

The Bride of Christ

What is a Church? Part 3

Ephesians 5:25-32 & 2 Corinthians 11:2-4

Summary:

- 1) Christ really wants a beautiful bride. So one of our main wifely duties is to be beautiful to Him.
 - The righteousness comes from Him yet it is our responsibility.
 - Heaven is the beauty of the bride, and God wants us to move toward that now
 - Conquering sin is a corporate concern, not just a private one, and it is accomplished when the body uses its gifts to do the one anothers.
 - It is important. Jesus died to purchase our purification.
- 2) Be faithful. God is jealous with a good jealousy.
 - Mere tolerance = adultery. Don't allow your heart to be inclined or biased in favor of error.
 - God requires complete and pure devotion, and
 - Christians are warned against slipping from that and drifting toward the three paramours: a different Christ, Spirit and gospel.

Introduction

Imagine for a moment that you are a woman - a woman who is hideously ugly. You are so ugly and so repulsive – not only in your appearance but also in your character and personality – that you have no friends. No one in cares about you – not even your family. Your life is a horror. Now imagine that one day you get into an accident and become a quadriplegic – paralyzed from the neck down. Now you are utterly helpless. You are not good at anything. You have no talents, no skills, and everything about you is repulsive to people. You can't even bathe or take care of yourself, and so you become filthy and disgusting.

One day you meet a man who is very rich and who is the kindest, most gentle, most generous, most attractive, most wonderful man who has ever lived. And this man befriends you and decides to love you and asks you to marry him. The twisted, perverse hideousness of your life has even affected your mind and heart, and so at first you are not even interested; so you decline. But he doesn't give up on you. He works hard to woo you and win your heart, and keeps at it until he has paid the highest imaginable price. Finally you fall in love with him and agree to marry him.

On the wedding day you have no friends to help you get cleaned up and dressed and made up, and so the groom gets you ready. He performs surgery on you and repairs the damage to your body. He puts all his resources into making you beautiful.

When the wedding day arrives and the moment comes when you come into the view of the people, every single person there *gasps*. They stand there stunned by your beauty. Tears stream down the face of the groom. They are tears of joy – a joy so profound and intense that it was worth absolutely any sacrifice to have that joy - even the sacrifice of being tortured and crucified. Every single person there – even the people who don't like you – agrees that you are the most beautiful women ever born.

That story is not a fairy tale. It is the true story of Christ and the Church. In the Old Testament it was the story of God and His people Israel. Here is God's way of telling the story (At the beginning when He describes our disgusting hideousness, instead of picturing us as an ugly woman He pictures us like an aborted fetus with the placenta still attached):

Ez.16:4-14 On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. 5 No one looked on you with

pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised. 6 "Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, "Live!" 7 I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful of jewels. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, you who were naked and bare. 8 "Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine. 9 "I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you and put ointments on you. 10 I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. 11 I adorned you with jewelry: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, 12 and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. 13 So you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was fine flour, honey and olive oil. You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen. 14 And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign LORD.

Way up near the top of God's list of things to do is to make His wife gorgeous – to make her a stunning beauty.

Review

Pretend for a moment that you have idea of what a church is; that none of us have ever heard the word church until today. None of us have any idea that there are people who get together and listen to sermons or sing worship songs. We have absolutely zero idea what a church is or what you are supposed to do when you gather as a church. God just saved us and placed us together in this room and said, "You are a church. I want you to conduct yourselves as a church." So we say, "But God, what does that mean? What are we supposed to do?" And He said, "Look in My Word and see."

That is what we are doing in this study. There are five metaphors for the Church that show up repeatedly in the New Testament that teach us God's idea of church. Our goal is to get so everything we do as a church is done for the purpose of fulfilling what these metaphors teach us that we should be.

The Church is...

1. The Body of Christ (seven places – Ro.12:5, 1 Cor.6:15,16; 12:27, Eph.1:23, 4:12, 5:23,30, Col.1:24)
2. The Wife/Bride of Christ (six places - Eph.5, 2 Cor.11:2, Mt.9:15, Jn.3:29, Rev.19:7, 21:2)
3. The Family/Household of God (three places - 1 Pe.4:17, 1 Tim.3:15, Heb.3:6)
4. The Temple of the Holy Spirit (four places - 1 Pe.2, Eph.2:21, 1 Co.3,6, 2 Cor.6:16), and
5. A holy Priesthood (three places - 1 Pe.2:5,9, Rev.1:6, 5:10).

