



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Issue 51

### *Ladies First:*

## The Place of the Wife in the Life of Her Husband

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOME  
Part XXIII

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

**I**n Ephesians chapters 1-3, Paul shows us who and what we are in Christ. What a blessedness this is! That's where our relationship with the Lord, and with each other, is to be found and based – as members together of His body. Then in chapters 4-6 he shows us the living out of those truths – the living out of who and what we are in Christ.

When Paul gets to Ephesians 5:18-20, he shows us the source of this out-living of the life of Christ. It is through each one of us being individually filled with the Spirit. When we compare this passage with its parallel passage of Colossians 3:16-17, we learn that the filling of the Spirit is the same as allowing (the “let” in the passage) the word of Christ to dwell in us richly. These are parallel because Christ's words are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63). The “Holy Spirit” is the “Spirit of Christ,” and the “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

So spiritual life starts in each of us individually – in our own hearts (Ephesians 5:18-20), with fruit unto singing and thanksgiving. Inward joy is the individual result. Then Paul, working from our individual filling (spiritual life moves from the inside out!), follows the working of the Spirit OUT of our lives to “one to another” – not just “one another” in a general sense: not just *any* “one another,” but he shows that the divine design is that it flows in a very definite and distinct way. The first individual and role to be mentioned is the husband. This is no mere coincidence, for the head is always God's starting point, whether it be the first man Adam, or the second man – the last Adam.

God starts there, it's the divine starting place.

So the life of Christ begins to work in the husband toward his wife – to love his wife – *not* with mere human love, but with the divine love wherewith Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it!

Then, just as this filling with the Spirit flows from a man's heart to his wife, the divinely designed effect of her being filled with the Spirit is through submission to her husband, and then the life of God travels on out to the children, and *then* outside the home.

That is the divine order of spiritual life from God.

The Scripture places the wife as a husband's first and *paramount* relationship:

### **OUR WIVES ARE FIRST, BECAUSE OF THE PATTERN OF CREATION**

Let's take a look at the original plan of God for

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## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

ISSN: 1936-9360

No. 51 – September, 2000

This biweekly publication (24 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of *rich* Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

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### **PATRIARCHS**

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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(recompiled and edited)

human relationships. In the garden of Eden, how many people did God make? He made one man and one woman. He could have made multiple men and women. In so doing He could have provided women for Eve to do “girl things” with. He could have provided a wonderful opportunity in the garden for “women’s fellowship and Bible study meetings;” but this was not necessary in the mind of God.

In making multiple men, God would also have provided Adam with others to do “guy things” with. They could have had “men’s meetings,” and they could have had a sympathetic ear as they shared things that they thought they “could not talk about” with their wives; but this was not necessary in the mind of God either.

**OUR WIVES ARE FIRST,  
BECAUSE WE ARE “ONE FLESH”**

Then there is the nature of the husband and wife relationship itself, as drawn, defined, and limited by God: the two are “one.” *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24). They were so much one that God called their name “Adam” (Genesis 5:2). Our wives are us!

**OUR WIVES ARE FIRST,  
BECAUSE THEY ARE OUR CLOSEST SPIRITUAL  
RELATIONSHIP “IN CHRIST”**

If our wives are saved, then we even have an additional sphere of relationship – we are also one in Christ.

**OUR WIVES ARE FIRST,  
BECAUSE OF OUR HEADSHIP OVER THEM**

As husbands, we are the head of our wives. *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of every woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God”* (I Corinthians 11:3). The husband and wife have a uniquely designed relationship. No other relationship is structured like it!

**OUR WIVES ARE FIRST,  
BECAUSE WE HAVE THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF  
THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

As husbands, we are the divinely appointed agents to teach our wives. *“And if they will learn any thing,*

*let them ask their husbands at home”* (I Corinthians 14:35). We are, in the like manner of Christ, to “sanctify” and “cleanse” our wives by the “washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26).

**OUR WIVES ARE FIRST,  
BECAUSE IF WE DO NOT KNOW HOW  
TO MINISTER TO OUR WIVES AND CHILDREN,  
WE CANNOT KNOW HOW  
TO MINISTER TO THE REST  
OF THE BODY OF CHRIST**

Further ministry, outside of the home, is patterned by bishops and deacons. We qualify to export our home-life to the rest of the body of Christ, only when it demonstrates the divinely appointed patterns of relationships.

