

Grace to you and peace from Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests to God. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 5:22–33 (NKJV) — 22 Wives, submit 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; and He is the Savior of the body. **24** Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. **25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, **26** that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, **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. **28** So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. **29** For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. **30** For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. **31** “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” **32** This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. **33** 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.

Marriage is a Bond

In Jesus name, fellow redeemed,

I'd like to share with you three definitions that the dictionary gives for the word “bond”:

- 1 *physical restraints used to hold someone or something prisoner, esp. ropes or chains,*
- 2 *an agreement or promise with legal force,*
- 3 *(as of a chemical bond) a strong force of attraction holding atoms together in a molecule or crystal, resulting from the sharing or transfer of electrons.*

Marriage is described in our text as a BOND – a joining of two to become one. The husband is to be ONE with his wife as Christ is ONE with the Church.

1. Christ and the Church are ONE

In our series of sermons from Ephesians, more than once we have been considering the UNION of Christ and the Church. In chapter one, **Ephesians 1:10 (NKJV) — 10 [that] He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.** And chapter two, **Ephesians 2:13 (NKJV) — 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** And chapter 4, **Ephesians 4:4–6 (NKJV) — 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**

The Church is ONE. As Scripture reveals, the Church is the invisible body of all believers united, bonded together to each other in One Holy Christian Church with ONE head – the Lord Jesus Christ: (**v.23b**). Considering those three definitions just mentioned, which definition describes the bond of Christ and the Church? What is it that binds the Church to Christ to be ONE?

For good reason Scripture describes your redemption as “reconciliation” – a word which means “to bring together.” Apart from Christ’s reconciliation, we find only separation. **Isaiah 59:2 (NKJV) – 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.**

To reconcile the Church to Himself, make the two become ONE, to bring sinners to peace with God, a sacrifice was needed; Jesus had to give Himself. (**v.25b–26**).

When combined with other Scripture references, the word, “washing,” used here can mean nothing other than baptism. First of all, “water” is mentioned. Second of all, this is the same word used by Paul in his letter to Titus – **Titus 3:5 (NKJV) – 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,**

God saved us, as it says, through this washing of rebirth. Baptism, then, may be thought of as your wedding ceremony – the timeless marriage of Christ and the Church. **Galatians 3:27 (NKJV) – 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**

Christ has washed you, presented you spotless, a glorious and unblemished bride, clothed only with His righteousness. **Isaiah 61:10 (NKJV) – 10 He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, ... as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.**

Christ and the Church are ONE. (**v.31b-32**) The English Standard Version translates: “This mystery is great and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church.” Think about this. Think about how intimate is your union to Jesus – it is as intimate as marriage – the “mysterious union.” The two have become ONE.

But just what does it mean to be ONE with Christ? What establishes and preserve this marriage bond? Marriage is often called a commitment. Is this bond preserved by your commitment to the bridegroom? Our life has shown anything but. By our thoughts and actions we have shown more desire to desert than to deserve. Our flesh sees this marriage only as a burden. Our flesh looks with longing eyes at the world around us, where the grass is supposedly greener. Our flesh craves the many pleasures we could be enjoying apart from our bond to Christ. If not for the undeserved love of our Savior Jesus, we are found adulterers.

Understand now, dear Christians, the great power of baptism. Understand how this is a MEANS OF GRACE – the gospel through means of Word and Sacrament. ... through earthly means He bring us His grace; He bring us the forgiveness of sins. Just like the Lord’s Supper uses an earthly element to work heavenly miracles through bread and

wine, so also baptism brings the heavenly gift of God's kingdom through the "washing of water by the word."

Through the word baptism brings you heavenly gifts. For a gift is just that – A GIFT ... something that does not depend on me. It neither comes to me because of my worthiness – for I have none. Nor is it withheld because of my unworthiness – for then we would all be lost.

If it were up to us, we would have left this marriage long ago – but Christ is the constant reconciler. Here is a marriage that will last – for unlike so many failed marriages, it rests not in earthly things, but in the perfect love of Christ. In an unconditional love (for that is the definition of "grace") Jesus calls us back, welcomes us into open arms.

We cannot define this BOND by definition #1 – *physical restraints used to hold someone or something prisoner*. Nor can we use definition #2 – *an agreement or promise with legal force*. Jesus exercises His headship by serving, by sacrifice, by giving Himself that by any means, He might save you. It would be more fitting to see this bond in the chemical definition: *a strong force of attraction holding atoms together, resulting from the sharing or transfer of electrons*. The bond of attraction, not by looks or outward things, but through the sharing of the forgiveness of sins and the attractive power of the gospel.

What could better motivate a fear and love response?

We bow to Him not by constraint. We are ONE not by force or imprisonment. We serve Him in the thankfulness, in love, as the body serves the head. Our life in Christ is a response – a response of unconditional fear and faith. Let us serve Him only, as the bride who adores no other husband, for no other husband, nothing this world could offer can compare with the eternal wedding feast our Savior has provided.

