

## I. Introduction

- A. Imagine the scene:
1. The crowd has gathered.
    - a. The candles are lit.
    - b. The flowers are giving off their fragrant scents.
    - c. The groom stands before them.
  2. As the music starts, the crowd rises in eager anticipation.
    - a. But, the groom has eyes only for the woman who stands at the back.
    - b. As she walks through the doors and begins the slow journey down the aisle, he looks at her.
      - (1) He sees her arrayed in white.
      - (2) He thinks about her purity and the glorious wonders of this great day.
      - (3) He recognizes that she has never looked as beautiful to behold in his sight as she does at that moment.
- B. There are few moments in life that equal the great memory of seeing the bride walking down the aisle to be joined to the bridegroom in holy matrimony.
1. In **2 Corinthians 11:2**, the apostle, Paul, writes, “**For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.**”
  2. The Bible uses many different illustrations to describe the church of Christ.
    - a. One of the most vivid images is the portrayal of the church as the being the bride of Christ.
    - b. When Jesus Christ looks upon the church, He looks upon it with the love and the tenderness of a groom watching his bride walk down the aisle.
    - c. Just as the waiting groom is filled with certain expectations as his new bride approaches, so Jesus also has certain expectations for His coming bride.

- C. This morning, we want to spend a few moments talking about “The Bride of Christ.”
1. When Jesus Christ looks at the church through the eyes of the bridegroom, what qualities does Jesus Christ expect to see in His bride?
  2. This morning, I hope that you will turn your Bibles to **Ephesians 5:22-33**.
    - a. So often, we study this passage in light of what it has to say about the relationship of the wife and husband.
      - (1) Rightly so.
      - (2) In the context, Paul is writing to address the marriage relationship.
    - b. At the same time, Paul compares the marriage relationship to the relationship of Jesus Christ to His church.
      - (1) Within that comparison, we can learn some valuable lessons about what qualities Jesus Christ is looking for in His bride.
      - (2) It is these qualities that we want to examine in our study this morning.

## II. Submission

<sup>22</sup> **Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.** <sup>23</sup> **For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.** <sup>24</sup> **Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.** (**Ephesians 5:22-24** NKJV)

- A. The first quality that Jesus Christ is looking for in His bride is *submission*.
1. Jesus Christ expects us to submit to Him.
  2. Notice, Paul gives us two reasons for *why* the church ought to submit to Jesus Christ.

- a. The first: "Christ is head of the church."
  - (1) God has given Jesus Christ a position of authority over us.
  - (2) In **Ephesians 1:22-23**, Paul tells us that God "put all things under [Christ's] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him, who fills all in all."
  - (3) God has placed Jesus Christ in the authority position over the church.
    - (a) It is like the mother who goes to the store and leaves the oldest son in charge while she is away - because she trusts him and expects him to show maturity in his actions.
    - (b) God has placed His Son, Jesus Christ, in the position of authority over the church.
    - (c) As Christians, we must honor that authority by submitting ourselves to it.
- b. The second: Christ "is the Savior of the body."
  - (1) Not only are we to submit to Christ, because God has placed Him in a position of authority over us; but we must also submit to Him, because He earned that right through His sacrifice upon our behalf.
  - (2) In **Acts 20:28**, Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus that God had chosen them "to shepherd the church of God which [Christ] purchased with His own blood."
  - (3) When Jesus Christ died upon the cross to redeem us from our sins, He was, in effect, buying us.
  - (4) As Christians, we must honor Jesus Christ as our Master.
  - (5) Because He has bought us with His own blood, He owns us - and holds authority over us.

- B. I am convinced that a root cause for many of the problems that we are having in the church today is that we fail to understand the Biblical authority of the husband in the home.
  - 1. We are living in a time when it is considered to be "politically incorrect" to say that wives ought to submit to their husbands.
  - 2. Our society has adopted an approach that teaches that the husband and the wife ought to be "equal partners" when it comes to holding authority over the home.
  - 3. This idea has translated into our relationship with Jesus Christ.
    - a. Instead of acknowledging that Jesus Christ holds sole authority over the church, we expect to be "equal partners" with Jesus.
    - b. We expect to have just as much input into what is going on as Jesus does.
      - (1) Instead of asking what has Jesus commanded about these things, we want to say, "Well, I think that we ought to do this or that."
      - (2) We expect to be able to:
        - (a) Worship as we choose.
        - (b) Be saved as we choose.
        - (c) Serve God as we choose.
      - (3) We expect Jesus Christ to go along with it.
      - (4) We are introducing things into Christianity that have no business being there, because we have elevated our own authority and we have diminished the authority of Jesus Christ.
      - (5) When we do that, we bring division and heartache into the church.
- C. Brethren, what does the text say?
  - 1. It says, "Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." (5:24)

- a. Wives, the Bible says that you are to submit to your husbands *in everything!*
- b. Christians, the Bible says that you are to submit to Jesus Christ *in everything!*
2. When Jesus Christ looks at His bride, He expects her to submit to His authority over her!

### III. Purity

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27 NKJV)

- A. I am reminded of the story of Jesus' birth, as it is recorded in **Matthew 1:18-25**.
  1. Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph, when Joseph discovers that she is pregnant.
    - a. Joseph knows that the child is not his.
    - b. So, understandably, his immediate conclusion is that she has been with another man.
  2. The Bible tells us that, "Joseph..., being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly." (Matthew 1:19)
    - a. Joseph was prepared to send her away.
      - (1) He did not yell or scream.
      - (2) He did not try to humiliate her by dragging her out in public and subjecting her to ridicule (as we see in the story of the woman caught in adultery - **John 8:3-11**)
      - (3) Joseph was a just man, and even though he must have felt betrayed, he still sought to deal fairly and justly with her.
      - (4) Nevertheless, he was prepared to send her away.

