

Utopian Marriage with Christ in Heaven

2021 Berean Family Bible Conf

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What a wonderful weekend and, again, it's a privilege and a joy to have Dr. Joel Beeke, President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and Minister of the Heritage Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids with us this morning to bring us the word of God.

Well, thank you for your presence this morning and for many of you being here through the weekend as we've been looking at this wonderful and glorious theme of how should we live, the answer being Solus Christus, by Christ alone, in Christ alone, through Christ alone, unto Christ alone. Solus Christus. We looked at that from Philippians 1:21, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. We looked at that in terms of knowing how to endure, how to persevere, how to keep running in this life, running by looking to Jesus. We looked at that from the theme of suffering, how do we handle our sufferings but by looking to Jesus. And then we looked at that in terms of our faith in Christ, is our faith lame or is it robust, are we really living powerfully, robustly, dynamically like Abraham unto Jesus. This morning we looked at the need for theological seminaries and the history of our own under the theme of Solus Christus. That's the goal of seminary training. Well, this morning we now want to look at the capstone of the whole: Solus Christus in heaven forever with Jesus Christ.

It's amazing that the Bible, don't you think, seldom speaks about dying and going to heaven, rather it speaks about dying and going to be with Jesus, at least most commonly. Jesus is the center of heaven. Heaven, our eternal home if we're true believers, is Solus Christus. Christ himself is the sum and substance of heaven's glory and what a glorious truth this is.

Have you ever thought about that? Why is heaven so focused on our Savior? Well, one reason, of course, is that no one can get there without Jesus' saving work. Anyone who enters heaven must confess with Ann Cousin paraphrasing Samuel Rutherford,

"I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land."

The second reason why heaven is centered on Jesus is because Jesus is the centerpiece of heaven and faith there will become sight of him in glory. Peter speaks of we love a Christ whom we have not seen, in whom though we now see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In heaven, we will experience, thou shalt see the King in his beauty.

And then, third, heaven is Christ-centered because in heaven every believer will be fully conformed to the image of Christ. We shall be like him. He shall be the firstborn among many brethren. What a joy it will be to be in heaven without sin and to reflect Christ so completely that it will be impossible to be un-Christlike, impossible to sin against him.

And then, fourth, heaven is so Christ-centered, focused on Jesus because his glory will always shine there and his praises will never grow old there. Revelation 21:23 says, "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Think of that, boys and girls, no need for sun or moon or stars, Jesus the light of the world is the light of heaven.

And finally, although all too often forgotten, another reason that heaven focuses on Jesus is because that in heaven the believing church will be married, married to Jesus Christ and will express the love of a bride toward her husband. Our engagement to Christ in this life will turn into an everlasting beatific marriage, a utopian marriage of perfection to the Lamb of God in glory, and that is a common theme throughout the Bible seldom preached about today, but it's the ultimate Solus Christus. Christ exalted by the entire heavenly choir. Christ centered upon. Christ the Lamb lifted up upon the throne and around him all the redeemed that no man can number. Solus Christus will be the theme of heaven's music and we will be united to the Lamb forever and ever.

Well, that theme is prevalent in Psalm 45, Isaiah 54 and 62, Matthew 9 and 25, John 3, 2 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5, and sprinkled all throughout the book of Revelation, but it's in Revelation 19:6-8 that this theme reaches a crescendo and we get an insight and a sight of the great glorious wedding of heaven and the great and glorious bridegroom and the great bride united with the bridegroom. And so this morning, we want to end this series of sermons with you by looking with you at the grandest, most glorious apex theme of Solus Christus. You, dear believer, will be in utopian marriage, perfect marriage with Jesus Christ in glory forever.

Revelation 19:7-8.

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Well, under this theme, then, of utopian marriage with Christ in heaven, I want to look with you at three very simple thoughts: the wedding, the bridegroom, the bride. The wedding, the bridegroom, and the bride.

