

## Marriage And The Bride Of Christ (Part 10)

The Privileges the Bride Receives

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The Thanksgiving Day we just celebrated here in the U.S. has always been thought of as a family celebration, a day for families to pause to thank God not only for His abundant physical blessings, and for those of us in the Church we are thankful for His miraculous spiritual blessings. We have a great deal for which to be thankful.

The average number of people that get together on Thanksgiving Day is 12. Forty percent of these family gatherings have more than 20 people. So it is a time to enjoy a family atmosphere. Generally, though, the blessings of marriage and the family are appreciated and acknowledged on that day.

The privileges we have in this country are tremendous compared with the rest of the world.

Generally, a privilege is, "A right granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage or favor."

A citizen of a country has rights to certain things that non-citizens do not. And similarly, a bride receives certain privileges when she marries her groom. A bride begins to receive certain privileges when she is betrothed, (that is, promised or purchased). Anciently, betrothal was considered the preliminary binding of the promise to marry prior to the wedding.

We have been working through Ephesians 5:25-33 which is primarily designed for the edification of husbands, but which, as we have seen, has a wonderful message for all Christians. The apostle Paul is writing his letter to the husband and he uses the comparison of the relationship between Christ and the Church. That is the analogy that the Christian husband must always keep in mind.

There is something else that we should cover before we come to the practical application of Paul's instruction of the specific responsibilities and duties of husbands toward their wives.

This is priceless to us individually as Christians as we realize our relationship to Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom; and as we realize that as a spiritual group, we are the Bride of Christ.

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**Ephesians 5:25-33** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 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. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 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.

Considering all we have been analyzing, it is only natural at this point to realize that the husband bestows certain things upon his Bride. So let us look at what Christ as the Bridegroom of the Bride, the Church, bestows upon her.

As we go through this you will be amazed at what a wonderful privilege it is to be members of God's church. It is important, even vital, to realize these privileges, these promises we are given. Possible the main problem, the main trouble, today is the failure of the average Christian to realize the privilege, and the dignity, of being members of God's church and of the body of Christ.

We should be concerned about the state of the world, but why are so many members of the Church complacent about the state of the Church? Too often the Church reflects what is wrong with the world. Even though we are trying to overcome Satan, the world, sin, and our own human nature, we still carry some of the filthy baggage of the world's ways with us.

Everyone God calls into the Church brings with him a significant amount of the ways of this world. Satan's influence does not stop bombarding us at baptism; he does not stop trying to entice us with the world's entertainment and celebrations.

Paul's encouraging words in Chapter 6 warn us of our enemy's attacks and of the solution to our defense.

**Ephesians 6:11-12** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and

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blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

**Ephesians 6:16** Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Thankfully we are given the power of the Holy Spirit to resist Satan's influence.

It is a deeply saddening thing to see the failure of Christians to realize what the New Testament tells us about ourselves, and what it means to be members of the body of Christ. While the world attaches so much significance to honors and position, we sometimes regard our membership in God's church very little.

It seems that some may even regard our membership in the Church as a kind of dignity that they bestow upon the Church, instead of realizing that it is the highest and most glorious privilege that anyone can ever have or know.

Others regard their membership in the Church strictly as a duty, and are fairly pleased with themselves when they perform a duty. That attitude reveals a complete failure to understand what it really means to be members of this body, which is the Bride of Jesus Christ Himself.

So let us gain an appreciation for some of the privileges Jesus Christ bestows on us, some of the things that are true of members of God's church. What are the things Christ bestows on us?

I have already touched on some of these in previous sermons, but not quite in this connection.

### **The Husband's Life**

The first thing a husband bestows on his wife is His life. He gives her a part of His own life. She becomes a sharer in His own life. When a man gets married he comes from a life of living on his own, but now he no longer lives his own life exclusively; his wife becomes a sharer in his life.

Since she is part of him, she is a sharer in his life, activity, and everything that is true

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concerning him. The first thing a married man has to learn is that when he is confronted by various situations, he now has to do something new.

Before this, the main problem for him was, "How does this affect me, what is my reaction to this?" But when married, he no longer stops at that. He now has to think also of how it will affect his wife. He no longer lives an isolated life of a bachelor, on his own; he has another person he must always consider, who is a sharer of his life.

Some things that were acceptable before marriage now have to be considered from the viewpoint of two individuals who have become one flesh.

