

The Offspring of Our Union

The Beauty of the Bride – Part II
Union with Christ

Romans 7:4

Introduction

Romans, chapter 7, began by describing the marriage of the Christian to the Son of God. Our old marriage to the Law has been dissolved, not by divorce, but by death. Having died to the Law in Christ, we are now free to remarry, and Christ offers Himself to us as our eternal Bridegroom.

The Holy Spirit presides over the wedding ceremony that we call, conversion. He asks us, “Will you take the Savior to be your wedded husband?”

We answered, “Yes!”

We took His name, Christian, as our own. We are awaiting His coming to take us back to where He has already prepared an addition onto the Father’s house for us.

The marriage is just the beginning, however. What is the purpose in our union with Christ? What did we expect from our marriage to Christ? What does He expect from us?!

Last Sunday, I saw a young woman showing off her engagement ring to some friends. I stopped and asked to see it. It was a beautiful ring. Suppose I were to ask her, “Now just why did you pick this guy to marry?”

Then, suppose she answered, “Because he makes me feel good about myself.”

Who is at the center of her reasoning? She is.

What if I asked some guy, who is engaged to be married, “Why are you marrying her?”

He replies, “Because she meets all of my needs.”

What is the chief incentive for his union? His own self-centered desires.

What if I asked a young fiancée, if there was any other reason for marrying this guy, and she said, “He makes me happy.”

“He makes you happy? What happens after you get married and discover that no one on earth can make you more unhappy than he can? You will end up calling your mother and saying, ‘He’s so irritating and exasperating!’”

I am not speaking from experience, of course.

If you ask some fellow, “Why are you going to marry her?”

“Well, because she’s so sweet.”

“What happens when she goes sour?”

“But, she’s so kind and gentle!”

“What happens when she isn’t gentle? What happens when she turns into a wild-eyed she-bear trapped in a cave and you’re the only living thing between her and freedom? Then what?!”

I have never been very good at pre-marital counseling!

The truth is, we not only enter marriage selfishly, we discover marriage to be amazingly adept at revealing every flaw in the human nature.

I thought it funny that Pastor Jonathan Edwards dealt with this issue as well. I read, this past week, of an incident that occurred in his ministry during the Great Awakening. One hundred fifty years ago, during the American revivals, Jonathan Edwards was

leading a massive prayer meeting with about eight hundred men in attendance. To that meeting, a woman sent a message asking the men to pray for her husband. The note described a man who had become unloving, filled with pride, and extremely difficult to live with. Edwards read the message in private and then, thinking that perhaps the man described was present, made a bold request. Edwards read the note to the eight hundred men and asked if the man who had been described would raise his hand so that the whole assembly could pray for him. Three hundred men raised their hands!ⁱ

D. Martin Loyd-Jones provoked my thinking. He wrote about the way we pander to the selfishness of the unbeliever when we attempt to win them to Christ. We say things to the unbeliever; such as:

- Would you like to feel better about yourself? Then accept Christ.
- Would you like to have all of your needs met? Then come to Christ.
- Are you unhappy? Come to Christ and He will make you happy all the time.

Presenting only those motives to an unbeliever not only distorts the gospel and misrepresents the Christian life, but allows the unbeliever to remain the center of his world. The gospel then becomes nothing more than some anti-depressant and Christ becomes a spiritual therapist who exists to ease their aches and pains. They say, “Yes, I want that kind of Jesus,” and pray a little prayer. Then, two months later, they abandon it all saying, “Christianity is too much work. I didn’t know Jesus was going to want to reconstruct my life. I never dreamed how inconvenient holiness would be.”ⁱⁱ

The Offspring of Our Union with Christ

What is the purpose of our union with Christ?
Why did we get married to Christ?

Fruit for God

There are a number of reasons, but the one Paul emphasizes in Romans, chapter 7, surprised me. Look at verse 4.

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

I would have expected Paul to write,

... so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, ...

- ... in order that we might be forgiven.
- ... that we might know the liberty we have in our union with Christ.
- ... that we might inherit eternal life.

All of those things are true, yet the purpose statement that Paul delivers in this verse, states the surprising motive,

... in order that we might bear fruit for God.

On second thought, it is not really surprising is it? Paul is writing within the context of an illustration of marriage between Christ and His bride, the church. Paul includes a reference to the offspring of our union with Christ, which is,

... that we might bear fruit for God.

