

# WAKE UP AND REST

**The Bride of Christ Sleeps  
at Her Own Peril**



by  
**Thomas M. Mitchell**

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*Wake Up and Rest—The Bride of Christ Sleeps at Her Own Peril*

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# DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to two of the most important people in my life. They are the two blessings that have stood by me through all the dark times and rejoiced with me during the good times. Without their love and support this book and all my other books would never have made it to the first draft. So, to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to the greatest blessing He has given me here on earth, my wife Diane, I dedicate this book.

I have also tried to acknowledge all those who have poured themselves into my life over the years, both in their teaching, their writing and counseling. My Bible is literally full of notes from many saints that have inspired me over the years, but unfortunately I didn't attribute them to the author in many instances. So to all of them goes my heartfelt gratitude, your wisdom has challenged, exhorted, and inspired me to continue to become all that God created me to be. And especially to one of the most gifted teachers I have ever had the privilege to sit under, Billie Alexander, who first sowed the seeds of love for the bride of Christ in my heart. Billie, your fruit remains.

There is, however, one very special man of God that has had a greater impact on my spiritual growth than all the others, my dear brother in the Lord, Pastor David Baker. David was my pastor, my best friend and my spiritual mentor with whom I had the privilege of ministering for many years. He spent endless hours pouring the Word of God into my spirit and challenging me to go ever deeper into the Word and my relationship with Jesus. There is much of his wisdom woven throughout the pages of this book. Although David has gone on home before me, my heart is blessed with the assurance that we will one day share our greatest desire together... forever sitting in the presence of our Lord.

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# PREFACE

The world we're living in today is full of turmoil and chaos on every front and at every turn. The news has become a constant reminder of how tentative and uncertain everything is. For many in America there is little hope on the horizon as everything seems to be out of their control. Many wonder how they are going to survive all the pressures of daily life and sadly, so do many Christians even though they hold the answer.

This book is a wakeup call to those who have made their personal commitment to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We hold the key to survival the world is looking for and we cannot fail to share it. But to do so we have to overcome our human side and allow our spirit to take charge and lead us through this "wilderness" we find ourselves in. And the key to that is to stop and take a long hard look at our relationship with the One to whom we're engaged to be married. Do we really know Him? What is He expecting of us? How can we find the answers? These questions and many more have to be answered if we're going to be able to step up and become all that He created us to be.

That's the challenge, and if we don't overcome it not only will we be the loser, so will the lost in America. The words of the Lord that rang in Solomon's ears sound a clarion call today for the bride Christ: *If my people who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.* <sup>(2Chr7:14)</sup>

I encourage you to take up the challenge contained within these pages and leave the unfulfilled life of the nominal Christian and move up the road to spiritual maturity. The Spirit-filled life that awaits you will lead to an incredible adventure as you submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. All that it takes is the faith to cross your Jordan River and enter into your Canaan, your Promised Land; the Rest of Christ. The first step is yours to take... *Wake Up And Rest.*

Thomas M. Mitchell  
Walk With God Ministries  
January 1, 2014

# INTRODUCTION

*It is true that the soul which has once rooted itself in Christ can never lose all the brightness of its King. Once the splendid Son of Righteousness has come into the central throne room (the throne of our heart), the castle can never lose its bright glory. And yet, by our foolish neglect, and by our willful sins, we drape the whole castle with a black pall.*

**Teresa of Avila**

Throughout the years the Lord has given me a growing burden for His bride—His true church. Those who by faith have accepted His forgiveness, paid for by His sacrifice on the Cross, and have made Him Savior and Lord of their life, hold this cherished position.

For me, it has taken many years of walking with Him and in His ministry to really understand what it means to be His bride. In many ways He has shown me through my own life just how little I understand about what it means to be a bride. As a man this concept was hard to grasp but as the burden grew stronger and He began to reveal more of His message my understanding increased.

This book is the culmination of that personal journey, following the Holy Spirit up a long path that particularly wound its way through the Song of Solomon, Hebrews, Revelation, and Ephesians. In the process He led me through creating and teaching a 12 week class on each of these books as He slowly un-wrapped His message of survival for His bride in these increasingly dark days. At each juncture the Lord opened up the Scriptures in ways that I had not seen before that forced me to open my spirit to understand and comprehend what He was saying. It was a long and arduous journey with many personal issues dissected along the way. And for the majority of the time I felt this was just my own personal journey that He asked me to share through the classes. But that was not the case, and one morning in prayer I realized that this was to be a book to challenge, exhort, and encourage the bride of Christ. It came in a flash of revelation when I heard the words *Wake Up and Rest*.



Jesus' bride, individually and corporately as a body, is going to be faced with increasing pressure from both inside and outside "formal religion." The enemy is using all the chaos he has created in the world around us to distract and lure Christians away from their first love. Sadly, the tendency of many true believers has been to succumb to that chaos and pressure and compromise their relationship with Christ. They have allowed the *cares of this world* to enter in and take their bridegroom's place. This book has been written to reveal why that should not be the case and how to avoid it.

We will examine just what it means to be His bride by looking at four books that provide us the message and the keys to moving on to become the pure and holy bride He is coming back to take as His wife. It's all about knowing and understanding who you are and whose you are, following the leading of the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to prepare you to be Jesus' bride.

By way of setting the stage for our journey to the greatest wedding in history I have used the same examples the Holy Spirit shared with me. And the most important example He gave me was enclosed in the Jewish wedding ceremony. As I began to understand the individual pieces of the ceremony I started to see how God has used it throughout history to reveal His plan for man's redemption. And while there are many nuances in the ceremony upon which we could spend chapter after chapter, we'll just use two of its key elements as they relate to the message contained in this book.

## **THE ARRANGEMENT**

The wedding was arranged by the fathers of the bride and groom in the form of a contract (*hupa*) that would be fulfilled in a wedding ceremony at some future date. The contract was sealed with the bride's price being paid, a final glass of wine shared between the bride and groom and the giving of a gift from the bridegroom to the bride to seal his promise to return and take her to her new home. He then returns to his father's house where he builds her a new home, only to return when his father has approved of the house at a day and time unknown to the bridegroom. The bride is set apart and returned to her family to prepare

herself and wait and watch for his return for their wedding, when their marriage will be consummated.

For the bride of Christ that arrangement involved a bride price paid in blood on the Cross. Jesus made a new covenant with us and pledged to return for us as He shared His last glass of wine at the last supper; not to have another until He returns for us. And as a gift in pledge of His return He has given us the Holy Spirit. Jesus has also returned to His Father's house where He is constructing a new home for us, and even He doesn't know the day or the hour of His return; it's up to His Father.

## **THE BETROTHAL**

In the Jewish ceremony the time period between the arrangement and the return of the bridegroom is the betrothal period (*ketubah*). It's during this time that the bride begins the withdrawal from her family, transferring her allegiance as she prepares to enter a new life with her bridegroom. She spends her time learning more about him, learning to trust in him and to deny herself, setting her mind on how to please, love and serve him. It's also during this time that she sews her own wedding dress; one that is to be without spot, wrinkle or blemish.

For Jesus' bride the betrothal is her sanctification. We too have returned to our family, the corporate body of Christ, and while we were sanctified at the moment we gave our life to Him—when we agreed to the contract to become His wife—our life down here awaiting His return is where we walk out that sanctification. And just as the Jewish bride is being purified so are we by the washing of the Word of God as we also sew our wedding dress; the key to the *ketubah*.

We received His inward righteousness—our salvation—the moment we were born again but our outward righteousness—our wedding dress—is what our betrothal is all about. Our wedding dress is to be holy (fully sanctified), without spot (outward defilement), wrinkle (no evidence of aging) or blemish (inward defilement). As we sew, as we enter into more of our sanctification, we become more like the pure virgin bride He is coming to receive—the spiritually mature Christian.

There is much more we could consider like the “fetching” when the bridegroom comes to carry His bride away to his father's house for

the wedding ceremony, the wedding feast and the entry into her new home to be his wife forever. For us that's the rapture of the church, the wedding in heaven, the millennial reign of Christ on earth and the coming of the New Jerusalem. I realize that there are many eschatological views concerning Jesus' second coming but for our purposes in this book let's set them aside, they aren't the issue for us here. We can all agree that He "is" coming back and so our focus should be on what we're to be doing while we watch and wait.

That is the message of this book, entering into the Rest of Christ—His Rest. Resting from our self-centered work and moving into a life of service for Him; entering into a Spirit-filled life. To understand what all that implies and entails this book has been broken down into four sections or four progressive stages. Each one builds upon the others as we progress from learning what it means to be His bride to understanding what that involves to discovering the enemy's traps along the way to taking up our position on the battlefield.

***Section I - The Doorway to Rest – The Brides' Invitation.*** We will first look at what it means to be the bride of Christ and understand how He sees us, which is completely different than we see ourselves. We'll do this as we look through Solomon's love story, which is the perfect picture of Christ and His bride; *The Song of Solomon*. We will never be able to become the bride He created us to be if we don't fully understand what that means and what all it entails.

***Section II - The Pathway to Rest – The Brides' Purpose.*** Next we'll look into our betrothal period. What are we supposed to be doing until He comes and how do we go about it. The writer of Hebrews will show us that in great detail as we see the path to spiritual maturity laid out for us. For many reasons I am of the camp that believes that Paul wrote the *Book of Hebrews*, but if you believe otherwise that's okay because it doesn't impact the message. He will reveal to us the solid foundation that we are to build upon as we mature and become "of" Him in addition to being "in" Him.

***Section III - The Dangers to Rest – The Brides' Warning.*** With the knowledge and understanding of who we are as His bride, and what we're to be doing while we wait, we need to reflect on the love letters our bridegroom sent to us through John. In these letters there are also some stern warnings concerning the snares and traps the enemy has set

for us in an attempt to get us to be unfaithful to our bridegroom. The seven letters to the churches in the first three chapters of the *Book of Revelation* provide us with those warnings. And how beautiful that in God's opening message to those letters He reveals our bridegroom, whom He has pointed to throughout history. We will see the revelation of the king that is coming to take us to reign with Him on His throne forever.

***Section IV - The Battle for Rest – The Brides' Armor.*** Our bridegroom has not left us defenseless in the face of our enemy. We find in the Book of *Ephesians* that God has provided us with the weapons we need to defend ourselves in the spiritual battles we face. We'll not only look at those weapons but also the war we're engaged in, who it's with and we'll discover the plans and strategies of the enemy so we won't be caught unaware. It's a very personal war and we need to understand who we're engaging and what the stakes are.

## **THE SECRET TO REST**

With this in mind, just before we begin our journey, let me share with you something that happened in my past that perfectly symbolizes the survival strategy the Lord has laid out for us. It took place during a time when I owned and operated an outdoor survival school, teaching adults and kids basic wilderness and suburban survival skills. It was in one of those classes that something took place, unknown to me, that would have a profound impact on me and on this book.

There was a sweet family—mom, dad and six kids—that attended one of our three day sessions. I was most taken with their youngest boy. He must have been four years old or so and he became my shadow for the entire course. He never said anything; he just hung close by my side and would participate now and again. At the end of the class he spoke for the first time and said “good bye.” I thought that was the end of it until several months later when I got a call from his mother.

She told me that they had been at Sea World on a crowded summer afternoon when all of a sudden their youngest—my shadow—was missing. They looked everywhere but couldn't find him. They closed the gates and the security personnel scoured the entire park looking for him. She said that after an eternity one of the guards came up

and said they had found him but that she would have to come and get him because he refused to leave where he was. She asked me if I remembered the story about the tree.

It was a special story that I told all the young kids about how rescuers track people. The high point of the story is that if you get lost the worst thing you can do is to go wandering around because it makes their job of finding you all the more difficult. So I told them that the secret was to find a tree that wasn't going to move and hug it until they found you. I smiled as she told me the rest of the story. The security guard led them over to the edge of the park in a shady area and there was her son with his little arms tightly wrapped around a tree. A simple story heard with open ears and acted on in faith.

We have the secret to our survival—entering into His Rest—and we have something solid and immovable to hang onto. He has given us His Holy Spirit, not only as a pledge that He is coming back for us but as helper and advocate, leading us to spiritual maturity. He knows exactly what we need to become the pure, virgin bride God created and destined us to be.

There is so much in every detail the Holy Spirit recorded in these books that it is impossible to cover it all in this book. As a result I have focused on the key message He revealed to me throughout my journey. I have, however, made more detail available in my four accompanying books that can be found on our website, *WakeUpandRest.com*. They go into much more detail in unwrapping Jesus' message to His bride in a verse-by-verse study of God's Word.

Remember, we have an incredible promise from God. Each of us has been ordained—determined beforehand by God—to *be conformed to the image of His Son*. <sup>(Rom8:29)</sup> So, as we begin, let me encourage you to hang onto the Holy Spirit tightly and listen for His voice as you journey through these pages and enter into *Jesus' Rest*. He will reveal God's plan for accomplishing that in your life. Not everything will be new to you but I promise that the Holy Spirit will reveal some things along the way that will change how you see yourself, how you see Jesus and what you need to do to draw closer to Him and stay there.

If we fail to answer His knock, draw near to Him and go with Him we are doing so at our own peril. As you proceed along your journey I hope that you will, as I have, come to realize that the peril we

face wears many faces and it's not only here and now, it reaches into eternity. We have been given a time to impact His kingdom both now and forever and we can't afford to waste any of it. But one of the perils we "don't" face in our journey is the loss of our salvation. We will see in Hebrews that this is not about what we have "already" been given; it's all about what we're going to do with it. And to fail to become all He created us to be and fulfill all that He has set before us is to do so at our own loss. There are incredible blessings and rewards here and now as well as forever that are predicated on what we do with the life, the gifts, the graces, and the blessings He has given us.

The purpose of this book is in response to the Lord's words to Solomon <sup>(2Ch7:10)</sup> *... If my people who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

The world and in particular America is at a critical crossroad and God is calling out to His people—His Son's bride—to wake up and step into the breach. If we don't, then the lost souls in America have no chance because they are just looking to their earthly government to solve all of their problems. And that's a government and a system that does not and will never have the answers. As the bride of Christ we are the people God is calling out to with a clear message. We are the "if" in the equation and we can't afford to fail Him by turning away at this critical moment in the history of His kingdom.

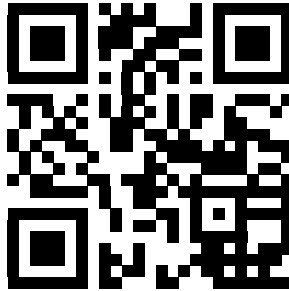
So let's begin our journey. All you need to do is hear with an open heart and act on what you hear with simple faith.

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**PART I**  
**THE DOORWAY TO REST**  
**The Brides' Invitation**

*Song of Solomon*

*It is a parable, which makes divine things more difficult  
to those who do not love Him, but more plain and  
pleasant to those who do.*

**Matthew Henry**



Our subject is the Rest of Christ, and to understand that we first need to get a much better grasp of who we're resting in—who we're engaged to. We've entered into a marriage contract, a covenant, with the Creator of the universe, but how many of us really know who He is? Have we made the commitment and spent time with Him to learn who He is and what He says? I suspect if you're like I was, you have spent entirely too much time at the foot of the Cross, trying to figure that out.

While we entered into our marriage contract with Him at the Cross, it's a huge mistake on our part to remain there. Oh, don't get me wrong. I am not diminishing the importance of the Cross but there is so much more ahead for each of us if we will rise up and walk with Jesus. Salvation is just the beginning. There is a whole lifetime of adventure waiting for us if we will just step into it. And the first step we need to take is to understand just what it means to be His bride and what obligations go along with that.

We've had our last glass of wine with Him and we've been given our gift and His pledge that He will return. Now He's in His Father's house, building our new home; our mansion. <sup>(John14:2)</sup> The word mansion (*mone*) comes from the verb "to remain" and means the place where one "dwells." When our bridegroom comes for us we are going to dwell with Him forever. But right now our mansion is the earth and we are in peril of missing the blessing if we don't understand that His Rest is here and now. Here's the key; it doesn't matter which mansion we're in, we need to rejoice in the fact that we're permitted to dwell with Him. Yes, we're going to transition to a better mansion in the future, but why should that keep us from living life to the spiritual fullest here on earth. Why shouldn't we Rest in Him now?

## **WE NEED A NEW PERSPECTIVE**

Too often we allow who we are in Christ to be clouded by the world around us. Our features have been distorted, scarred and marred by the trials and tribulations of this natural life and our spiritual vision has become blurred. We come before our bridegroom with a negative self-image, the same way Solomon's bride saw herself. The image she had of herself was sinful and sorrowful, *black as the tents of Kedar*; <sup>(Song1:5)</sup> the camel hair desert tents that had been turned black by hard use and the

scorching desert sun. Her view was captured by John Newton (writer of Amazing Grace) in his hymn, *Great God From Thee*:

*Since I can hardly therefore bear,  
What in myself I see  
How vile and dark must I appear  
Most holy God to Thee?*

But in the same breath she realized that in Solomon's eyes she was also *comely*. To him she was not only beautiful; she was "suitable."

*But since my Savior stands between  
In garments dyed in blood  
Tis He instead of me is seen  
When I approach to God*

Haven't we all felt that way? Sorrow in our sin makes us look at ourselves and want to hide away from what we see, but deep down inside we know that in Jesus' eyes we too are like *the curtains of Solomon*; <sup>(Song1:5)</sup> the fine white linen that hung on the walls of Solomon's temple. In His eyes we are pure and our wedding dress has been made white in His righteousness. We may be black in our own eyes but we're comely in His. The world may see our black outside but He sees His glory on the inside, we're sinners yet saints. What He wants is for us to change our view to His and begin to bring what's on the inside to the outside. That's what's involved in sewing our wedding dress, letting the Holy Spirit work on the outside to reflect what has been fully put on the inside.

Paul pointed out that fact in his second letter to the Corinthians <sup>(2Cor4:7)</sup>—*but we have this treasure in earthen vessels*. Our vessel may be black from time-to-time but we can't forget that we have the "treasure" of the Holy Spirit on the inside, and His goal is to see us changed; conformed into the image of our bridegroom. <sup>(Rom8:29)</sup>

We are engaged—betrothed—to the King of the Universe. Let that sink in for a minute. We have been *chosen* <sup>(John15:16)</sup> to be His bride, and He paid heaven's highest price to call us His own. I don't think it's possible to fully grasp that unless we first understand how He sees us. I

found out during my journey that what I see in the mirror in the morning is quite different than the image He has of me. Let's let Solomon speak for our bridegroom as He reflects on her qualities:

- ***Fairest Among Women*** <sup>(Song1:8)</sup> We are the *fairest*, a most beautiful and pleasant bride because He has given us His holiness. We are the bride who is low in her own eyes, which makes us so much more amiable in His eyes.
- ***Royal*** <sup>(Song1:14)</sup> He says we are *comely with jewels adorning our cheeks* and *gold chains around our neck*. Only women of rank in Solomon's time wore jewels and gold. In us those jewels represent the fruit of the Spirit and the gold represents the royal status He has given us. But the beauty isn't our cheeks or our necks, it's in the graces He has given us to mature in; presented one link at a time.
- ***Pure*** <sup>(Song1:15)</sup> Jesus sees in us the *eyes of the dove*, fair, pure, chaste, and innocent. When led by the Holy Spirit we are humble, modest, gentle, and heavenly minded.
- ***Righteous*** <sup>(Song4:1)</sup> Our hair—the very hair that He has numbered <sup>(Luke12:7)</sup>—is *white like a flock of freshly washed goats*. It is the outward reflection of our inward righteousness. Our hair is the symbol of consecration and submission, like the Nazarites who never cut their hair as an act of consecration to the Lord. The world may see our hair as black but Jesus puts a high value on the righteousness He sees.
- ***Faithful*** <sup>(Song4:4)</sup> Our neck is like David's tower, strong, tall and straight, reflecting our strong faith that connects us to our bridegroom; our head. In the face of the unfaithfulness of the world around us He sees us as courageous in our faith. When our neck is strong we don't go around hanging our head.
- ***Sanctified*** <sup>(Song4:7)</sup> In His eyes our wedding dress is without spot or blemish. In Him we are fully sanctified, purified, consecrated, and justified. <sup>(1Cor6:11)</sup> We may not see ourselves

that way but we are, we were fully sanctified the moment we entered into our marriage contract. But for now we struggle with spots and blemishes and He wants us to wash ourselves in the Word of God and cover ourselves with the oil of the Holy Spirit. If He sees the finished product in us, shouldn't we strive to be so?