*“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)”*

*“Even so must their wives be ... faithful in all things.”*

*“Ruling their children and their own houses well.”* We are not to export what does not work at home!

**OUR WIVES ARE FIRST,  
BECAUSE THEY ARE OUR CLOSEST LIVING  
RELATIVE, OR NEXT OF KIN, AND WE ARE  
INSTRUCTED OF PAUL TO LEARN “BODY LIFE”  
WITHIN OUR FAMILIES FIRST**

When addressing the responsibility of “body life” extending out to the needs of the saints-at-large, Paul says *“Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn FIRST to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for this is good and acceptable before God”* (I Timothy 5:3-4).

As husbands, we need to focus upon the responsibility that God has given us personally.

It is so much easier for all of us to “do every body else’s business,” instead of doing our “own business” (I Thessalonians 4:11).



# *The Divine Viewpoint* in Our Relationships

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

**T**he way we see things – any of us – all depends upon our viewpoint. Now there are two basic viewpoints, one is human, earthly, and carnal. The other viewpoint is divine, heavenly, and spiritual. Our viewpoint determines the way that we *perceive* things. If we view things humanly, earthly, and carnally, then that is what we will “see.” We will always “see” the carnal, when we look from the carnal viewpoint. But if we will see things from God’s viewpoint we will “see” spiritually.

Example: sometimes we know there are discussions about hearing from each others’ hearts; speaking from the heart; knowing what’s in our hearts, talking heart to heart, sharing what’s on our hearts, and revealing our hearts. In all this it is important that we keep the divine perspective. After all, it is His viewpoint that is reality. As believers, who are we? Who are we *really*? Well, let’s allow Paul to answer that question:

*“For to me to live is Christ ...”* (Philippians 1:21).

*“I am crucified ... but Christ liveth in me”* (Galatians 2:20).

So who are we *really*? If it is true that we no longer live, but Christ lives in us – and that is true – and we want to get to know who we are, who in *reality* are we going to have to get to know? Whether we are dealing with our “own heart” or the “heart of our brother?” Who are we going to have to get to know? *Him!* He’s our true identity!

This truth removes our “need” to constantly evaluate, analyze, or go over the past to know ourselves or our brothers. Christ frees us from all of this! *“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 7:25).

## **FREEDOM FROM IDENTIFYING AND ASSIGNING MOTIVES**

When we seek to identify motives in others, what we may actually be doing is “evil surmisings.” That’s why we can’t start with, or count on the heart as being our FOCUS in our relationships together “in Christ.” We must come back to CHRIST as our FOCUS. If we FOCUS on Christ, He can be counted on for producing grace and edification. Our hearts, our motives, and our attempts to identify them, are unsure; but Christ is sure!

*“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”* (I Corinthians 2:2).

Suppose we had that as our FOCUS, instead of our own hearts and motives! What might the results of our relationships in Christ might be?

Well has C.S. Lewis written: “Humans are very seldom either totally sincere or totally hypocritical. Their moods change, their motives are mixed, and they are often themselves quite mistaken as to what their motives are.”

To that we say amen! How liberating to be freed from the bondage of our own hearts! Even our apostle would not judge himself – he left it with the Lord, who alone knows the answer to these things! (I Corinthians 4:3).

We are then FREE to know Christ – something sure! – and to have our motives in Him.

We have many precious things together in Christ – things that we can richly enjoy together if we keep our eyes on Him!

So, if I want to *really* get to know the *real* you better, I simply need to get to know Christ better. And if you want to *really* get to know the *real* me better you need to get to know Christ better. And if I want to get to know the *real* “me,” I need to open my Bible and get to know HIM!

If we approach our relationships in any other way than “in Christ,” we will approach them from a carnal viewpoint. And if we seek to know one another *in Adam*, we will find carnality. But this is NOT who we *really* are. So, if we keep seeking for folks to merely reveal their “hearts” – and they oblige us – we will stand risk of becoming continually disillusioned. But if we choose to live with our brothers and sisters the same way that God does – which is “in Christ,” the conflict will cease. At least it will cease in our own hearts – the *real* us – which is Christ. And then, even if our brothers or sisters are not enjoying the fullness of their *true* person, we can love them as who they *really* are, in spite of how they are “acting!”