Sometimes marriages suffer because the husband has not realized that in the setting of married life he is no longer able to just go off and do what he wants without considering and honoring his wife's opinion and needs.

One of the main causes of marriage problems is financial troubles. Often one, or the other, or both spouses handle the family finances poorly. One spouse makes a major purchase without consulting the other, the purchase causes more financial hardship, and emotions get out of control and anger becomes unbridled.

It is not that it is a sin to make a large purchase (unless covetousness is involved), but the husband is no longer separate from his wife, and the wife is no longer separate from her husband; therefore they should consider one another's valuable opinion regarding any substantial purchase. Contentions will arise if one spouse does not honor the opinions and needs of the other.

Because of a lack of genuine concern for one another in marriage sometimes, one spouse does not seem to be concerned about what the other thinks, and regards the matter as if it were a purely personal decision. But it is not!

A person has no right to isolate himself over a serious or substantial matter from his wife. Because the two are one flesh, he should consider his wife's views and vice-versa.

Here is something light-hearted that is vaguely connected: The couple had reached an age where the wife thought it was time to start considering wills and funeral arrangements rather than be caught unprepared. Her husband, however, was not too interested in the topic, "Would you rather be buried or cremated?" she asked him.

There was a pause, then he replied from behind his paper, "Surprise me." This is credited to Jim Gibson in Victoria, B.C.

## **Christ's Life**

Now let us look at it from the other aspect and realize that we are sharers of the life of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom. What an amazing thought that we are always in His mind, that in all His outlook we have our part and our place. We are in Christ; we are sharers of His life.

**Colossians 3:4** When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Christ is our life. Eternal life is not some heavenly substance that God imparts when we, trust our Savior. Eternal life is Jesus Christ Himself.

**I John 5:12** He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

We are dead and alive, at the same time—dead to sin and alive in Christ.

Someone once said, "Life is what you are alive to." A child may come alive when you talk about a baseball game or an ice-cream cone. A teenager may come alive when you mention cars or dates.

In Philippians 1:21, the apostle Paul wrote, "For to me to live is Christ." Christ was Paul's life and he was alive to anything that related to Christ. And it should be that way with every member of God's church; it should be that way with the Bride.

He is "our life" is another way of saying that we are sharers of His life. The phrase in Ephesians 5:30 that we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, is another way of saying the same thing.

We are now just looking at it at a slightly different angle; not so much from the angle of the spiritual union, but from that of Christ's own consciousness that He is giving of His life, sharing it, and that we are taken into it and become an intimate part of His life.

Now let us go on to see this in its various manifestations of sharing Christ's life.

## **His Name**

One manifestation is that He bestows on us His name. We take on His name because He gives us His name. We are now, in this physical life, called 'Christians' and we are no longer what we were, we have changed names. We have names such as Elect, First-fruits, Saints, and so on.

A woman, when she gets married, changes her name. How important that becomes in helping us to understand the teaching of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5. When a woman gets married she takes the name of her husband. That is the custom of most of the world and shows us the relationship between husband and wife.

It is the name of the husband that is taken, not the name of the wife. But look at all this from our perspective as Christians. Christ has put His name on us. There is no greater compliment that can ever be given us than that. It is the clearest expression of this married relationship.

This is presented to us in many ways in the New Testament. The apostle Paul puts it several different ways.

**Colossians 3:11** Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Those are the types of names that we carried before, but no longer. We are now Christians. We have a new name. Or, listen to the way Paul puts it to the Corinthians,

**II Corinthians 5:16** Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

Paul no longer thought of people who God called to be Christians in those categories, so he used new terms for them now. He no longer wanted to know what they were, but what they are which is Christian. God's people have the name "Christian" on them.

**Acts 11:25-26** Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Let me add a side note here. According to *The Bible Exposition Commentary*:

When the saints were scattered abroad during Saul's persecution of the church (Acts 8:1), some of them ended up in Antioch, the capital of Syria, 300 miles north of Jerusalem. (Do not confuse this city with Antioch in Pisidia, Acts 13:14.) There were at least sixteen Antiochs in the ancient world, but this one was the greatest.

With a population of half a million, Antioch ranked as the third largest city in the Roman Empire, following Rome and Alexandria. Its magnificent buildings helped give it the name "Antioch the Golden, Queen of the East." The main street was more than four miles long, paved with marble, and lined on both sides by marble colonnades. It was the only city in the ancient world at that time that had its streets lighted at night.