- b. Purity mattered to him!
  - (1) It was important to him that his wife be a woman of purity - that she be a virgin.
  - (2) When that purity was called into question, he was ready to send her on her way.
  - (3) It was only after an angel told him that this pregnancy was from God, and that Mary remained a virgin, that he was willing to take her to be his wife.
- B. When it comes to the bride of Christ, purity matters!
  1. Going back to **2 Corinthians 11:2**, Paul says, "For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."
    - a. The whole context of this statement is that Paul is afraid that the Corinthians were going to allow Satan to deceive them and corrupt their understanding of Jesus Christ.
    - b. Paul's fear is that they would lose their purity.
  2. When you look at our text, **Ephesians 5:27**, Paul tells us that Christ desires to present us to Himself as "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."
    - a. Jesus Christ is looking for purity in His bride.
    - b. In fact, the bride's purity was important enough to Jesus Christ that He was willing to die for her to achieve it!
  3. Brethren, I am afraid that we have lost sight of just how important our purity is in the sight of Jesus Christ!
    - a. We have placed so much emphasis upon the *availability* of forgiveness (the fact that we can be forgiven of *any* sin), but we have lost sight of *why* we need forgiveness.
    - b. We need forgiveness, because the bride of Jesus Christ must have purity!
    - c. When we enter into the waters of baptism, it is not about ceremony or tradition.

- (1) Baptism is about being joined to Jesus Christ.
  - (2) Baptism is about washing away the sins and the impurities that are in our lives.
  - (3) Baptism is about standing before Jesus Christ without spot or blemish, having been washed in His precious blood!
  - (4) Baptism is about purity!
- C. Brethren, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of our purity to Jesus Christ.
1. When Jesus looks upon us with the eyes of the bridegroom, Jesus expects to see a pure bride.
  2. Our purity was so important to Jesus that He was actually willing to *die* to obtain it!
  3. We must continue to keep ourselves pure before Him, lest we be put away in the day of Judgment!

#### IV. **Respect**

<sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.  
<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.  
(Ephesians 5:32-33 NKJV)

- A. A few weeks ago, some of the young adult couples got together to watch the movie *Fireproof*, which deals with a young couple's marriage that is on the brink of collapse.
1. Throughout the movie, the lead character's major complaint against his wife is that she does not *respect* him.
  2. One of the lessons that he has to learn is that if he wants his wife to respect him, he has to be worthy of her respect.
- B. Respect is such an important part of marriage.
1. In the book, *His Needs, Her Needs*, Willard Harley identifies five core needs of men and five core needs of women within the marriage relationship.

- a. One of the core needs that he identifies for men is "Her admiration."
  - b. For a marriage to be successful, the husband has to know that his wife respects him - that she looks up to him and honors him.
2. The same thing holds true in our relationship with Christ.
- a. We cannot truly love Jesus Christ if we do not first respect Him!
  - b. We have to respect:
    - (1) His position of authority over us.
    - (2) His sacrifice on our behalf.
    - (3) His desires for our purity.
  - c. Just like in the marriage relationship, we have to consider more than our own needs - we have to meet the needs of our spouse.
    - (1) So often, we focus our attention upon the things that we want or need from Jesus Christ:
      - (a) Forgiveness.
      - (b) Redemption.
      - (c) Salvation.
      - (d) Eternal life.
    - (2) How often do we focus our attention upon what Christ is seeking from us?
      - (a) Are we giving Jesus the honor and respect that He deserves from us in our daily lives?
      - (b) When Jesus looks us at us, can He see our love for Him in our thoughts and in our actions.
      - (c) Or, are we guilty of being like the Pharisees and scribes in **Matthew 15:8**, where Jesus says, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me."

- d. Does Jesus hold our respect?
  - (1) Certainly, He is deserving of it!
  - (2) Are we giving it to Him in our daily lives?

V. **Conclusion**

- A. When Jesus Christ looks at His bride, He expects to see certain characteristics within her - submission, purity, respect.
  - 1. At the same time, as the Husband, Jesus offers us certain characteristics that we count on seeing in Him.
  - 2. Paul describes some of these characteristics in this passage as well:
    - a. He willingly sacrifices His own life to preserve her life.
    - b. He loves her and cherishes her, even as He loves and cherishes His own body.
    - c. He seeks to lead her to greater purity.
    - d. He nourishes and cherishes her in all things.
- B. This morning, Jesus Christ is dutifully carrying out his role as the great Bridegroom.
  - 1. The question is, are you living as a worthy bride of Jesus Christ?
  - 2. If you are not a Christian, then you are not joined to Jesus in holy matrimony - and, therefore, you do not enjoy the gifts that come with being the bride of Christ.
    - a. You must believe in Him. (Mark 16:16)
    - b. You must repent of your sins. (Acts 2:38)
    - c. You must confess Him. (Romans 10:9-10)
    - d. You must be joined to Him through being baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Romans 6:1-7)
  - 3. Perhaps you are a Christian, but you have not been faithful in your duties as the bride of Christ.
    - a. You must repent. (Acts 8:22)
    - b. You must confess. (1 John 1:9)