Anything less than this will be to no avail. We will simply be using our human reasoning to lay forth the conditions by which we will have supposed “spiritual” relationships – conditions by which we will accept one another. And we will use these human, carnal standards to judge one another.

Let’s read carefully and live in Paul’s words to the carnal Corinthians:

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgement, yea I judge not my own self. For I know nothing of myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why

does thou glory, as if thou hast not received it?” (I Corinthians 4:3-7).

How quick are we to judge our brothers, to judge the circumstance – and all the while taking on the role of our Father. Paul was not moved by the judgement of others concerning himself. Their presumption upon him and his motives were of no weight to Paul. And neither did he analyze his own heart and spirit for judgement. He left us all with the Lord!

Herein lies the answer to the carnality of the Corinthians, and our own as well: to begin by allowing God to be the Lord.

Otherwise we end up being on “sides” for and against each other. When in Christ, there are no “sides.” We speak of “truth on both sides,” and “reality being somewhere in the middle.” But these are only human viewpoints. When the fact is, “in Christ” we are freed from “sides.” And the truth and *reality* is on neither side – it is “in Him.” That’s spirituality. In fact, the Holy Spirit is called the “Spirit of Christ,” and the “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” *He* is the reality, not what we “see” or “judge.”

When we get our eyes off of the Lord; off of who we are “in Him;” off of who others are “in Him,” we will end up biting and devouring one another.

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” (Galatians 5:14, 15).

This passage reminds us that loving our neighbor is our own responsibility, not our neighbors. We, as in everything, are *only* responsible to our own submission to the Holy Spirit. We are to love our neighbors, and leave their personal response to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

As believers we are neighbors (“fellows”) one of another (Ephesians 4:25)!

Our actions are often based upon these truths. There have been two passages that God has impressed upon me over the past few years. The first is:

*“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (I Thessalonians 4:11-12).*

Now here is a study that we would all do well to obey! Study to be quiet. It is Paul’s commandment to the body of Christ.

The other passage is:

*“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption, let all bitterness, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:30-32).*

This passage shows us how to end bitterness, clamour and evil speaking. And it is not by getting to the so-called “root” of the “problem.” That’s man’s solution. That’s psychology’s method. The Divine life is in forgiveness. Not just “forgetting,” but forgiveness – nothing short of forgiveness that is “even” with God’s forgiveness of us.

Ours is not designed to be an improved version of the world’s “guy to guy” relationship. It is designed to be an “in Christ” relationship. This relationship does not even need to be established, or built, or worked on: it already exists “in Christ,” and, as with all things that are “in Christ,” it is already “complete.”

That’s the starting point! Our relationships are already all that they will ever be. The only thing left is to learn about them from God, and enjoy them with each other – and we have all of eternity (praise the Lord!). And this is how it is

with all things that we have “in Christ.”

So what do we DO about our relationships? The answer is not so much found in DOING, as it is in *being* – BEING who we are “in Christ,” to each other. That involves forgiveness, longsuffering, forbearance, grace, gentleness, tenderness, tenderheartedness, peace, meekness, etc. And we are to instruct, encourage, admonish and rebuke one another concerning these things. But this is something that we cannot do if we do not live in them. But if we do live in them, even our admonition and rebuking will be in forgiveness, longsuffering, forbearance, grace, gentleness, tenderness, tenderheartedness, peace, meekness, etc. And we all need this admonition! The admonition to return to the divine viewpoint, to have a renewed mind. And when admonition and rebuking is done with all the attributes of Christ in place, it is done unto edification. But, anything less than that would be a tearing down.

That’s Paul’s point with the two saints that were having trouble at Philippi:

*“I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2).*

Paul did not beg these saints to “work things out.” He did not beg them to “get to the bottom” of their problems; he did not beg them to “settle their differences;” but he did beg them to “BE.” His instruction is “... *that they BE* ...” He only begs them to start BEING who they already are!