Presently, the church is betrothed, waiting for her wedding day. Now there's a great difference in the Bible between the word betrothal or espousal, which means the same thing, and our engagement, and yet they are somewhat similar. When you get engaged to someone to be your spouse, even in our culture, it's a pretty firm commitment but it's possible to break up an engagement and it's tough but it's possible to do it without getting a divorce because you're not married yet. In Bible times, when you were espoused to someone, it was like a very strong engagement, or when you were betrothed to someone. In fact, in a sense, you were considered to be husband and wife but the marriage is not yet consummated in intimacy, and that's why if you were espoused to someone in Bible times and you broke the relationship, you actually had to get a divorce because espousal was also a ceremony of indissoluble commitment to one another. That's why, for example, Mary and Joseph, who were only espoused or betrothed to each other, were called, Mary was called by the angel Joseph's wife, but they weren't officially married yet but the wedding day was coming and when that wedding day came, then the biblical custom was that the bridegroom would come to the bride's home to get her and her friends, take them to her new home where they would all feast and celebrate for a week or even longer.

Now all true Christians in this life are betrothed, espoused, to Jesus Christ. That's what Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 11, he says, "I have espoused you to one husband, Corinthians, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." You see, Paul casts himself in the role of the marriage broker or matchmaker, and in his love for Christ, he desires to present Christ a chaste virgin bride. And in his concern for the Corinthians, he is very upset with any other preacher to the Corinthians who would want to lead them astray into spiritual adultery, lead them off-center away from Solus Christus to other things. And Paul's not just talking here about a set of abstract truths. He's not just presenting people with some philosophy. He's proclaiming the person, the beauty, the treasure, the glory of this great bridegroom, Jesus Christ. "I have betrothed you," he says, "to him. You are engaged, you are committed, you are espoused to be his."

"From heaven," said Samuel Stone, "he came and sought her to be his holy bride. With his own blood, he bought her and for her life he died." Christ is the great dowry price, the great bride price for all true believers and therefore if you are a true believer, you are legally and inalienably his through saving faith worked in your heart by the Holy Spirit, and your great bridegroom is coming again for you, to lead you home to his Father's house where he will present you spotless before his Father in heaven. There will be a great wedding procession, great festivities that will not last for a week or two but, in essence, for all eternity. We will be with Christ, dear child of God, and behold his glory unceasingly and never take our eyes away again from Immanuel, God with us.

You see, the salvation story is a love story. The covenant of grace is a marriage contract. Before the worlds were made, God the Father chose a bride for his Son and drew up a marriage contract between them and this wedding involves more choice than mutual attraction. God chose us in eternity and gave us to Christ if we're believers, who bought us at Calvary and took us as his own through the preaching of the gospel and he's coming back for us to take us to our real home forever where we will enjoy holy, sacred intimacy and fellowship with him forever, and the Bible calls this marriage. The whole Trinity is involved in this marriage. The Father gives us his Son as our bridegroom and gives us as a bride to the Son, John 3. And as Ephesians 5 says, Christ purchased his bride with his blood and death. And as Ephesians 1 says, the Holy Spirit is given to us as an earnest, a guarantee, a down-payment, an engagement ring, if you will so that when Christ betroths us to himself, he gives us the Spirit as a kind of engagement ring that guarantees we shall arrive at the last day for the actual wedding, and what a wedding, what a wedding it shall be.

Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Never has there been a more worthy bridegroom, said James Hamilton, than Jesus Christ. Never, never has a man gone to greater lengths, humbled himself more, endured more, or accomplished more in a task of winning his bride than Jesus Christ. Never has a father planned a greater, bigger, better feast than the Father of heaven. Never has a more powerful pledge been given than the pledge of the Holy Spirit given to this bride. Never has a more glorious residence been prepared as a dwelling place once the bridegroom finally takes his bride. Great will be the rejoicing, great will be the exaltation, no limit of glory given to the Father through the Son by the Spirit in the believer on that great wedding day. The marriage of Jesus Christ and his bride has come and it is the greatest wedding ever. Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

What a wedding but also what a bridegroom. That's our second thought, what a bridegroom. This wedding is ultimately mostly about the bridegroom. Weddings in our day are, well, mostly about the bride but, you see, the focal point of this eternal wedding is the bridegroom. It's Solus Christus. The marriage of the Lamb is come.