A busy port and a center for luxury and culture, Antioch attracted all kinds of people, including wealthy retired Roman officials who spent their days chatting in the baths or gambling at the races.

Antioch was a wicked city, perhaps second only to Corinth. Though all the Greek, Roman, and Syrian deities were honored, the local shrine was dedicated to Daphne, whose worship included immoral practices. "

Antioch was to the Roman world what New York City is to ours," writes James A. Kelso in *An Archeologist Follows the Apostle Paul*.

Not only was an effective church built in Antioch, but it became the church that sent Paul out to win the Gentile world for Christ.

When the persecuted believers arrived in Antioch, they did not at all feel intimidated by the magnificence of the buildings or the pride of the citizens. The Word of God was on their lips and the hand of God was on their witness, and "a great number" of sinners repented and believed. It was a thrilling work of God's wonderful grace.

To bear Christ's name, then, is to share his authority, protection, and identity; this entails responsibility and persecution, and introduces a quite different meaning for the phrase, "for my name's sake."

To acknowledge Christ's name, and not deny it, guarantees the preservation of one's

own name or identity.

**Revelation 3:5-12** He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens": "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My [that is, Christ's] new name.

We preserve our own identity by not denying Christ's name and not being ashamed of it. If we overcome sin, Satan, the world, and our own human nature, our name is not blotted out from the book of life.

Peter wrote with regard to our blessed condition in life; not that we would find personal and positive enjoyment in being criticized and slandered. But our blessed condition is because it is like our Savior's condition was; it shows that we are his friends; and it shows that we have rich spiritual influences in the present world.

**I Peter 4:12-19** Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian,



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let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

So we realize that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ bestows His name on us. It is as real as what Paul told the Galatians,

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

This is a very wonderful and revealing statement of the foundation of this married relationship. There is a sense in which the Christian's whole life is in the Husband, and yet the Christian has not become lost altogether, he is still there. As Paul says, 'the life I now live in the flesh'.

There is the mystery that is great concerning the marriage relationship. We must never forget that this great name of Jesus Christ is upon us. What matters, and should matter to every one of us is that our names have been changed.

Here in the realm of the Church the other names do not matter. It does not matter what a man's name is, what his position or office is, what his ability is, what anything is. The thing that matters about him now is that the name of Christ is on him.

We are all one there; we are all together in Him. He has taken us to Himself—the Church—the Bride of Christ. Notice again what Christ says to the Philadelphians and to the rest of the Church.

**Revelation 3:12** He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I [Christ] will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

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The Christian, (he who overcomes) is considered as a pillar or column in the temple. The name of God will be conspicuously recorded on him to show that he belongs to God. It is like a large government building, and on its columns are recorded the names of people who are distinguished and privileged. It is a public testimonial of the respect of those whose names are recorded there.

The honor that is conferred on, "He who overcomes," is as great as if the name of that God whom he serves, and whose favor and friendship he enjoys, is inscribed on him in some conspicuous manner.

He who overcomes is known and recognized as belonging to God; the God of the Redeemer himself, indicated by the phrase, "The name of my God."

"The name of the city of my God" indicates that the Christian belongs to that city, or that the New Jerusalem is his home. Wherever he goes and wherever he lives, he will be recognized as belonging to that holy city, as enjoying the rights and privileges of a citizen of New Jerusalem.

This is the wonderful thing that happens to all who are Christians, all who are members of this body, the Bride of Christ. We are given a new name, Son of God—It is His own family name!

The day is coming when, "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth," and that is the name that is given to those of us who constitute the Bride of Christ.

## **Dignity**

Then we see that out of that comes the fact that we are sharers in His dignity, in His great and glorious position. Dignity is defined as, "goodness in the sense of merit." It refers to commanding respect. With regard to Christ it implies magnificence, excellence, and manifestation of glory.

So what is true of us now, in light of the dignity of Christ?

God has allowed his people even now to share in a measure of the dignity and authority that Christ has, seated at the right hand of God.

**Ephesians 2:4-10** But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us

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alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Verse 7 answers the question of why God so generously shows such love to his people, which is so that we will be in awe for all of eternity over the incredible kindness and love of God. It will take to infinity to completely understanding and fully appreciating God's love. It will take all of eternity to totally fathom God's abundant and unending love.

