for all. All we have to do is sit back and BELIEVE that he did all this and there is nothing for us to do, yea, NOTHING we CAN do! But, this is contrary to the teaching of the Master! We sing that there is a cross for every one, but a straw can cause us to fall like a ton of bricks hit us. We must be willing and ready to bear what ever is necessary to support the Lord's cause and save our own souls. If we live godly there will be many crosses to bear. Some light, some heavy, but with the Lord's help we CAN bear them! Let us do it willingly! Luke says that this cross bearing is to be done DAILY. We are to be ever ready.

AND FOLLOW ME.

Oh, yes, another real problem for those who can't make up their minds as to whether the reward is worth the price. Most of the religious world has long since given up following the Saviour. They write their own laws and call their own shots as to who they will follow and what the price of salvation should be in their opinions. Like Peter, if asked to do it the Lord's way, they follow afar off. Only when we do what Christ has authorized can it be of faith and please him. Anything, regardless of how good man may think it is, unless it is authorized by God (in work and in worship) it is sinful. Wherever we walk, unless it is in the light, unless it is in the path of the Saviour's footprints, we are walking in the wilderness of sin. This walk in the footprints of the creeds of men is vain. (Matt. 15:7-9) Are you following Jesus, or in your zeal, or lack thereof, are you going it alone? Better check the road map! You may be zealously rushing down the wrong road, or you may be asleep on the right road!

Do You Take Your (Cont.)

passions. It is the basis of home and family, of our human happiness here and spiritual welfare both here and hereafter. Let not the Arch-deceiver of men ever lead you to think of marriage in any distorted way. Keep constantly before your eyes the teachings of God's word, realizing that the Bible presents the solution to every problem of home life, if heeded and obeyed.

Counterfeits

Topical Bible Lessons

By Harold Turner

A counterfeit is an imitation. It may be so much like the real that it is difficult for us to distinguish it from the real.

God gives the real, the genuine. Satan gives the counterfeit. He wants his work to resemble God's work enough to deceive the sons of men, yet to contain enough evil to damn and to destroy. He sows tares among the wheat. Tares resemble wheat so much that man cannot tell the difference until the fruit appears. Satan is said to take a form that resembles an angel of light, and his ministers appear as the ministers of righteousness. (2 Cor. 11:13-15)

Satan talks to God's people about "Patience". However, upon examination, we learn that it is "laxity" and not "Patience" that he seeks to encourage. Patience is a virtue, laxity is its counterfeit.

He preaches "stinginess" to Christians. But, of course, he does not call it such. He gives the thing of which he speaks an acceptable name - "economy".

He preaches on the subject of love, but the thing of which he speaks is lust-perverted love. In fact, every vice is a perverted virtue. His message of justice, is in reality nothing more than vengeance.

Let us beware of those things that appear to be right. The counterfeit is useless when the real test comes. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves." (2 Cor. 13:5) "Study to show thyself approved unto God." (2 Tim. 2:15.)

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"We frequently concern ourselves with the speaker's ability to deliver. Should we not be more deeply concerned with our capacity to receive?"

What Is Baptism?

1. Matthew 28:19, In teaching the gospel to all nations, were the disciples to administer baptism to those they taught?_____
2. Acts 8:36-39, Was this baptism to be administered in water?_____
3. Acts 8:38-39, Does this picture of baptism suggest immersion in water?_____
4. Romans 6:3-5, Is baptism described here as a burial?_____
5. Colossians 2:12, Is baptism pictured here as a burial?_____
6. Romans 6:5, If we are not planted in the likeness of Christ's death, what will be the results?_____

Who Is To Be Baptized?

1. Matthew 28:19, Were people to be taught before being baptized?_____
2. Acts 2:41, Those who were baptized had gladly received what?_____
3. Acts 8:36-37, Must one believe that Jesus is the Son of God before being baptized?_____
4. Mark 16:15-16, Did Jesus say that both teaching and believing were necessary before baptism?_____
5. Acts 8:36-37, Must one confess his faith in Christ before being baptized?_____
6. Acts 2:38, What was commanded before baptism here?_____
7. From the above Scriptures, is one ready for baptism before he has been taught the gospel, believed in Christ, confessed his faith in Christ, and repented of his sins?_____

"If you keep your tongue, it will improve."

"Measure your fellowman by his excellencies, not by his shortcomings."

"Men regret their words more than they regret their silence."

"The exercise of sympathy enlarges the affections of the heart."

"Be firm in your convictions and you can well afford to be kind."

"Give your brother credit for being a good man unless you know that he is not."

Why Should One Be Baptized?

1. Mark 16:16, Did Jesus include baptism along with faith as a condition to being saved?_____
2. I Peter 3:21, What doth also now save us?_____
3. Acts 2:40-41, What did these do in response to the appeal to save themselves?_____
4. Acts 2:38, These were commanded to repent and be baptized in the name of Christ for what purpose?_____
5. Acts 22:16, For what purpose was this one told to Arise and be baptized?_____
6. Acts 4:10-12, Is salvation only in Christ?_____
7. Romans 6:3, How did these get into Christ?_____
8. Galatians 3:27, How did these get into Christ?_____
9. Ephesians 4:5, How many baptisms were being administered at the time this book was written?_____
10. Acts 19:1-5, Is there ever a need to be rebaptized? Why?_____
11. Have you been baptized in the same manner (by immersion), and for the same purpose (to be saved) as the Scriptures teach?_____
12. If you haven't been baptized as the Scriptures teach, would you like to do so?_____When?_____

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