- ***Steadfast*** <sup>(Song7:4)</sup> We're solid as a rock. He looks at our face and our nose is like *the tower of Lebanon*. Like that tower we're set like flint; steadfast. We are a tower that is impregnable and unconquerable. And like an animal that "smells" danger, we know where the enemy is and we keep our nose pointed directly at him without fear.
- ***Submitted*** <sup>(Song7:5)</sup> Once again Jesus reflects on our hair. We are submitted and in our submission our hair is purple. He sees His royalty in us, we have captivated Him and He is *held in His galleries*; bound in our beauty and awestruck by our submission.
- ***Desirable*** <sup>(Song7:10)</sup> As we, like Solomon's bride, acknowledge that we belong to our bridegroom and we're not our own, we will also realize how much He desires us. We will rejoice in the hold that He has on us and the more our emotions toward Him grow in the spirit, the more desirable He will become. It all goes back to what God said to Eve in The Garden: *Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee.* <sup>(Gen3:16)</sup>

If we will just take a little time and meditate on these virtues and what they mean to our bridegroom we can't help but change our personal view and desire to see them become more evident in our life. Perfect, in His eyes yes but not in ours. And we never will be until that day when He comes to carry us away with Him. But that doesn't mean we are to settle for anything short of the perfection He planted within us. Our challenge is to begin to see ourselves in that light and allow the Holy Spirit to knock off the sharp edges that hide our beauty from the world around us. Jesus sees that beauty and so can we. So how are we supposed to see our bridegroom?

## WE NEED A FRESH VIEW

Have you ever passed someone on the sidewalk and then a moment or two later tried to recall something about them that intrigued you but you couldn't quite put your finger on it? Sure, and just as quickly you forgot about what it was you were trying to remember and went on about your way. But if it was critically important you would probably have turned around and tracked that person down for a closer look. Well, that's what so often happens to the bride of Christ when the Holy Spirit prompts us and we don't respond right away. The prompting fades away as we go on with what we felt was more important. We need to learn to listen for those promptings and take the time to reflect on just who is calling us.

During my early missions in Viet Nam I found myself becoming somewhat overwhelmed with all the radio chatter once you got into the target area. It was difficult to know when someone was talking to you among all the conversations going on. But after a few missions I became more accustomed to all the noise and just listened until I heard my call sign. That's how we need to be with the Holy Spirit, always in a listening mode and ready to respond.

All we need to do is change our direction and walk along with Him, and if we keep our spiritual eyes and ears open we might just be surprised how our view of Him will become much clearer. Let's pick up a few clues as to how we should view our bridegroom from Solomon's bride:

- **Redeemer** <sup>(Song1:14)</sup> In the first century the rabbis viewed camphire, the fragrant henna flower, as a type of the Messiah. The word also means a covering or coating, and to the rabbis it meant a redemption-price. They rendered *Song 1:14* this way: *My beloved is unto me the man who propitiates all things*. Jesus is our atonement, the propitiation for all our sins. Like Boaz was for Ruth, <sup>(Ruth)</sup> Jesus became our kinsman redeemer when He paid our redemption price; our bride price.
- **Preserver** <sup>(Song1:13)</sup> Solomon's bride referred to him as *a bundle of myrrh* that she always carried over her heart.

Myrrh was used in embalming to prevent corruption and decay, and that is what Jesus does for us. He prevents the moral corruption that can destroy our soul. He is like both camphire and myrrh because He not only redeems us, He preserves us.

- **Sweet** *(Song2:3)* The world, like many trees, offers only false shelters; riches, friends, and pleasures that are all short-lived. The apple tree, on the other hand, may not be as tall or as wide but it is fragrant and offers sweet fruit. Jesus is like the apple tree, you only need to taste Him to know how sweet He is. *(Ps34:8)*
- **Strong** *(Song2:5-6)* Jesus supports us with His left hand under our head and with His right hand he embraces us. He both protects and embraces us, providing our security. When we're weak in ourselves we are strong in Him. Solomon's bride asked him to *stay*—bear up or sustain—her with *flagons*, which in Hebrew meant the “house wine.” That is what our cry should be: Jesus, bear us up, support us and embrace us with your New Wine, your Spirit.
- **Perfect** *(Song5:10)* Solomon's bride saw her beloved as *white and ruddy* and so is our bridegroom. White and red mixed together represent complete beauty; perfect moral and spiritual health. His whiteness isn't a dull white but the dazzling white of the sun, representing His spotless innocence and the glory of His Father. His redness represents His bloody humanness, His suffering on our behalf. This is what Samuel saw in David (a type of Christ) when David stood before him; *he was ruddy with bright eyes.* *(1Sam16:12)* Our bridegroom is perfection and in Him we are perfect, needing nothing more to be perfectly accepted by the Father.
- **Powerful** *(Song5:11, 14)* Jesus' head is like *fine gold*; perfectly refined. It represents His deity, His royalty, His perfect and sovereign dominion over everything, and as His bride He rules over us as the Father rules over Him. His hands are like gold rings—rich, pure, and precious—that represent His power and His works of grace on our behalf. There is

perfection in spiritual authority: The Father, the Son, the husband, the wife and the child. <sup>(1Cor11:3)</sup>

- **Steadfast** <sup>(Song5:15)</sup> Solomon's bride saw his legs as *pillars of marble, set in sockets of fine gold*. And so is Jesus, strong, stately and steadfast. Wherever He puts His foot—His presence—He will remain. He is able to bear the weight of all the world's governments on His shoulders in spite of their spiritual opposition to His kingdom. And His steadfastness has a firm foundation in His divine nature, just like marble pillars set in concrete.
- **Friend** <sup>(Song5:16)</sup> In our relationship with Jesus He isn't only our beloved bridegroom, He is our friend. He doesn't call us servants because the servant doesn't know what his Lord is doing. He calls us friends because He has told us everything the Father has told Him. <sup>(John15:15)</sup> We need to see Him as our complete satisfaction in all things.

If we'll take time and spend it in His Word, God will reveal all this and more concerning our bridegroom. And just as we need to begin to see ourselves through His eyes, we also need to see the Son through the Father's eyes. Amazing as it is, in His perfection He has chosen to become friends with imperfection. The only way that could be accomplished was to become one of us and pay the price we should have paid; our bride price. Truly, as Matthew Henry wrote, our bridegroom is our best friend:

*This is He whom I have chosen, and to whom I have given up myself. None but Christ, not but Christ. This is He on whom my heart is, for He is my best-beloved; this is He in whom I trust and from whom I expect all good... for this is my friend.*

What an incredible thought. Our Savior, our redeemer, our bridegroom is our best friend. Maybe we ought to spend more time getting to know Him, not letting Him pass by without taking notice—serious notice.

## WE NEED TO SPEND TIME WITH OUR BRIDEGROOM

One of the most beautiful parts of Solomon's Song is the bride's realization that it's not about who she is, what she's done or what she's been through. It's all about her relationship with Solomon. She wants him to draw her near and he is continually calling her to grow close. The problem she has is that wanting something and pursuing it are two different things.

We can learn a great deal about this struggle as we watch the bride discover how to put action to her desires. She learns that the secret to her relationship with Solomon is to spend time with Him in his garden. That's the answer for us if we truly want to draw close to Jesus and develop the kind of relationship that Solomon's bride realized.

To fully understand this concept, we need to go back to the beginning. In The Garden everything was perfection and Adam and Eve walked in perfect harmony with God. But sin destroyed that relationship and they were banned from The Garden. God could not allow them to eat of the tree of life and live forever in their fallen condition. They didn't want to leave His presence so He had to drive them out and place an angel with a flaming sword at the gate to keep them from coming back, and that angel stood at His post until the "defining moment" in history.

When Jesus cried out on the Cross *it is finished*, <sup>(John 19:30)</sup> it meant much more than His death. For our purpose here, realize that there was no longer the need for the angel to guard the entrance to The Garden, the gate was thrown wide open and man was given a way back to God.

I learned something along my journey that changed my entire perspective concerning my relationship with Jesus. The Garden of Eden is just as close as my next heartbeat. By accepting His sacrifice for my sins and receiving the Holy Spirit He has opened up a garden in my heart where He wants to spend time with me. We'll look at this in more detail when we get to Hebrews, but for now just stop and meditate on that fact. Jesus is waiting for you in your own garden—His garden—where He's placed a bench for two. And the incredible thing is that anytime we want to go there He is there waiting for us. And once again we are invited to freely eat of the "tree of life."

Solomon's bride discovered that in her garden there were incredibly fragrant spices, sweet fruit and a well of fresh clear water. The



same awaits us. The fragrance of the graces He's bestowed upon us and the sweet fruit of the Spirit abound, fed by a spring of living water from the well He dug. Jesus continually draws us to come into our garden and sit and learn from Him. He is always there, tasting our fruit, noticing which tender shoots need attention, seeing what new seeds need to be sown, identifying the weeds that need to be pulled, what little foxes need to be chased out before they can ruin our fruit and what parts need watering. And even though our garden is sealed from the outside, just like the bride's garden, there is a well of living water that needs to flow out of it and the wind of the Spirit needs to lift our fragrant graces into the world around us.

When I finally grasped the fact that not only does Jesus not see all my flaws but that He wants to spend time in my garden helping me become all that He created me to be, my prayer and quiet time took on a whole new meaning. I realized that He is most interested in seeing me fulfill my role in His kingdom here and throughout all eternity.

Our garden is truly the doorway to His Rest. On that Friday afternoon when God rent the veil in the temple the doorway to His presence was opened to all who will, by faith, receive His salvation from their sins and accept His invitation to enter into His very presence. Do you realize that Israel waited for centuries for that moment and they missed it? We can't afford to let this opportunity pass us by. As His bride our first desire should be to spend every moment with Him, one-on-one with the Creator of the universe, sitting beside the One with the answer to our every question. This is the only place where we'll find the path to spiritual maturity, where we need to allow Him to shine His light and His love on those parts of our garden that need tending so they will no longer hinder our relationship.

I remember a time when He was helping me to understand all of this and why so many of His bride don't visit their garden. He said that when He turns His light on those parts of our garden that need attention, far too many run back out. We can't afford to run back into the dark when the light comes on; the cost is too high. We need to remain steadfast and let His Spirit do the work in our heart that will clear away another hurdle to our achieving spiritual maturity.

What an awesome bridegroom we have. He's not only made us a promise that He's coming back for us—a glorious bride *without spot or*

*wrinkle, holy without blemish*<sup>(Eph5:27)</sup>—Jesus has taken it upon Himself to provide us all that we need in His Holy Spirit to ensure that we become that bride. And that includes not only all the blessings we will receive in the process now, but also all the future rewards He is storing up for us. Our life here on earth can be filled with all the blessings of heaven; they're all waiting for us in our garden. All we have to do is spend the time with Him and be obedient to His word. He's there this very moment, waiting for us.

## WE NEED TO ANSWER HIS KNOCK

When Solomon's bride heard his knock at her door her response was like that of many believers today. He was calling her from outside where his head was covered with the morning dew; he'd been standing and knocking in the cold, all night long. But she had already put on her bed clothes, washed her feet and didn't want to get up and dirty them again. She was asleep, but awake enough to hear his knock and not want to get up and let him in. She didn't say that she couldn't open the door, she said *how shall I*; <sup>(Song5:3-4)</sup> it was inconvenient.

With all of his heart Solomon called out to her with nothing but endearments: *Open my sister* (her equality with him), *my love* (his choice), *my dove* (purity, simplicity and loveliness) and *my undefiled* (pure and righteous). <sup>(Song5:1-2)</sup> Not once did he reprimand her for failing to open her door. How reminiscent of Jesus plea in the Garden of Gethsemane; *what could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.* <sup>(Matt26:41)</sup>

Jesus is knocking on our door and He is patiently and faithfully standing out in the cold, calling us to rise up and come away with Him into our garden—*behold, I stand at the door and knock.* <sup>(Rev3:20)</sup> Come away and grow closer to Him. Come away and be about the business of the kingdom. He is calling us by His Word, by His Spirit, by our trials and afflictions and by our own conscience. Many believe those words from the Book of Revelation are for an unbelieving world but they aren't... they're spoken to His bride.

It's all too common today for the bride to allow herself to lapse into spiritual apathy. Her soul is sleeping when it should be awake,

listening to her spirit. Even though she hears His voice the world has made her too comfortable, wrapped in all its materialism. It's like the man who prepared a great supper and sent his servant out to invite "many" to come. All he got were excuses: I have to take care of a new piece of ground I just bought; I have to take care of some new oxen; I just got married. <sup>(Luke 14:7,16-20)</sup> And the bride has her "many" excuses that always seem to be tied to worldly issues. She doesn't want to forsake the warmth of the bed she's made in the world, the very bed that is compromising her relationship with Jesus. Leave me to myself and let me lie in the comfort of my own ways and self-indulgence; don't ask me to deny myself. The peril of this attitude is great, both here and now and in eternity to come.

Yes, Jesus is patient and longsuffering, but at some point He will withdraw His presence and when we finally rise up and answer the door He'll be gone. We will be just like Solomon's bride—*my soul failed me, when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.* <sup>(Song 5:6)</sup> If we allow our soul to be controlled by our old nature we're sure to find ourselves in her position.

While we're at this point let me make this issue of the soul a little bit clearer. Watchman Nee, in his series *The Spiritual Man*, makes a great point concerning the flesh. First let's understand that the flesh of the believer—the bride of Christ—is dead. It died with Jesus on the Cross and it no longer has any power over us. But the question arises: then what was Paul talking about in Romans? The answer is key to understanding the message of this book, the key to understanding the struggles of the bride. Our flesh is dead, we are a new creature in Christ and our spirit is reconciled to God by Christ's sacrifice. So why do we struggle? Nee answers that question.

Before we were born again our soul was submitted to the desires of our flesh. But the moment we gave our heart to Jesus there arose a battle for the control of our soul. It's the battle between our renewed spirit and its protagonist, our old nature; not our flesh. The soul, having been controlled by the flesh, only knows the desires of the flesh and so it wants what it used to have. It's no longer "controlled" by the flesh but it still wants what it used to want—what it used to have.

Our battle then, according to Nee, is for our renewed spirit to gain control of our soul, control over what we desire. Our spirit needs to

be in control because its job is to overcome those old soulish desires and replace them with our desire for our bridegroom; responding to His knock instead of wrapping ourselves in the comfort of past desires for worldly things.

Why is this such an important a concept to grasp? It's the basis of the enemy's strategy for keeping us from achieving spiritual maturity. We will get into this in much more detail when we move into Ephesians, but understand that there is a battle for control of our soul and it's between our old soulish desires and the desires of our spirit. This is the battle and the battleground is our mind, that fertile piece of land that now has to deal with our conscience; the voice of our spirit. This goes all the way back to the beginning. God created man a wholly spiritual being and He wanted him to eat of the tree of life in the middle of The Garden but he chose not to. Ever since then the battle has been all about returning the spirit to its rightful place of control in our life; overcoming the desires of the natural man.

In a nutshell, that's what the battle for spiritual maturity is all about. That's what sewing our wedding dress is all about. We have our inward righteousness but the battle is to achieve our outward righteousness. It's a tough battle and it won't end until we leave this planet. But in the interim—during our *ketubah*—Jesus has given us an open door to our garden and bids us to enter in; *boldly*. <sup>(Heb4:16)</sup>

Time is growing short and the moment of His return is on the horizon. All we need to do is look at what is going on in the world around us and compare it with the Word of God. When is He coming? I don't know and the Word tells me not to try and figure it out. All I know is that we are closer today than we were yesterday and it's critically important for the bride of Christ to rise up from her slumber, leave the milk behind and move onto the strong meat of the Word. We'll be looking at the book of Hebrews later but we can sum up its entire message in three verses, and I think that message, as presented in The Living Bible, hits right at the heart of the bride:

*Heb 5:12-14 You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others, but instead you have dropped back to the place where you need someone to teach you all over again the very first principles in God's Word. You are like babies who*

*can drink only milk, not old enough for solid food. And when a person is still living on milk it shows he isn't very far along in the Christian life, and doesn't know much about the difference between right and wrong. He is still a baby Christian! You will never be able to eat solid spiritual food and understand the deeper things of God's Word until you become better Christians and learn right from wrong by practicing doing right.*

I think it should be clear by now that our bridegroom is calling us to rise up, draw near to Him and follow Him up the path to spiritual maturity. There is a whole new life here on earth for us if we will but heed His call and submit to the leading of His Spirit. The Spirit-filled life is not only one of peace, love, strength, and empowerment; it's the most exciting life we could ever lead.

Do you want to know “why am I here?” Do you want the question “there's got to be more to life than this” answered? Then the first step is to understand whose you are, who you belong to and then find out how He views you, what you mean to Him and have your eyes opened up to who He is. If you're a true believer—the bride of Christ—then you've made a commitment to your bridegroom and, like the Jewish bride, you need to be about making yourself ready for His return.

## **THE BIGGER PICTURE**

There is so much to digest in the *Song of Solomon* and to try and encapsulate it here wasn't possible. For that reason my book—*The Doorway To Rest*—goes into the message verse by verse and will greatly expand what we have presented here. And in bringing this section to a close there is one key verse that lets us put this whole idea of spiritual maturity in perspective. It gives us the meaning behind the importance of moving on. This is the bigger picture that goes beyond our becoming all we were created to be. Yes, we were created for a purpose, for this lifetime, this year, this day and this hour, but that purpose is much bigger than us.

There is a difference in coming “to” Jesus for salvation and coming “after” Him for service. The first makes us a believer and the

second makes us a disciple. Salvation comes by acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ—it's free and it can't be lost because it depends solely on "God's" faithfulness. Discipleship comes only after "self-sacrifice," the surrender to Jesus' call for devoted service. It carries a cost, a separate walk, and it can be lost because it depends solely upon "our" faithfulness.

We aren't just to seek to make believers out of sinners by witnessing; we're to make disciples out of saints by teaching. That's what Jesus told us to do:

*Matt 28:18-20 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

The great commission is associated with the authority of service, and that is to teach, to make disciples, and to observe and to watch in faith and obedience. That is why we, the bride, need to wake up. Let's go back and let Solomon show us that bigger picture and why the kingdom of God needs disciples.

*Song 6:10a "Who is this who looks down like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."*

*Who is this?* It's the bride of Christ and she is looking down at dawn, she's like the moon and the sun. She comes on the scene quickly like the dawn; like the planet Venus. Coming from the darkness she is the dawning light of the world. She is the freshness of new life in a decaying world. But she is also like the moon in her relationship with the world. And like the moon she shines on borrowed light.

The moon is the reflection of the light of the "sun" onto a dark world. The bride is the reflection of the light of the "Son" into a spiritually darkened world. But like the moon, sometimes she is only a quarter, a half or three-quarters full. And there are times when, like the

moon, she allows the world to get between her and the Son or the world's clouds cover her up and her light diminishes. But when she is full she lights up the world's darkness. She rules the night and brings the light of the Gospel to its dark corners.

She is also bright as the Son. That's how her bridegroom sees His relationship with her. The world only sees her as the moon—a mere reflection of His light—but He sees her clear as the sun, perfect and complete. And on that day when Jesus returns for His bride she will shine in His full glory. There will be no more eclipses or spots, just the pure light of the Son. But in the meantime we are to continue to be like the moon and reflect His light into the world around us. Then in our relationship with the world we will be a mighty threat to our enemies. We will be like Israel was in Canaan, a militant army in the world that is engaged in constant conflict with Satan and his army, ever moving the kingdom nearer. When we're a full moon we are a force to be reckoned with. Listen to how the 19<sup>th</sup> century German poet, Gustav Jan described us:

*Behold the Bride! She, herald-like, precedes  
The royal sun, arrayed in dazzling light,  
As mild Aurora smiles away the night,  
While all in dewy stillness shine the meads.*

*Behold the Bride! Fair as the moon out-gleaming,  
Melting dim shadows of the midnight skies;  
His grace, through her reflected, meets our eyes,  
The light which she receives, o'er others beaming.*

*Behold the Bride! A terror to her foes;  
As the vanguard of long embattled hosts,  
The power of heaven's Eternal King she boasts;  
Renown to win, and glory, forth she goes.*

## HOW DO WE FIT INTO THE BIGGER PICTURE

The bride needs to ensure that she shines like a full moon, not a partial one, reflecting “all” of His light into this dark world. She can’t let the clouds of this world surround her and dim her light nor can she allow the world to get between her and the Son, eclipsing His presence completely.

