

HWMR: The Preparation of the Bride (Week 4)

Scripture Reading: Rom. 6:19, 22; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9; 1 Thes. 5:23; S. S. 8:13-14

The Beauty of the Bride

- Rom 6:19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as **slaves to righteousness unto sanctification**.
- Rom 6:22 But now, having been **freed from sin** and **enslaved to God**, you have your **fruit unto sanctification**, and the end, **eternal life**.
- Eph 5:25 Husbands, **love your wives** even as **Christ also loved the church** and **gave Himself up for her**
- Eph 5:26 That He might **sanctify her, cleansing her** by the washing of the water in the word,
- Eph 5:27 That He might **present** the church to Himself **glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things**, but that she would be **holy** and **without blemish**.
- Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for **the marriage of the Lamb** has come, and **His wife has made herself ready**.
- Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in **fine linen, bright and clean**; for the fine linen is the **righteousnesses of the saints**.
- Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they **who are called** to the **marriage dinner of the Lamb**. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
- 1 Thes 5:23 And the God of peace Himself **sanctify you wholly**, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- S. S. 8:13 O you who dwell in the **gardens**, / My companions listen for your voice; / Let me hear it.
- S. S. 8:14 **Make haste, my beloved**, / And be like a gazelle or a young hart / Upon the mountains of spices.

Day 1

*Ephesians 5:25-27 - ...[Christ] **loved the church** and **gave Himself up for her** that He might **sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word, that He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish**.*

- I. The process of dispositional sanctification is the process of our organic salvation as our beautification to become the beautiful, holy, and glorious bride for Christ— 1 Thes. 4:3a; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Eph. 1:4-5; 5:25-27; 1 Thes. 5:23-24; Rom. 6:19, 22:**
- A. **Ephesians 5:25-27** reveals the entirety of God's complete salvation in presenting Christ to us in **three stages**:
1. **In the past**, Christ as the Redeemer **gave Himself up for the church** for our judicial redemption—"Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"—v. 25.
 2. **In the present**, Christ as the life-giving Spirit is dispositionally sanctifying the church by **saturating her with His element** so that she may be His counterpart; this is organic salvation as bride beautification and bride preparation—"That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word"—v. 26.

3. In the future, Christ as the Bridegroom will present the church to Himself as His counterpart for His satisfaction—"That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish"—this is our glorification for bride presentation—v. 27.
4. In the past, Christ gave Himself up for the church; in the present, He is sanctifying the church; and in the future, He will present the church to Himself as His counterpart for His satisfaction; therefore, His loving the church is to sanctify her, and His sanctifying the church is for His presenting the church to Himself glorious.

According to the New Testament, Christ's care of the church has two aspects. The inner aspect is the nourishing, and the outer aspect is the cherishing. To be nourished is to have something imparted into us inwardly, whereas to be cherished is to be warmed and comforted outwardly. Cherishing is related to environment. In our environment or circumstances the Lord Jesus is often real to us as a warm, tender breeze blowing upon us. As this warm breeze comes upon us, we have the sense of being soothed tenderly. Although this takes place in the environment, it is something more than the environment itself. It is even something that surpasses the Lord's presence. When the Lord's presence becomes a gentle breeze, we experience His cherishing. This cherishing includes soothing, comfort, and rest.

In the environment of the church life, we often experience the Lord's cherishing, although we may not even be conscious of it. However, if for any length of time we are in an environment where there is no church, we sense that the climate has changed and that the environment is different. Then we begin to sense that we have lost something, that the tender, warm breeze is no longer blowing upon us. We may have everything necessary for our material existence, but we know that something we formerly enjoyed is missing. When we return to the church life, we immediately and spontaneously enter into the environment and atmosphere of the Lord's cherishing. Once again we are warmed, soothed, and comforted. This is cherishing.

Just as a child is cherished by the very presence of his mother, so we are cherished by the Lord's presence. My little granddaughter often desires simply to be intimately in her mother's presence. Simply to be in the presence of her mother is a comfort to her. The presence of her mother provides a tender, warm atmosphere. In like manner, the Lord's presence produces an atmosphere of tenderness and warmth to cherish our very being.

We experience such an atmosphere in the church meetings. I am saddened whenever there are saints who do not care for the meetings, but prefer simply to have fellowship in their homes. No matter how enjoyable the fellowship may be in your home, the atmosphere there is not nearly as cherishing as the atmosphere in the meetings. How pleasant is the spiritual climate in the gathering of the saints! As soon as we enter this atmosphere, we are cherished by the Lord's presence. It is by the atmosphere produced by the Lord's brooding presence that the Lord cherishes the church. To be in this climate, this atmosphere, this environment, gives us rest, comfort, healing, cleansing, and encouragement. No atmosphere can compare to the atmosphere of the church meetings. For this reason I do not want to miss even one meeting of the church.