It is so easy to be critical, to find fault, and to nitpick our brothers and sisters in Christ. In fact, this is much easier than forgiveness, longsuffering, forbearance, grace, gentleness, tenderness, tenderheartedness, peace, meekness, etc.; but that is where real spiritual strength is found, for this is what God is demonstrating today in the dispensation of grace – this is God’s present purpose.



# Body Building

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF EDIFICATION

### Part V

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*“But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:15-17).*

#### PRINCIPLE #4

C.f. I Corinthians 13:1-7

#### Charity

*“But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died” (14:15).*

#### thy brother

“The Apostle says: ‘Thy brother,’ and not ‘Thy enemy.’ Not even a friend or acquaintance, but a brother, to whom a Christian owes much more than to anyone else, since he is a brother in Christ!”<sup>1</sup>

C.f. I Corinthians 8:12

“The cry, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ came from the lips of a murderer. The word Paul uses here for ‘destroy’ means ‘ruin’ or ‘reduce to uselessness.’ ... To have a free conscience in the things we allow is one thing; to exercise that freedom to the peril of another man’s soul is something else. No believer should exercise privilege without regard to responsibility.”<sup>2</sup>

#### grieved

Strong: (#3076) “to distress”

This grief is unto destruction (see the second sentence of this verse.)

#### charitably

1. Luther, p. 202.
2. Phillips, p. 240.

“He who has that knowledge is above all called to walk in this love.”<sup>3</sup>

“And while we are delivered from the Law and legalist traditions of men, we are not delivered from the law of love. Love should keep us from doing those things which hurt a brother. ... To refuse to do what we have a right to do, for the sake of others, is the highest expression of godly love.”<sup>4</sup>

“According to Paul’s teaching, the law of liberty must always be balanced by the law of brotherly love, which is higher and more edifying.”<sup>5</sup>

“If only we could be properly related to each other in love, I think we’d be astounded at what joy, comfort, and strength the Lord could minister to us through the Body. If we were all wholeheartedly devoted to each other in teaching, encouraging, comforting, loving, and building up each other, it would be like having Christ in our midst, like heaven on earth! How we rob ourselves of blessing when we focus on people’s faults and push them away, rather than esteeming them in love and lifting them up!”<sup>6</sup>

“Love for the weaker brother awakens a genuine spirit of helpfulness which overflows in charitable acts toward him.”<sup>7</sup>

3. Kelly, p. 257.

4. Lovett, p. 369.

5. Bultema, p. 160.

6. Charles Norman, e-mail 1/30/97.

7. Phillips, p. 239.

“As a Christian I realize that God has called me to love people, not things. Not even my ‘rights’ to do something of which I honestly approve is important to me, compared to my desire to build up rather than risk tearing down other Christians.”<sup>8</sup>

“It will be necessary for each member of the body to come to a conscious, deliberate decision to love and serve the others unconditionally. This is absolutely essential! If we leave love only as an option or if we allow our feelings to govern us, the devil will do his work, the flesh will prevail and the church will be damaged. Therefore, we must make a firm decision to love each other and never allow anything to change it. Once this decision is made, we will find the supernatural supply of God enabling us to follow through with our commitment. In this way, we will begin to experience more of the fulness of Christ in the church.

“If we can be brought by God to view His Church the way He sees it, we will no longer be limited by any schisms in the Body. Our love should transcend any man-made separations. Although in this life we will probably never see an end to all the divisions, we can end them in our own hearts. The more Christians who take this position of love towards all, the better the situation will become. ... The church is not a place or a group but a spiritual reality which we can experience. Such an experience can penetrate any outward barriers. We can have true spiritual relationships and fellowship with believers in all kinds of situations. This is the only real church.”<sup>9</sup>

“We need to have our spiritual eyes opened to see the sin of division that exists today in Christendom, as God sees it. Division in the body of Christ is a grievous sin and we need to repent of it! ...