We need to wake up and rest in our bridegroom, allowing Him to remove all the spots and blemishes that hinder us in reflecting His full light into our world. And as we draw ever closer to Him, we’ll become all that He created us to be with all the graces and gifts He has given us to go out into the world and make disciples. That’s the bigger picture. As His bride we have a responsibility to grow up in Him and become conformed into His image so that we become spiritually mature, mature enough to reach the lost and awaken those among the bride that are asleep.

The time is short and we cannot afford to let Him slip away because of our apathy. We don’t have the time it takes to be continually searching for Him, trying to find out where we left Him or the place to where He has withdrawn. We have a commission to carry out and that entails our full commitment and total submission to His calling. Each of us, as the Psalmist said, *are fearfully and wonderfully made* <sup>(Ps139:14)</sup> for a special purpose; to minister to one another with the gifts He has given us to ensure that we reach the lost to make disciples.

What Solomon’s bride wanted was for him to be a *seal upon her heart and her arm*. <sup>(Song8:6)</sup> We know that difficult and tough times are coming and we want to be securely settled in Jesus’ heart and lifted up by His arms. We need to be near Him at all times like a signet ring, covered in His love that is strong and conquers the only thing that conquers every living thing; death. We must be jealous of everything that would draw us away from Him and fear everything that would cause Him to withdraw from us. If we will then we’ll be free to carry out His commands.

For a number of years when I was running away from the struggle of business, slogging through the daily challenge of providing for my family, I expanded my survival school business and began training hunting dogs. It was during those years that God taught me



many lessons through the lives of those beautiful retrievers, of which the best of the bunch was my partner. Buck was the most beautiful yellow Lab you have ever seen and his mind was like a steel trap; show him once and you never had to show him again. When people saw him work in the field they lined up to get their retrievers into our kennel. What I didn't realize during that time was while I was running away from the world, God was preparing me to go back into it, and Buck was His teacher.

There is one moment in time that forever sealed in my heart the key message that God was instilling in me during those years. I had begun to realize that God was preparing me to move back into His service and one morning down by the lake He revealed to me exactly what He was going to do with my life. It was so “way out there” that I was about to attribute it to my imagination when He told me that if I would just trust Him it would all come to pass. As I thought about that He just said... “Look down.”

And as I did, there were two of the softest most trusting eyes in the world looking up at me. Buck had his head in my lap and all he was focused on was me. The Lord said, “That’s how I want you to see Me. See how he has total trust and faith in you. He will do anything you ask because you have never given him any reason to doubt your love for him. That’s how I want you to see Me. You can put all your trust and faith in Me for the challenges ahead. Just put your head in My lap and listen for My voice. I will lead you one day at a time.”

Over the next 20 years He fulfilled every promise He made to me that day by the lake; each and every one. And along the way I have had to stop and remember how He sees me and how much He loves me. I have had to be reminded many times by the Spirit to stop, draw near to Him and gaze up into His eyes and remember how much He cares for me.

I was given many spiritual lessons by those beautiful dogs and have written about and taught those lessons to others over the years. It’s all about trusting in our bridegroom, but if we don’t spend time with our head in His lap we’ll never get to know just how beautiful and precious we are in His eyes.

As we move into the next section to see what that means and how we approach it, let’s take with us this picture of our bridegroom.

Remember that He sees us in a completely different light than we see ourselves. For us to begin to see that, we need to spend time in our garden—His Rest—allowing Him to remove all the barriers to our becoming who we really are and being about the reason why we were created; to please Him.

The first step to entering into that rest is to understand who He is and how He sees us. Only then will we be able grasp just how much we mean to Him and how much He loves us. And that can only happen if we stop struggling with Him and spend time at His feet. In the words of God's faithful servant, Corrie ten Boom: *Don't wrestle, just nestle.*

# THE DOORWAY TO REST

## *The Brides' Invitation*

### (Song of Solomon)

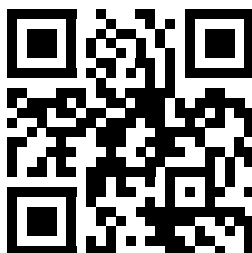
*Get access to more study materials, an audio book, and other  
WWG products as a valued member of our email list.*

There is so much more for the bride in Solomon's Song and that is explored, verse-by-verse, in the accompanying book to this section—*The Doorway to Rest - The Brides' Invitation*. It's through that door that we discover just how precious we are to our bridegroom and how important it is for us to see ourselves through His eyes. That is the doorway that leads to the Rest of Christ, and until we open that door and understand who we are in Him we won't fully understand what it means to be Jesus' bride.

You can order *The Doorway To Rest* by:

Visiting: <http://bit.ly/buydoorwaytorest>

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**PART II**  
**THE PATHWAY TO REST**  
**The Brides' Purpose**

*Hebrews*

*The destiny of every human being depends on his relationship to Jesus Christ. It is not on his relationship to life, or on his service or his usefulness, but simply and solely on his relationship to Jesus Christ.*

**Oswald Chambers**

We began our discovery of what it means to be the bride of Christ with the *hupa*, the marriage contract. We answered Jesus' invitation to become His bride and our contract has been sealed with the "bride's price"—His blood. He promised us that He is coming back to take us as His wife and He has given us His gift, the Holy Spirit.

As we looked at the message of the *Song of Solomon* we were given a clear picture of not only who our bridegroom is, but equally important how He sees us and how we should see Him. His invitation opened the doorway to His Rest and now, as we walk out the days of our *ketubah*, we need to find out what that means and what it *entails along the pathway of His Rest*. For that we turn to the Book of Hebrews where we learn what sewing our wedding dress means and how important it is for us to be ready and watching for His soon return as we move up the path to spiritual maturity.

We need to move on from the Cross, and within *Hebrew's* 13 chapters we are provided with our foundation along with the challenge to continue to achieve the goal of our betrothal. *Hebrews* not only provides us with the path to that maturity, it also reveals the steps we need to take to stay on that path. And along the way we have the incredible opportunity to live in His Rest and set aside for ourselves unbelievable rewards for our wedding day as we fulfill our individual role in His kingdom. But our journey isn't without challenges and Paul clearly lays those out for us. He urges us to face them and not be satisfied with just our salvation. What we seek is nothing less than entering into the total Rest of Christ.

## THE CONTEXT

Before we begin, I think it's important to understand the seriousness of the message that was delivered to these first century Hebrew Christians, sometime just prior to the destruction of the temple by Titus in 70 AD. They were immature in their faith, like many members of the bride today, and were tempted to turn back to their place of comfort; Judaism, the temple, and the Law. For the bride that haunting call comes from the world with all its false promises that's designed to keep her locked up in her bed chamber.

How these first century Christians got to this point and what caused their failure to move on to spiritual maturity are sadly facing many today. They were slothful, despondent and had lost enthusiasm for their faith. They had become wanting in their spiritual understanding and discernment and were failing to gather together as one body to support one another. Their loyalty to church leadership was waning and they were in danger of being carried back to old familiar teachings. These immature Christians were in danger of coming up short of God's promises by continuing to stand on the wrong side of their "Jordan River," failing to enter into their "Promised Land." They were happy to be content with the types and shadows but not the substance of Christ, and their Christian life was just a shadow of the real thing. There were lots of good intentions and promises but no power, no reality of Christ. They were continually pressured by family and friends to return to the temple and the Law, like believers who have left family and friends to follow Christ. The temptation to give up when things get tough and return to the old ways is strong and Satan takes every advantage of it.

That is a perilous danger for the bride. She needs to go on from living in the natural—her spiritual wilderness—and enter into her "Canaan," her land of milk and honey; the Rest of Christ. If she does then she'll become real and Jesus will become real to her. Sliding back into a nominal Christian lifestyle can't be an option if she has any hope of becoming the beautiful, pure, chaste, and holy bride that He is coming back for.

So let's hold fast to our confidence in His grace and partake in His fullness as we walk through our sanctification. Let's make the commitment to cross over from our wilderness into His Rest. Jesus' blood covenant—our contract—is our way out of the wilderness of this world. But there is so much beyond the cross—on the other side of the Jordan—that we dare not tarry at the Cross. The Cross is just the place of beginning. Entering into His Rest is our number one priority and there are great rewards awaiting us as we move on to perfection; now and forever.

## THE CHALLENGE

As we explore what His Rest is all about we need to remember one thing. It's not about our salvation; it's not about growing "into" grace. Our salvation is secure. Now we're to grow "in" grace. As Peter said, *grow in the grace* and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>(2Pet3:18)</sup> Hebrews isn't about salvation, it's about repentance. It's possible for us to fall by the wayside, turn away from a life of faith along this journey and have God set our ministry aside. We aren't "lost" but our "usefulness" is ended and at the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be no reward. That's why Paul talks about *running the race*. <sup>(Heb12:1)</sup> It's about the rewards at the end of the race, not salvation. Think of it this way, Paul is talking to Christians, not sinners, because dead sinners can't run the race, that's for living Christians. What Paul wants us to understand is that failing to move into the Rest of Christ—spiritual maturity—will lead to only one thing; backsliding. And if we slide too far we take the risk that God will cease to deal with us until we see Him face-to-face.

In *Heb 12:12-17* Paul shows us some of the challenges that we're going to face along the way and what we need to do to overcome them.

- ***Standing Still*** – We must lift up our hands and not let them hang down. We can't afford to just stand in one place in weakness. We need to lift up our hands in praise, worship and thanksgiving to strengthen our hands and knees and do something.
- ***Wandering*** – We must follow the straight path because when we wander we're going to fall. Be careful that we don't detour into the world and be "lamed" by its system, its materialism. Remember what happened to Lot.
- ***Detaching*** – Our goal is to follow after *peace* <sup>(Jas3:17)</sup> and *holiness* <sup>(1Pet1:16)</sup> with all men. We need to actively pursue the Rest of Christ and keep ourselves cleansed from the defilement of the world. If we follow peace our conscience will be clean, and if we follow holiness our sanctification

will keep us detached from the world and pure in Christ. If we do then we will *see God*; <sup>(Matt5:8)</sup> enjoy Him here and now.

- **Diligence** – It takes diligence, being constantly on guard, to keep us from falling from grace. Not falling from our salvation but from the Gospel; our Christian walk. If we fall out of the Rest of Christ we may become what Paul calls a *bitter root* that will affect others. Esau became that bitter root when he yielded to the “natural pressures” of life and turned away from his rights as the eldest son. We can’t let ourselves follow that same path and lose sight of the long-term perspective. There is an “afterwards,” and there are eternal rewards to be obtained if we don’t throw them away for the temporal ones of the world.

Our challenge is to think in terms of being not only partakers “in” Christ but to be partakers “of” Christ. In *Heb 3:1* Paul calls us *partakers of the heavenly calling*. Let’s think about that for a moment. The word means a partner—“of the same substance.” We are of the same “divine substance” as Jesus. Peter said the same thing when he referred to Christians as *partakers of the divine nature*. <sup>(2Pet1:4)</sup> The difference between “in” and “of” is an important key to Paul’s message.

Partaking “in” Christ is “positional.” It’s believing in Him and accepting His free gift of salvation; becoming born again from above. It costs us nothing because He paid the price for our sins on the Cross. On the other hand, partaking “of” Christ is “experiential.” That’s living out our new life in Him, becoming the *overcomers* referred to in Revelation. <sup>(Rev2:3)</sup> Being “of” Christ means that the life of Christ is being lived out “through” us, empowered by the Holy Spirit. We get to experience Him as we live out His overcoming life, His agape love (unconditional love), His supernatural power, and His divine wisdom. But to be a partaker of Christ costs us something. If we want to enter into His Rest, become a partaker of Jesus and be an overcomer of this world we have to continually lay down our life at the Cross. As Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane; *not my will, but your will be done*. <sup>(Luke 22:42)</sup>

The term “rest” as used by Paul means to cease or restrain. It carries the same meaning as the Hebrew word *nuwach* (be quiet, remain, set down), which was used in referring to Noah’s ark when it came to



“rest” on Mount Ararat after its journey through the storm. It’s the Rest of God that Joshua led the Israelites into in Canaan and Paul says that we, like Israel, are to *labor to enter into that rest.* <sup>(Heb4:11)</sup> But this is where many get confused and they develop a “works” mentality.

I think the best description of the Rest of Christ comes from an example used by Doctor M.R. DeHaan in his *Studies In Hebrews*. He described a shipwrecked sailor on a raft in the middle of the ocean when he was rescued by a passing ship. After he recovered and was enjoying his trip home the captain asked him to help out with the duties aboard the ship. He didn’t have to, he was going to get home in any event, but he was glad to be of service to the one who saved him because of his gratitude for being rescued.

The application to us is easy to see. We have been saved out of our hopeless situation and now, like that rescued sailor, we have a choice. We can just ride along as we make our way home or we can be about serving the One who saved us. Serving has nothing to do with our salvation. We’re saved and aren’t going to be thrown back into that hopeless situation. Rather it’s about responding to our salvation. The call to Christian service isn’t forced upon us; it’s ours to respond to out of love for Christ. We have the opportunity to live out a life that is a labor of love in gratitude for His sacrifice.

This is what our sanctification, our *ketubah*, is all about. By partaking of Christ we are creating His image in us; all for the purpose of bringing glory to Him. That’s what Paul meant when He said in *Romans* 8:29 that we are predestined (ordained by God) *to be conformed to the image of His Son*. Our betrothal is where we replace our “self-life” with Christ’s life. Once again Paul returns to this message in His letter to the Galatians:

*Gal 2:20 **I am crucified with Christ:** nevertheless **I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;** and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by the faith of the Son of God,** who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

And in his letter to the Colossians he tells us what that life is; a life lived in His Rest:

*Col 1:10-12 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; 12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:*

This is the betrothal of the bride. It's her sanctification, partaking of His Rest by walking worthy, being fruitful, increasing in knowledge, growing strong, exercising patience and longsuffering, being joyful, and giving thanks. But the exchange of our life for His doesn't happen automatically and it doesn't come cheaply. We must become cleansed vessels and the only way to accomplish that is to choose His life by the same simple child-like faith we exercised when we gave our life to Him. We need to choose His life of service and victory.

But the Hebrew Christians were in danger of coming up short of that life and the rewards that accompany it. They were allowing the draw of the temple and their old life to continue to quench the calling of the Holy Spirit into their new life. They were running the risk of allowing their unfaithfulness to cause them to begin to "drift away" by leading the life of the nominal Christian.

Today we seldom use that term, we're more familiar with "carnal Christian." But they are one in the same; those that have drifted away from their bridegroom and have chosen to do the impossible. They're trying to live in Satan's world while at the same time trying to live in God's world; it's an impossible task. Christians have been given a calling that is "from" heaven that is leading "to" heaven. That was Paul's goal: *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* <sup>(Phil3:14)</sup> His mark, his goal, was to live a life that followed the calling of Christ; a call to enter into His Rest.

For the bride, He now says that He wants her to go further. Further into a life of service that brings about a victorious, abundant, Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered, and Spirit-led life, as opposed to a life of "works" that falls back upon the Law. We have a life that has been saved by grace, but if we want a life that is full of victory we have to make the sacrifice of service. That is what Jesus meant when He said to *take my*

*yoke upon you and learn of me... and ye shall find rest unto your souls... My yoke is easy and my burden is light.* <sup>(Matt 11:2-29-30)</sup> What He was picturing was the yoke that was specifically made for a young inexperienced ox to wear that tied it to a mature ox that knew its job. It was made in such a way that while it guided the young ox, the entire burden of the heavy work was transferred to the mature ox. That's what Jesus has done for us, He has given us the Holy Spirit to "come along side" and bear our burdens as we journey through His Rest and become more like Him.

Remember, there is a difference between coming to Jesus for salvation and coming after Him for service. The first makes you a believer but the second makes you a disciple. The first depends solely upon God's faithfulness but the second depends solely upon your faithfulness.

The forefathers of these Hebrew Christians came "out of" Egypt but they never entered "into" Canaan, the land of milk and honey (God's Rest). They died in the wilderness having never attained the victory. They never received their reward, having come up short of God's best for them. The bride can make the same mistake today. We can *neglect our great salvation* <sup>(Heb 2:3)</sup> and come up short of Jesus' Rest. We won't lose our salvation but, like much of Israel, we'll die in the wilderness of this world, never having enjoyed the fullness of the victory that Jesus purchased for us on the Cross. We can go on to victory in Christ (a Spirit-filled Christian) or we can die unfulfilled in the wilderness (a carnal Christian).

Today many of the bride are standing at their personal Jordan River, their point of decision. They are saved but defeated because of disobedience, lack of separation from the world, neglect of the Word of God, the weights of the world, unconfessed sin, and the fear of paying the price of yielding to Christ; obedience. Far too many believe that the Christian life is just escaping hell and going to heaven. They are completely ignorant of the joy of service and the life of complete surrender that brings about the peace of God.

The purpose of becoming partakers "of" Christ—entering into His Rest—is to become the overcomer Jesus encourages us to be; those who produce the fruit of righteousness in their lives. It's the fruit that is produced in us by the Spirit of God, the Godly fruit that comes from

sanctification. Our work—our service to Christ—is our fruit and our fruit is the product of our lives. Or put in the context of the bride of Christ: her fruit is her wedding dress, her outward righteousness that flows out of the inward righteousness of her salvation. But we need to remember that there is a huge difference between service (love) and works (Law).

*Oh Give Me Rest From Self.  
Lord Jesus, Thou has promised rest.  
Then give it now to me.  
The rest of ceasing from myself  
To find my all in thee.  
It may not be at the battle's front  
My Lord will have need of me  
But if by a still, small voice He calls  
To paths I do not know,  
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand and in Thine,  
I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,  
O'er mountain, or plain, or sea,  
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord  
I'll be what you want me to be.  
- Dr. H.C.G. Moule*

## **THE KEY TO LIVING IN JESUS' REST**

An excellent primer for living in the His Rest can be found in *Hebrews 9:1-12*. Here Paul takes his Christian brothers back to the heart of the Law; the tabernacle. And there are many, many of its elements that speak to us today regarding our relationship with Jesus. Just like the tabernacle was a tent that was constantly wandering with Israel in search of a permanent home so we in our “fleshly tents” are sojourners here on earth, in search of our permanent home. I cover those in great detail in my book *The Pathway To Rest*, but here let's just look at four elements that directly relate to our living in His Rest.

The tabernacle had three sections or courts: the Outer Court, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (the Holiest Place). The last two represented Israel's two proximities to God, the two sanctuaries. It was

the Holiest Place that housed the glory of God, His presence over the Ark of the Covenant. The Holiest Place was set apart and a veil kept everyone out except the High Priest, who could enter only once a year on the day of Atonement, when He made a sacrifice for his sins and then again for those of Israel. Now picture them in light of Israel's Messiah, our bridegroom.

Outside the Outer Court—called the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple—was where we lived before we knew Him, outside of His kingdom in the world of the lost. When we made our commitment to follow Jesus we entered the Outer Court, which contained the brazen altar where the animal sacrifices were made to cover Israel's sins. For us it was the Cross. Once we became born again we moved into the Holy Place, the first proximity to God; the Christian life.

The Holy Place is a place in which we are nearer to God than we were in our sin, in the Outer Court. It's a symbol of the earth, a place full of busy work just like it was for the priests; trimming wicks, filling the candlesticks with oil, changing the showbread, etc. It's a place where there is a self-imposed veil between us and the presence of God. For many in the bride it's a place where they never seem to be good enough and nothing they do ever seems to take away that guilty feeling. They spend their time reading the Bible, praying, and putting in effort at Christian service; so close and yet so far. But the Holiest Place is where they really need to be. It's a symbol of heaven, a place that is living in the light of His glory, the light that shines into our hearts and reveals everything for what it is.