Now our text may sound a bit strange there because lambs don't get married, but Jesus Christ, you see, is here being presented in his capacity as Savior and Lord. The lamb of this marriage shows us his love by living for us and dying for us. So you must understand the book of Revelation is the kind of genre it is, it's an apocalyptic genre. Apocalyptic genre, and what that means is that we are not to take this as a physical literal marriage. That would be wrong. There is no physical literal marriage in heaven but there's something better, there's something bigger, there's something more intimate. It's the union and the Bible calls this a marriage, this sacred, spiritual, perfect union between Jesus Christ and his people and because he's the Lamb of God, the suffering Savior who's merited that union, who applies that union, who draws his people into that union so that he may have communion that flows out of this union, the Bible calls it marriage.

This marriage, you see, is the ultimate marriage. This marriage is the one marriage that everyone needs to know, everyone needs to be prepared for. You know, sometimes we

think when we read things like this that, well, God is just relating to us at our level and the marriage of the bride and the bridegroom in heaven is just kind of a picture that reflects this really important thing we call marriage in this life. And we do the same thing with the word father, don't we? We think that calling on God as Father is a reflection of this important fatherhood in this life. But you see, we've really got it all turned around. God allows marriage in this life because he wants to reflect the ultimate marriage. He wants us to be able to picture the ultimate marriage of union and communion with Christ, and he gives fatherhood in this life as a reflection of his eternal fatherhood in Christ. You see, the real thing, the perfect thing, the unstained by sin thing is God's fatherhood and Christ as bridegroom. It's all about God, you see. It's all about Jesus. It's all about Solus Christus, the Lamb of God. Hallelujah, the Lord God reigneth! Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come. Solus Christus.

Well, the Lamb first appears in Revelation in chapter 5. We read that, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." You see, this is a Lamb who went out and won his bride and still wins her today until the end of the world. This is initially a one-sided love affair because, you see, by nature no one is attracted to this Lamb. Everyone wants to live for himself. Everyone wants to be captain of his own ship and master of his own fate. No one loves Jesus first. John says we love him because he first loved us.

So when we think of the ideal marriage, we Westerners, we think of two lovers gazing into each other's eyes, [unintelligible] with love, don't we? That's a Western view. It's different in many other parts of the world. Even today, there are parts of the world today where parents of a bride often decide when she is to marry. In some cultures, she may have no say in the matter at all. She may not even know who her husband will be. She does not meet him until the day they are married. She learns to love him as her husband in the marriage state, and he, her. Now you see that pattern, for example, in the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. Rebekah said, "I will go," and she had never seen Isaac. In some ways, not all ways but some ways, that's the kind of marriage we have with Christ. We love Christ but we only love him because he first loved us. He loved us while we were yet sinners. He loved us while we were utterly unattractive and utterly undeserving. He loved us while our carnal minds were still at enmity with him, while we were rebels and enemies and homely because of sin. He loved us.

One of the most powerful examples of this is Hosea. It provides us with just a wonderful example of this love. God said to Hosea, "Go take the wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms for the land has committed great whoredom departing from the Lord." And that's what happened as an adulterous Gomer had a succession of affairs and when her youth and attractiveness were spent, she ended up in the slave market. But Hosea found her in the slave market and bought her back, not to exact revenge on her for the rest of her life but out of sheer one-sided love for her. He was a faithful husband to her despite her unfaithfulness to him. And dear believer, that's how God loves you in Jesus Christ. When you were promiscuous in sin and you were unfaithful to him, when you were unattractive in terms of holiness to him, he loved you with an everlasting love. He loved

you beyond your wildest imagination. He loved you all the way to the cross of Calvary. He loved you to the end, to the furthest limits of his love. "Having loved his own which were in the world," John 13:1, "he loved them unto the end." And there on the cross of Calvary, he paid the ultimate dowry price to purchase you on the grounds of his Father's justice to be his everlasting bride. And, oh, what a penalty he had to pay, what suffering he had to go through to take up all your debts and pay the full price of your salvation.