“We are called to walk in all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to other Christians in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is imperative that we reach out in love to all who belong to Jesus. There is no place for

an elitist spirit in the body of Christ. True love will tolerate differences ... It will not exhibit a spirit of intolerance, and neither will it use doctrine to divide the body of Christ. Doctrine is not the basis of fellowship. Should a group possess a truth that others do not, they are to reach out in love as bond servants and share it. Should their words not be received, fellowship is not to be broken; rather they are to walk in the light of that particular truth so that they demonstrate the life and reality of it. In this way, those who are hungry, whose hearts are open, will be encouraged to also receive it.

“Disunity has risen over the years in the body of Christ over inflexible doctrinal positions and the institutionalizing of churches. This has quenched the testimony of the one body of Christ. The answer is not bigger organizations, and neither is it ecumenicism! What has been organizational for centuries, in structure and function, must become organic with the life flow of God’s Spirit. True unity can only come from the Lord himself. He must touch hearts, especially of leaders, to see the great need that exists for repentance and humility. ...

“What is needed is true unity centered in Christ Himself! He must come to have first place in everything, beginning with our hearts.”<sup>10</sup>

### **destroy**

Strong: (#0622) “to destroy fully”

Webster: “To demolish; to pull down; to separate the parts of an edifice, the union of which is necessary to constitute the thing; as, to destroy a house or temple; to destroy a fortification.”

*C.f.* I Corinthians 6:12

“It is not always right for us to do all that it would be right for us to do! The weak cannot win the strong to the level of weakness; but the strong may be able to win the weak to the level of strength; but this will not be done by the strong insisting always on his liberty. All things lawful for us are not always expedient. If by exercising our liberty we injure the spiritual life of a believer

8. Richards, p. 89.

9. David W. Dyer.

10. Dale Rumble, *The One Body of Christ*.



whose light is limited, we do violence to the law of love, which is the highest known principle of action [I Corinthians 13:13].”<sup>11</sup>

“The attitude of disregard for a brother’s conscience is the very principle of destroying him. But Christ died for him! – how great a contrast. He sacrificed His life to save him from destruction. Shall we sacrifice nothing for the sake of the blessing of saints of God? Let not our callous actions bring disrepute on that which in itself we know to be good.”<sup>12</sup>

“The strong Christian who has come to the conclusion that nothing is unclean of itself must be careful to respect the scruples of the one who has not yet learned the lesson, for fear he should hurt the spiritual health of his brother. Our brother’s weakness is the measure of our duty ... As David Brown helpfully says, ‘The wilful violation of conscience contains within itself a seed of destruction.’”<sup>13</sup>

### **for whom Christ died**

“If Christ died for that weak brother of ours – troublesome and awkward fellow, though he may sometimes be – then he must be very dear to Christ. Shall he not be dear to us?”<sup>14</sup>

*“Let not then your good be evil spoken of:”*  
(14:16).

### **good**

i.e., liberty

“We have no right to give up our dearly-bought liberty, but we do have the liberty to give up our rights.”<sup>15</sup>

C.f. II Corinthians 6:3

*“For the kingdom of God is not meat and*

11. Scroggie, p. 102.

12. L.M. Grant, Comments on the Book of Romans, (Sunbury PA: Believers Bookshelf, n.d.), p. 143.

13. Thomas, p. 374.

14. F.B. Hole, Paul’s Epistles (Volume One), Northumberland: Central Bible Hammond Trust Limited, reprinted from “Edification,” 1930-32, p.51.

15. Harry Bultema as quoted by C.R. Stam, p. 329.

*drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”* (14:17).

### **kingdom of God**

“Paul in one word sweeps the whole Christian platform clear of the rubbish of all the traditions of men. ... All such things have nothing whatsoever to do with the kingdom of God.”<sup>16</sup>

“He [Paul] uses the broader term here ... not the narrower term, ‘kingdom of heaven,’ which has to do with the future reign of Christ on earth.”<sup>17</sup>

### **righteousness**

“There’s no reason whatsoever why we should take the righteousness here in any other sense than Paul has used it in this letter -- the merited righteousness of God on the cross -- and this stands here as the basis of the other two.”<sup>18</sup>

### **peace**

“[This] is the same peace as the peace of God in 5:1. The word literally means to make of two one. Christ has removed the enmity and has made of God and man one.”<sup>19</sup>

### **joy**

“Joy is the result of having peace with God. It is spiritual in nature and is a result of having all of our differences settled so that we have a future hope of glory.”<sup>20</sup>

Here we have presented to us the three characteristics of the kingdom of God. “The real issues are far deeper than [meat or drink] ... What counts most is a union with the Spirit of God so vital that it is expressed in a Christ-like walk.”<sup>21</sup>

(This is part of a continuing series on edification).