When Jesus died on the Cross for our sins God ripped the veil that separated the Holy Place and the Holiest Place (earth and heaven) from top to bottom (from heaven to earth), forever opening up His presence to us. Our bridegroom paid for our right to enter into His presence with His blood, the last sacrifice that needed to be offered. Now the Holiest Place is open 24x7 and Jesus has invited us to boldly enter in:

*Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

This is the key to living in Jesus' Rest. Remember our private garden from the *Song of Solomon*? This is that garden, our Holiest Place where Jesus waits for us to sit with Him and deepen our relationship. It's the place where His grace and mercy abound because His blood was poured out on heaven's altar. When Jesus said on the Cross that *it is finished* <sup>(John 19:30)</sup> the Law was fulfilled and there was no longer any need for animal sacrifices. The Garden of Eden was reopened and we were invited in. And it's during the time we spend with Him there that He takes us through all the issues in our life that are spots, wrinkles, and blemishes on our wedding dress. But He doesn't just leave us there, standing with a soiled dress. Through our repentance and by His grace we move ever closer to becoming His pure and holy bride.

Our challenge is to remain in the Holiest Place when His light exposes those parts of our life that are keeping us from being fully conformed into His image. When those things are brought to light it's our tendency to run back into the Holy Place; back into the world and away from what has been exposed. What we need to do is just the opposite, stay in His light and allow His grace and mercy to heal us. It's in the Holiest Place that we mature our spirit, where we move away from milk and on to the meat of the Word of God. If we will avoid the temptation to draw back into the life of the carnal Christian, trying to live in both worlds, we'll continue to sew our wedding dress, removing the spots, blemishes, and wrinkles of this world. Then we'll begin to see our outward nature reflect what Christ has put in our hearts. We just need to heed the words of Terry Fullam: *The fruit of the Spirit grows in the garden of obedience*. That's where we need to spend our time.

Our job during our betrothal is to hold fast to our *profession*. <sup>(Heb 3:6)</sup> We're not holding onto our "possession" (our salvation) because that's secure. We need to hold onto our "confidence" in the hope that Jesus has given us. If we don't, we'll cut ourselves off from the joy of building God's spiritual house here on earth and our rewards in heaven. It's about our assurance, confidence, and hope in His promises. The danger that the Hebrew Christians were facing was that they could lose all that, and that's why Paul told them that they could *come short of it*. <sup>(Heb 4:1)</sup>

## WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR US?

It's possible for the bride to be destined for heaven, assured of her salvation and yet lead a miserable life here on earth. There are two distinct possibilities for the Christian experience down here: carnal or spiritual; babes in Christ or spiritually mature saints. Sadly there are many who choose to remain perpetual infants, lacking the full joy of this life. But the good news is that they don't have to remain that way. His Rest is but a heartbeat of repentance away. It's a rest from the burden of guilt, from the pressure of temporal activities, from the distress of self-will, and from unsatisfied worldly affections. It's a rest in His finished labor, His divine fellowship and in loving service to Him.

Paul urges us not *to come up short*; if we do, we do so at our own peril, our own loss. Once again Dr. DeHaan: *The peril comes from seeking satisfaction in the visible and material rather than the invisible and spiritual—ease and happiness rather than peace and rest—rest in creation rather than the Creator.*

## WHAT IF WE FAIL?

Many believe that failure in the context of spiritual maturity involves the loss of our salvation. I think we've made it pretty clear already that interpretation is incorrect. Failure from Paul's perspective is all about losing out on a victorious life of service in which the Lord has set before us the opportunity set aside for ourselves incredible rewards in heaven. As is clearly reflected in the parable of the Talents, the Servant and others, <sup>(Matt 18:24-34)</sup> those rewards are based upon what we do here on earth with what we've been given. And failure to respond to His calling here and now puts us in peril of losing many of today's rewards that include:

- Living a life of intimacy with our bridegroom.
- Learning the way of the Spirit and living a fruitful and powerful life.
- Receiving the joy that comes from submission and loving only our bridegroom.

- Moving from our flesh to our spirit, from weakness to empowerment.
- Becoming all that He created us to be and developing and imparting the gifts we been given for the benefit of His Kingdom.
- Resting in his love and peace, getting to know Him, loving Him, and pleasing Him.
- Being freed from the pull of this world and the power of its material entanglements.
- Standing without spot, wrinkle or blemish when the trumpet sounds.
- And all so many more.

However, as great as these blessings are there is one peril that overshadows their loss. Paul speaks directly to that in Chapter 6:

*Heb 6:4-6 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 **If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance;** seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

First and foremost he is speaking to Christians, those who have been saved for all eternity by Christ's sacrifice. The sixth verse is the one that causes concern for many... *if they fall away*. Some think that these are Christians who fall away that may never come back. The real danger is that they may slip so far back that they will "never want to come back." You cannot lose your salvation but you can "leave" it and all the blessings that go with it. This is why it's so important to *press on to the mark*, to the finish.

What Paul is talking about here is "repentance." It's possible to fall by the wayside and not want to repent, and God does not do your repenting for you. At some point He will set your ministry aside. You aren't lost but your usefulness is ended and at the Judgment Seat of



Christ there will be no reward. Paul's exhortation to "run the race" is all about living a victorious life here and now and looking forward to those rewards. His message is for us to examine ourselves, judge every known sin, confess them and allow His grace to cleanse us.

Can we fail? Yes, we most certainly can fail to become all that God created us to be and fall short of His very best for us, the abundant and victorious life. And we can fail to receive the rewards that go along with that life, both here and now and in heaven. It all comes back to what kind of wedding dress will we be wearing when He returns for us. How closely will our outward righteousness reflect our inward righteousness? And that is all tied to "repentance." I think that's why God called David *a man after his own heart.* <sup>(Acts 13:22)</sup> When the light was shined on his sin, David was quick to repent. He knew what it meant to get back into the Holiest Place.

We can't afford to allow ourselves to backslide into the Holy Place, that place where our hearts can become hardened and we won't even want to repent of our sins. That can lead to the point at which God will set us aside until He returns and our anguish at that moment will be all about "what could have been."

## HOW DO WE KEEP FROM FAILING?

I think it's pretty clear by now that our bridegroom has a vested interest in our reaching "the mark." He has given us His Holy Spirit and invited us to come into His presence any time we want. His entire plan is to help us become spiritually mature and take up our rightful place in His kingdom. The word maturity or perfection represents victory; the abundant life, the Spirit-filled life. It lies on the other side of the dead works, dead legalism, and the formal religion so prevalent today. Our goal is to become more like our bridegroom every day, conformed into His image and not the image of the world around us.

It all goes back to Solomon's bride. When she drew near to him with a true heart and without any natural hesitation she was able to hold fast to her profession, her confidence in his promises. She learned that to cast away her confidence was also casting away her great rewards. She had to hold onto that confidence by faith. As the prophet Habakkuk said, *the just shall live by faith.* <sup>(Hab 2:4)</sup>

Lack of faith is the one thing that will keep us from reaching spiritual maturity. Our faith is no different than that of all those who Paul lists in the Hall of Faith.<sup>(Heb13)</sup> They are all witnesses to us that faith is center of our relationship with God. Abel lived by faith but Cain lived by religion. Enoch and Noah were saved from the world by their faith. Abraham received grace although his faith was weak. By faith Isaac blessed his sons and Joseph saved Israel. Moses lived by faith daily and Rahab had faith that worked.

In the face of these witnesses Paul tells us that to move on in our Christian walk we are to *lay aside every weight and sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race set before us. Looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.*<sup>(Heb12:1-2)</sup> Laying aside the weights of past sins—those of our old nature—and focusing on the One who not only gave us our faith but also promises to see us through to the end is the clear path set before us. To do that effectively we need to be committed, submitted, and patient, pausing along the way to ask our bridegroom how we're doing; how we're running the race.

In the first nine verses of Chapter 13 Paul gives us seven good questions to ask along the way that will give us a good checkup on how we're doing.

- How's your love for your brothers and sisters in Christ? Not loving them like brothers and sisters but loving them because they are your brothers and sisters.
- How's your hospitality? Have you been cold and indifferent toward others?
- How's your sympathy for others? Where are the needy on your priority list? What priority have you given to the lost?
- How's your home life? How solid is your marriage and your relationship with your family?
- How's your contentment with who, what and where you are? Are you focused on something other than your bridegroom?
- How's your intercession for others? Has self-centeredness impacted your prayer life?

- How are your stability, commitment, and conviction? Are you centered on His Word or have other teachings and doctrines slipped in?

Honest answers to questions like these will get the attention of our spirit and the Holy Spirit will give us the correction we need to make to stay on course.

I was in the midst of a nasty storm in my life at one point and was crying out to God for some direction. And since He made me a visual child He showed me a picture of me standing on the bridge of a ship headed into a terrible storm. My hands were on the helm but I didn't know which way to turn when I heard his voice; "Stay the course, hold what you've got." At first, looking at the dark storms ahead of me, that didn't seem to be a very good idea, but then He told me that the storms of life often come up unexpectedly to try and get us off course. It's at those times that we need to hold the last heading the captain gave us, and wait until we hear from him if there is to be a course correction. If there are no corrections then we can be sure that our present course is the one that will get us through the storm and into the sunshine on the other side.

But, if the Holy Spirit gives us a course correction it's our job to take heed and make it. And if we want to be certain that we will hear those corrections we need to stay in the Holiest Place and not slip back into the Holy Place. We need to stand fast at the helm and not falter in the face of the storm. A pastor once told me that people getting ready to leave a church begin by moving a little farther back each Sunday until they're sitting in the last row. Then it's just a matter of time before they walk out the door. We can't afford to let that happen to our relationship with Jesus. We need to keep our eyes on Him, looking away from everything else and consider Him by reckoning up or counting everything else against Him.

There is a great worship song by Danny Daniels that has always been one of my favorites because it perfectly sums up that vision God gave me. I have sung in from my heart many times when all I could do was hold onto what I had and stay the course.

*And when the darkness is closing in and I'm running against the wind, I will trust in you, and I will not be afraid. Cause when I'm*

*standing on the shore and the battles they have gone before; I will trust in you, and I will not be afraid.*

We initially made our way past the brazen altar and into the Holy Place but, as awesome as that was, we can't afford to stay there. There is so much more waiting for us beyond the Cross. The secret to our successful walk here on earth can only be found in the Holiest Place, the place where the work of the Holy Spirit takes our soul from self-centered to Christ-centered. But that decision is ours to make, a decision that critically impacts our ability to thrive in the years we've been given. Let us all commit to spend each and every day of our remaining years in His Rest.

# THE PATHWAY TO REST

## *The Brides' Purpose*

(Hebrews)

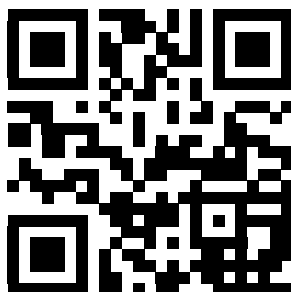
*Get access to more study materials, an audio book, and other  
WWG products as a valued member of our email list.*

Here in *Hebrews* Paul has provided us with a detailed look at what our betrothal to Christ is all about. In his comparison of the Old Covenant with the New Covenant through the eyes of his Hebrew audience we are shown the pathway to rest. You'll find much more that is directly applicable to the bride of Christ in *The Pathway to Rest – The Brides' Purpose* where we explore that in more through a verse-by-verse study of *Hebrews*.

You can order *The Pathway To Rest* by:

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**PART III**  
**THE DANGERS TO REST**  
**The Brides' Warning**

*Revelation 2-3*

*Many casual worshipers in Christian churches today who are quite familiar with the Sermon on the Mount are not aware of the existence of the seven messages of Christ. Many of the evils and shortcomings which exist in the church today are a direct outgrowth of neglect of the solemn instruction given to these seven churches.*

**John F. Walvoord**

The Lord shared with me that Christians generally fall into two categories when it comes to the Book of Revelation. There are those who don't want to read it because they feel it's too hard to understand, it's full of future turmoil surrounding His second coming and they don't want to deal with that. The second group is only interested in the mystery and prophecy contained in chapters 4 through 22. Unfortunately there are many pastors and teachers who completely ignore the book even though God tells us that in reading and hearing it we will be "blessed."<sup>(Rev1:3)</sup>

What Jesus wants us focused on are the first three chapters that deal directly with His bride, especially at this moment in time. These messages embody a complete synopsis of everything that Satan has used throughout time to distract, confuse, and draw away the bride from her intimate and personal relationship with Jesus. When they're all put together a picture points to where Jesus is leading us. What man has allowed Satan to pervert and corrupt, Jesus now wants His bride to restore, and the first step in that process is the same step He revealed to the seven churches in Asia... *Remember.*

Only Jesus would set aside His awesome power and authority to reach out to His precious bride in love. To awaken her out of her slumber and warn her of the danger surrounding her; the danger of allowing her heart and affections to wander. We hear in His words the voice of one who continues to cry out for her to return in spite of all that she has done. I wonder if we could—would—do the same.

As we look back in time it isn't hard to see that our God has been consistent—unchangeable—in the way He has dealt with His creation. We only need to look at the history of how He dealt with Israel when she strayed from Him, ignoring His Word and His prophets and assimilating into the world around them; becoming "of" the world. Here in the opening verses of His Revelation we find that nothing has changed; only the ones to whom the letters were written have changed.

The messages haven't changed because "the message" hasn't changed. It's one of love that reaches out with open arms, crying out for a wandering bride to return; a message of restoration and reconciliation. Do you remember God's words to the prophet Hosea?

*Hos 1:3 When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of*

*harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord." So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.*

God calls Himself the husband of Israel and as a wife she had continually been unfaithful to Him. So He told Hosea—a pure man—to go join himself in marriage to a prostitute. Hosea was called to make the same choice that was facing God; choosing to be faithful to Israel who was guilty of spiritual adultery. Sadly, God could not forgive Israel for what she would not acknowledge and therefore He gave her the desires of her heart.

How clearly this reflects our relationship with our bridegroom. Do we really want Him to be our Lord and Savior; our God? Do we resist His guidance, His Word? Is there a lack of holiness in our life? How about the church, is it mired in a culture of tradition that we demand of it? Unfortunately, in many cases the answer is a resounding yes. And it's here that we tread on very slippery ground.

As we begin to slip and slowly slide down that slope, drifting away from God in our pursuit of self-satisfaction, we find ourselves headed in a direction toward the one place we never want to find ourselves. The more we drift the more our pride refuses to acknowledge how spiritually empty we are until we wind up at a place where we don't think we have any sin to confess. It's all about the faults of others or the circumstances of life that are against us. At some point we draw dangerously close to becoming closed to the call of God's Spirit.

When we place ourselves in danger of failing to repent for our sins and continue in that state it means that they cannot be forgiven. We only need to consider Israel and how God continued to reach out to her in spite of how far she had drifted from Him. For us it is possible to say "no" to God for so long that we no longer are capable of saying "yes" in order to receive His forgiveness. That was exactly where God found Israel in Hosea's day.

Today there are many Christians who say they believe in Jesus, pray, and take an active role in their church; good Christians. But they aren't growing in their faith, deepening their relationship with Jesus or leading others to Him. Paul warned us that this attitude strikes straight at the heart of God; we grieve the Holy Spirit. *(Eph4:30)*



Paul's use of the word "grieve" in relationship to our resisting God's love is exactly how God felt with regard to Israel. Anything that blocks His love and forgiveness grieves Him; like putting possessions, people, power or position ahead of Him. Anything that deflects us from following the "individual" calling He has set before us to love and serve Him and others causes Him pain. It's for that very reason that God continues to confront us with what we are and what we've failed to be and do. Our culture-bound church that tolerates the humanistic society around us grieves God deeply. As Lloyd Ogilvie so aptly put it: *our sensual, sex-centric, pornographically saturated culture might even make the priests of Baal blush!*

How awesome then that God "could not" give up on His wife—Israel—no matter how unfaithful she had been. But more tragic was the fact that Israel not only continued in sin, she no longer acknowledged her sin and didn't seek His forgiveness. It's the same way He continues to pursue us when we reject His faithfulness with our unfaithfulness; no matter to what depths we sink. However, His redemption doesn't come without a price as He will not—cannot—turn a blind eye to our sin. We must repent and turn from our sinful past and look to Him as our only source of redemption and restoration.

That's the path that God took with Israel when He asked Hosea to take Gomer as his wife; a wife who later returned to where she came from, where she sank even lower than before. And what did God do?

*Hos 3:1-3 Then the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans." 2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. 3 And I said to her, "You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man — so, too, will I be toward you."*

Can you imagine the shame that Hosea felt when God first asked him to marry Gomer and then after she returned to her depraved lifestyle and didn't deserve his reconciliation God asked him to *go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover*. Thankfully God never gives up.

Man is like that today, he doesn't naturally desire God in his fallen state and only searches after his own independence; a state that we are ever drawn back to as Christians by our old nature. Hosea is for us the clearest example of why God sent Jesus to redeem—purchase—us in the first place and why He is sending Him again to call us back from our wandering infidelity. How blessed we are that God's love for us is based on action and not on emotion.

Fast forward now to the *Book of Revelation*. Once again God uses someone holy—Jesus—to call out once again to that which has become unholy. The very One who was pure from before the moment He was in His mother's womb was sent to redeem those, which time and time again have been guilty of sin. God sent His Son once again to His bride to call her and take her back. His voice shook the churches then and it still does today. He delivered seven messages—seven love letters—that touch every level of man's condition.

The church today has slowly and almost imperceptibly progressed away from the way it was established in the *Book of Acts* on the Day of Pentecost, and God uses these messages to clearly show us the reasons. He delivered them to admonish and yet encourage, warn of judgment and yet restore. And these messages have been woven with a golden thread; “remember,” “return” and “repent.” This golden thread directly addresses and confronts the true believer—the bride of Christ.

## **THE REVELATION OF THE BRIDEGROOM**

*Rev 1:1(a) The Revelation of Jesus Christ ...*

The word Revelation (*apokalupsis*) is singular and is the radical discovering, unveiling or uncovering of something that was previously hidden. And we are immediately told that this surprising and radical breakthrough is the revelation of Jesus Christ. We've seen Jesus come as a lamb to be sacrificed with His glory veiled, but here we see Him come as our sovereign Lord to be crowned the King of Kings. He first came to be judged but when He comes again it will be “to judge.” He walked among us enduring shame but the next time we see Him it will be in His full splendor, no longer redeeming as a servant but reigning as the sovereign of all. And so we move from the gospels as related by man to

these incredible messages delivered directly to us from the lips of none other than the Lord of all.

What I want to be sure we don't miss here is the primary reason for *Book of Revelation*. First, and this is critically important, Jesus tells John to look; what you see, tell to the seven churches. And what did John see; seven golden lampstands. They represent the seven churches in Asia, likened to the candlestick (*menowrah*) in the tabernacle with seven lamps giving light in the darkness <sup>(Ex 25:31-37)</sup>. In *Rev 1:12* the word is *luchnia* (light bearer). These lampstands are bearers of light against the darkness, but they are not light in and of themselves; it is Jesus' light that they carry.

Jesus left this world and "night" (spiritual darkness) will continue until He returns. Therefore in His absence the lampstands are to bring His light into the world; our role in life and our challenge. However, read on and in verse 13 we find the key to meeting this challenge.

And the first thing John saw was Jesus standing, not on the outside or on the perimeter, but in the "midst" of His church, right where He is in all His glory today. The term Son of Man (used some 70 times in the Bible as in *Dan 7:13*) speaks of Jesus as the "God-man" walking on this earth; the Messiah. He stands there in His priestly robe *girded about the chest with a golden band*; <sup>(Ex 28:4)</sup> His righteousness.

What a picture. Jesus tells John to look and see Him in the midst of His churches, clothed in a priestly robe of majesty and righteousness. These are not the clothes Jesus wore when He travelled through the hills of Galilee, on His journey to Jerusalem or on the Cross. They're not the clothes of a suffering servant but those of a king, a king who is in the midst of the churches, observing, watching over, helping, protecting, and defending them.

It's from this position in the midst of these churches that Jesus delivers His messages (letters) that are all connected, just as His presence in the midst of the circle connects the churches together. He is the "only" common center or common source that holds His church together. And His letters are focused on our obedience to Him as "our" center, because that is how we'll be judged.

This is how the Savior of the gospels now presents Himself to His bride. It's not only a message of confidence in His leadership but

also a warning of the growing signs of corruption and apostasy, which He “will not” tolerate in His bride. In His love for her, Jesus delivers seven messages that we need to view as warning signs as we watch and wait for His midnight call. These are mid-course corrections that are necessary to keep us on track and clear warnings to deal with our spots, wrinkles, and blemishes (decay and sins). The bride that Jesus desires to present to His Father is to be holy, morally pure, blameless, and ceremonially consecrated.