Paul moves from the image of a bride to the image of a tree bearing fruit. Fruit is the expression of life. We had been planted in the soil of sin and law and death. Then, God through Christ, transplanted us and placed us in the rich soil of grace and mercy so that we would be able to bear the fruit of His life in our character and conduct.

Fruit is the proof of life. Fruit reveals what kind of life is in the tree. Jesus said in Matthew, chapter 12, verse 33b,

... for the tree is known by its fruit.

Fruits that evidence marriage to Christ

So, what kinds of fruit are there? What are the kinds of fruit that evidence marriage to the Son of God?

Nearly seventy times, the word “karpos,” or “fruit,” appears in the New Testament. We obviously do not have time to look at all of them in order to understand Paul’s declaration of God’s intention for our lives, but let me give you a few of them.

The fruit of speech

1. First, there is the fruit of speech.

Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 15, says,

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

Sons sound just like their fathers; daughters talk just like their mothers! The accents and nuances are

exactly the same. Husbands and wives adopt similar vocabularies and expressions. That comes from exposure to one another.

When you spend time with Christ, you begin to speak the language of Christ. Your speech is pure and filled with praise that becomes a sacrifice to God.

The fruit of surrender

2. Secondly, there is the fruit of surrender.

John, chapter 12, verse 24, says,

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

“Lord, here I am . . . Your seed. You can bury me now, whenever and wherever You wish!”

This reminds me of a young lady in our congregation that I was told about recently. She became convicted that she was not bearing fruit for Christ. She did not feel like she was really doing anything for her Lord. She discovered a group of five older women and started talking to them. She found that they were believers, but were not really doing anything for Christ. They told her they preferred to work evenings and weekends because they were basically lonely and preferred to work rather than stay at home alone. This young lady invited all five to her home for dinner and began a Bible study with them. She then prayed for something to do together with them that would allow them the chance to serve as well. She called the mission to homeless women and children in Raleigh. They have recently gone together and provided a skit and a Bible story for the homeless women and their children.

“Here am I Lord . . . Your seed. Bury me wherever You will!”

The reason the fruit of many believers is little instead of much, is because their surrender has conditions. They will determine where they will be buried and where they will bear fruit. They never fully accept where God buried them, and that lack of full surrender fails to bear much fruit!

The fruit of spiritual maturity

3. Thirdly, there is the fruit of spiritual maturity.

Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 9 through 11, says,

Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall

we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

The correction of God, to the believer who listens and learns from his mistakes, brings about fruit of righteousness; right living which involves spiritual maturity.

Many Christians are growing old in the Lord but are not growing up in the Lord. The primary reason for this that the writer of Hebrews suggests, is that they will not listen or learn from the correction of God’s Spirit and His Word.

One of the greatest evidences of spiritual growth is the growing evidence of the next kind of fruit.

The fruit of sacrificial giving

4. Fourthly, there is the fruit of sacrificial giving.

Paul wrote these astonishing words to the Philippian believers, in chapter 4, verse 15,

You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia . . .

(listen to this!),

. . . no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

In other words, when Paul began his ministry, nobody supported him except the Philippian church. Continue to verses 16 and 17.

for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit . . .

(“karpos,” or fruit),

. . . which increases to your account.

According to Paul, the financial assistance given to him allows the Philippian believers to receive future rewards from Paul’s labor.

A person will invest in stock with the hope that the shares will grow in value and the increase can be added to their account. We invest in people. We give so that ministry can happen in the lives of

people. And, those who give become a partner not only in the ministry, but in the reward.

I want you to know how excited I am about the way this church gives to people and projects outside our own budget. I believe this church has developed a good nose for investment potential.

A few weeks ago, I brought up on the stage of this church, a young man who was heading for Moody Bible Institute. He is a Russian teenager who came to America as an atheist, but was led to Christ in this church and was disciplined by our student ministry staff. His name is Dima. You may remember that he sat on the front row wearing the new suit that he had bought for ten dollars at Goodwill. Within a matter of days, he was to head for Bible college to prepare for the ministry, with the plan to eventually go back to Russia as a missionary. I brought him up on stage – it was not part of our service; we had not planned to do it; we just sensed that together we could help him pay for his schooling, as well as for his way to Chicago. In fact, he did not even know how he was going to get to Chicago. We passed the plates in the second and third services, and later, others from the first service heard about it and contributed. This congregation, after already giving beyond our own budgeted needs, reached in its pockets and gave Dima an offering of \$17,400, as well as three plane tickets!

