

# Session 8 (Part 2): The Bride and the Writings of Paul

---

## I. The Bride in Ephesians 5

1. Paul uses the analogy of the relationship between a husband and wife to make powerful teaching points about our bridal relationship with Christ.
  - a. Now that we have answered the question of what Ephesians 5 teaches about who is the bride, let's look again at Ephesians 5 from a different perspective. This time we want to observe what it teaches us about our bridal relationship with Christ. Ephesians 5 presents several very powerful and important truths about Christ's heart toward His betrothed bride and the response He is looking for from His bride.
  - b. In Ephesians 5, Paul flows back and forth between a discussion about the relationship between a husband and wife and Christ and the church. In so doing, he makes several powerful points about Christ and His bride, especially from the perspective of how Christ is working to make the bride.
  - c. In prior sessions, our focus has been rightfully so on the responsibility of the bride to make herself ready. Topics like the bride putting on garments of righteousness; virgins getting oil for their lamps; saying yes to the bridal invitation; and the like. Whereas these things are absolutely necessary and important, Ephesians 5 views the bride making herself ready from the perspective of what Christ has done and is still doing to make the bride ready as a glorious eternal partner.
  - d. Even though this powerful chapter of scripture does call on the church to respond to Christ's work toward His bride; the primary focus of the chapter is on what Christ has done and is still doing to make the bride ready. The teachings from this chapter about Christ as the leader in preparing the bride add a vitally important perspective on being made ready as a bride for Christ. As we will see, we are not in any way making ourselves ready independent or separate from Christ's loving care and intimate leadership.
  - e. With that initial explanation, let's discuss the wonderful truths in the chapter. The passage we are considering, Ephesians 5:25-33, is presented as follows:

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 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 respects her husband.

## Session 8 (Part 2): The Bride and the Writings of Paul

---

- f. As you read through the above passage, you quickly realize that the primary emphasis is on Christ's attitude toward His bride, what He has done, and what He is still doing—that is, *His work* in us and on our behalf—to present us as His glorious bride. We have highlighted five areas of focus mentioned in this section of scripture, the majority of which describe what Christ is doing for us to make us ready.

### II. A Glorious Church in Full Union with Christ

1. Christ is working with one and only one objective in mind, that is to accomplish the eternal plan of the Godhead that was formed before the foundation of the world.
  - a. To fully understand the objective for which Christ is working in His church, we must refresh our memories on God's eternal purpose. As you will recall, In God's eternal purpose, Christ is to be pre-eminent in all things and to have an eternal partner who is holy and blameless. Ephesians 1 describes God's eternal purpose for His people. As we have stated in other classes, before the foundation of the world the Godhead for their good pleasure determined to have a family of mature sons for the heavenly Father and an equally yoked bride for Christ. This was and still is the goal for the church age, that is, to have a people who will be the eternal partner of Christ throughout the ages.
  - b. God is working toward this one goal of having for Christ a holy and blameless eternal companion who will become His glorious partner. We see this goal presented initially in the first chapter of Ephesians: "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him" (Eph. 1:4) and then presented again in Paul's description of the bride in Ephesians 5, "...that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:27).
  - c. Thus, we see God's purpose for the church age and His vision for Christ's bride, that is, to be a glorious wife for Christ without spot or wrinkle and to be holy and blameless. As we will see as we continue to unpack this passage, Christ is at work in His people so that He can present to Himself the church holy and blameless in all her glory.
2. Another aspect of God's eternal plan and purpose is for Christ to abide in perfect union with His bride.
  - a. Not only is God's eternal purpose to have a bride for Christ who is holy and blameless, but also to have a bride in perfect union with Christ. As you will recall, Jesus prayed in John 17 that He might become one with His creation (Jn. 17:20-23). We see other pictures of this union between Christ and His bride in Eve who was in Adam before she was taken from his rib and the bride who came forth from Christ's side as a result of His death on the cross. In Chapter 5, we see this idea repeated. Note the following verse,

## Session 8 (Part 2): The Bride and the Writings of Paul

---

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.

- b. Thus, another aspect of God’s eternal plan and thought highlighted in this chapter is for Christ to have a bride who not only is holy and blameless, but is also in perfect union with Christ. The plan is to have a bride who will dwell in the greatest of intimacy with Christ, an intimacy that can be characterized as being one with Him. The bride was taken from His side at the cross and is bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. In a spiritual sense, she is to become one flesh with Him.
- c. Therefore, summarizing these two passages, Christ is at work in His people to fulfill the eternal purpose of the Godhead so that He can present to Himself the church holy and blameless in all her glory. Moreover, He is doing this with a second objective in mind, that He can be joined as one to an eternal partner—His wife made ready.
- d. With this as the purpose to which Christ is working, we see different aspects of His great work to make His bride ready.