In each of the seven messages in front of us we see the demonstrated love of Jesus for His bride. He hasn’t forsaken her nor has He abandoned her. To Him she has priceless value as the bearer of His light (seven golden lampstands). However, she needs to be reminded that one day when it is least expected the Father will send Him forth to call for her. The question is, will she be ready or will she have failed to trim her wick or run out of oil like the “foolish virgins?” Take a moment and read *Matt 25:1-13* and keep that picture ever in the forefront of your thoughts as we progress through our journey, a journey that is rapidly drawing to a close.

Jesus said when all these things “begin” to come to pass—false messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, famines and pestilences, earthquakes in diverse places, false prophets and deceivers, increased iniquity, and apostasy—“*then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*” <sup>”(Luke 21:28)</sup> At this moment in history we all need to lift up our head and watch, but at the same time never forget where we’re planted and what we’re to be doing. I truly believe that our “house” is almost finished and we cannot fail to tend our lamps!

Now, just before we examine these messages, it’s important to remember that these were seven real churches in Asia and Jesus spoke directly to what was taking place in them at that time. However, these messages are also prophetic and they speak to all churches and Christians down through the ages. Many also view them as representing seven stages in the life of the church. But what’s important for us is that they point out strategies of the enemy that are designed to attack individuals as well as churches. And for that reason Jesus is calling us to reflect on His warnings as the days grow shorter and the activity of the enemy increases.

It's important for us to understand what Jesus was referring to in each message that spoke directly to the real life circumstances facing the individual churches. They paint a very clear picture to help us understand the real dangers that surround us and what we need to do to protect ourselves. I encourage you to spend time reflecting on these words that have been given to us from Jesus' own lips. You will get a detailed verse by verse discussion of these seven messages in my book—*The Dangers To Rest*—that is available on [www.WakeUpandRest.com](http://www.WakeUpandRest.com).

So, with the background set let's begin our journey of discovery with our first stop along the ancient postal route in the Roman Province of Asia at its chief city, Ephesus.

### **TO EPHESUS—THE CARELESS BRIDE (REV 2:1-7)**

Ephesus, which means *let go*, was the post-apostolic church to which Jesus said, "You have fallen." The church was drifting away and letting go of the truth. The love it had for Christ was diminishing and was being replaced with "dead works."

This was a dynamic church that was energetic in doing the work of the Lord but its cost was its fading love of Christ and their fellow man. The church at Ephesus was the first step down the slippery slope to Laodicea; apostasy. Today the church is surrounded by cities like Ephesus with every form of distraction and enticement to draw the bride away and encourage others to labor and toil against them, and the love of Christ gets left out in the process.

There are many in the bride that find themselves in this very place. The years of toil and demands of life have stripped them of that first love. They still "believe" and haven't "lost" that love, it's been replaced with other things, many of which were built with "good intentions." When we shift from the simplicity of loving Jesus to "working" for Him we will surely suffer the loss. When we move away from Him it's usually fueled by a desire to fulfill the soul instead of building a relationship. Thankfully, Jesus tells us that this "love" can be rekindled by remembering, returning and repenting.

Let us all take the lesson of the church at Ephesus to heart. We must be ever vigilant because this first step down the slippery slope to apostasy is subtle one. It is one that is most often taken without any

knowledge of the path it's on or the danger involved. In fact, it's a path that is never seen because that first step is almost always taken with the best intentions in the world. But it's a step that begins the process of trading the love of God for the works of the flesh; the love of God for the efforts of a "dead man."

Ephesus had great zeal for truth and right but they had a love that was in fatal decline. We can't afford to let that happen to us. When we find our love for Christ has slipped away we need to stop and remember where that happened, return to where we left Him and repent, beginning to do all those things that we were doing when His love was alive in our heart.

### **TO SMYRNA—THE SUFFERING BRIDE (*REV 2:8-11*)**

The church at Smyrna—*bitter*—was suffering persecution that was to last almost 200 years. It all began with Nero and his attempt to totally destroy the church by the spilling of the martyrs' blood. To them Jesus spoke only encouragement, telling them that their suffering would only be for a time.

Jesus had experienced the worst the world could do to Him and He understood the persecution the church was enduring. He recognized their abject poverty, but yet He told them that they were "rich" in the Spirit. The world considers wealth as value but Jesus considers our spiritual wealth as absolute worth; He chose us to be "rich in faith."

Their works were prosperous, their investment in the kingdom of God made them truly rich and they had His promise that would never be revoked; a promise that secured riches beyond their wildest dreams. He wanted them to understand that their riches would come at the expense of suffering and that still holds true for the bride today. He never promised us that it would be easy. When we have been totally emptied of self-trust, have cast ourselves completely at His feet and fully understand that true riches are not found in anything we have attained or have become but are only found in Him, then we are truly rich beyond measure.

Look at the Christians in Smyrna through the lens of the parable of the tares and wheat. (*Matt 13*) The seeds of evil (tares) were sown among the righteous (wheat) and persecution was the result. But Jesus' response was to allow the wheat and the tares—the Christians and those

persecuting them—to grow together until the harvest. That is what tries (proves) our faith, love, patience, and obedience. When the harvest comes the “wheat” will be gathered into His barn; we will receive the crown of life and all that has persecuted us will be bound up in bundles to be burned.

There is a time of suffering for each of us and as the days grow short that suffering is going to increase. When that time comes we need to reflect back on Jesus’ words ... *do not fear those things which you are about to suffer*. Perhaps the words of Corrie ten Boom, who continually faced fear and suffering at the hands of the Nazis, puts it in perspective: *Fear is like a rocking chair... it gives you something to do but doesn’t get you anywhere*

As His bride let us wait and watch, not fearing the dark of the night because He has given us His lamp. Therefore let’s tend it carefully and be ready for His sudden call to come forth. Suffering today is but a small price to pay for the joy that comes in the morning. <sup>(Ps30:5)</sup> The field is ripe for the harvest... but the workers are few. <sup>(Mt9:37-38)</sup> We can be confident in His promises because He is faithful.

## **TO PERGAMOS—THE WORLDLY BRIDE (REV 2:12-17)**

During the Roman period the church at Pergamos—*mixed marriage*—was guilty of following the “doctrine of Balaam,” a doctrine of corruption. The church married the world with the result of godly things being used for the advantage of the world as instituted by Constantine when he legalized Christianity and gave the church new freedoms. Pagan temples became churches and pagan priests became clergy.

What was happening in Pergamos was a church trying to be all things to all people, and as such they were tolerating those who held worldly views, allowing them to infiltrate the church and bring corruption into the body of Christ. Mixing the things of the world with the church was compromising its message and ministry. Jesus condemned those that followed that doctrine and He also charged the church for tolerating them in its midst; compromising their purpose.

He made it clear in this letter that His bride must say no to those who would become part of her that are not committed to Him. She must

remain separate from the materialistic philosophy of the world, for if she marries it she cannot keep the integrity of her faith.

What is the doctrine of Balaam? It's joining with the world and adopting its ways, seeking political change when the world seems upside down rather than first and foremost, standing for the One and only One who can truly change it. It's all about desiring to become a part of the world to make our voice heard. We have been called to a higher purpose and our strength is not of this world. We don't have the same values and when we compromise we're entering into a marriage with the world when we are betrothed to the King of Kings.

If we are going to make a difference in the world around us we first have to determine to be different. We can't allow circumstances or situations to force us to compromise. Paul told us not to form binding relationships with unbelievers and that goes for the world in general. <sup>(2Cor 6:14)</sup> We need to be active witnesses for Jesus to the non-believing world around us. But that can't happen if we compromise our faith for the sake of comfort; avoiding confrontation and persecution. If we do, it's the first step in allowing the world to become a part of us, and like the church at Pergamos we will be more influenced by the world than we are likely to influence it. Our focus needs to remain fixed on our bridegroom, listening for His voice, spending time sitting at His feet and allowing the Holy Spirit to remove all those barriers of sin that keep us from becoming more like Him. He has called us to come away and be separate and therefore we have no business entering into a relationship—a marriage—with the world.

## **TO THYATIRA—THE UNREPENTANT BRIDE (REV 2:18-29)**

The church at Thyatira—*daughter*—was associated with *that woman Jezebel*. Her pagan practices were the precursor of the Dark Ages; the idolatry, graven images and adoration of saints found in the early church at Rome. Its sole purpose was to combine the church with the world to gain power.

Sadly we see this happening in churches today. There is something beguiling in riches and power that makes people do things that are totally inconsistent with the Christian life. We only need to



consider the issues of materialism, fornication, divorce, abortion and homosexuality; it all goes downhill from there. Unfortunately, in today's world many a worldly Christian has been allowed into leadership, bringing with them a false and evil doctrine as the direct result of money and/or charisma. There were those in Thyatira that were enchanted by Jezebel's "deep" understanding and were led astray. More than once throughout history the church—and the world—have been awed by someone's false teachings.

This is a challenge every Christian faces today. The spirit of Jezebel hasn't gone away; it has only become more powerful down through the ages. It has always been about, and will always be about, compromising our Christianity for riches, comfort, pleasures, and "you fill in the blank."

Jezebel speaks of those who talk more about commercial success than they do about the claims of Christ. The Christians at Thyatira faced temptations that were tied to their skills; how they supported their families. They were up against false teachings and social pressure from their workplace; participate or suffer the loss of work. We can take a lesson here and be reminded that the strongest challenge to the bride doesn't occur in the public places but rather where we earn our money in order to survive. Under those circumstances then it's fair to ask the question—how are we to survive?

We need to see our daily lives in the bigger perspective and keep our integrity and faith intact. If we worship our job—putting it in front of our Christianity—then we're asking too much from it and not enough from God. He has to be—must be—the first and only source in our life. The moment we put our hope, trust, confidence, and faith in man or the world we're certain to fail. All these things that take our minds and hearts off of Jesus are the idols of Jezebel.

The error of Thyatira is possible today. We can also have idols by looking to a person or a church program and put our hope and trust in that person or that structure. How many times have we seen a leader arise with some "special revelation from God," some "deeper understanding" that the bride doesn't know or comprehend? How many times have we seen her become beguiled and follow after them, sacrificing her relationship with Jesus by leaning on her own understanding and not His?

Every day we are either getting closer to Him or farther away. There are only two alternatives sitting before us: either we choose to become more Christ-like or more self-like. There isn't an option to "stand still;" stand pat where we are. Either we listen to the call of the world and compromise or we listen to the words of our bridegroom and hold fast to what we have until He comes!

### **TO SARDIS—THE DYING BRIDE (*REV 3:1-6*)**

To the church at Sardis—*gem*—Jesus proclaimed, *you have a name but are dead*. This is the period of the protestant reformation when the church at Rome had become intolerable. Much of the pagan ritual was done away with but the church never recovered its sound doctrine. It recovered the salvation doctrine (soteriology) but not the "study of" the Holy Spirit (eschatology/pneumatology).

Nowhere is there a better example of the melancholy contrast between past splendor and present decay than the church at Sardis. This letter is a searching message to those of the bride today that are full of activity but are lacking in any real evidence of the life of Christ; they've ignored the Holy Spirit. This message is just as pertinent today as it was at the time John received it. When we take a position that is counter to the Word of God, choose to go our own way in opposition to it, continue down that road and fail to repent day after day, month after month and year after year, there will be a price to pay.

The question is, how did such a vital, Spirit-filled church die? The citizens of Sardis were living off past fame and so was the church. Their loyalty and service to Christ was in the past. They died spiritually by losing the dynamic of daily dependence on the Holy Spirit.

The church didn't die from persecution for a church can't be killed from the outside, it only dies from within. The greater the church is persecuted the stronger it becomes and the larger it grows. Just look at the world around us... China, Africa, Asia. Sardis did have some who were alive but they were surrounded by those who were dead, those who had become nothing better than hypocrites.

A church dies when its individual members die and when it relies on its past reputation, falling into complacency and overconfidence. It dies when sin is allowed to abound. Many go around wearing soiled

garments and beneath their outward reputation is secret unconfessed sin, which ultimately leads to relaxed moral standards in the church. A church dies when there is a lack of spiritual sensitivity; when it fails to sense its own spiritual condition.

### **TO PHILADELPHIA—THE SERVING BRIDE (*REV 3:7-13*)**

The church at Philadelphia—*love of the brethren*—represented the “open door.” This was the age of missionary revival; the time of Finney, Whitefield, Spurgeon and Moody. The church returned to its true mission of loving and serving God and their fellow man, a mission that down through the centuries hasn’t been changed.

There are missionary doors for every believer that Jesus will open, and we don’t have to go to Africa to find them. Those doors are at home, in the office or anywhere within the circle in which we move every day. They are doors that no man can shut, no matter how hard they may try. If the Lord opens it, it stays open until He decides to close it. To the Philadelphians this meant those who called themselves Jews (Jesus said they were not) that were trying to shut the door on Christianity. Jesus is also saying to His bride today that no one can shut the doors He opens.

He commended Philadelphia because in their *little strength* they rested solely in His power and kept His Word, unlike the church at Sardis. He didn’t ask them, nor does He expect us, to open heavy doors. All He wants is for us to walk through those He opens; a task that isn’t hard because He empowers us. God isn’t looking for super Christians, just the garden variety who are experiencing His love in their own lives and are willing to share it. When the world sees this type of love (agape) in the bride the doors will swing wide open; the world is starved for this kind of love.

We sometimes get too wrapped up in evangelism with all the “mechanics” of sharing the Gospel. I don’t know who wrote it but I have a note in my Bible that was written a long time ago and it has always encouraged me to remember the key to sharing the Gospel... *Evangelism is not developing a formula—it’s establishing a relationship.* And that’s what living in the Holiest Place is all about.

We would do well to consider the Philadelphian church as it represents one of the two end-time churches; the two end-time believers. Philadelphia is the strong, vibrant, Spirit-filled church of the bride. They were a missionary church that understood the power of the Gospel and the admonition to spread it among those in an unbelieving world. They understood that their task was simply to trust in God to provide the convicted heart and the power to restore. It was their weakness and faithfulness that provided the platform for the Spirit of God to touch the hearts of others. And their reward is ours if we follow them... more open doors!

### **TO LAODICEA—THE APOSTATE BRIDE (REV 3:14-22)**

The church at Laodicea—*rule of the people*—represents the last church, the *lukewarm* church that is the other end-time church. It's the church that is *poor, wretched and blind*; filled with cults and strange theology. The church that tries to be both “in” the world and “of” the world, neither hot enough to use nor cold enough to heat up. They are neither pagans nor Christians, neither good nor evil, and are neither led by false doctrine nor addicted to the true Word of God.

The real problem was not simply their indifference but the ignorance of their real condition. The spirit in the world around them had crept in and paralyzed them, causing them to totally misread their true condition.

This error is often made by those who have an abundance of the world's goods, who are materially comfortable. When they make a “profession of religion” they assume that they are well off in everything and are complacent and happy. The problem is that having a great deal of wealth by an individual or a church is more likely to produce the same lukewarmness that existed in the church at Laodicea; the very state of affairs that Jesus said was disgusting and abhorrent.

In all respects their material needs were satisfied and they felt they had enough of everything, which resulted in contentment, complacency, and indifference toward their spiritual needs. As it was then it still is today, those who are rich in this world's goods often feel that they don't need anything. It's an illusion among many that if they can just attain wealth they will have everything. They believe that there

isn't any need that can't be met with wealth; they can just sit down in pleasure and rest. Hence we have a pull from the world that encourages putting wealth ahead of everything else; the search for personal peace and comfort.

The Laodiceans had become lukewarm because they were blinded by their own self-confidence; self-confidence that had turned them into spiritually empty vessels. They had overestimated their own wealth far too long and the only thing that was going to change that perception was the hard shock of reality; a shock this message gave them. They needed to be told the difference between the state they were in and the state they should be in because they were incapable of seeing it.

Here we have the bride who slumbers in her chamber and when her bridegroom knocks she is slow to rise from her comfort. By the time she finally rises and opens the door he is gone. She cries out for him but can't find him. With Jesus on the outside there can be no fellowship, or as He showed to the Laodiceans, no real wealth. He is knocking on the door to His bride's heart, not the door to a stranger. *(Rev3:20)*

Jesus wants to be our friend but He recognizes our free will and won't force admission into our heart. If we open the door when He knocks He'll come in and dwell with us, but if we don't answer He turns quietly away; maybe to return and maybe not. The spiritual state of the bride, between waking and sleeping and being slow to open the door to her divine lover, speaks to the lukewarm church and the lukewarm believer.

Tragically there are people who go to church all their lives but never hear the message. They never deal with the issues of sin and repentance. To them there is a heaven to gain but no hell to shun. The only cure for the lukewarm bride—the nominal, carnal Christian—is readmitting the one she has excluded; the Holy Spirit.

The church at Laodicea represents an organization built by man while the church at Philadelphia is a living organism built by the Lord. As His bride we dare not become today's Laodicean church that forsakes Jesus for the comfort of the world. Let us rather become the church at Philadelphia, the overcoming and victorious bride.

## THE NEXT MOVE OF GOD

I cannot overemphasize the importance of these seven messages, these seven love letters. They are critical for the bride. No one can argue that there are monumental events taking place in the world that point to *all these things*.<sup>(Matt 24:33-34)</sup> And there are many things happening in the Spirit all over the world that we're not experiencing in many churches and meetings here in America, and there are many reasons why. Perhaps we only need to consider one:

*Matt 13:58 Now He did not do many mighty works there **because of their unbelief**.*

I have talked with many who minister outside of North America and they are witnessing the presence of the Holy Spirit in their meetings in tremendously powerful ways. They are seeing miracle healings, deliverance and spiritual restoration as the Holy Spirit moves in response to the spoken Word and the faith of those who hear it and respond. Will we see that happen here? I believe the answer is held in the Word that Jesus is sharing with His bride here in America. He is getting ready to move in a mighty way, but He is first dealing with her and that is why He wants her to take heed of these messages.

This next move of God is going to involve the bride restoring what began to slip away just a few short years after the Day of Pentecost. How quickly many began to modify the perfect church the Holy Spirit established on that incredible day, a church that was founded on Jesus' two commands:

*Mark 12:30-31 And you shall **love the Lord your God with all your heart**, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall **love your neighbor as yourself**.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

The very thing the church at Ephesus lost, God now wants His bride to restore; her love for Him. The very thing for which He commended the Philadelphians He now wants her to restore; her love for others. It is His love that we have allowed Satan to pervert and replace

with the riches and comfort of the world we live in. But now is the time that God is going to begin moving in a mighty way to change that.

First and foremost the church in the Book of Acts adhered to Christ's commandments by ensuring that the needs of the body were being met. Their emphasis was not on big buildings, large programs and influence in the community. It was on ensuring that those needs—physical and spiritual—were being met in order for a healthy church to carry out its primary mission of making disciples. Take some time to read the *Book of James* and consider his words in light of where the church is headed.

What happened over time, however, was the shift in the priority of man to the physical at the cost of the spiritual. We see it evident in five of the seven churches that were focused on man and man's plans and not the Spirit and His plans. The result today is a drifting away from Jesus that has left many in the church in America materially strong but spiritually weak. Their primary focus, and that of many believers, is within the "building" walls; some of which have far too many walls to count. The church has lost her connection with the lost by establishing a building wherein the bride sits with waiting arms to welcome any who would enter. That ought not to be so. Within the walls of the "church building" is the place where the bride needs to be prepared and ministered to in order to build up her spiritual gifts in order to minister to one another. It has been lost on many that spiritual gifts are for the building up of the body and not primarily for ministering to an unbelieving world. Yes, God uses them for that purpose but let's not forget why He gives them to those who believe in Him... *the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all* <sup>(1Cor 12:7)</sup>. God further provided offices within the body for the very same purpose.

*Eph 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*

The bride can't go out into the world with the message of the Gospel and make disciples if she isn't spiritually prepared and strong in her faith. It is with these essentials that she needs to deal. In many places the direction of the Holy Spirit has been replaced with the plans and programs of man. The focus has been on how to attract members and not how to serve others. It is to those churches and the believers that sit in the pews on Sunday that Jesus is crying out. They are the present day churches at Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea. To those who represent Smyrna and Philadelphia he urges them to continue and to hold fast. To the others He urges them to remember, return and repent.

But Tom, this isn't anything different than we've heard before? Perhaps not, but let me share why I believe it is so critical now.