The last two weeks we studied the image of the body of Christ and we found that the significance of calling us His body is...

1) We represent Christ in this world.

The way people treat the church is the way they treat Christ. The way people love or fail to love the church is the way they love or fail to love Christ.

2) His work is done through us.

His work, especially the dispensing of His grace and fullness, is done primarily through the Church. And it happens when we use our gifts to build one another up until the whole body reaches maturity.

So as the body of Christ our goals are

1) to faithfully represent Him, so when people look at us they get an accurate representation of what Jesus Christ Himself is like, a

2) to reach maturity so we can do His work of filling this world with His fullness. And we accomplish that by building up the body by carrying out the one-anothers and focusing especially on our spiritual gifts as we do so. Now let's move on to the second metaphor - bride.

2. BRIDE/WIFE

There are more than a half dozen places where the New Testament uses this metaphor to describe the Church. Why? Why does God call us His wife? What is He trying to tell us by calling us that? The fact that we are His body means that we are to faithfully represent Christ in this world and to reach maturity so we can carry out His work - that is what our role as His body means. So what does our role as His wife mean? What are our wifely duties?

Wifely duty #1 – to be Beautiful

The passage above from Ezekiel about how God made His wife beautiful was probably what Paul had in mind when he wrote Eph.5:25-27. In the Old Testament times God described Israel as His wife, and a high priority in His agenda was to make her beautiful. In our time God describes the Church as His wife, and He has that same priority with us. In Eph.5 Paul uses both the body metaphor and the bride metaphor. First the body.

Eph.5:22 Wives, submitting to your own husbands as to the Lord, ²³ for the husband is head of the wife as also Christ is head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so wives should *submit* to their husbands in everything.

The point of the body image there is that just as your body acts harmoniously with the directives of your brain, so the Church is responds to the authority and leadership of Christ, and that is a model for husbands and wives.

The body metaphor comes up again in vv.28-30.

²⁸ In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hates his own flesh, but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰ since we are members of His body.

So another purpose of the metaphor of the church as His body is to teach us something about the way He cares for us. He cares for us like a man cares for his own body.

Then he moves to the wife metaphor.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as also Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her in the washing of water by the word. ²⁷ He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless.

³¹ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. ³² This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church.

The presentation mentioned in v.27 is the presentation of a bride to her husband. A woman is never more beautiful than on her wedding day. Getting her ready takes an entire crew of her friends working hard for hours. She gets the prettiest dress she can afford, has her hair done professionally – does everything imaginable to make herself as pretty as it is possible for her to be. And then there is a big production of her grand entrance – that moment when she is first presented to the groom in all her glorious splendor.

In Bible times it was the same way. The bride was made as beautiful as possible and then presented to the groom. And that is one reason God describes the Church as His bride. Every husband wants a beautiful wife. God made grooms want to look at a beautiful bride and He designed brides to want to be looked at as beautiful in order to make us understand something about Him. God desires a beautiful, stunning, gorgeous, glorious wife. So one of our main wifely duties is our responsibility to be beautiful to Him.

So what are we supposed to be doing when we gather on Sunday mornings? God's answer to that, in

essence, is, "I want you to come together on Sunday mornings and do something about your hair. One of the main purposes of your gathering and functioning together as a church is for you to get some lipstick on, and get your dress ironed, and get in shape, and brush your teeth..."

Our job or His?

Perhaps you are thinking, "Wait a minute, I thought we were a quadriplegic or a helpless, aborted fetus - isn't it *God's* role to make us beautiful? Doesn't v.25 say that ...

²⁵ ... **Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her ..."**

Yes, that is all His doing. But that is not to say we have no responsibility. Only He can purify us. But we must submit ourselves to that purifying, beautifying love.

2 Cor.7:1 ... let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness in fear of God.

1 John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He is pure.

1 Pe.1:22 ... you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth ...

Jas.4:8 Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts...

Ez.18:31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit.

Rev.21:2 I also saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev.19:7 Let us be glad, rejoice, and give Him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself. 8 She was permitted to wear fine linen, bright and pure. For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints.