Nourishing and cherishing go together. Through the nourishing we enjoy the supply of life inwardly, and through the cherishing we experience the soothing, comforting atmosphere outwardly. Whenever we are in an atmosphere of cherishing, we can absorb every word of the ministry. This indicates that under the cherishing we receive nourishing. A church that is nourished and cherished in such a way will be strong and healthy. (*Life Study of Ephesians, Message 53*)

The **nourishing and the cherishing** are the **church's portion**, and they should be **found in every meeting**. If there is no nourishing and cherishing in the meetings, then there is a problem. The problem, however, may be **with you** and **not with the church**. If you are proper, normal, and healthy, you will enjoy the cherishing atmosphere of the Lord's presence in the church and in this atmosphere receive the nourishing supply of life. Praise the Lord for the way He cares for the church! The church people have the privilege of enjoying the Lord in such a fine, tender, intimate, real way. (*Life Study of Ephesians, Message 53*)

Day 2

Isaiah 28:5 - In that day Jehovah of hosts will become a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people

Psalms 27:4 - One thing I have asked from Jehovah; that do I seek: To dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire in His temple.

- B. The beauty of the bride **comes from the very Christ** who is wrought into the church and shining out from the church to be **expressed through the church**—Isa. 43:7; Eph. 3:21.
- C. Christ is a **crown of glory** and a **diadem of beauty** to the remnant of His people—Isa. 28:5:
 - 1. A crown is like a hat or turban, whereas the diadem is the headband as the most beautiful, glorious part of the crown—Exo. 28:36-39; 29:6; Isa. 62:3.
 - 2. We need to continually **behold the beauty of the Lord in the church** as the house of His beauty so that we may be transformed from glory to glory, beautified by the Lord, to become His beautiful bride with Him as our diadem of beauty—2 Cor. 3:18; Rev. 19:7-9; Isa. 28:5; Psalms 27:4; Isa. 60:1, 7, 9, 13, 19; 62:3; Rev. 21:11.

In Ephesians Paul deals with the **four categories** of negative things in a very good sequence. Related to the creation of the new man, we have the **ordinances**. Related to the growth of the new man for function, we have **doctrine**. Furthermore, related to the daily living of the new man, we have the **old man with his old way of life**. For the creation of the new man, the ordinances must be **abolished and slain**. For the growth of the new man, doctrine must be **depreciated**. For the proper daily living of the new man, the old man must be **put off**. However, after these three categories of negative things have been dealt with, we must still face the problem of the spots and wrinkles.

Because they are so subjective, the **spots and wrinkles** are more difficult to deal with than the ordinances, the doctrines, and the old man. We cannot simply abolish the spots and wrinkles or put them off, for they are in our organic tissue and natural makeup. **Spots** are of the **natural life**, and **wrinkles** are a matter of **oldness**. Humanly speaking, there is no way for us to remove such things. However, God has a way. The **water of life in the Word** can metabolically **wash away** these defects by the **transformation of life**. The more Christ sanctifies the church and cleanses her through the washing of the water in the Word, the fewer spots and wrinkles there will be. Furthermore, as Christ nourishes and cherishes the church, the spots and wrinkles will be removed metabolically. Every flaw, defect, and imperfection will be removed by Christ's transforming life. (*Life Study of Ephesians, Message 95*)

Day 3

Ephesians 5:26 - That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word.

Revelation 19:7 - Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

According to Ephesians 5:26, Christ gave Himself up for the church so that “*He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word.*” After the Lord Jesus gave Himself for us in the flesh, He was resurrected and in resurrection became the life-giving Spirit. As the life-giving Spirit, He is the **speaking Spirit**. Whatever He speaks is the word that washes us. The Greek word rendered word in verse 26 is not logos, the constant word, but **rhema**, which denotes the **instant word**, the word the Lord presently speaks to us. As the life-giving Spirit, the Lord is not silent; **He is constantly speaking**. If you take Him as your person, you will discover how much He desires to speak within you. Idols are dumb, but the indwelling Christ is always speaking. No one who takes Christ as his life and his person can remain silent. On the contrary, he will be constrained by Christ to speak. As I minister to the Lord’s children, I experience Christ speaking within me.