### III. Christ Loves the Church

#### 1. The driving motivation of Christ is His great love for His creation.

- a. As we have noted previously, Ephesians 5:25 reads like this: “Husbands, love your wives, just as *Christ also loved the church* and gave Himself up for her”. As we will observe later in this session, Christ gave Himself up for His church. He sanctifies His church. He washes the church with the water of the word. He cherishes His church and He nourishes her. The motivation in all of His actions is His great love for His people.
- b. To begin our discussion about Christ’s love for the church, let’s once again return to Ephesians 1. Recalling that Ephesians 1 describes God’s eternal purpose in the greatest detail of any place in scripture, verses 4 and 5 read as follows,

...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. *In love* he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will (Eph. 1:4-5, ESV).

- c. There is a debate among scholars as to the application of “in love” in this passage. Some say it refers to the love God wants to see from us toward Him. Others say it is the love of God toward His people. In this second case, the verse would mean that “in love for His creation, God predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ”. In his commentary on Ephesians, John Stott prefers the second meaning. He wrote that he favors this interpretation because the context appears to be emphasizing *love as the source* rather than *the result* of our election.<sup>1</sup>
- d. Although I am far from a scholar, I agree with Stott. Therefore, using this meaning, the passage tells us that before the foundation of the world, God *motivated by powerful love for His creation* established a predetermined plan to have a prepared bride and mature sons as a family for the

## Session 8 (Part 2): The Bride and the Writings of Paul

---

Godhead. Therefore, as we stated God's motivation for this magnificent eternal plan and purpose was and still is the love of God for His people.

- e. Returning to Ephesians 5, it makes the foundational point that Christ's motivation for having a glorious bride without spot or wrinkle is His love for the church. Because He greatly loves the church, He works tirelessly to prepare His bride to be His blameless eternal partner. His motivation is His love.

- f. Before moving on, I want to share a quote from my book, *A Worthy Bride*,

Now, as He waits for His bride to make herself ready, Jesus longs to have greater intimacy and partnership with us. He is lovesick for us. With great emotion and passion, He desires us. Jesus is not a stoic who waits passively in heaven, indifferent to His wedding day. He is a passionate Bridegroom who longs to be joined to His bride for all eternity. Jesus loves us with the same love the Father has for Him (John 15:9).<sup>2</sup>

- g. The above quote very effectively communicates the passionate love Christ has for His betrothed bride. Even in her weakness, frailties, and sinfulness, Christ loves His bride with an unfailing emotion filled love, and will do whatever is necessary to prepare her to be His bride. .

### 2. Christ loves the church even to the extent of dying for her to become His bride.

- a. Going once again to Ephesians 5, Paul wrote this about the nature of Christ's love for His bride, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and *gave Himself up for her*" (Eph. 5:25).
- b. Christ loved and loves the church to such an extent that He willingly left the glory of heaven to come to earth for the purpose of dying on the cross. He came with love as His motivation to die for His bride.
- c. The following quote from Session 2 of this class summarizes the wonderful love Christ has for His bride, a love that led Him to leave the glory of heaven and come to earth offering His life as the dowry or price required to purchase His bride,

As stated previously, in biblical times a dowry was required for a Jewish man to take a wife. The dowry was to be paid by the groom to the bridal family at the time of the betrothal ceremony. Again, we see a wonderful picture of the dowry paid by Jesus to purchase His bride. Christ paid the ultimate dowry by the shedding of His blood and the giving His life on the cross. With the payment of His life as a dowry, Christ purchased His bride paying the price to transfer her from the domain of darkness to the domain of His kingdom. The scriptures refer to this as an act of redemption (Col. 1:13-14). The Greek word translated redemption in this passage means "to release by payment of a ransom". With His life as the price, Christ paid the ultimate dowry price to purchase a bride for Himself.

- d. John Stott also wrote these words about Christ dying for His bride,

It [*Ephesians 5*] seems to trace Christ's care for his church from a past to a future eternity. Certainly the words Christ loved the church, preceding as they do his self-sacrifice on her behalf, seem to

## Session 8 (Part 2): The Bride and the Writings of Paul

---

look back to his eternal pre-existence in which he set his love on His people and determined to come to save them.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Christ wants His bride to deeply comprehend the level of love He has for His bride.

- a. Again quoting from the book of Ephesians, Paul exhorted the church to be rooted and grounded in the love of God for His people,

...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:17-19).

- b. As the above passage tells us, God wants us to really comprehend Christ's great love for us. God wants us to know it with a deep revelation knowledge in our hearts, much more than merely having a head knowledge that God loves us because we have heard about His love in church all our lives. Much more than that, God wants us rooted and grounded in the comprehension of the deep love of God for us. And as the passage also tells us, understanding His love is key to our being filled up to fullness in Christ—and, thus, to become His bride made ready.