The next move of God is going to be "outside" the "church." It isn't going to take place within the walls of congregations across the country. By that I mean it's going to take place in the harvest fields. The church building is going to be a place for making disciples. God wants to restore the church in the Book of Acts; the church He created to reach a lost and suffering world. The pressure Satan is putting on conformance to the world today is stronger than ever and it has lulled a large portion of the bride to sleep. Yes, many have lost their first love and it shows in the fact that they are focused on their internal services and programs and not on the hurting world outside the door. In many churches and in many hearts the Holy Spirit has ceased to be invited, and in others He doesn't show up because of the practices being tolerated in the church and individual believers.

Why are we seeing God's powerful hand in third-world countries in a way we're not here in America? It's because the power of the Spirit of God is being quenched by churches and believers that don't want to be moved out of their comfort zone. I believe with all my heart that is going to change... soon!

In this next move of God we will see signs and wonders accompany the going forth of the Word of God on a scale that we have never before witnessed. The bride that remembers, returns and repents will find her relationship and intimacy with Christ restored. He stands at the door and knocks and all she needs to do is open the door and the blessings will flow; the blessings of more and more doors of opportunity



to share the Gospel. She will become the church at Philadelphia, the victorious end-time church.

## **SO WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?**

It means that Jesus is calling on His bride to wake up, take stock of her spiritual condition and take the necessary steps to restore her relationship with Him before it's too late. It means that churches and believers, if they want to be a part of this next move of God, need to press into the Holy Spirit and find out where He is and go there. But if you don't understand who He is and why He's here you will never be able to move in the faith and the power you need to stand up to an enemy that knows who you are and hates the Gospel you carry. You need to discover the gifts that God has given you for the body of Christ and begin using them because, like faith, they can only be built up through exercise.

Our focus needs to be in the world, depending on the Word of God and the strength and power of the Spirit to keep us from becoming a part of it. Jesus wants His bride out sharing the truth as He demonstrated to us over and over again during His short life here on earth where He spent most of His time out in the world spreading the Gospel. We need to find ways of meeting an unbelieving world that will overcome their hypocritical view of Christians with the genuine love and Word of God. We will never see the lost in our sphere of influence if we just sit in church and wait for them to come.

Sadly, those who continue their empty, nominal Christianity are going to miss this next move and tragically they won't witness what the bride is going to be blessed to see. As individual believers we need to strengthen our spirit, build up our faith and develop our spiritual gifts. God has a plan for each one of us that is to be played out right there where we live and work. But if we aren't tuned in and listening to the voice of His Spirit we'll walk right by the door that's just been opened.

I believe what I have shared here more strongly than anything I have ever heard from the Lord. He is ever so close to returning and we dare not—cannot—ignore the importance of His letters to the churches; to His bride. The underlying problem in five of the churches was the

diminished presence of the Holy Spirit. He is the one that Jesus sent in His stead; the one who comes along side to assist, lead, counsel, direct, empower, love, minister, and all so much more. He is the one who will be leading this move of God and if you don't "know" Him (intimately) you need to, if you don't understand His gifting you need to find out, and if you aren't fully yielded to Him you need to determine why and deal with it immediately. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- Remember where you went wrong, return to the One you left and repent and receive His grace.
- Know the Spirit; reconnect and trust Him for power, wisdom and guidance.
- Know your calling and gifting and step into them. Don't deprive the body of Christ what you have been given.
- Allow the Spirit to develop those gifts through the tests and trials that will strengthen them.
- Be prepared to "move out," strengthened and equipped within to share the Gospel in your world.
- There is no longer time for "holy huddles." God is moving outside the church because the church isn't moving.
- Remember that the centerpiece of Christianity is "relationship."

How much does Jesus love His Bride? To that question there isn't a sufficient human answer. We can't grasp the enormity of His love. Perhaps we might get a clue if we think back on His message to the church at Pergamos. If you remember it was a church that had allowed the vile and evil practices of Jezebel to infiltrate their midst. Yet for all the horrible pain and suffering she caused it wasn't that for which God was about to punish her. No, it was because He gave her "time" to repent and she refused to.

That's the message of Revelation... *the time is short but there is still time to remember, return and repent.* I am very confident that you have, as I have, found many of the characteristics of these churches in your own heart, but thank God we only need to have an ear and "hear" (understand and respond) what the Spirit is saying. What He is saying today is that there is a new move coming in which He is going to be

actively reaching out to spread the Gospel in America, and it's going to take place out there in the harvest fields. The choice is ours to open or not open our door, the one He's knocking on. When we answer it may hurt for a time after its open but it won't last for long, and the rewards far outweigh any suffering on our part. Remember, He only chastises those He loves.

Will we be ready? Will we be spiritually healthy? Will we be spiritually empowered? If the answer is yes we're going to experience the hand of God in ways we never dreamed of... *one open door after another.*

# THE DANGERS TO REST

## *The Brides' Warning*

### (Revelation)

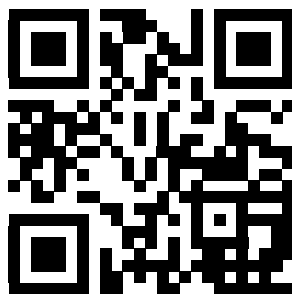
*Get access to more study materials, an audio book, and other WWG products as a valued member of our email list.*

The warnings from our bridegroom in *Revelation* 2 and 3 represent the real dangers facing us as we walk out our betrothal here on earth. Just as God warned Israel prior to her entry into His Rest, so Jesus warns us of the dangers surrounding us today. And like Israel was called to search their homes for leaven, we are challenged to search our heart for any hidden sin. This is covered in detail in *The Dangers To Rest – The Brides' Warning*, a verse-by-verse look at these critical chapters as they relate to the bride of Christ in America.

You can order *The Dangers To Rest* by:

Visiting: <http://bit.ly/buydangerstorest>

Or Scanning with your Smartphone:



**PART IV**  
**THE BATTLE FOR REST**  
**The Brides' Armor**

*Ephesians 6*

*We may be tempted to think that our enemies are human and then to seek to fight with worldly weapons. But our real enemies are the spiritual forces that stand behind all institutions and seek to control the lives of persons and nations.*

**Maxie D. Dunnam**

## **ARE WE REALLY IN A WAR?**

For many Christians the concept of spiritual warfare brings up images of angels and demons engaged in battle in the heavenlies. Sadly these images shade the reality that spiritual warfare is going on all around us down here 24 hours a day, and the fact that it is personal; deeply personal.

Spiritual warfare is a battle between the forces of God and the forces of rebellion, led by Satan. The bride is engaged in this spiritual war and her enemy is a host of unseen angelic and celestial enemies whose power vastly exceeds her own. It's a war between light and dark, good and evil, heaven and hell, and God and Satan. But, sadly, the majority of the bride in America isn't even aware of the fact that they're in a spiritual battle.

We're in a grim conflict and we're not on a worldly cruise ship or a showboat; it's a battleship and it's a fight to the finish with no holds barred. We can't be neutral and we can't call a truce. When you were born again, you were born to win and you've become a spiritual freedom fighter. You're a commando in God's invasion army and just like a soldier wouldn't step onto the battlefield without advance "Intel" on the enemy, there's intelligence you need if you're going to exercise authority in spiritual warfare.

Much of this warfare is beyond our ability to see and influence except through prayer, and even then only as God's Spirit gives us revelation into the spirit world. With few exceptions our enemies remain invisible to our eyes, but nevertheless they're real and so is their opposition.

Angelic beings have great power and Satan would seem to possess the greatest power, a power we dare not disregard. To do so is to underestimate the immensity of the spiritual struggle and the corresponding need we have for divine enablement. Satan is constantly attacking the church, the home and the personal lives of Christians. You have been in battle for a long time, whether you know it or not.

## **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

Spiritual battles began in the Garden of Eden, they have continued down through history and the bride is in the middle of one today. We need to understand that while coming to faith in Christ involves entering into every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, it's also the commencement of a great struggle with Satan and his forces. Unfortunately there are many of the bride that dwell on the blessings but fail to take note of the battle; the battle that we must wage in His strength if we have any hope of prevailing on a daily basis. The alternative is a defeated and unfulfilled life.

### **A War Against The Devil**

This is a war made up of many battles with Satan and his army, but people today don't want to believe that there is a devil anymore. They treat him as some sort of comical figure with horns, a tail, and a pitchfork. Children are desensitized at an early age. Consider the subtle ways he is presented to them: the haunted house ride at Disneyland, comic books, cartoons, movies, etc. By the time they become adults they've dismissed him as a figment of Hollywood's imagination. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Satan is real and he has a spiritual army that we wage war against. It's a real army and it's made up of Principalities (head officers), Powers (staff officers), Rulers (divisional commanders), and Spiritual Hosts of wickedness (rank and file). <sup>(Eph6:12)</sup> We will get into this in more detail later but for now just recognize that Satan is not a figment of anyone's imagination. He is real and he is committed to destroying the Word of God (Jesus) and all those who belong to Him.

### **A War Against Our Old Nature**

Many of our battles—even many of those we attribute to Satan—are waged against our old nature. As noted earlier, before you were born again your soul was the slave of your body, your flesh. But when our spirit was renewed in its relationship with God everything changed. The problem is that while we have a renewed spirit—and the Holy Spirit

living within us—our soul still wants what it used to have and that results in our getting into some tough spiritual battles. Paul reminds us in many of his letters that this battle with the old nature is real <sup>(Rom7:23; 1Cor12:7; Gal5:17)</sup> and in his first letter Peter summed it up well: *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.* <sup>(1Pet2:11)</sup>

## **A War Against The World**

The world holds all the temptations our body used to crave and our soul remembers them all. We live in this fallen world and, unfortunately, our soul still craves many of the things it offers. A.W. Tozer understood that perfectly, he recognized that slippery slope we saw in *Revelation*. For the bride to fail to understand that she is in a battle puts her on the very edge of that slope:

*In the early days when Christianity exercised a dominant influence over American thinking, men conceived the world to be a battleground. Our fathers believed in sin, the devil and hell as constituting one force, and they believed in God, righteousness and heaven as the other. Man could not be neutral and if he chose to come out on God's side, he could expect open war with God's enemies. But today men think of the world not as a battleground but a playground. We are not here to fight but to frolic. We are not in a foreign land, we are home and the best we can do is rid ourselves of our inhibitions and our frustrations and live this life here to the full.*

It's not that some of the bride don't want to win; it's that they really don't know they're actually in a war. And that's because spiritual warfare is not commonly taught in churches today; *I don't want to know what I don't know.*

Reflecting back on the *Book of Hebrews* we can easily see that our path to spiritual maturity involves spiritual warfare. The enemy and the old desires of our soul continually provide resistance to that process, and the closer we draw to our bridegroom the more difficult those battles become. That's why Jesus continually encouraged the churches to be



“overcomers,” to be victorious in their spiritual battles; both those “without” and those “within.” And they needed—and we need—to take on those battles in Him. He has already won the war and will be there with us as we go through each and every battle until the final one is over. So what is spiritual warfare?

## OUR WARFARE

Spiritual warfare is both offensive and defensive. It’s offensive in tearing down the strongholds the enemy has formed in your mind through deception and accusation and it’s defensive in guarding against the devil’s tactics or schemes that bring about those strongholds. And in attempting to establish those strongholds the enemy uses three primary weapons: Deception, Temptation and Accusation.

- **Deception**—Making us believe a lie or something that isn’t true has been the stock and trade of the father of lies from the beginning. When the enemy sends deception your way it’s an attempt to deceive you into believing the lie so you’ll fall into sin. This is how he builds his strongholds, those incorrect thinking patterns that stem from believing the lie. They’re formed when the deception takes hold in your mind. From the very beginning Satan deceived Eve into believing that God’s Word wasn’t true <sup>(Gen3:4; 2:17)</sup> and that stronghold brought sin into the world.
- **Temptation**—We get tempted because we allow ourselves to first be deceived. It often follows deception as we’re enticed or encouraged to sin in one way or another. First the enemy tells us, "You won't surely die," then he makes the fruit on the forbidden tree look good to us. Temptation is a lot like fishing; it’s the worm that hides the hook, the sin. We need to remember that it’s the Word of God that reveals the hook behind the worm. That’s why David said he hid God’s Word in his heart so he wouldn’t sin. <sup>(Ps119:11)</sup>
- **Accusations**—The devil is known as the accuser of the brethren. <sup>(Rev12:10)</sup> He is a master at digging up some embarrassing or gross sin in our past and continuing to rub it

in our face to try and beat us down with guilt and condemnation. But the good news is that our bridegroom has brought down the accuser and his efforts to bring those accusations before God day and night all end in failure. <sup>(Rev 12:10)</sup>

We are going to examine this spiritual war and our warfare in more detail, but before we do I want to reemphasize the fact that spiritual warfare is personal. Yes, there is a time and a place for doing “war in the heavenlies” against major actions of the enemy, but the battles that are critical to our spiritual maturity are personal; deeply personal and they all involve personal strongholds.

Satan’s strongholds can cause us to form incorrect perceptions of God as the enemy continually tells us that God doesn’t really love us, that He didn’t die for us. They can make us feel like dirty sinners when we believe the accusations that Satan uses to remind us of our past to get us to believe that our sins haven’t been washed away. His strongholds lead us into guilt and the feeling of unworthiness that weighs us down and rips us apart spiritually.

The enemy has been feeding us lies all our life and we need to stop eating them and feed on the truth of the Word of God. Strongholds are his assets in this war and he uses them relentlessly. Our response is to use the assets that God has given us and be equally relentless in tearing them down. This is what our spiritual warfare is all about; it’s the front line we stand on every day. This war is personal and the first stage of battle is to know your enemy.

*If you know the enemy and know yourself  
you need not fear the results of a hundred battles.*

- Sun Tzu

## KNOWING YOUR ENEMY

*Eph 6: 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against **principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places***

Paul has provided us with a clear and succinct description of our enemy, which is the center point of our spiritual warfare. And there is no doubt that we are in a war with a well organized spiritual enemy with a most powerful adversary leading the way.

### **Satan**

Throughout the scripture the devil is described as: a deceiver, murderer, liar, tempter, destroyer, the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the god of this age, the accuser of the brethren, the evil one, an angel of light, the son of the morning, and the anointed cherub. A clear portrait is painted for us in *Ezekiel 28:12-19* that tells us “who” he is, but Paul tells us “what” he is: a decided fact (he is real), a destructive force, a strategist, and he’s spiritual, strong, sinister, and the power behind the world’s system.

We can’t afford to forget that he is of the highest rank of the angels created by God and he wants to be equal with God. As the commander of the kingdom of darkness, he and the angels aligned with him continue their rebellion, their war, with God and with us. But Satan is a finite created being and he is only operating temporarily with God’s permission, and although he is powerful his power and knowledge are limited. If he knew everything he wouldn’t have killed Jesus on the Cross. But what he does know are our weaknesses and he uses them continually: money, fame, lust, power, and anything else that he believes will get us to follow him. And he doesn’t operate alone.

## Fallen Angels

Angels are spiritual beings that were designed and created with a free will to be servants of God, but a third of them chose to give their allegiance to Satan and follow after him. These are the principalities, powers of darkness, powers, and dominions whose only purpose is to serve Satan in hindering anyone to whom they are directed. They have a different rank, power, and authority, <sup>(Dan10:13)</sup> they are eternal beings that have already been sentenced to hell along with Satan after the final judgment, <sup>(Matt25:41)</sup> they're neither male nor female, they don't reproduce, <sup>(Matt22:30; mark12:25)</sup> and they can take on the appearance of a human or an animal. <sup>(Gen3:1)</sup>

## Demons

Demons are disembodied evil spirits that have an intense craving to cause evil of every kind, getting vicarious pleasure from tormenting and generally ruining lives. Their purpose is to bring people into bondage to the evil appetites they disseminate, thereby serving Satan's interests. <sup>(John10:10)</sup> Many are driven by a particular appetite and seem to have different interests in the way they torment their victims with carnal cravings. The Word tells us in fact that there are *legions* of demons. <sup>(Mark5:9; Luke8:30)</sup>

Demons seek to in-dwell or attach themselves to humans or animals in order to influence their actions, <sup>(Matt12:43-45; 8:30-32; Luke11:25)</sup> and many times a person oppressed or possessed by a demon will display unhealthy or unnatural cravings or actions. The result is always a destructive effect on the victim; spiritually, emotionally, and physically. <sup>(Mark9:17-29)</sup>

Everywhere Jesus went He set free those oppressed by demons. At times He asked them to identify themselves yet at other times he didn't allow them to speak. It's noteworthy that one quarter of Jesus' acts recorded in the Bible involved Him casting evil spirits out of those to whom He ministered. <sup>(Matt12:22-23;8:16;Mark1:34;Luke4:41)</sup>

## HOW DOES SATAN OPERATE?

In spiritual battles Satan employs a variety of strategies to oppose and attempt to defeat us. Paul doesn't speak of the "scheme" of the devil, but of his "schemes" (wiles). <sup>(Eph6:11)</sup> When he tempted our Lord in the wilderness he lost the battle and gave up, but Luke makes it clear that it was only for a time, only until he could regroup: *And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.*" <sup>(Luke 4:13)</sup> Not only did Satan tempt our Lord with several different lines of approach, he purposed to continue to tempt Him in the future when the opportunity presented itself. He is an opportunist with a variety of schemes.

His perception is warped and he operates on the basis of his own distorted perception of reality. Sinful men easily and readily identify with his mindset and motivation, but as the bride of Christ we must reject it for the evil it is. And when we act like our bridegroom, Satan is mystified and angered because he simply can't fathom why anyone would submit to God and worship Him.

His sole purpose is to try and defeat God by dragging people into hell with him, and he is determined to destroy them in the process. His cleverest ruse is to make people believe that he doesn't exist. He hides in religion, art, intellectualism, education, philosophy, and psychology. Many have underestimated him and have not done battle with that "outpost" of sin—that stronghold—in their life, the one Satan uses as a beachhead from which to expand into more territory. If we're not vigilant and carelessly let our guard down, opening the door to his influence, we risk his gaining control of our mind and our thinking.

What we must understand about Satan that will help us deal with his strategies are two very important things. First, his pride and arrogance make him think he can really be like God and second, he has an intense jealousy and hatred for mankind because of the great love and plan of salvation that has been offered to man and not to fallen angles.

He is always strategizing how to defeat the bride of Christ, going after every individual Christian to destroy their life through adversity, discouragement, by dissipating their time and energy, and frontal assaults on their weak areas. The devil is constantly getting in the way, attempting to block the moves God wants to make in your life by ruining

your testimony. He's after your home and he wants to destroy your purity, sow discord in your family and cause dissension and division among God's people. And a primary target is the church, to erode its ministry by sowing suspicion, intolerance, criticism, and dislike.

Paul warned us not to be ignorant of the devil's devices <sup>(2Cor2:11)</sup> that he uses to blind, beguile, seduce, oppose, resist, hinder, buffet, tempt, persecute, and defeat. He wants to disturb our mind and deceive our heart in order to bring division in the body, paralyzing the ministry and scandalizing its leaders. Those in power are tempted by appealing to their pride and ambition, because that's the way he responded to his position of power. He appeals to those under authority to act independently rather than submitting to those over them, and he appeals to our self-interest, urging us to shun self-sacrifice.

Satan knows nothing of grace and he delights in the downfall of others. If he isn't afraid to attack Jesus then we shouldn't be surprised when he attacks the most mature Christians. He wants to devour our testimony, our influence for Christ and everything that can be used for Christ's purposes. And he is at work today through false teachers and false prophets, who misquote Scripture, teach corruption and mix just enough truth with falsehood to appear to be trustworthy and believable.

Understanding our enemy and how he operates is a critical element in our being successful in spiritual warfare. As the day of Jesus' return draws ever closer we need to be aware of the increase in spiritual evil around us. When Jesus came the first time there was an extraordinary outburst of demonic activity, it happened again when He was crucified and it will happen again just prior to His return. Consider what is going on around us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it's clear that the build-up has already begun. We need to remember that while Satan isn't afraid of us, he desperately fears the Holy Spirit, and since we're *His temple* <sup>(1Cor6:19)</sup> we are marked targets. He is a defeated foe but until his judgment is carried out he is a force to be reckoned with.