In **John 6:63** the Lord Jesus said, “*The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life.*” The Greek word rendered words here is also rhema, the **instant and present spoken word**. This differs from logos, the constant word, as in John 1:1. As the speaking Spirit, the Lord is speaking the rhema to us. Whatever He speaks is spirit.

If day by day there is **no speaking** of the Lord within us, it is an indication that there is **some problem within us**. If there is no speaking, no rhema, then in our **practical experience the Spirit is absent**, for the Lord’s speaking actually is the Spirit. As long as we have the Lord’s present word, we have the Spirit, the life-giving Spirit. We cannot separate Christ as the life-giving Spirit from His speaking. His presence consists in His speaking. How can we know that Christ as our person is present with us? We know it by His speaking. If we do not have His speaking within us, **we do not have His presence**. But if we turn to Him to mean business to take Christ as our life and our person, His speaking will begin again. His speaking is the **living word**, the living word is the **Spirit**, and the Spirit is our **wonderful Christ Himself**. How practical, subjective, intimate, and real He is as the speaking Spirit! (*Life Study of Ephesians, Message 55*)

Day 4

John 7:38-39 - He who believes into Me, ...out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit...

Revelation 22:17 - And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.

II. The Lord’s primary work in the recovery is His genuine work to prepare us to be His glorious bride; apart from the continual, dispositional sanctification spoken of in Ephesians 5:26, there is no way for the bride to be prepared and, hence, no way for Revelation 19:7-9 to be fulfilled:

- A. The church is being beautified through the **process of sanctification** by **Christ as the life-giving Spirit** cleansing us by the **washing of the water in His word**—Eph. 5:26-27:
 1. This indicates that in the **word of Christ is the Spirit as the water of life**; the words that He speaks to us are spirit and life—John 6:63.
 2. As the life-giving Spirit, Christ is the **speaking Spirit**; whatever He speaks is the word that washes us; this does not refer to *logos*, the constant word, but to *rhema*, which denotes an **instant word**, the word that the Lord **presently speaks to us**—Matt. 4:4; John 6:63; Rev. 2:7; 22:17a; cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Matt. 13:14-15; Acts 28:25-31.
 3. Christ's speaking is the Spirit; **His speaking is the very presence** of the life-giving Spirit—John 6:63; Eph. 6:17.
 4. The indwelling Christ as the life-giving Spirit is **always speaking an instant, present, living word** to metabolically cleanse away the old and replace it with the new, causing an inward transformation.
- B. Through such a washing process we are **saturated with Christ** and **beautified by Christ** to be His holy, beautiful, God-expressing bride, a bride without blemish or imperfection—Rev. 19:7; cf. S. S. 6:13; 8:13-14.
- C. Christ as the life-giving Spirit **sanctifies the church by cleansing her according to the washing of the water in the word**; according to the divine concept, *water* here refers to the **flowing life of God** typified by flowing water (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 7:37-39; Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:1, 17); **we are now in such a washing process** in order that the church may be holy and without blemish.
- D. The Greek word for *washing* in Ephesians 5:26 is literally *laver*; in the Old Testament the priests used the laver to wash away their earthly defilement (Exo. 30:18-21); day by day, morning and evening, we need to **come to the Bible** and be cleansed by the laver of the water in the word.
- E. Paul uses the Greek word *rhema* when he speaks of the word with its washing process (Eph. 5:26); **logos** is God's Word **objectively** recorded in the Bible; **rhema** is the word of God spoken to us on a **specific occasion** (Mark 14:72; Luke 1:35-38; 5:5; 24:1-8).
- F. The **rhema** reveals something to us **personally and directly**; it shows us what we need to deal with and what we need to be cleansed from (the laver of bronze was a mirror that could reflect and expose—Exo. 38:8); the important thing for each one of us is this—is God speaking His word to me today?
- G. One thing that we always treasure is that **the Lord still speaks to us personally and directly today**; true growth in life depends upon our receiving the word directly from God; only His speaking in us has true spiritual value—Heb. 3:7-11, 15; 4:7; Psalms 95:7-8.
- H. The central point of our prayers should be our **longing for the Lord's speaking**, which enables us to fulfill the goal of His eternal economy according to His heart's desire to have a bride as His counterpart—Rev. 2:7; cf. 1 Sam. 3:1, 21; Amos 3:7.
- I. In a very practical sense, the **Lord's presence is one with His speaking**; whenever He speaks, we realize His presence within us; Christ's speaking is the very presence of the life-giving Spirit.
- J. The speaking of the indwelling Christ as the life-giving Spirit within us is the cleansing water that **deposits a new element into us** to replace the old element in our nature and disposition; this metabolic cleansing causes a **genuine and inward change in life**, which is the reality of dispositional sanctification and transformation.
- K. **We must be beautified by Christ as the life-giving, speaking Spirit in our spirit**; through the Lord's speaking within us as the life-giving Spirit, we are becoming **His glorious church**—Eph. 5:26-27; Rev. 2:7.