So there is a real sense in which we do purify ourselves. The bride gets herself dressed, but she gets dressed in the beautiful garments of righteous acts that were graciously given to her. She did not generate them on her own. In fact, if we read a little further in Rev.21 we find out that the source of the beauty is none other than the glory of God.

Rev.21:9 Then one of the seven angels, who had held the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me: "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ He then carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ arrayed with God's glory. Her radiance was like a very precious stone, like a jasper stone, bright as crystal.

The bride is like a spectacular, beautiful city made out of crystal and jewels and precious stones. Jewels and crystal are nothing in the dark. Their only beauty comes from the way they reflect light. And the light of this city is the glory of God, which lights it all up with spectacular radiance. God makes the Church beautiful by making us fit reflectors of His glory, and then shining His glory through us.

Do you realize that is a description of *heaven*? That is the eternal state – the place where there will be streets of gold and perfect paradise. Are you getting that? The eternal state – the perfect paradise of heaven – is the perfected, beautified Church (I am using the term "church" in its widest sense to include all believers of all ages.). So what will heaven be like? Heaven will be the awesome brilliance of the glory of God reflecting off the spectacular beauty of the perfected, beautified Church.

And God's plan for the Church now is for us to attain as closely as possible to our destiny. Our task

now is to function as the dwelling place of God on earth, and to make ourselves as pure and righteous as possible so we don't obscure the beauty of His glory with our sin. Sin in our lives will coat the jewels with black filth so they don't reflect God's glory; but holiness and righteousness will reflect it in the most beautiful and spectacular fashion.

Conquering sin is a corporate concern

So we make ourselves beautiful by repenting of our sin and submitting ourselves to His beautification process. When we gather together on Sunday mornings we need to work hard at ridding ourselves of the ugly contaminations of sin in our lives. The process of conquering your anger problem or your impatience problem or your greed problem or your lust problem, or your worry problem, or your problem with discontent; is not just an individual issue. It is not just a private matter between you and God. It is part of our function as a church to beautify ourselves.

You are stuck in sins that you can't conquer on your own. You think you can - you think you are just now turning the corner on it, and finally getting a handle on it. But face it - you've thought that for the last 10 years. You and I are stuck in sins that we can't conquer without the help of the rest of the body. And so a major part of our functioning together has to do with purification in our lives. If your sin were only between you and God, God never would have said what He said in James 5...

- confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so you can be healed. (v.16)

We need you to help beautify us. And you need us. We need you to use your gifts on Sunday mornings to help us break free of the sins we are enslaved to. And so when you leave church on a Sunday morning, ask yourself this question - *What did I do this morning that made the bride of Christ more beautiful? What did I contribute this morning to the elimination of sin and impurities in the lives of the rest of the bride of Christ?*

And if you imagine for a second that you are responsible only for your own spiritual life, and that it is not your job to make me more pure and holy and righteous, then again - you need to re-read the one another commands. I am making much of this point because the one-anothers are so prominent on the pages of Scripture on the one hand, and yet so little of the structure of a typical Sunday morning worship service is designed to accomplish them.

Purifying people from sin is not a function of the sermon only. God did not intend that job to be accomplished by means of one person's gift. It will take all the gifts of every last one of you. The following is a small sample of the one another commands. Ask yourself if this sounds like it is talking only about the pastor and the sermon.

Heb. 10:24-25 spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

25 do not give up meeting together but 1Th 4:18 encourage one another daily

Jas. 5:16 confess your sins to one another and pray for one another

Hebrews 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, ... so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Ro 14:19 do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Col 3:16 teach and admonish one another with all wisdom,

Ro 15:14 instruct one another.

Eph 5:19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

21 Submit to one another...

Gal 6:2 Carry one another's burdens

Ro 15:7 Accept one another

Eph 4:2 Be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Gal 5:13-15 serve one another in love.

Ro 16:16 Greet one another

Jn 13:14 wash one another's feet.

Ro 1:11-13 Mutually encourage one another by your faith

Our 11:00 hour is devoted to all this. When you decide whether you are going to commit to staying for the 11:00 hour let this question figure prominently in your decision: *Have I used my gift this morning to do my part in beautifying and purifying the bride of Christ?* If not then you are not just leaving in the middle of church; you're leaving before the beginning of church.