## OUR BATTLE DRESS AND WEAPONS

*Eph 6:13-14 Wherefore **take unto you the whole armor of God**, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand**. 14 **Stand** therefore ...*

After Paul's definition of who our spiritual battle is with he quickly moves to tell us how we're to wage our fight. There are two very key statements in these two verses that speak to what's expected. First he makes it clear that we are to "take up the whole armor of God." The word "take" is not a request; it's a command to "assume continually." As we will see shortly, there isn't an option to select just those pieces we think are important or that we feel comfortable with. And secondly, he refers to the attitude we're to take with us onto the battlefield.

Paul uses the word "stand" twice, but in each instance it holds a different meaning. First, when we have done all we need to do to stand as a victor that has already won; we are to stand to receive his prize. And when we've done that we are to stand as one who is ready for battle because we know going into our battles that the war has already been won because Jesus finished it on the Cross. And with that assurance we can engage the enemy already knowing the outcome. In battle there is nothing more intimidating than facing an opponent that already knows in his mind that he will win. That's how the enemy sees us when we come into battle with that mindset. But he isn't powerless and he's committed to wage war on all fronts. That is why Paul tells us to take up the "full armor." We need every piece if we are to successfully engage the enemy here and now on his turf. So let's take a look at the weapons God has placed in His armory for us to take up.

### The Belt of Truth—Your Reputation

*Eph 6:14a ... having your loins girt about with **truth**...*

The belt—*girdle*—is a key part of the armor of God, designed to protect your reputation; the truth. It represented the framework or the structure of a Roman soldier's battle dress. It held everything together and was what he tucked his robe into when he went into battle so he

could move freely and wouldn't be hindered or tripped up. For the bride her belt is the truth of the Gospel.

- The truth of our judgment when we agree with the Word of God.
- The truth of our heart when we set out to gain God's approval rather than man's.
- The truth of our speech when we agree with the Word of God.
- The truth of our action when it's plain, faithful, and honest in dealing in all things.

The truth in us is one of the first things the devil tries to take away, and the more he opposes it the tighter we need to cling to it. For us the belt of truth holds up our "outer covering"—our old nature. It keeps us single-minded and stable, protecting our personal reputation. Once a lie gets into the life of a believer it seems that everything begins to fall apart. When David covered up his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, nothing went right and *Psalms* 32 and 51 tell us the terrible price he paid. The truth, on the other hand, is the foundation of a victorious Christian life.

Our belt of truth has a two-fold purpose. First it prepares us for battle and second it's the place to support our weapons. The belt was also the place where soldiers pinned their awards so those who saw them would know they were facing a distinguished fighter. Our award is displayed in our countenance, the reflection of the truth that we know, the foundation of a Christian life. When the belt is fastened tight around our waist it shows that we are prepared for battle. If your belt is loose it means just the opposite; you're off duty.

The belt also protected the lower part of the soldier's body, the seat of his vital organs and the organs for creating life. We need that protection as well for what we sow are the seeds of truth. And the truth is what the enemy—the *father of lies* <sup>(John 8:44)</sup>—wants to destroy with his attacks as a deceiver, trying to entangle us with falsehoods and half-truths in order to confuse us. He doesn't want us to sow the truth, he wants us to sow the untruth coated with the truth; the spirit of compromise.



Wearing the belt of truth displays the consistency of our character, the consistency that comes from living the truth. The diplomat says, “Words were given to conceal our thoughts, and thoughts to conceal ourselves.” But the truth reveals us to others and shows us who our enemies are and how they plan to attack us. The belt of the truth of the Gospel girded about our flesh is our foundation; everything else holds together based upon it.

The key to effectively using the belt of truth is to arm yourself with it by knowing it. When you wrap yourself in the truth you are establishing yourself in it. Our perfect example is our bridegroom when He was tempted in the wilderness. <sup>(Matt4:1-11)</sup> Satan challenged Him with partial truths and the Lord turned him away with the whole truth. He was prepared because he knew the Word of God.

We need to prepare ourselves for the same challenges so we’re able to think clearly and deal with the enemy’s lies with the truth that we “know;” that we understand. Armed with the truth we will be ready to face all his lies and the confusion that accompanies them. However, the problem for many of the bride is that they know just enough of the Word to carry on an intelligent conversation in the foyer with another equally uninformed Christian. Out in the world that limited knowledge leaves them completely vulnerable to the enemy’s attacks.

When we get discouraged, depressed, confused or defeated we’re open to the enemy’s assaults. That’s when we need to “gird up our loins” with the truth because nothing discourages him more than to face an enemy that knows his cause is just and true. But if you face the enemy without the truth he will find your weak spot: harbored sin, unfaithfulness, strongholds, etc. Don’t leave the door open, close it with the truth.

When you’re fighting the enemy there can be “no pretenders,” there’s no faking it. You have to be real on the inside and the outside because the enemy won’t be fooled. Too many Christians “talk the talk” but fail to “walk the walk.” They have been faking it so long—mistaking fantasy for reality—it has become their reality; immaturity for maturity, carnality for spirituality. They go into battle unprepared for Satan’s fierce attack and they are exposed and defeated like the unarmed soldiers they are.

The answer to how to use the belt of truth begins with being true to yourself. Consider these challenges that are all answered by the truth:

- Act out a conviction on the spot; when the still small voice speaks don't hesitate to act in truth.
- Keep the solemn commitments you've made between God and your own heart.
- Deal with your own conscience tenderly, and don't allow your desires to overrule it. It's your connection to the Holy Spirit.
- Don't hide from yourself. Truthfully confess to God how you really feel, after all He already knows.
- Continually remind yourself "whose" you are, "what" you are, and "where" you're going and you won't stray from the truth.
- Cherish those little sparks of divine insight, those thoughts that come like threads of truth from heaven. They will tighten your belt.
- Purify your desires with the Word of God, always watching and tending your inner thought life. Be transparent with nothing concealed, nothing hollow, nothing false and the enemy won't find a doorway to enter.

### **The Breastplate of Righteousness—Your Purity**

*Eph 6:14b ... and having on the **breastplate of righteousness**;*

Sometimes we get so comfortable dealing with God's Word and its principles that we forget we need to apply it in our life. We can become solid pillars in the church by doing so or we can be "caterpillars" that just crawl in and out on Sunday morning; just talking about The Word. What it boils down to is our perspective: do I care about the spiritual battle; do I really want to fight in it?

James Kennedy did a survey that asked the question: "Why don't you witness?" You would think the number one answer would be I'm afraid, or I don't know how, or I don't know any unsaved people. Sadly

the most popular answer was: “I don’t witness because of the life that I live.” That answer gets right to the heart of “purity” and what it means to wear the “breastplate of righteousness.

The soldier’s breastplate was one piece of armor that covered the front of his body from neck to thighs to protect his vital organs. It provided no protection for the soldier’s back—Roman soldiers didn’t run away from the battle. We have also been provided with a breastplate—the righteousness of Christ—to protect those things that are vital to us: our character, uprightness, integrity, sincerity... our holiness.

Someone once described righteousness as protection for “what we show,” to protect us from Satan’s attempts to corrupt our hearts so we’ll display ugly passions instead of the love of Christ. It’s Jesus’ righteousness that provides both our justification—our salvation—and our ability to live a holy life.

When we become Christians we’re immediately equipped with the righteousness of Christ. On the Cross, when our bridegroom took our sin upon Himself, He imparted His righteousness to us; right standing with God because of our right standing “in” Him. So when we put on the breastplate of righteousness it means that we’re protected by His Righteousness. And when the devil accuses us before the Father, He looks at us and all He sees is the righteousness of Christ—not all our faults and sins.

But too many of the bride just accept their position in Christ and do very little about it. They’re saved—living in the Holy Place—but they’re not practicing their sanctification in the Holiest Place. They haven’t become in “practice” what they are in “position.” In other words, they want the “inside” armor but not “outside” armor, they want to be able to live carelessly and excuse themselves; “Well, in God’s eyes I’m righteous.” But if we are in fact righteous in the eyes of heaven then we should be righteous in the eyes of the world. Our position should be reflected in our practice and we should live according to the pattern laid out in God’s Word.

I love the genius of the Gospel; God doesn’t ask us to imitate His righteousness. We couldn’t possibly do that so He gives it to us as part of our salvation. He gives us His Holy Spirit to reproduce Christ’s righteousness in us and through us, and we’re to wear it and show it to the world. But like every other piece of God’s armor, we are to take it up

(put it on) and not to wait for God to put it on us. That's what Paul meant when he told the Ephesians that we are to *put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* <sup>(Eph4:24)</sup>

Our righteousness is also to be consistently evident in our life. We are to wear the breastplate in all situations and we do that by appropriating His righteousness by faith. When we wear the breastplate it reflects the fact that we have been changed by the power of God. In every situation we need to be standing apart from the world. When we do our life becomes attractive to others and when we speak they will listen because there is a unique quality about our life that springs from His righteousness. The world needs to see our gleaming breastplate.

But if we aren't wearing it we become just another easy target for the enemy. If we're harboring any sin we won't be able to witness because our life won't match our words. We won't be able to be victorious over temptations when the enemy throws them our way because every time we attempt to battle them the enemy will remind us of that "spot" in our life. But if we put on the breastplate of righteousness it's a different story. Listen to how Charles Erdman puts it:

*One who binds himself about with a determined loyalty to the holy law of God is secure against the deadly thrusts of the Tempter. A man who is conscious of being in the wrong is usually a coward. A man who knows that he is right can withstand a multitude and he enters the conflict without fear.*

Once again we see in that soldier who knows he's right and that the battle is his that there is no fear in the action he takes. That's the soldier we're to be. But putting on His righteousness takes some serious self-examination. The enemy's strongholds need to be dealt with and that process isn't a onetime event, it's a daily exercise that is to be lived out by faith in the One whose righteousness we wear. Instead of walking around trying to be a better Christian, we need to let our heart fall in love with our bridegroom every day. Rather than trying to do better in our walk we need to draw closer to Him in our prayer life, our worship and our study of His Word. Being deeply in love with Jesus will keep us from running around trying to be righteous because we will naturally

want to please Him. We won't be trying to control our life in our own power because we'll begin to see His love controlling us.

Putting on the breastplate of righteousness is dealing with our own heart. Where is it today? Is it concerned with the pleasures and treasures of this world? The church is losing battles today because too many Christians want to cozy up to the world, live comfortably in the culture and not engage the enemy in battle. They think they have the breastplate on but are sadly mistaken.

*Many a man who thinks he has on the "Christian" armor is smitten in the same manner. There is some defect of character; some want of incorruptible integrity; some point that is unguarded—and that will be sure to be the point of attack by the foe. Albert Barnes*

A consistent spiritual checkup is a great antidote for a vulnerable heart.

### **The Sandals of Peace—Your Tranquility**

*Eph 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

The literal translation of this verse reads: *And having shod yourselves as to the feet in readiness of the gospel of peace.* That word “shod” means underbound or securely fastened; one’s foundation. For the Roman soldier there was nothing more important than the sandals on his feet. They were like a half boot with the soles made of leather and wood with spikes on the bottom to provide a sure footing. That is one of the key reasons Rome was so powerful in battle. After long marches there were no sore and blistered feet, their soldiers were immediately ready to enter battle.

The bride has been founded on the Gospel of peace, which she possesses. The fact that she has already been reconciled with God is her peace, the inner sense of well-being that supports everything else. It’s the peace that our enemy desperately wants to take from us. Jesus told us that in Him we might have peace <sup>(John 16:33)</sup> and, as we learned in *Hebrews*, when we were saved we received that peace “in” Him (the Holy Place), but we must appropriate that peace and make it real, by becoming “of”

Him in the Holiest Place. It is one thing to have it but quite another to live it.

Our sandals are directly related to the other pieces of armor we just looked at. It all begins with the truth, which leads to righteousness that brings about peace. As we noted previously, we are not in a battle with people, we're engaged in a battle of thoughts and attitudes that takes place in the realm of our outlook on life. Therefore we must have peace and that can only come from the strong and inspiring voice of the message we carry.

Those in the world are rapidly finding their peace disappearing through the fear, stress, uncertainty, chaos, and violence that surrounds them every day; their hearts are *failing them for fear*. <sup>(Luke 21:26)</sup> If the bride is to have a ministry of peace to those whose hearts are failing, then she needs a solid foundation of peace. And so Paul says that she must be "prepared," which means having a settled and resolved heart that will adhere to the Gospel and live by it so she can be ready to carry it to the lost. Without it we're marching into battle and will arrive there with blistered and torn feet that won't be able to support us. We'll arrive on the battlefield ungrateful, unreasonable, unproductive, unchristian, and unprepared.

- Ungrateful because we doubt Jesus for the basics of life.
- Unreasonable because we don't think God cares about what's going on in our life.
- Unproductive because when we face the enemy we're worried about what's going on in our life.
- Unchristian because we're just like those in the world who are worried about the necessities of life.
- Unprepared because our life is filled with concern about yesterday or tomorrow.

Jesus addressed each of these challenges in the sixth chapter of *Matthew*; especially verses 33 and 34. It is one of the most critical messages for the bride and it's the message that changed my life. We don't have to be filled with anxiety, worry, and fear if our mind is steadied by the good news of the Gospel of peace; the good news that we

are at peace with God. Then we can face the challenges of today and not worry about what we can't control. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow isn't here and we can't do anything about either one. We need to focus on today and all that it contains. When you allow yourself to be torn up with worry and fear you're totally unprepared for battle. You're standing barefoot on the rocky battleground without any solid footing.

Remember, it's up to us to go into God's armory and requisition our armor and our sandals are no exception. If we want peace in our life we first need to be certain that we meet with the Author of Peace. Next we need to meditate on the Prince of Peace so we can be filled with His peace and then we need to go forth and manifest the Spirit of Peace within us. He is the one that manifests our peace when everything around us is in turmoil. Every day we need to put on the Gospel of peace by inviting the Holy Spirit to take control of our life. When we do this continually, little by little He will get control of our life and we'll get that overwhelming sense of peace that accompanies Him. Then we will be ready for battle in the words of the English theologian, Daniel Whitby:

*That you may be ready for the combat, be shod with the Gospel of peace, endeavor after that peaceable and quiet mind which the Gospel calls for. Be not easily provoked, nor prone to quarrel: but show all gentleness and all long-suffering to all men, and this will certainly preserve you from many great temptations and persecutions, as did those shoes of brass the soldiers from those gall traps.*

### **The Shield of Faith—Your Certainty**

*Eph 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

Where in the world did that ugly thought come from? That's an all too common question we ask ourselves all the time. It always comes when least expected; in church, in prayer or walking down the street. The enemy's fiery darts (his temptations) always center on our individual weaknesses as well as our strengths, and he has legions of evil spirits to tempt us, corrupt us, weaken our wills, deceive our minds, deaden our

consciences, and distort God's truth. As the Word tells us, it's always the same three places, the very places he tempted Christ; *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life.* <sup>(1John2:16)</sup>

For the Roman soldier the shield was His key piece of armor. It could be used to protect every part of the body. It was usually two feet by four feet, made of two layers of wood, bound with iron and covered with leather that was soaked in water before entering into battle in order to quench the flaming arrows of the enemy or stop the arrows that were soaked in poison. And it's the flaming and poisoned arrows of our enemy that Paul is referring to. Those arrows he has tipped with depression and disappointment that sting long after their initial strike. And our defense is just like that of the Roman soldier. We need to soak our shield of faith with the water of the Word in order to extinguish them before they can do any damage. But in order to be effective we need to remember that our shield is not a shield of "saving faith," it's a shield of "living faith." Faith, acted upon the Word of God and applied by His grace is what quenches the enemy's darts of temptation.

Satan is a master at throwing his darts of doubt that always question the goodness of God. Just like in The Garden; *did God really say?* His goal is to get us to enter into a conversation —just like he did with Eve—in which he will always question God's goals for us. He even goes so far as to try and convince us that it's really not a temptation; God is just withholding something from us. He did it to Jesus in the wilderness and we shouldn't be surprised when he does it to us.

The answer to his darts of doubt is our shield of faith. Just think of the many times it was used by Abraham. There is no doubt that Satan tempted him to doubt God for deliverance in Egypt and for the birth of Isaac and his sacrifice. How about Noah, Joseph, Daniel, Mary? The list goes on and on. They all had active faith that worked in their lives. It was faith of the heart and not the head, faith that comes from God and not a teacher or preacher. For us it's the faith that comes from time spent with Jesus in the Holiest Place, outwardly by studying His Word and inwardly by following His Holy Spirit.

Our shield of faith must also be one piece, built on the finished work of Christ and totally focused on Him and no one else. If not, it won't stand up to the enemy's blows. We must constantly be aware of



the fact that we are never out of range of his arrows, so there is no point in trying to run away.

So how do we build that kind of faith, take action and build a strong shield? It's simple—find something God has told you to do and do it. Then do it again by standing on His Word.

A key truth to remember is that we aren't alone and we aren't to allow ourselves to become isolated. This is a war and it isn't the place for the Lone Ranger. Rome understood that and its army always marched into battle, side-by-side, leaving no room for the enemy to penetrate their line. We also need to march straight forward with our shields locked together with those of our brothers and sisters. Only then will our faith become so alive that we won't question our circumstances, the limitations God has placed on us or His right to dictate the terms of our life. We can only truly accomplish that when our faith is solely fixed on our bridegroom; fixed on the truth by faith.

### **The Helmet of Salvation—Your Sanity**

*Eph 6:17a And **take the helmet of salvation**...*

Satan is in the business of waging a constant battle for the possession and control of our mind. It's his domain and our battleground. His goal is to corrupt us with false teaching and the lure of the world's system, confusing the plan of salvation and our daily walk through this world. His focus is trying to dilute God's plan that we become like Jesus; loving, holy, joyful, peaceful, patient, and self-controlled. He wants us to focus on service at the expense of worship and become preoccupied with the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches so that we lose sight of the soon-coming kingdom. If he can do that then he has successfully lowered our standards and we can be poured into his mold. But God has given us a piece of armor to protect us in that battle.

Rome considered the helmet the most important piece of armor and stiff penalties were handed out to those found not wearing theirs. Paul points out how important our helmet of salvation is when he uses the word "take," not "take up." The word in this case means "receive." It was the Roman soldier's armor bearer that handed him his helmet and it is Jesus who has given us our salvation. But it's up to us to receive it and

the protection it provides from the enemy's purposes, plans, thoughts, and concepts.

Our mind is the battlefield on which Satan desires to establish his outposts (strongholds) in order to manipulate us against what God has for us. For that reason our helmet is much more than just our salvation, our just knowing that we're Christians. It protects our center of intelligence, equips us with the wisdom of Christ and protects our thoughts from the enemy's influence and interference.

Not wearing a helmet while riding a motorcycle is a risky proposition and so is going into spiritual battle without our helmet. It's not an option and we need to wear it constantly if we're going to "think" like our bridegroom. We can't afford to enter into battle with our own thoughts, concepts or programs; we need to be fully equipped with the mind of Christ. And the only place to gain that wisdom is in the Holiest Place with Him, spending time in His Word.

Our helmet is, as Paul says, *the hope of salvation*; <sup>(1Thess5:8)</sup> our hope "only in" salvation, in nothing but Jesus. It incorporates hope in everything He has promised that we have now and are yet to fully receive; eternal life. And just like the helmet and the shield are tied together so are hope and faith. It's like the thermostat on your wall. You dial the temperature you desire (hope) but without the furnace (faith) it's empty hope.

We can't effectively serve Him in His kingdom without our helmet; without His wisdom. But, unfortunately, too many of the bride have the idea that intellect isn't an important part of our faith. Quite the contrary, studying the Bible keeps us from falling for the enemy's deceptions and being led astray. We need to be equipped with the mind of Christ if we're going to defend ourselves in a hostile world. We're going to be caught at times in hostile environments without any time to prepare and are going to need to trust in His wisdom; His Word that we have stored in our spirit.

Think of Peter, an ignorant fisherman who stood up after the day of Pentecost and amazed the Sanhedrin in the authority and wisdom of Christ. How about Paul when he confronted the Jews in Damascus, when he debated the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem or when he presented the Gospel before Felix, Festus and King Agrippa. In both men there was something beyond their natural ability; it was the authority and wisdom of Christ.

Oh how we need that today. We can't walk around in this world without answers, answers for the hope that is within us. But there are too many today who run from confrontation, always staying on the defensive because they aren't equipped with the helmet of salvation.

Our challenge is to embrace the truth and communicate it to a lost world, a world controlled by an enemy that is prepared to try and stop us with strongholds he wants to establish in our mind. That's why we need our helmet of salvation, to fight the inner battles.