You know, sometimes when two young people marry, one has a substantial bank account and one is in debt, and they come together and the one who has a substantial bank account pays all the debts of the other and she's set free. My wife and I knew an example like that of a young lady who was married to a chiropractor, he did very well in his business, he actually was a millionaire, and he got a serious case of terminal cancer. They were from Missouri and I got to know them through our book ministry and our periodical. I had a number of conversations with him. I never saw him alive, and he tried to get everything ready for his wife. He wanted her to have a good amount of money for the rest of her life. He took all his money and he put it in offshore accounts so it would gain more interest for her. So she was all set financially. He gave me a call and he said, "I've instructed my wife and she's agreed to move to Grand Rapids, Michigan to sit under your ministry." And he wanted me to come down and do his funeral and we agreed to all of that. All of that happened and she came, actually she became one of my secretaries in the book ministry, settled in, and she went to make her first withdrawal from all the money that she had and the whole thing was a scam in the offshore account and she couldn't get a penny. Not a penny. So instead of being wealthy, she was in debt and, you see, that's what happens, that's what happens, don't you think, when the Holy Spirit comes and enters into your life and empties you of all of your own righteousness and shows you that you have no standing with God, you're just in debt. You're just in debt.

But there's a man who came along from Ontario and he began to try to woo, allure this young woman to himself and he was well-to-do, but she would have none of it. She wasn't attracted to him. He tried again. It didn't go. Finally, he said, "I'm going to try one more time." He said to her, "Will you just go out to eat with me one more time?" "All right," she said, "last time." And they got across the table from each other and he thought, "Well," she asked him about his children. She had never had any children, he had six children. He thought, "I've got nothing to lose. She's not going to love me anyway," and so he just poured out his heart and talked about his love for his children and just like that, she fell in love with him. They got married, still live together. He's an elder in the church now. I don't know how many years they've been married, maybe 15-20, and have a wonderful marriage. It's one of those marriages where he can say, "I love you more than yesterday and less than tomorrow."

And one of the first things they talked about when she fell in love with him was what should she do about all that money. "Oh," he said, "don't worry a bit about it. Don't even try. Don't take anybody to court. Don't stress yourself out. I've got plenty of money for you. You don't have to worry about being in debt again." You see, that's what Jesus does for us. When we've got mountains of debts, they lift themselves up to the heavens, they're as broad as we can see, thousands and millions of sins every second we live, and we don't

love God above all and we don't love our neighbor as ourselves, we're sinning, we're disobeying the heart of God's law. Sin. Sin. Sin. Sin. Sin. Every single second we're not born again, we're sinning. It's debt upon debt upon debt upon debt. Thousands, millions, billions of debts and Christ comes along and he says, "I want you as my bride. I will pay it all with my bloody death on the cross, and I've got riches for you, I've got riches for you that you cannot imagine."

You know, there's a beautiful book written called "The Best Match" by one of the Puritans, Edward Pearse, and he extols the virtues of this bridegroom so wonderfully. He asks the bride, he asks you, my friend, whether you're saved or whether you're lost: do you want a match who has honor and greatness? Jesus is God and man, the brightness of his Father's glory, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Do you want riches and treasures? His riches are the best for they last forever. They're infinitely great. They'll satisfy your every desire. Are you looking for a generous heart in a spouse? Well, he's willing to lay out his riches for you that your joy may be full. Do you want wisdom and knowledge? He's the infinite wisdom of God. Wisdom shines in him. He is wisdom itself with a capital 'W' and he knows perfectly how to glorify himself and to do good to those who love him. Are you looking for beauty? He's altogether lovely. Samuel Rutherford said, "He's got more beauty in him than all the angels and all of mankind put together." Are you seeking someone who will truly love you? He is love itself, love higher than the heavens, deeper than the seas. Do you want a husband who's honored and esteemed. Well, he's adored by saints and angels. Everyone whose opinion really matters treasures him and, above all, God the Father delights in him. Do you seek a match who will never die, never leave you a widow? Christ is the King immortal, eternal, the resurrection and the life. Believest thou this?

Do you believe in the Lamb of God? Behold, the Lamb of God, my friend. Do you know this bridegroom as your Lamb? Are you betrothed to him? Have you received him as your heavenly husband? Have you come to him repenting of your sin, throwing yourself as a hell-worthy rebel sinner on his mercy? Will you have Jesus Christ even now, the Son of God to be your Savior to love and honor and obey from this day forth and forevermore? Will you have the Lamb of God to be your husband, a sin-bearer to be your bridegroom? If you will have him, you are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, says our text. But if you won't have him, you will not have him at all and dreadful will it be on the great final day, the judgment day to fall into the hands of this Judge, the hands of Jesus Christ unprepared. Oh, this bridegroom, this marriage, you must have.