The Bride of Christ bears fruit that resembles the heart of her Bridegroom; who came to give Himself away!

Did we lose anything? No! What an incredible investment!

The fruit of saving truth

5. Fifthly, there is the fruit of saving truth.

Colossians, chapter 1, verses 3 through 6a, says,

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit . . .

The gospel bears the fruit of truth, the fruit of life, and the fruit of light and hope. Without the gospel:

- there is not light, but darkness;

- there is not truth, but speculation;
- there is not life, but despair;
- there is not hope, but futility.

Everything a person yearns for in life, ultimately is that which rides upon the wind of the gospel, for the true gospel points men and women to Jesus Christ.

There is no greater thrill than sharing the gospel of hope with someone who is hopeless and then, watching them discover hope in Christ. Let me tell the story of a recent opportunity that I had to share the gospel.

A few weeks ago, Marsha and I were on our way back from the coast. Some friends had loaned their beach house to us so that we could celebrate our twenty-second anniversary. It was in a beautiful spot of creation. On our way home, we picked up our youngest daughter, who had been staying nearby with friends.

It was raining off and on as we traveled back. Although the interstate has a seventy mile per hour speed limit, I had slowed down because of the rain, which had saturated the road. I still do not know what happened, but I remember feeling the steering wheel jerk a little to the left. I pulled it back and we began to hydroplane out of control. Our van turned completely around, as if it were on ice, and we went off the interstate backward at about sixty miles an hour. We crashed into a guardrail and skidded down it, knocking one post after another down. Finally, we came to a stop. No one was hurt, the windows had not broken, but the side of the van had been destroyed – the van was totaled.

We called our friend, Ed Maness, a member of this church who is an officer with the State Highway Patrol. Within minutes, he was there to calm us, help us, and deal with the traffic report. He even drove us home.

At the time, we were right in the middle of our church series on adversity. I did not mention this then, because I did not think it qualified to be in the list of adversities that our brothers and sisters in Christ were experiencing. But for us, this was adversity.

I remembered what Richard Allen Farmer said, “While we don’t always know the reason for adversity, adversity always has a reason.”

I wondered what the reason was.

I went to a car dealership to look at vans like the one we had just totaled. The “sticker shock” sent my

heart racing. I could not believe how much vans had increased in price in four years! So, I got on the Internet and found a used van in Connecticut that was like ours. I searched the history of the van through the vin number, and it was clean, had low mileage, and was still under warranty. I negotiated the deal over the telephone and agreed to buy the van.

Wayne Witt and Drew Baird, a couple of guys in our church who love to fly planes, flew me in a small plane to Cheshire, Connecticut. The van salesman met us at the little community airport, where we checked out the van and then, drove it back to the dealership. My friends flew back to Raleigh.

My plan was to wrap up the deal and get to my parent's home in Virginia no later than ten o' clock that night. I pulled away from the dealership around two o' clock that afternoon. The plan was working like clockwork. I still could not figure out why this was all happening. I drove about thirty minutes south and pulled off for some food. After getting some strong coffee, I got back in the van . . . and it would not start!

The van would not start – it just made a funny noise. I am not a mechanic, but I know a funny noise when I hear it. It was not a dead battery noise; it was not a bad starter sound; it made a noise that sounded like a thousand people laughing and jeering at me for buying a van in Connecticut.

I called the dealer on my cell phone and said, "What did you sell me?"

He said, "Stephen, the van, as you know from our vin number search, had a bulb replaced and a door lock – that's it. It has never broken down."

That was true, and we had driven it back from the airport and it ran like a charm.

He said, "You're still under warranty so you have free roadside assistance."

Suddenly, I am filled with joy! After several hours of waiting, I was towed to a small dealership in the little town of Fairfield, Connecticut. It was not fair and there were no fields anywhere in sight.

All the while, I was thinking, "Adversity has a reason."

When we got to the dealership, it was closing. They checked for spark and gas and got both. The mechanic said, "Look, it's after five o' clock, I'll look at it first thing in the morning."

I do not want to bore you with all this. Do you want to hear the rest of it?

I said, "Well, do you have a hotel nearby?"