The Importance of Beauty: Blood-bought purity

If you are a spiritually mature person you have learned to downplay the importance of physical beauty. And that is good, because physical beauty is temporary and it has no eternal value. But don't let that cause you to downplay the importance of eternal beauty. For the wife of Christ to be stunningly beautiful in His eyes is not a matter of secondary importance. Take a look at Titus 2:11 and see just how important this is to the Lord.

Tit.2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, He was not just purchasing our forgiveness. He was not just paying our penalty so could avoid hell. He was doing those things, but that is not all He was doing. According to v.14 another thing He was doing was redeeming us from all wickedness in order to purify for Himself a people that are eager to do what is good. Jesus wanted a beautiful bride. And to Him the most beautiful thing there is is righteousness.

God designed males to be able to gain enormous amounts of pleasure just from looking at a beautiful woman. And the Lord portrays Himself in this metaphor as being like a man who is thrilled to look upon the beauty of a beautiful bride. Every man has certain things that strike him as especially beautiful. And if a woman has those characteristics he could enjoy gazing at her all day long. For Jesus, the characteristic that gives Him that kind of pleasure to gaze upon it, is righteousness and purity and holiness. And so He dreamed of having a wife like that. And He wanted it so bad, according to Tit.2 He died in order to have a wife like that.

When Jesus died on the cross He purchased not only our forgiveness and justification, but also our purity and eagerness to do good. He loves that. Heb.12 says that it was for the joy set before Him that Jesus endured the cross and thought nothing of its shame. He had His eye on the joy that was coming, and that joy made the cross more than worth it. And a big part of that joy He had His eye on was the pleasure of looking down from heaven and seeing all of you, and looking into your hearts and seeing an eagerness to do what is good. That is so beautiful to Him, He paid the highest price imaginable to get a wife like that.

This has really been a powerful thought in my life recently. Every once in a while the thought pops into my head that I could look up to heaven and say to Jesus, "This is what you get for dying. You gave Your life on the cross because You really, really wanted something – well, this is what You get."

That hits me like a Mack truck every time I think about it - in both positive and negative ways. On the negative side it is incredibly convicting. If that thought occurs to me when I am in the middle of some sin, it a painful thought for me to look up to heaven and say, "Jesus, this is what You get for all Your suffering."

But on the positive side it is extremely encouraging - to know that as much sin as there is in my life there is also real righteousness and genuine eagerness to do good. And that righteousness is so incredibly beautiful to Him and pleasing for Him to gaze upon that it was worth giving His life for.

The word "redeem" means to purchase. Jesus purchased the purity of the Church. So let me ask you this – If Jesus Christ purchases something, does He get it? Yes. Jesus did not do what I do when I go to King Soopers, buy some groceries, pay for them, and then walk out and forget to take my bag of groceries. If Jesus purchases something He gets it. Which means He *will* have a pure Church.

However, it is not instantaneous. In the short term it is actually within our power to resist the work of His beautifying love and rob Jesus Christ of the very joy that compelled Him to the cross. In the short term we can make it so the joy Jesus wanted so bad that He died to get it, we can destroy it and replace it with grief and sorrow.

So one of our wifely duties as the bride of Christ is to make ourselves beautiful to Him. And the main way that is accomplished is by using our gifts to help people escape from sin and attain greater righteousness.

Another way is by dealing properly with sin in our midst. That will be discussed in the next lesson. For now just mark in your mind that wifely duty #1 is to be beautiful for our Husband in heaven. Now let's take a look at wifely duty #2

Wifely duty #2 – to be Faithful (Don't commit adultery)

2 Cor.11:2-4 For I am jealous over you with the jealousy of God.¹ I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. 3 But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be corrupted from a complete and pure devotion to Christ. 4 For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly!

God is an extremely jealous husband.

Ex.34:14 Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

God not only loves us with a purifying love; He also loves us with a jealous love. If you choke on that because you have always thought of jealousy as a bad thing you need to understand that it is a wonderful thing. Envy is an evil thing. Irrational jealousy is an evil thing. Perverted or misplaced jealousy is an evil thing. Sinful reactions to and expressions of jealousy are evil things. But true jealousy is a key component of marital love and it reflects the very character of God. It is a wonderful thing. It guards and protects the marriage and it expresses how much the husband values the wife's exclusive love.²

Tolerance = adultery

And the reason Paul is jealous with God's jealousy is because their hearts are drifting toward another husband.