If we are Christians, we are "in Christ," and that means that we are "seated with Him in the heavenly places." Wherever the bridegroom is the bride is also, and the standing, the dignity, and the position that belongs to him, belongs to her.

It does not matter who she was; the moment she becomes his bride she shares everything with him. Therefore, she must uphold her position, responsibilities, and dignity; and a curse will come upon those who slur her.

There is no greater insult against the bridegroom than a refusal to honor his bride. But she must be worthy. Dignity is the quality or state of being worthy, honored, or esteemed.

This is something we are told repeatedly. Jesus talks about this glory He gives to His Bride.

**John 17:22** And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one.

The glory that the Father had given Him He has given to His people. This is something that happens invariably in marriage; the bride, being a part of the husband, and having his name on her, shares his whole position. The glory Christ was given by the Father, we are given by Christ and expected to uphold that state of dignity.

Let us look at another statement of the matter. Listen to what Jesus Christ said about

Himself.

**John 8:12** Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

He says, "The world is in darkness, apart from Me." He is the only light that the world can ever receive, everything else is just an attempt by men to discover light; and they invariably fail.

There is no light apart from Christ. But notice what He says about us.

**Matthew 5:14-16** "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

"You are the light of the world." In other words, because He is what He is, and because of our relationship to Him, we likewise become the light of the world. It is very difficult for us to realize and comprehend this miracle.

We are just a small number in this pagan world, and sadly sometimes we are ashamed of ourselves. Sin leads to shame.

**Psalms 25:2-3** O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause.

The state of mind of being embarrassed or ashamed of God's way of life manifests itself in the feeling of inferiority or unworthiness with regard to the world. We are restrained by shame in a way that interferes with our commitment to Jesus Christ and His teachings.

**Mark 8:38** For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

When Christ used the expression, “ashamed of me and of my words,” He was drawing a contrast with the willing attitude to lose one's life for His sake. But the truth about us is this: We are the light of the world. Jesus Christ said that about us. This dark, evil world knows no light, and has no light, apart from the light from Christ that you and I are reflecting.

Thinking about it from the aspect of our dignity, what Christ is, and what He makes us, is inevitable because of our relationship with Him. Listen to what Christ reveals to the Laodiceans and the rest of the Church in the Book of Revelation.

**Revelation 3:21** To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Because the Bride of Christ is overcoming she is going to sit with Him on His throne. That is the dignity, that is the privilege we have.

The apostle Paul seems to scratch his head at the church at Corinth because they just do not seem to get it; they do not seem to be able to grasp this greatness and this glory.

**I Corinthians 6:2-5** Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?

Even though Paul's rebuke was initially directed at the Corinthians, it was inspired for the edification of every member of God's church. “What is the matter with you?” asks Paul. “Why are you arguing among yourselves?”

Paul wonders if they realize that every one of us as a Christian is in such a relationship to Christ that we are going to judge the world; that we are going to judge angels. This is part of the dignity that belongs to us.

Think of the Christian in relationship to the angels. Had you realized that we are meant for a destiny that will put us above the angels? The angels are wonderful beings, they

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excel in strength; but we are destined for a position that will be above the angels.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it like this,

**Hebrews 2:5-8** For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

So we are sometimes discouraged because 'NOW we do not yet see all things put under him'; but we have hope. And here is why:

**Hebrews 2:9** But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

These words mean that we are going to be in that position. We already have it in the sight of God; we do not see it, but it is true of us now.

We are as good as above the angels because we are the Bride of Christ; and as He is above them in the heavenly places, we have the dignity and that greatness and that position even now.

### **His Privileges**

The next point is that we share not only in His life, but in His privileges.

The moment a woman becomes the bride of a man she shares his privileges. Whatever they are, she becomes participant of them and sharer of them; and this is also true of the Church.

What do we share? We share the Father's love.

Notice a passage in John's gospel that I quoted earlier, it is really quite amazing.

**John 17:22-23** And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

This is a statement to the effect that God the Father has loved us as He loves His own Son. This means that because of our relationship to Christ we are in that relationship to God.

Here's an illustration: Think of a man, without daughters, whose son just got married. He now says to the bride of his son, "You are my daughter." And he regards as his daughter from then on in every way. She is one with his son; therefore, he bestows his fatherly love on her.