## IV. Unfailing Commitment

### 1. Not only does Christ love His bride, He is committed to making His bride ready for their marriage.

- a. Ephesians 5:25-27 reads like this, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:25-27).
- b. John Stott writes the following about the preceding passage,

It will be observed that Paul uses five verbs to indicate the unfolding stages of Christ's *commitment* to his [*betrothed*] bride, the church. He loved her, gave himself up for her, to sanctify her, having cleansed her, that he might present her to himself.<sup>4</sup>

- c. Christ is committed first to God's eternal purpose that was established before the foundation of the world. He is committed to do whatever was and is necessary to provide for Himself a bride as His eternal partner who will be holy and blameless without spot or wrinkle.
- d. Said differently, Christ is absolutely committed in unwavering perseverance to purchase a bride and to make her ready as His eternal partner. His commitment is such that if a believer desires to be His eternal wife and responds to His leadership and promptings, Christ will make her ready as His eternal partner.

## Session 8 (Part 2): The Bride and the Writings of Paul

---

2. In His commitment to make the bride ready, Christ is committed to sanctifying His bride that she might be presented to Him holy and blameless.
  - a. Not only did Christ die to purchase His betrothed bride. He died that she might be consecrated to Him as His eternal wife. The Greek word translated *sanctify* in Ephesians 5:26 means to dedicate, separate, or set apart for God.<sup>5</sup> And how does He set His bride apart for Himself to be holy and blameless without spot of wrinkle? He washes her with the water of the word.
  - b. From the moment a person is born again, Christ is working in their lives to mature them in such a way that they are progressively set apart or said differently, consecrated to Him as His prepared bride. He works day and night in our lives to progressively set us apart for Him so that we become holy and blameless at His coming and that we might become His glorious bride made ready as His eternal partner.
  - c. He is forever committed to washing believers with the water of the word to purify, and to remove spots and wrinkles so as to make the bride holy and blameless. It is beyond the scope of this session to discuss how Christ sanctifies His bride. Instead, the purpose for this session is to make the point that Christ is committed to progressively setting apart His bride so as to be holy and blameless at His coming. Many believers, myself included, look at our weakness, frailties, sin, and self issues and wonder if we can ever become the spotless bride Paul writes about. The point for here is that Christ is committed in His great love for His bride to the sanctification process. So, if the bride will submit to His leadership, she will be made ready.

### V. Nourishing and Cherishing the Bride

1. Christ nourishes and cherishes His bride throughout her quest for maturity.
  - a. Continuing to look at Ephesians 5, the concluding section of the chapter contains these words about Christ's attitude toward His bride, "...for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body" (Eph. 5:29-30). In this passage, Paul compares the attitude that people have toward their own body to the attitude Christ has for the body of Christ. He says that Christ nourishes and cherishes the church.
  - b. Although some people abuse their body, most take great care of their bodies. They make every possible provision for their body with proper food, clothing, warmth in cold, and cooling in heat. Most do whatever they can to take proper care of their body. Paul says that Christ takes this same type of care over His church and uses the words "nourish and cherish" to describe Christ's attitude toward His care for the church.
2. The definition of *cherish* helps us understand Christ's attitude toward His betrothed bride.
  - a. With Christ nourishing and cherishing His church, let's look first at the idea of Christ cherishing the church. The Greek word translated *cherish* is "thalpo" which primarily means "to heat, to soften by heat, or to keep warm as of birds covering their young with their feathers. With this as its primary meaning it carries the meaning of "to cherish with tender love" or "to foster with tender care".<sup>6</sup>