2 ... I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.³

The implication is they are fooling around with a paramour. The interesting thing is he doesn't rebuke them for accepting a false gospel – just for listening to one and giving those people a hearing. Adultery does not begin with marrying another man. It begins with being enticed in some subtle way and having the desires of the heart drift toward that enticement. It starts not with marrying another man, but with desiring him and being interested in him and giving a hearing to his enticements. Wanting to give a hearing to false doctrine evidences an adulterous heart.

¹ The phrase should not be translated "godly jealousy." It is literally "with the jealousy of God." (θεοῦ ζήλω). It means Paul felt the jealousy that is in God's heart.

² For a detailed discussion of the jealousy of God see the Appendix.

³ This imagery here is of the betrothal customs of the time. The couple was legally married at the time of the betrothal, but they did not move in together or consummate the marriage physically until months later when the wedding celebration took place. And there were two people whose responsibility it was to guard the purity of the bride during that period, in order to guarantee to the groom that she remained a virgin during that time – the father and the best man. It is not clear which of those Paul is comparing himself to (my guess is father), but either way the meaning is exactly the same. The betrothal of a church to Christ takes place when the people in that church become Christians and join together as a church. And the final presentation to the Groom takes place at the end of the age when Christ returns. The interval in between is the betrothal period in which we are not physically present with Christ, but we do belong to Him. And we must keep ourselves pure.

Take a very, very close look inside your heart. Which way does it lean? The issue is not only what you believe, it is also what you *want* to believe. Most of what we believe about good and evil we believe because we are biased in the direction of that belief.

Contrary to what our culture says, bias is not a bad thing. You can be biased toward goodness and truth or you can be biased toward falsehood and evil. When someone makes a truth claim it lands on your heart in a certain way. You hear it and either your heart says, “Ooh – I like that. I hope it is true!” or it says, “Oh man I don’t like that. I sure hope it is not true.” And one way to get an idea of which way your heart leans is by watching how much evidence it takes to convince you of certain things. When you have a bias toward wanting to believe something it takes very little evidence to convince you. When you have a bias against believing that thing it takes a huge amount of evidence to convince you (and if the bias is strong enough, no amount of evidence can convince you).

There are people who hear the gospel and they realize that if it is true, that means they are going to have to give up some things that are precious to them. And so their heart begins to hope it does not prove true. So they actually develop a bias against the truth. And then they come across some professor or some book or some TV program that claims to disprove Christianity, and even though the arguments are very weak, the person is totally convinced. Then they meet someone who offers evidence that Christianity is true, and this evidence is ten times as substantial and compelling, and it is not enough for them. (“Yeah, but what about this and what about that...”) and they point out all the problems they can think of with Christianity. But none of the much larger problems with non-Christianity bother them in the least. All that is because of their bias.

And even as Christians we are constantly in danger of slipping into sinful biases in favor of error. Very often it comes out of a desire to be accepted and respected by the world. Some of the world’s doctrines are so precious to them that they will mock anyone who doesn’t buy into them. For example: evolutionism (the world created itself), universalism (all religions lead to heaven), naturalism (the laws of physics are the only factor in determining what happens), subjectivism (good and evil are determined and measured by my opinion only and not by God or any other absolute standard that stands above me), etc. And if you don’t buy in to all those dogmas and doctrines that they hold so dear they will mock you as being superstitious and they won’t take you seriously.

Beyond that, if you hold to the doctrines of Scripture they will be offended. They hate the truth about hell, God’s justice, God’s mercy, God’s sovereignty, etc. They especially hate Jesus’ claims of deity and exclusivity. And the more clearly you proclaim those doctrines the more offended they will get.

And so out of a desire to be accepted and respected by the world many Christians develop a bias in their heart toward wanting to believe some of the world’s doctrines, and a bias toward not wanting to believe certain aspects of the gospel. So they give the world a sympathetic hearing - more sympathetic than the hearing they give God on those subjects.

That is a very bad thing to do – not just because it leads toward error (eventually you will reject the truth and embrace error), but also because that bias and inclination *itself* is adulterous. The truth of Scripture comes right out of God’s very heart. So when you prefer the doctrines of the world to what the Bible says, when your heart hears the world’s ideas and says, “*I like that – I hope it is true,*” (or “*I like that, I wish it were true*”) - when you prefer the world’s ideas to the very thoughts of God’s own heart, that is just a like a woman who sees another man and prefers him to her own husband. It is adultery against God.