What did Christ say about the Father's relationship? "That the world may know that You have loved them as You have loved Me." That is the privilege. It works this way—it gives us access to the Father. A father is always ready to receive the bride of his son. She did not have that access to him before; there was no relationship; but the moment she becomes married to the son she has a legal and personal right of access into the presence of the father.

As the father is ready to receive the son, and to give the son privileges that he would not grant to his most trusted and favored employees, so now he grants them to the bride because she is the wife of his son.

True Christians have a right of entry and of access into the presence of the Father in Jesus Christ the Bridegroom. Though God the Father is the Supreme Ruler of the whole Universe, if we have a need, we have a right of entry to His presence.

He will always listen to the Bride of His Son, if we ask according to His will. He always has time for us. There is no higher privilege than this. He loves us as He loves His Son, and He gives us this right of access and of entry into His holy presence.

Since we have this knowledge, it should make us think twice before we pray. As we realize what we are doing and what we are, we should remember the rights and privileges that are given to us.

## **His Possessions**

The next point is that we are sharers in His possessions. The apostle Paul, as you would expect, had something to say about what we are given. He asks the Corinthians, "Why are you divided among yourselves and jealous of one another, and envying one another?"

**I Corinthians 3:18-23** Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

"All things are yours"—everything—because, "You are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The Universe is ours to inherit, because we belong to Christ. It is obvious that the apostle Paul was thrilled with this knowledge; and a test of our faith, a test of our conversion, is whether we are moved and thrilled by these things.

We may be having a hard time; we may be persecuted; we may be despised, people may be laughing at us because we are Christians. What we have to remind ourselves about is what Paul reminded the brethren about in Rome.

**Romans 8:16-17** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

It does not matter what the world thinks of us. All things are ours; we are joint heirs with Christ.

This old world that we are in at this moment is only a passing world; this is not the real world, this is not the lasting world.

What we see is the world, this society, as the result of what man has made. What we see is the chaos produced by man under the sway of the evil one. The world itself, of course, is very interested in the visible and the present; and everybody is wondering what the latest national and international conferences will resolve and achieve.



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But all their efforts are in vain. This is an evil world, and evil and sin will go on manifesting themselves in it until God's appointed time of judgment arrives. But there is a "World to come;" it is the New Jerusalem that will come down from heaven, and Christ will dwell there with His Bride. We are heirs of this glory that is to come.

You may be having a hard time striving against the world, the flesh, and Satan; you may be facing difficulties and obstacles; do not dwell on that alone!

**II Corinthians 4:16-18** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

We have no reason to have anxiety over this because we share Christ's inheritance, His possessions! He puts these things into our hands. We are His Bride and He is going to marry us.

### **His Interests**

The next point is that we are sharers of His interests, His plans, and His purposes. We are co-workers together with God. Our service in the Church should not be something done on a superficial level to be seen by others. It is not something done merely in terms of yourself and what you are doing.

Rise above that and consider Christ's interests because they are God's interests, plans, and purposes. Christ has a purpose with respect to the world, and we are the light of the world, therefore, we are intricately involved with Christ in that purpose.

The husband tells his wife everything. She knows his every secret, his every desire, every ambition, every hope, every project that interests him. She is one with him.

He confides in her and tells her things that he would not say to anybody else; she shares everything, and there is nothing kept back, nothing hidden from her.

**Revelation 2:17** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. [Hidden manna represents previously unrevealed spiritual knowledge,

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spiritual food, and eternal nourishment.] And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."

Full disclosure is the relationship of husband and wife. It is also the relationship that is developing between Christ and the Church; we are partners with Him in God's plan of salvation for mankind. We have had many secrets revealed to us, and there are many more revelations we will be privileged to know.

A wife is a helper for her husband, as the Church is a helper for Christ. Therefore, we should pray about our role as helper for Christ. A wife who is worthy of the name does not need to be pushed to take an interest in her husband's activities; she counts it her great privilege to be helping her husband; she is genuinely interested in what he is involved in, and in his success.

Since we are the Bride of Christ; the Groom shares it all with us. Therefore, we must rise to the dignity and privilege of it all.

### **His Servants**

Jesus Christ not only shares His possessions, interests, plans and purposes with us, we are sharers of His servants. He shares His servants with us.