But who, then, is the bride? Well, our text says, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and," here it comes, "his," bride, his, "wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." The bride asks always, isn't that true, "What shall I wear? What kind of dress is fitting for someone to be married to such a bridegroom?" I still remember our oldest daughter when she said, "Mom and dad, I want him to be pleased with what I wear on the wedding day. I want to make sure I get the right dress." She couldn't wait for the wedding and as the days went by, she checked off the days, she counted how many were left. You know what it's like,

many of you. And she was ahead of schedule, like you've got to do this so many days ahead of time, and she longed for the wedding day.

She made herself ready for the bridegroom long before the wedding and that's what it is like for the believer. In our Western world which is so focused on earthly possessions and materialism and stuff rather than relationships like so much of the rest of the world, we often get this all mixed up and turned inside out, in fact, we even talk like the world, like we want to be younger or we don't look forward to Jesus coming on the clouds. How different our forefathers were. John Calvin once said, "He who does not hanker," hanker is a strong word, "hanker to be with Christ has made little progress in the Christian life." Charles Spurgeon said, "When you get up in the morning, you ought to go to the east side of your home and lift up the shade and look out, 'Is he coming? Oh, not today, not yet today.'" Spurgeon says, "It ought to be a daily disappointment when our Lord does not come instead of being, as I fear it is, a kind of foregone conclusion he will not come just yet."

You see, the bride is longing for the bridegroom, longing for the consummation of the marriage, but also the bridegroom is longing for the bride. Jesus Christ yearns for that day when his eternal marriage with his beloved bride shall be consummated and he will say to his Father, "Here am I, Father, and all those that thou hast given me." And there will be no empty chairs in heaven. Every place will be filled. Every one of the elect will be brought in.

Psalm 45 puts it this way, "So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." You see, Jesus longs to beautify you, dear believer, with his perfect image, his perfect holiness. On that great day, he longs to embrace you one day as his bride. He, the King of heaven, and you, the queen of heaven. The King of kings making us his queen. And again, don't think of this in sexual terms of sexes and don't feel uncomfortable as a man thinking of yourself as the queen of Christ, just like women have to include themselves when the Bible speaks of adopted sons of God. The Bible never says adopted daughters of God but it's not a sexual thing, you see, it's the genre of Revelation. So we incorporate ourselves into this, you see. The King of kings will take us as his bride, as his queen, the queen of heaven, and the angels will be our servants, and the King will take us by the hand and lead us to paradise, his own personal garden, as it were, where we will live with him forever and be with him face-to-face. You see, Jesus longs for that day. It's not only us longing for him, it's him longing for us because men will have no more sin, we'll be as holy as he is holy. Think of that. As impossible as it is for us now not to sin, so impossible it will be then for us to sin.

What a glorious thing, we will see him face-to-face. The Old Testament says you can't see him and live. Revelation 19 says in heaven we will gaze upon the face of Jesus. Think of that. Gaze means you don't look away. You know, in this culture, our Western culture, when you talk to someone, you look them in the eyes, don't you? But you don't stare at them the whole time. You look away once in a while, give them space. Everyone just feels that at the gut level. You don't even think about it. It happens automatically. Samuel Rutherford, the great Scottish divine said in this life, we just get blinks and glances of

Jesus and then we look away, look away too often, look to the things of the world too often. Oh, for the day when we will be able to gaze upon Jesus and never have to look away.

I had a Nigerian student a couple of years ago who brought another Nigerian student to me who had just arrived. He wanted to introduce him to me in our seminary, and the new student as he introduced him, just looked like this at me, he looked at me for about a 30 second of a second and looked away, just kept going back and forth. And the older student noticed it and he goes, "Oh no, no." He said, "In America the culture is different," he said to his friend. He said, "In Nigeria it's an insult to look your teacher in the face. In America it's an insult not to look him in the face." So then the new student tried to look at me longer and he went about like this, he just couldn't look at me. Isn't that how you feel spiritually sometimes with Jesus in this life? You get a little look at him but it's hard to gaze upon him. It's almost uncomfortable sometimes like when you look at someone too long because he's so holy and I'm so unholy, and I look away. The intensity of that spiritual communion is so profound and I'm so spotted with sin I look away. But in heaven, I'll never look away again. He will see no sin in his Jacob, no transgression in his Israel. The bride will have made herself ready and we will enter into the joy of our Lord clothed in white and fine linen, beholding him face-to-face.