16. Newell, p. 512.

17. Stam, p. 328; For a closer study of this subject see Kingdom of Heaven and its Relationship with the Kingdom of God, (Gladstone, VA: Bible Student’s Notebook, Issue #27, p. 271).

18. Bultema, p. 160.

19. Bultema, p. 160.

20. Rhodes, p. 314.

21. Phillips, p. 241.

# *A Great Mystery*

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32).*

[SPECIAL NOTE TO THE READER: The reading of two other Bible Student’s Notebook articles is a prerequisite to fully profiting from this article. Please read (or review) “The Identification of the Wife” (BSN #38, page 400) and “Coverture” (BSN #37, page 383) before proceeding. Thank you.]

The truths in this brief lesson are very profound, yet they are so simple and basic.

The truths of identification and coverture mentioned in the special note above can really begin to affect your thinking! They can change the way that you look at things, and the way that you look at things can make an impact on your life!

Let’s take the truths we have learned in our past studies on the home and apply them to another area our life in Christ.

*“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:28-32).*

What happens when the average believer reads this passage? What is his immediate conclusion of this divine illustration? Is it not that we are the “Bride of Christ?” And that the “great mystery” has now been solved? But has it really?

There are two issues which cause believers to

make the inadequate and faulty deduction that the “great mystery” of Ephesians chapter five is that we are the “Bride of Christ”:

(1) their failure to fully understand the dispensational significance of the Body of Christ, and

(2) their failure to fully understand marriage.

1. The term “bride of Christ” does not appear anywhere in the scriptures. Now, we are not trying to make a big deal of this phrase B but Christendom sure seems to be. In fact this phrase is constantly used, even though it does not appear in the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

2. What then is the issue of this “great mystery?”

A. We are ONE with Christ!

*“So we, being many, are one body in Christ ...” (Romans 12:5).*

*“... ye are all one in Christ Jesus ...” (Galatians 3:28).*

B. We are under His HEADSHIP!

*“And he is the head of the body, the church ...” (Colossians 1:18).*

C. We are IDENTIFIED “in Christ!”

*“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him ...” (Romans 6:6).*

*“... buried with him ...” (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).*

1. Now the Bible does use the phrase “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Revelation 21:9), but this is a reference to a city, the new Jerusalem (:2, 10).

*“... quickened us together with Christ ...” (Ephesians 2:5).*

*“... ye are risen with him ...” (Colossians 2:12).*

*“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places “in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).*

#### D. We are under His COVERTURE

*“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:33-34).*

#### E. We have had a NAME EXCHANGE

*“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is*

*Christ” (I Corinthians 12:12).*

(Please take careful note what Paul calls the “body” in this verse: “so also is Christ!” In contrasting our physical bodies with the Body of Christ, he refers to it simply as “Christ.”)

These five areas are the foundational issues of marriage, are they not? If we ever lay hold on these five truths, our lives cannot help but reflect eternal glory to God our Father.

*“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself ... that we should be to the praise of His glory ...” (Ephesians 1:6-9, 12a). ■*

## *Are We Really Any Different?*

by – Gary E. Funk

Are we *REALLY* any different  
Than all the rest?  
We claim to have a message  
That is the very best.

We know the Pauline epistles  
Are the message for today.  
We learn to talk the talk  
And make it very clear,  
But do we walk the walk  
As though it were really dear?

God gave us a Savior  
To take away our guilt,  
shame and sin,

And then He gave us a message  
Telling us how we could  
the battle win.

Overcoming strife, envy, greed  
and yes, even hate,  
He gave us volition that we  
might chart the course  
And become the deciding factor  
In our own fate.

Peace, longsuffering,  
contentment and joy  
Are the tools we have at hand,  
But are we *REALLY* any different?  
Only if we *REALLY* understand!

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