Day 5

Revelation 19:8-9 - And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

III. Ephesians 5:27 reveals that the church as the **bride of Christ will eventually become a glorious church, a God-expressing church**, “not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish”:

- A. Our only beauty is the shining out of Christ from within us; what Christ appreciates within us is the **expression of Himself**—Psa. 50:2; 2 Cor. 3:15-18; cf. Exo. 28:2:
 - 1. “Your eyes will see the King in His beauty” (Isa. 33:17a); “the King will desire your beauty” (Psa. 45:11a).
 - 2. “You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, / As lovely as Jerusalem, / As terrible as an army with banners”—S. S. 6:4.
- B. For the bride to be prepared means that she is clothed in “fine linen, bright and clean,” which is “the righteousnesses of the saints” (Rev. 19:8); this **fine linen is the beauty of the bride**.
- C. On the day of his wedding, a bridegroom cares much more for the beauty of his bride than for her ability; the Lord Jesus, our God, cares primarily for the **beauty of Himself expressed through our humanity**; we need to be **beautified by Christ day by day** so that we can be prepared to be presented to Him as His lovely bride.
- D. Whenever we **take time to behold** the beauty of the Lord in His word by **pray-reading** and **musings upon His word** (Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15), **He becomes our beauty**, and we are beautified by Him to become the house of His beauty so that He also may be beautified (27:4; 2 Cor. 3:18; Isa. 60:7b, 9b, 13b, 19b, 21b).
- E. The washing of the water in the word in Ephesians 5:26 deals mainly with spots and wrinkles; **spots refer to something of the natural life**, and **wrinkles are related to oldness**; only the **water of life** can metabolically **wash away** such defects by the transformation of life.
- F. To be **holy** is to be **saturated with Christ** and **transformed by Christ**, and to be **without blemish** is to be **spotless and without wrinkle**, having nothing of the natural life of our old man—cf. S. S. 4:7.
- G. Also, the church will not have “any such things,” which means that she will not have “this or that kind of defect”; God will bring the church to the place where **nothing can be said against her in any respect**—Eph. 5:27.

Day 6

Song of Songs 8:13-14 - O you who dwell in the gardens, my companions listen for your voice; let me hear it. Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young hart upon the mountains of spices

IV. **Ephesians 5:26-27** matches **Song of Songs 8:13-14**; both reveal that it is **by the Lord's speaking** to us that we are **prepared to be His glorious bride** with the desire for His second coming—"O you who dwell in the gardens, / My companions listen for your voice; / Let me hear it. / Make haste, my beloved, / And be like a gazelle or a young hart / Upon the mountains of spices":

- A. In Song of Songs the loving seeker of Christ asks Him who dwells in the believers as His gardens to **let her hear His voice** while her companions **listen for His voice**—8:13; cf. 4:13-16; 5:1; 6:2:
 - 1. This indicates that in the work that we as the lovers of Christ do for Him as our Beloved, we need to **maintain our fellowship with Him**, always listening to Him—Luke 10:38-42.
 - 2. **Our lives** depend on the **Lord's words**, and **our work** depends on **His commands** (Rev. 2:7; 1 Sam. 3:9-10; cf. Isa. 50:4-5; Exo. 21:6); without the Lord's words we will not have any revelation, light, or personal knowledge of Christ as our King (Isa. 6:1, 5), our Lord (2 Cor. 5:14-15), our Head (Col. 2:19), and our Husband (2 Cor. 11:2); the life of the believers hinges totally upon the Lord's speaking (Eph. 5:26-27).
- B. As the concluding prayer of this poetic book, the Song of Songs, the lover of Christ prays that her Beloved would **make haste to come back** in the power of His resurrection (gazelle and young hart) to set up His sweet and beautiful kingdom (mountains of spices), which will fill the whole earth—8:14; Rev. 11:15; Dan. 2:35:
 - 1. Such a prayer portrays the **union** and **communion** between Christ as the Bridegroom and His lovers as the bride in their bridal love, in the way that the prayer of John, a lover of Christ, as the concluding word of the Holy Scriptures, reveals God's eternal economy concerning Christ and the church in His divine love—Rev. 22:20.
 - 2. "Come, Lord Jesus!" is the last prayer in the Bible (v. 20); the entire Bible concludes with the **desire for the Lord's coming expressed as a prayer**.