There are many variations of the rags to riches theme. There is the story of a woman in her rags, slaving and having a hard and difficult life. She does all the chores for others.

The short version of the story is that a prince comes upon her; and because of her dignity and virtues and beauty, the prince falls in love with her (but of all that, it is her inner beauty, her quality of character that matters).

**I Peter 3:3-4** Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

She eventually marries the prince; and then what happens? Instead of having to slave in that humiliating way she now has servants. Whose servants? His servants! Because she has become the bride of this Prince all his servants are her servants, and they

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minister to her as they do to him.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is contrasting Jesus Christ with the angels, and this is how he expresses it.

**Hebrews 1:13-14** But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

What this means is that because we are Christians, the angels of God are our servants under the supervision of Christ.

That is how this Epistle describes an angel, as a ministering spirit, who is sent forth to serve and to minister to us who are the heirs of the world to come of which he is speaking.

Since they are unseen, not visible, we may tend to neglect the appreciation of the ministry of angels. We may not be as thankful for them as we should be. But whether we realize it or not, there are angels who are looking out for us; they are always here with us for physical and spiritual protection and also to keep tabs on us regarding other needs in our lives.

Although we do not see them, that does not matter. We do not see most of the important things; we only see the things that are temporary and visible. Nevertheless, we are surrounded by angels, and they are appointed to look after us and to minister to us.

Christ's servants are our servants, because He is the Bridegroom and we are His Bride. They are manipulating things for us in ways we cannot understand. From their creation they have ministered to God and Christ; and because of our new relationship they are now our ministering servants.

It is important to realize that we are surrounded by ministering spirit beings; and that nothing can harm us unless God allows it. The angels are there sent by Christ under His Father's authority to look after us.

## **His Sufferings**

The next point is that we are sharers of His problems, of His troubles, and of His

sufferings.

We should not expect to have friendship with the world; but this should not deter us from the work that God has given us to do. We see by looking at the example of Jesus Christ that He was not deterred by the opposition of the wealthy, the highly educated, or the powerful.

**John 15:18-20** "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Remembering this, and having his example firmly in mind, we are not to labor less because the wicked oppose and ridicule us, but we must stand all the more steadfast in our witnessing of God's way of life.

The apostle Paul felt something of the pain, but he was still able to rejoice because he had the right focus, not on himself, but on the work of God.

**Colossians 1:24-27** I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The apostle Paul was so conscious of his relationship to Jesus Christ that he said that he was filling up in his own body something that remained of the 'sufferings of Christ.'

A wife worthy of the name suffers whenever her husband suffers; she suffers in her heart as she sees him suffering; she shares it with him, she bears it with him.

Paul took upon himself in his own body something of what remained of the sufferings of Christ as God works out His purpose in the world. The Church, the Bride of Christ

knows something of this agony, this suffering—the sufferings of the Head of the body.

## His Prospects

The last point is that we are sharers in all the glory of His prospects. Our new life is hidden with Christ in God. Eternal life is an invaluable jewel or treasure, which is laid up with Christ in heaven where God is. Since our treasure is laid up in heaven, we must not set our minds on the things on the earth.

**Colossians 3:1-4** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

This means that Christ must prepare His Bride ahead of time, as Paul says in Ephesians 5:27, “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.”

Therefore, we can look forward to sharing everlasting glory with the Bridegroom Son of God. From this it follows that we should regard ourselves as living for the kingdom of God.

Notice Christ’s prayer in John 17:

**John 17:24-26** "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

We share God’s love for Christ, and we will share it with Him through all eternity.

Is there anything that is comparable to this, to being Christ’s Bride and members of His body?

With such a wonderful promise and future, can we allow our weaknesses, our

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helplessness, our complaining, our lethargy, our half-envying the world distract us from the spiritual privileges we are and will be given? Is the so-called wonderful life it has, its artificial joy and shallow entertainment worth pursuing? How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

It is a dying world; it is an evil world; it is under condemnation; and it is going to disappear. It is already passing away. But you and I have this glory to look forward to, the glory that we will share with Jesus Christ. The glory of that 'world to come' is indescribable; and we will live and reign with Him over the whole universe.

Having taken the Church as His Bride, He bestows all that on her. His prospects are ours, His glory is ours; all things are ours. This is what the true Christian as a member of God's church and as the Bride of Christ has to look forward to.

What a wonderful Husband! What an awesome future!