One of the greatest Psalms we sing in our church is in our Psalter 31 these words. It's my favorite.

"When I in righteousness at last
Thy glorious face shall see,
When all the weary night is past,
And I awake with Thee
To view the glories that abide,
Then, then I shall be satisfied."

Oh, to be pure and holy in the presence of the pure and holy Savior will just make me cry out, "Solus Christus, to him be all the honor, and all the glory, and all the worthiness, and all the dominion, for he is altogether lovely!"

Now our youngest daughter worked for some years in a wedding dress store and one day a lady walked into the store and said, "I really hardly have any money. I can't buy a dress but my husband is dying of cancer and I want to renew my vows with him. Could you just give me a dress? Any possibility?" And my daughter said, "You know, I don't own this store." She felt terrible. She said, "I can't help you." The lady walked away sad, and then my daughter had a thought. She ran after the lady, caught up with her and she said, "You know, if you go to a thrift store and you just buy a dress, you could probably get one for \$15-20 and you bring it to me, I will work on it, I'll put the beads and ornaments on it and all that other stuff," I don't even know what it's called, "but I'll put it all on so it will sparkle and I'll fit it to you." My daughter also would fit dresses and she's a seamstress. And the ladies face lit up. She went out and she got a dress. My daughter spent several days working on it, made it just beautiful for her, fit it to her, and she

renewed her vows. And then her husband died. But you see, this dress, you don't even have to pay \$15-20. It's given. It's given to the bride, the text says.

Isaiah 61:10 says, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." The robe of righteousness that we wear on our glorious wedding day is the realization of our imputed blamelessness and holiness through Jesus Christ for he has redeemed us from sin's guilt and he purifies us to be zealous for him. So this gown, this gown is the robe of Christ's perfect righteousness imputed to us in justification. Christ takes off the filthy garments of our guilt and he clothes us with the clean and beautiful clothing of his own merit so that his obedience, his perfect obedience is credited to us. That's why we read in Revelation 7:14 of all the people going into heaven. Remember the question was asked: who are these that are entering in? And the answer is given: they are they from every nation who have washed their robes and made them white, white in the blood of the Lamb. And how did they do that? Well, by trusting in Christ alone for justification from the guilt of sin.

And yet at the same time, and this is fascinating, at the same time, our text says, "to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." But the Greek says "the righteous deeds of the saints." Now what does that mean? The wife has made herself ready. You see, the man who says, or the man or woman who says that he or she belongs to Christ and yet never lifts a finger to purify himself or herself, said J. C. Ryle, is self-deceived. A Christian life though it's all grace that saves us, the Christian life is such that we get ready also. God's initiatory love produces a return love in us. His justification produces a sanctification in us. We get ourselves ready and how do we do that? Well, Paul tells us in Colossians 3, by putting off the old man and putting on the new. Putting off anger and wrath and malice and blasphemy and putting on the bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind and meekness, and so on. And at the same time, though we do those things, we don't do them independent of the Spirit working in us. We can't do them in our own strength and therefore the text says, you notice that it is given to the bride to make herself ready.

So ultimately it's all grace, it's all given by God through Christ and that's what makes the bride sing so gloriously, "Hallelujah for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Christ reigns, dear believer, over every part of your salvation, also your sanctification and that's why Ephesians 5 says, "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word to present her to himself a church, a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." It's all grace. Grace alone. By Christ alone. Based on scripture alone. Through faith alone. To the glory of God alone. Oh, what a future the bride has in the heavenly bridegroom's eternal home and what a day it will be, dear believer, for you to see him and to have him open the celestial gates of heaven for you and welcome you in and embrace you with his everlasting love. What a future the bride has because of what a bridegroom she has and what a wedding she has.