If your husband thinks long hair is beautiful, and some guy at work thinks short hair is beautiful and so you cut your hair short – that is a bad sign. If we find ourselves caring more about what the world thinks is beautiful and respectable than what God thinks is beautiful we are sliding into adultery.

God requires complete and pure devotion

3 But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be corrupted from a complete and pure devotion to Christ.

Anything short of a complete and pure devotion to Christ is adultery. There are some people who teach that it is possible to be a Christian and have no devotion to Christ at all. That is known as the anti-lordship salvation view. What people like that fail to realize is that being a Christian is like being married

to Christ. It does require a commitment – not a perfect commitment, but a full commitment (just like when you get married). The normal Christian condition is to have a complete and pure devotion to Christ, and that is exactly what the Corinthians had. Look at v.3 – he does not say that they had lost that yet. What he says is that he feared that they might. He was warning them because there was a real possibility that on their current course their minds would become corrupted and they would fall from their complete and pure devotion to Christ.

Three Paramours

According to v.4 they were falling into infidelity in three areas:

4 For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly!

Different Jesus

False religion always wants to adjust our perception of Jesus away from what is portrayed in the Bible. It is amazing how much energy Satan constantly puts into altering our concept of Jesus.⁴ The world is forever trying to invent a Jesus who did not claim to be God, who didn't talk so much about hell and who does not require 100% commitment if you want to be one of His followers. And when a church becomes inclined to give a hearing to that sort of thing it is a sign that her heart is drifting from faithfulness to Christ.

Different Spirit

It is through the Holy Spirit that you have personal, relational interaction with God. Millions of people want that. But they come up with ways of having personal interaction with God that don't match what is in Scripture. That is a false holy spirit.

They invent a God who responds in predictable ways to religious rituals, so they can be in full control of their religious experiences (If I do this, this, and this, then God will do that). Or they manufacture so-called miracles and assume that is the real Holy Spirit. Or they try to have a relationship with God that bypasses Jesus Christ. None of that results in any real fellowship with God, because none of it involves the real Holy Spirit.

Different Gospel

This has to do with what it means to be saved and how one is saved. Any gospel other than the one we discussed two weeks ago in the newcomers' class - salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone apart from any merit on our part, by a faith that produces repentance and full commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ - any other gospel is a false gospel. Anyone who teaches that you save yourself by being good or by being religious is teaching a false gospel. Anyone who teaches that you can be saved while rejecting the authority of Jesus Christ is teaching a false gospel.

In fact, even if someone preaches nothing false at all – 100% of the things that come out of his mouth are absolutely correct, but he leaves some key parts out (like repentance), a lot of people who listen to his preaching will go to hell, and God will hold him responsible. Their blood will be on his hands.

Acts 20:21ff I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus...

²⁶ I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

⁴ Just look at how much effort he puts into that Jesus Seminar, where a bunch fringe kooks get together and vote with beads about which things in the Bible are true or not true, and the secular media dutifully reports their findings every year portraying them as mainstream scholars.

He was innocent because he didn't leave anything out. A lot of preachers today are leaving a whole lot out. And the huge crowds they are getting to pack in to their churches are nothing but a display of the huge amount of blood that will be on their hands on Judgment Day.

The Corinthians had not yet embraced the false Jesus and false Spirit and false gospel. They were just giving them a sympathetic hearing. But they were Christians. Look again at v.4.

2 Cor.11:4 For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it splendidly.

They had responded to the preaching of the true Jesus, accepted the true gospel and received the real Holy Spirit. They were true Christians – that is why God was jealous. You don't get jealous if some woman you don't love goes off with another man. You get jealous if your wife does that. They were God's wife – the bride of Christ. That is why God was jealous. They were Christians and yet they were developing a bias toward a false gospel. That can happen; and it is something we need to constantly be on our guard against - both personally in our own lives and corporately as a church.

So what can we do to make sure Agape Bible Church remains faithful? We will discuss that in the next lesson along with our third wifely duty, which is to love God. And that will be the most important sermon of the series.