He said, "Yea, there's a Fairfield Inn down the street a couple of blocks."

I made it there and booked a room – for eighty-five bucks. Then I remembered that my younger brother could get a room for me with his frequent flier miles. The Fairfield Inn just happens to be connected with the Marriott. I called him and he said, "No problem."

My brother called back a little later, but instead of giving me a code number, he said, "Stephen, the Marriott people can't find a Fairfield Inn where you are. The closest one is in New Haven, which is ten minutes north."

I said, "Look, I'm standing in the lobby of the Fairfield Inn."

He said, "Okay, I'll keep looking."

Ten minutes later, he called and said, "There isn't anything related to Marriott in that town."

By now I had been looking around and had noticed that there was no air conditioning and the lobby was rather chewed up. I said, "Wait a minute," and walked outside. I looked up at the sign, and it said, "Fairfield Motor Inn". I was in the town of Fairfield.

I asked the hotel clerk to please call a cab for me. Thirty minutes later, he pulled up and I got in and said, "Fairfield Inn, New Haven."

He said, "New Haven, that's twenty miles north. It'll cost you thirty bucks."

I said, "It is not, it's ten miles north."

He said, "No it isn't, it's twenty miles north and it'll cost you thirty to thirty-five bucks."

I grabbed my briefcase, got out, and said, "You go yank somebody else's chain."

I walked into the hotel, pointed at the lady, who I am sure was part of the conspiracy, and said, "Call me an honest taxi. That guy said it was twenty miles north and would cost around thirty bucks."

She said, "He's right!"

Now I had blown it! So, what do I do? I called the dealership and got a salesman. I explained my need to get to New Haven and asked if he could take me.

"Well, that's an hour round trip for me. I've got to work until around eight o' clock . . . sorry."

I said, "Okay, don't worry about it."

What do I do? I don't have much cash on me, I'm hungry, I can't get to my hotel, my van is a

lemon, and I'm stuck in a town filled, no doubt, with liberal Democrats . . . not that there is anything wrong with that!

“What is the reason for this, Lord?”

Twenty minutes later, I was about to call that taxi back, when the lady at the desk said to me, “You have a phone call.”

It was the salesman. He was an elderly man who was retired, but was working part time to make a little money. He said, “I've been thinking about you. I'm sorry you're stranded. Look, if you can help me with gas money, I'll come after work and take you to New Haven.”

I said, “Thank you so much.”

A little after eight o' clock, he pulled up. He was obviously on his last nickel. He was a soft-spoken man whose name was Michael. We took off. The last thing I wanted to do was talk a lot, but he began to tell me his life story. He was a former POW and was divorced with grown kids that he rarely saw. He was diagnosed with cancer a year or so ago and survived it. He moved to Fairfield to be near his high school sweetheart, who was a widow. They were seeing each other and were not sure what was next. He then said, not knowing I was a pastor, that he had had a number of blood transfusions because of the effects of his cancer. As a result, he had been told that he had contracted the HIV virus. It had developed rapidly, and he had been told recently that he had six months to live. He said to me, “You know, I've never told anyone this before – that I have AIDS – you know what I've decided to do? I'm going to go to Florida this winter and die in the sun.”

For two weeks I had wondered, “Why? What's the reason for the accident and the plane trip and the broken down van? Will I ever know the reason why?”

When this man said, “I'm gonna go to Florida and die in the sun,” I knew. We had been taken through all of this so that I would be brought to a town in Connecticut called Fairfield, as a messenger boy for the King, to deliver a message to this man that God had already prepared, through his deep adversity, to hear the gospel which bears the fruit of light and truth and hope.

We sat out in the parking lot and it was not long before he prayed and became the bride of Christ. He had tasted the fruit of the gospel, which Paul said in this verse, continues to bear fruit all around the world.

Conclusion

We have been married to Christ – and the offspring of our union is fruit. It is the fruit of:

- speech that is marked by purity and praise;
- surrender of our lives to God's will in His placement;
- spiritual maturity as we learn from His instruction;
- sacrificial giving as we seize ministry investment opportunities;
- the privilege of sharing the gospel with others so they too can experience its life giving fruit and become the bride of Christ.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 8/17/2003 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Bryan Chapell, *Holiness by Grace* (Crossway, 2001), p. 80.

ⁱⁱ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: The Law* (Zondervan Publishing, 1973), p. 64.