William Montague Dyke was a young man who was stricken with blindness at the age of 10, lived in the 19th century, was brilliant, went to university. While in graduate school met the beautiful daughter of a British Admiral, the courtship flamed into romance, they became engaged and looked forward to their wedding day though William had never seen his bride. Now shortly before the wedding at the insistence of the bride's father, William agreed to undergo eye surgery that might or might not restore his sight. He would be bandaged for two weeks and he said, "I'll undergo the surgery on one condition, if I can have it exactly two weeks before my wedding. I want my dad to be my best man and when my bride walks up the aisle, I want my dad to come forward and unwrap the bandages from my eyes because if I could see, I want the first thing I could see to be my bride." It was an aristocratic audience. No one was supposed to say a word. Everything was proper but people were nervous. They knew what was going on. They were on edge. Well, when the bride, the doors opened, the bride came down the aisle. William's father walked up, took off the bandages, and William could finally see his bride and he just burst out, "My dear, you are far more beautiful than I ever imagined!"

You know, on that great day when the gates of heaven will go opened and Christ Jesus come out to meet you and bring you in and you behold him with spiritual eyes as you've never seen him before, you will cry out, "Lord Jesus, altogether lovely one, the chief among 10,000, you are far more beautiful than I ever imagined!" Solus Christus. What a day. What a day. What a beatific vision, as the medieval divines called it, that shall be. What an answer to the prayer of Christ, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory." And forever, forever, we will feast in his presence and bathe in his smile and enjoy knowing and communing with him forever.

Well, let me close this sermon by asking you: do you know this bridegroom? Is he your treasure? Your pleasure? Your salvation? Your all-in-all? Your number one in life? Or perhaps are you trying to have the world in one hand and Jesus in the other and deep down you really love this world more? Are you just a nominal Christian? "Oh, I just come to church. Every other week is fine." No, no, no. If you fall in love with this bridegroom, you want to be with him all the time. You want to be with him when his people meet corporately. You look forward to the corporate gathering in heaven.

Oh, what a day. I've been at conferences where there were 3-4-5,000 ministers singing hymns and the tears are rolling down most of our cheeks, the beauty of the music. Imagine being in the heavenly choir with millions upon millions upon millions and millions that no man can number all singing praise to the Lamb whom you love with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. What a future of praise of the glorious bridegroom.

Or maybe you're sitting here this morning and you don't know the bridegroom at all. You have to be honest and you say, "I don't even know what you're talking about this morning. My heart is in this world and the things of this world." Oh, my friend, I invite you, I invite you to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb. I invite you to come and confess your sin and to believe in the Son of God alone for salvation. I invite you to give

up your shallow sinful ways and turn to this bridegroom. I send you an RSVP from my Master today. I invite you to the marriage. How will you respond? You don't have to respond to me, I'm just a servant of God. You have to respond to my Master. His name is preached this morning. His name was preached this weekend. He asks for a response. He comes to you as he came to Rebekah, "Wilt thou go with this man, this great Isaac, the God-man, Jesus Christ? Will you have him as your bridegroom now and henceforth forever?" Will you say this morning, "I will go. I will go. I will surrender my life. I will go."

"The king there in His beauty,
Without a veil is seen:
It were a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between:
The Lamb with His fair army,
Doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land."

I will go.

"O Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted
More deep I'll drink above:
There to an ocean fullness
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land."

Will you go or will you push him away one more time? It's either Christ in heaven or it's you in hell and what a contrast. Don't, don't reject the glorious invitation of the Son of God. This is the one marriage you can't do without.

A story is told, I'll end the sermon with this, a story is told of a young woman, she was in her 40s now and she got cancer, she was dying. Her dad was sitting by her side. Her dad was not a believer, she was. The day she died she said to her dad, "I'm finally going to be married." And her dad said, "Oh, my child, you've lost your mind. You're actually dying." "No, daddy," she said, "you don't understand. I'm going to be married to Jesus forever. I'm going to my wedding today."

You could be in the best wedding ever. Don't pass up this invitation. My Master RSVP's you. Take it home to your inner closet, take it home to your bedroom, get down on your knees, confess your sins and cry out for mercy and tell him, "I want to be your bride. Will you be my bridegroom?" Amen.

Solus Christus, O God. O may Jesus be our life, our all and in all so that we learn to hate sin and to love him and to have him be our treasure, our pleasure, our Lord, our Savior, our nearest kinsman, our all and in all, and one day, oh, happy, happy day when this mortality puts on immortality and this corruption incorruption and we shall be with thee, Lord Jesus, world without end in absolute perfection, utopian marriage with Christ in heaven. Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.