Revelation 19:7–9 (NKJV) — 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' "

Christ and the Church are ONE.

2. Husband and Wife are ONE

Getting back to our definitions of the concept "BOND", let's apply it to our earthly marriages ... which of these definition would we use to describes the bond of husband and wife?

So often the world seems to define marriage according to definition #1 – *physical restraints used to hold someone or something prisoner*. Hence the phrase: "ball and chain."

Our pride and sinful flesh are no different. Your flesh refuses to be tied down. He wants to break loose. He sees marriage or any calling of God an imprisonment holding him

back. This is why it is tempting to look at this bond as nothing more than a legal obligation, a contract.

Maybe you've seen the show "Everybody Loves Raymond." In one of the episodes, after a trip, a suitcase left at the bottom of the stairs. The husband and wife, Ray and Deborah, both expect the other person to take the bag upstairs and unpack it. So there it sits, as Ray and Deborah walk past it day after day, pretending to ignore it as the animosity builds and builds. It builds to the point that when Ray leaves on a business trip, he makes sure Deborah will no longer ignore it by leaving the bag behind with a piece of moldy cheese in it. Finally an argument explodes. Why didn't you take it? Well, why didn't you? Deborah begins referring to all the things she does around the house and how little Ray does, while Ray responds coldly by saying that this is her job.

How typical it is of our me centered mind. Not just marriage, but we see this in most every relationship we have. Our natural mind is a very good score keeper. Either we know why we aren't responsible, or we know why the other person is. Maybe we keep it suppressed for some time, but when the suitcase at the bottom of the stairs finally can be ignored no more, out comes the score cards. Either – you NEVER unpack the suitcase after a trip, OR – I ALWAYS unpack the suitcase. Looking at our Christian life as a score card is only to see legal obligations.

(v.31) Jesus added in Matt. 19 "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." God that creates this BOND of husband and wife. The husband and wife are not ONE on paper only. "The two shall become one flesh." Leaving father and mother they form a whole new family – a new UNIT. They are to be ONE in every way.

(v.24,25)

How often this relationship is misconstrued in our society. Many argue this passage is outdated because it teaches some sort of inferiority of women. Notice, though, quite the opposite is being said – after all, Christ Jesus our Lord "**did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom**" (Matt. 20:28). In Philippians we read that, in Jesus, God humbled Himself and took the form of a slave. This is what it means to be head of the wife – to serve – to love her so much that you are willing to yourself in order to serve her, to save her, to rescue her from every trouble, every bad day, every struggle. And in Christ, the husband finds a reason to repent, to see how he has not really done this as He should. In Christ is found forgiveness and motivation to improve.

(v.28)

Just as with the Church, what could better motivate a godly response than unconditional love? Men are no where called to put the wife into submission. Men are not called to be master or dictator. Instead the call to submit is the wife's alone. It is her act of love for Christ that will in turn show fear and trust for the husband God has given her. And in Christ, the wife finds a reason to repent, having seen the failure to respect the husband as the Church does to Christ. In Christ is found forgiveness and motivation to improve.

Perhaps we can see then the best definition for the BOND of marriage in the chemical definition, #3 – *the strong force of attraction holding atoms together in a molecule or crystal, resulting from the sharing or transfer of electrons.* After all, the attraction that

occurs with atoms is through opposite forces working together. For every electron, let us respond with a proton, and vice versa. We share forgiveness. We transfer acts of love.

This call to faith is not to wait until we find some worthy reason to act. The call is founded in the unconditional love of Christ who every day reconciles you to Him. He heals and strengthens your bond to Him by doing, not waiting. Hence the marriage bond is an ongoing reconciliation: communication, repentance, and forgiveness – not waiting for the other party to grab the suitcase, but grabbing it first, no score being kept. This is the love in action that will keep the bond strong.

Colossians 3:12–13 (NKJV) — 12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

We find the lasting attraction not in outward looks or emotional attachment, but in the nucleus – the inner gospel strength of Christ. Just as with the Church, in any relationship of this world, we find a lasting bond through forgiveness and reconciliation in Christ – our everyday re-bonding to each other. Truly, in such a bond, God has in store the greatest blessings.

Above all, we must remember that our earthly relationships will never be what they are supposed to be. We cannot rest our strength and hope in earthly things, lest our faith be a constant roller coaster. **Psalm 37:39 (NKJV) — 39 But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble.** Our strength rests in Jesus who gave himself for us. In this world we will have tribulation, but “be of good cheer,” says Jesus, “I have overcome the world.” Bonded to Christ, we partake of the everlasting wedding banquet of the Lamb.

*Hallelujah! Let praises ring!
Unto the Lamb of God we sing,
In whom we are elected.
He bought His church with His own blood,
He cleansed her in that blessed flood,
And as His Bride selected.
Holy, holy
Is our union And communion.
His befriending
Gives us joy and peace unending.*