## Session 8 (Part 2): The Bride and the Writings of Paul

---

- b. The same Greek word is used in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 and reads, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children” (1 Thess. 2:7, NKJV). The New American Standard Translation of the same verse reads, “But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother *tenderly cares* for her own children” (1 Thess. 2:7).
  - c. Let’s next look at the English definition of *cherish*. It means: to hold or treat as dear; feel love for.<sup>7</sup> Synonyms are: adore, love, worship, appreciate, prize, treasure, value.<sup>8</sup>
3. Christ cherishing His bride reveals His tender care in maturing the bride to become holy and blameless.
- a. Christ loves His church with great love. In fact, He loves the church as one would love their own body. Out of this great love for His bride, He tenderly and affectionately deals with her with great compassion and gentleness. Christ’s goal is to prepare His church to become a spotless bride who is holy and blameless. In leading believers toward this high calling, Christ cherishes believers as one would their own bodies and tenderly, gently, and caringly leads believers on this wonderful journey toward sanctification.
4. Christ also nourishes His church in its quest for maturity.
- a. Let’s next look at the definition of the Greek word translated *nourish*. The word means to nourish up to maturity<sup>9</sup>. The English dictionary defines nourish as: to provide with the food or other substances necessary for growth, health, and good condition.
  - b. This same Greek word is used one other time in the New Testament a few verses later in Ephesians 6:4. This verse reads, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). The word translated *nourish* in Ephesians 5:29 in the context of Christ and His church is translated in Ephesians 6:4 as “bring...up”. As we can see, the word suggests the “raising up a child to maturity”.
  - c. Christ’s attitude of cherishing and nourishing His bride implies that Christ tenderly cares for His people with great love. Much like that of the way a nursing mother cares for her child, He tenderly and lovingly leads His bride on a journey toward maturity. All long the way, He nourishes her with the proper food and drink to lead her progressively from one place to another. He does this throughout her life to eventually make her ready as His bride.
5. Summarizing Christ’s loving work toward His bride, He has us on a journey to be the bride made ready.
- a. Christ greatly loves every individual person but especially every individual believer. He loves us with such great love that He willingly chose to leave the glory of heaven to come to earth for the purpose of dying for us on the cross. His death on the cross carried the purpose of betrothing us to Himself and also carried the purpose of beginning a work of sanctifying us so that His eternal purpose could be fulfilled in us and that we might be presented to Him as His eternal wife.

## Session 8 (Part 2): The Bride and the Writings of Paul

---

- b. To accomplish this, throughout our lives He cherishes us: that is He tenderly love us so much that He takes great care for us with great gentleness and compassion as a nursing mother would care for her child. Out of His great care for us, He also nourishes us; that is, He takes us on a lifelong journey to bring us up from childhood to maturity. This is His goal for every believer, and He is committed to this task out of His great love for us.
- c. Based on His great love and care, He calls us to reverence Him and submit to His leadership.

### VI. Reverence and Submission

1. To become His glorious bride without spot or wrinkle, believers must in great reverence submit to Christ's loving leadership.
  - a. Chapter 5 closes with these words, "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband" (Eph. 5:32-33). The Greek word translated *respects* means to reverence, venerate, to treat with deference or reverential obedience.<sup>10</sup>
  - b. The last verse in the chapter is directed to wives, but it also applies to believers. The passage illustrates very powerfully Christ's love and commitment to His church and His work to make the church ready as a glorious bride. In response to Christ's love and care, the passage explains that the betrothed bride must greatly respect Christ in a way that leads to reverential obedience. As stated earlier in the passage, the church is to be subject to Christ in everything (Eph. 5:24).
  - c. In these final verses in the chapter, Paul once again weaves his message between husbands and wives and Christ and the church. In so doing, he makes the point that the church must at all times be subject to Christ. The Greek word translated *subject* in this verse is *hupotasso*. It comes from two Greek words *hupo* which means under and *tasso* which means arrange. It is primarily a military term "to rank under". Thus it means to be in subjection to or to obey one who is given authority over.<sup>11</sup>
  - d. Therefore, the betrothed bride must live in a continuous state of reverentially following Christ's loving leadership. As we have stated in this section, Christ loves every believer. He is committed to making every believer ready as His bride. He carefully nourishes and cherishes believers for the purpose of setting them apart for Himself as His spotless bride made ready. In response to His great love and care believers are to live in reverential submission to Christ's leadership obeying His word and voice so as to be made ready as His glorious wife and eternal partner.
  - e. In this wonderful passage, Paul makes it clear that Christ is the head of the church and accordingly, the church is to live in submission or subjection to Christ. The point is that believers are to live their life under the governmental hand of Christ and His leadership. Much of the present day church treats Christ and His word as though it is optional or even irrelevant in today's modern society. Nothing could be further from the truth. Christ is the head and believers are to live in complete submission to Him. Out of reverence for Him, believers must be committed to obey His word and His voice. In so doing, they will be progressively sanctified and made ready as Christ's holy and blameless bride.

## Session 8 (Part 2): The Bride and the Writings of Paul

---

- f. As we close this session, we thank God for the love and care of Christ and His commitment to lead us to maturity.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, IntVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., 1979, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ken Kessler with Bryan Kessler, *A Worthy Bride*, Restoration Times Publications, Kennesaw, GA, 2011, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 227.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 227.

<sup>55</sup> NT:37, Abbott-Smith Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament. PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2014 by Biblesoft, Inc.

<sup>6</sup> NT:2282, Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/cherish>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/cherish>.

<sup>9</sup> NT:1625, Thayer's Greek Lexicon, PC Study Bible formatted Electronic Database. Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.

<sup>10</sup> NT:5399, Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.

<sup>11</sup> NT:5293, Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.