*2 Cor 10:4-5 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the **pulling down of strong holds**;) 5 **Casting down imaginations**, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and **bringing into captivity** every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

It's God's wisdom that tears down those strongholds, it's His salvation—our helmet—that represents forgiveness from past sins and the strength to overcome and even conquer present and future sins. It symbolizes God's power, His readiness to save others and our confidence in Him. The more we wear it the more we'll fill our minds with the things of God and the more we're protected against Satan's lures and lies. Without it we're open to becoming distressed and depressed as we see the world and our culture here in America collapsing around us. We need the blessed hope of Jesus' return constantly on our mind, the hope of our salvation. And that hope is the victory we are assured of at His second coming.

Satan's number one stronghold is our mind, we have the victory... but do we have the mind of the Victor?

## **The Sword of the Spirit—Your Weapon**

*Eph 6:17B ... and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is **the word of God**:*

Up to now in dealing with the armor of God we've been focused on the defensive. Now it's time to switch to the offensive as we pick up our sword, which cuts both ways in that it is used to both attack the enemy and reflect his blows.

The Romans used a short sword, not the long, unwieldy and heavy one used by many of their enemies. It was short and sharp on both edges for cutting both going in and coming out. It was the most efficient fighting instrument of the time and nothing could compare with it. So it is with our sword—nothing can compare with the Word of God.

The Word of God, as used in the New Testament, is never a general reference to the Scriptures, it means “the word which God gives us to speak.” The Greek word “logos” refers to Jesus as the Word of God or the written or spoken word. Our sword is the “rhema” word of God, which is the revealed word. It’s the Word of God that has become revelation to us, the word we understand, the word we know; the word that comes alive to us as we read the Bible or hear it preached or taught. It’s the word that the Holy Spirit has personally revealed to us. The problem is that too many treat the Bible as a wish book, a sword they never take out of its scabbard—they just carry it into battle and stand there defenseless.

Like every other piece of armor our sword needs to be active and used with the wisdom of God to pierce the heart of the unbeliever and the Christian alike. Unlike its real counterpart in the world, it will never get dull and in fact the more you use it the sharper it becomes. It has two edges, one for cutting to the heart of the matter and the other for healing the wound. And if we know how to use it the Holy Spirit will do the necessary cutting and healing for us.

Once again, Jesus’ confrontation with Satan in the wilderness is the perfect example of how to use the sword of the Spirit. Satan attacked and Jesus deflected the blow with the truth that drove the enemy away. We face those same three temptations—lust of the flesh and the eye and the pride of life—and our response needs to be the same. But we won’t be able to wield our sword if there isn’t any Word inside us to back it up.

The psalmist said, *thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee* <sup>(Ps119:11)</sup> and Paul told us to *let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.* <sup>(Col3:16)</sup> In both cases they were talking about getting the Word of God—the revealed word—down inside you so that when you lift your sword you will be victorious. Remember, the enemy knows the Word better than we do and he is a master at bending, diluting, and twisting it to fit the situation. And we need to know the difference for he will quickly draw his many swords against us: secular

humanism, materialism, psychology, liberal theology, cultism, false religion, evolution... the list is endless.

Our challenge is to be prepared to respond with the truth, the truth that cuts through Satan's ranks, his deceptions and all his devices. We need to wield our sword in our prayers, when we preach, when we teach and when we witness. When we're downhearted the Word that we "know" will bring us joy, when we're perplexed it will be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path and when we're tempted it will cleanse our way. The key is to depend upon our sword and not our own opinion or wisdom.

Our sword cuts sharply and penetrates quickly, it's efficient and it cuts to the heart of the matter without effort on our part. We just need to be a willing and obedient soldier and let the Holy Spirit guide the Word of God for us and in our hands the revealed Word will become the Sword of the Spirit. When we use it in the right place (*trials*) at the right time (*temptations*) it will cut the enemy's snares into pieces. This is a sword in which we can have total confidence for it will never dull or break no matter how often it is used.

I believe the sword (*Word*) and shield (*faith*) are the principal pieces of our armor. When employed together they defend us from anything the enemy can throw our way. When we have faith in our sword we'll use it but without faith we won't and that leaves us open to defeat. A sharp sword hanging at our side and a lowered shield are useless, they're both ready to perform but we can't use them. When faith is gone, fear is present and we begin to take a beating from the enemy without any way of fighting back. No Roman soldier would go into battle without first being well trained in the use of his shield and his sword. But too many Christians move into battle without so much as a rudimentary understanding of how to use either one, let alone how they work together to defeat the enemy—and to make sure he doesn't get back up!

## **A LESSON FROM DAVID**

At a very young age most of us were told about one of the greatest battles in the Old Testament; David and Goliath. We all hold the picture of Goliath's end in our mind's eye as he crumpled to the ground with David's rock buried in his forehead; God's victory over sin. But

most quit reading at that point and in so doing they miss one of God's key lessons regarding spiritual warfare:

*1 Sam 17:49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.*

But the job wasn't done.

*1 Sam 17:50 **So David prevailed** over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. 51 Therefore David ran, and **stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith.** And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.*

David made sure that Goliath wasn't going to get up; he finished the job. He put his enemy right where he was supposed to be—under his feet <sup>(Ps91:13)</sup>—and finished the job by cutting off his head and silencing his voice. That was a critical step to take because it wasn't until the Philistines were sure that Goliath was dead that they would flee the battlefield. We need to remember that when we've engaged the enemy and he seems to be defeated. We can't afford to let our guard down and let him get up again. Our job is to continue the fight until the Holy Spirit tells us to stop and "all" the enemy has fled in terror of His presence.

## **PRAYER—YOUR COVERING**

*Eph 6:18 **Praying always with all prayer** and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto **with all perseverance** and supplication **for all saints**;*

We all understand the predominance of prayer in our Christian walk but so often we just let it become an obligation, which turns into a chore or a burden. What we don't think about is that our prayer covers

our armor as we go into battle; it brings God's power and sufficiency to the front line. It's our spiritual fuel but just like in the natural, yesterday's fuel won't work in today's battles. Without prayer we're engaging the enemy in our own strength and power and we know that is never successful.

Paul tells us in this verse that we are to pray with all prayer and supplication; pray at every stage of life and in all conditions. If we are to be successful in our warfare we need to constantly be prepared to face our enemy, and that means being in constant communication with our Commander In Chief. All we need to do is look at Israel.

When Joshua sought the Lord before battle they won but when they didn't they lost. And there was no better example than when he led Israel against Ai <sup>(Josh7)</sup> without seeking God's will and they were soundly defeated. Only after God reprimanded Joshua for Israel's hidden sin and their transgression of His covenant <sup>(Josh7:11)</sup> were they able to rise up in God's power and take the city. Until their sin was dealt with they were acting on their own and were powerless in the face of their enemy. When the sin of Achan <sup>(Josh7:13-26)</sup> had been dealt with then God told Joshua to take the city. That's a strong lesson for us. We can't expect to take the battle to the enemy and be victorious if we haven't first sought the will of our Commander In Chief. If there is any unconfessed sin in our heart we can be sure that any communication we receive from Him will deal with that before He will lead us into battle. God doesn't want any of us to stumble into our "Ai" without being fully prepared and equipped to "take the city."

Notice that Paul uses the term "all" several times. He emphasizes the fact that we are to be in constant communication with God if we are going to win our battles; on all occasions, in all places, for all things, and at all times. I used to think that meant walking around praying every waking moment, but that's not the case. We need to remember that the Holy Spirit is just a heartbeat away and when we face challenges, decisions and questions we need to turn to Him first. It's all about maintaining an attitude of prayer and being conscious of His presence. That's why He has come along beside us to counsel us along the way. But if we don't ask for His counsel or listen for His wisdom when we need it we are literally "tying our hands behind our back."

Satan may not fear our persistence but what he does fear is a needy child of God standing in the Holiest Place. And because of that he uses every device at his disposal to block that mindset, keeping us occupied with other things: fatigue, doubt, discouragement, depression, etc. That's why Paul points out that the antidote to all those distractions is constant prayer.

We are also encouraged to be strong in our prayers. Paul uses the term "supplication" to make the point. It means continued prayer that is strong and contains incessant pleadings; intercession. We are to "ask" and not to give up until we get our answer or God tells us to stop. If we quit we're limiting ourselves and leaving an opening for the enemy. We need to ask and keep on asking. Charles Spurgeon makes the point:

*Asking is the rule of the kingdom. It is a rule that will never be altered. God blessed Elijah's prayer and sent rain and God delivered Daniel but he had to pray for it.*

As God's warriors there is power in our prayers because they are *in the Spirit*. Praying in the Spirit—being led by the Holy Spirit—will keep us from just making speeches to God, running down our usual laundry list. It will keep us from offering up selfish prayers that are out of God's will for us. The Holy Spirit will never dictate to us, He always directs us through the Word of God and it's His leading that allows us to pray the perfect will of God.<sup>(Rom8:26-27)</sup> Our part is to listen, allow Him to reveal God's will in all situations and then to come into agreement with it.

The next piece of the equation leading to successful prayer in our spiritual warfare is to *watch* after we pray. That means we are to be spiritually awake, being diligent and not allowing anything to disrupt our prayer life. We don't want to be like Peter and the others who fell asleep when the Lord needed them to be awake and watching.<sup>(Mark13:34-38)</sup> We're to be like Nehemiah when he rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem; working with one hand and watching for the enemy with his weapon in his other hand.<sup>(Neh4:17)</sup> Our job is to watch for the enemy while we wait for the answer to our prayer, and keep on praying until the Spirit tells us to stop. All of us have had those times when we didn't "persevere" in our prayer and gave up before we got our answer. That's one of Satan's favorite



ploys, trying to convince us that somehow we've blown it and we might as well quit praying. If we are to counter that attack we are going to have to become prayer warriors. I wonder how many times in my life I've given up just as the answer was at my doorstep.

And finally, we are told to *pray for all the saints*. We aren't solitary soldiers on the front line, the bride of Christ is made up of our brothers and sisters and they need our prayers to help them take up their armor and be ready for battle. We are all warriors and we've been built to run on prayer, our spiritual engines won't run on anything else. Our prayer in spiritual warfare involves entering into three realms.

- The first is our “hidden place,” our prayer closet, which is anywhere we can be alone with God. It's that place where everything else is shut out and we are shut in with Him. <sup>(Matt6:6)</sup>
- The second realm is the “heavenly place,” where our battles with evil take place; in the heavenlies. This is the realm of wandering and wicked thoughts, the book I shouldn't have read, the TV program or movie I shouldn't have watched or my voice of the past that has uttered a host of things I wish I'd never said that the enemy loves to dredge up. This is the realm of worry and fear about the cares of this world. But this is also place that holds all of our *spiritual blessings* <sup>(Eph1:3)</sup> that are worth fighting for.
- The third realm is the “Holiest Place,” where we need to spend our every waking moment. This is the place from which we need to carry on our daily spiritual warfare as we walk through this world—sitting at His right hand. <sup>(Eph2:6)</sup>

No matter how complete our armor is, no matter how skilled or how courageous we may be, without prayer we're going to be defeated. Jesus told His disciples the parable of the widow before the judge to make the point... *that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* <sup>(Luke18:1)</sup>

## THE REAL HOLY WAR

The world and the devil attack from the outside but our old nature attacks from the inside. Therefore, we need every piece of the armor and to learn what it means to “war in the Spirit.” To be victorious over Satan we have to fight to gain victory over our old nature, to flee from its old desires and forsake the influence of the world by faith. Our old fleshly nature is used by Satan as the target of his temptation. It gives him opportunities to attack us and open the doors that enable him to establish strongholds from which to torment us. This is our “greatest challenge.”

As Christians we have a much harder time with our inner struggles than the unbeliever does because we have both natures at work and they only have one. Even though our spirit’s desire is to please God our soul still struggles with submission. This is the personal battle for which we need all of our spiritual armor and God’s plan for success:

- Acknowledge once and for all that the flesh has been crucified and apply that truth in your daily life. Think of it as the chicken running around with its head cut off... it’s dead, it just doesn’t know it. Look at the things that are influencing your life and note which ones come from your soul’s pursuit of its former life. Then deal with those influences ruthlessly and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When you do you will discover God replacing your old nature with the fruits of the Spirit.
- Walk in the Spirit. You can resist all you want but without “submitting” to God’s will the devil isn’t going to flee. If you spend all your time trying to crucify your dead flesh and never follow the Spirit you’re going to lose the battle every time. Submitting to the Holy Spirit and letting Him lead you opens the door to a powerful Spirit-filled life.

Spiritual warfare is first and foremost a personal battle and that battle is about the enemy’s strongholds; those strongholds that result from us buying into the deceptions that are designed to draw us away from God’s plan for our life and keep us captive. What we need to

remember is that we don't have to allow that to happen because we have the answer. Jesus told us that He came to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah that included *proclaiming liberty to the captives*.<sup>(Isa61:1)</sup> The enemy no longer has the authority to bind us up with his strongholds and keep us captive, but it's up to us to take up our sword and bring down those strongholds.

God has given us our perfect suit of armor; it's the complete picture of our bridegroom. He is our truth, our righteousness, our peace, our faith, our salvation and He is the Word of God. Let us not forget to "take Him up" every morning before we step out on the battlefield.

# THE BATTLE FOR REST

## *The Brides' Armor*

(Ephesians)

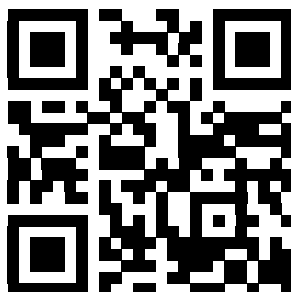
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At this point in our journey we have considered what it means to be the bride of Christ, what is expected of us during our betrothal and we have been warned of the dangers we face along the way. And here in Part IV we explored the war we're in, the battles we face and the victory we have in Christ. In my book *The Battle For Rest –The Brides' Armor* you will learn in more detail just what this “personal war” involves and how to become victorious in your daily battles with the enemy.

You can order *The Battle For Rest* by:

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# THE BRIDE TRULY SLEEPS AT HER OWN PERIL

## Some Closing Thoughts

*Who can fully appreciate what this royal marriage means? Who can understand the riches of the glory of this grace? Here this rich and divine bridegroom Christ marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness. Her sins cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as of her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say, If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all his is mine and all mine is his, as the bride in the Song of Solomon says, My beloved is mine and I am his.*

**Martin Luther**

How are we as the bride of Christ to survive in this world filled with chaos, confusion and tragedy? What are we to do to make it through? Those were just two of the questions I pondered as the concept of this book began to take shape. Are we faced with just surviving this life in order to get to heaven or is there something more?

As you have worked your way through these pages I trust that you have also found some answers to those questions. Our life here on earth is not about surviving, it's about thriving. We have been given the keys to making that distinction a reality but it's our responsibility to commit to make that happen.

We've looked at four key parts to the process of not only surviving, but thriving in the midst of a world that is falling apart all around us. But like anything else, it takes more than acknowledging the answer to accomplish the goal. Our walk through this world has only two paths to follow: either with Christ or without Him. It's my prayer that this book has challenged, encouraged, and exhorted you to make the right choice as there is a lost America out there that depends on it.

The journey through these four books has been one that I have been on for the majority of my Christian life. From that day in 1963 at CSU, when my wonderful brother in Christ, Jim Grubbs opened the door to the presence of Jesus, I have been growing in my relationship with Him. Wherever you are Jim, this book is the result of your love for a friend and a burden for his salvation. There have been periods of rebellion and times of the greatest intimacy, times of struggle and times of incredible peace. But throughout each of them Jesus has been there for me, always faithful and always longsuffering, knowing my end and guiding me up the path.

As I said at the outset, through it all Jesus has placed in me a burden for His bride, a burden I didn't really understand until a short few years ago. It was then that He began taking me through these four steps to understanding what it means to be His bride and what implications that has for my temporal life here on earth and my eternal one in heaven. Hearing His voice and understanding His message has taken me through the lowest valleys to the highest peaks, always searching, inquiring and learning more about who He is and whose I am.

As His bride that same journey is open to you. If you've accepted His marriage contract then you are already somewhere up the

path, headed to the greatest marriage ceremony in the universe. But I can say with certainty that you, like me, have not reached the summit. That day is coming and it's coming soon. For us the challenge is to make sure that every day He gives us during our ketubah is spent waiting and watching for His return. But I hope that after reading this book you realize that waiting and watching isn't enough; we are to be "doing."

As I searched for some way to encapsulate what this book is about, what it's trying to say, I kept asking the Lord for a key verse. And as He has always done, when I ask and "wait" for His answer, He orchestrated a meeting that gave me the answer. It was a discussion with a couple that has deeply studied the Bible with an eye to understanding it from Israel's perspective. I listened as they gave me some wonderful insight into the Jewish wedding ceremony and the ketubah in particular. As I listened to them describe in detail what the bride is to be doing as she waits and watches I asked them the question I had been asking God; "So with the revelation Jesus has shown me in these four books about His bride, how do you put it all together and summarize the message." They smiled and said it's in two verses!

The message has never changed since it came from the lips of Solomon, who had searched in vain for the answer. He labored through life, through the entire book of Ecclesiastes before He found the answer. It was only then that He was able to pen his Song of Songs. And as I read those verses I reflected back on the four steps to spiritual maturity that God has set down in my spirit. Those steps truly do encapsulate how we are to sew our wedding dress; reflecting the righteousness we have on the inside on the outside for the world to see as we grow from just a sliver to a full moon, reflecting the light of the Son into this dark world.

As we draw ever closer to our bridegroom we are rewarded with the incredible blessing of realizing more and more of Him in our life. As we begin to see Him for who He is and understand how He sees us and how much He loves us, we realize that there is so much more just waiting for us as we journey up the path. He has paid our bride price with His blood and He has sealed our wedding contract with His Holy Spirit. It's now incumbent upon us to live out our part of the betrothal as we follow the Spirit as He leads us into becoming conformed into the image of our bridegroom.

This is an incredibly exciting time in the history of this world and we have the opportunity, the responsibility, to be on the front line. We have an equally incredible calling to become all that He has created us to be, to step up with all the gifts and graces He's given us and fulfill our role in His Kingdom. He has promised us that He will bless us along the way and set aside incredible rewards for us if we will just draw near to Him and let the Holy Spirit show us those spots, wrinkles and blemishes in our wedding dress that need to be dealt with. They are the things that keep us from drawing ever closer to Him as the day of His return speeds toward us.

We want to be ready when He comes and we want our wedding dress to be the glorious one He is expecting to see. We want to stand at His Judgment Seat and receive our rewards for what we did down here for His Kingdom with what He gave us. On that day we want what we have done here on earth to be like precious gold and silver. We need to let Paul's words be a constant reminder that one day we will account for our time down here:

*1 Cor 3:13-15 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*

Yes, our salvation is sure but do we want to be ushered into heaven *yet so as by fire*? As His bride that can't be an option for us. We cannot afford to stay locked up in our bedchamber while He knocks at our door, drawing us to come with Him into the harvest field. The days are growing short until that trumpet sounds and it's critical for us to ask the hard questions and respond to His answers. And those answers are only going to be found by boldly entering into the Holiest Place and submitting our spirit, soul and body to our bridegroom, allowing Him to fill these earthen vessels with His love, with Himself.

Solomon started out strong but lost his way, only to come to the end and realize what it all meant and what it means for the bride today as she waits and watches for her bridegroom... *I am my beloveds and He is*



*mine.* <sup>(Song6:3)</sup> And with that understanding firmly set in our heart, *Jesus' Rest* comes down to these two verses that challenge you to *Wake Up And Rest*:

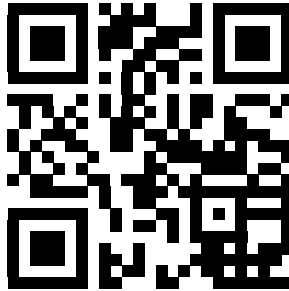
*Eccl 12:13-14 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pastor Tom Mitchell has spent the better part of life exhorting, challenging and encouraging the bride of Christ to move ever deeper into her relationship with her bridegroom. Over the past 30 years through Walk With God Ministries He has authored 13 books, written numerous articles and has taught the Word of God from the pulpit to the classroom and through his blog at [www.WalkWithGod.org](http://www.WalkWithGod.org).

Now, as he enters his year of Jubilee with the Lord, he has penned *Wake Up And Rest – The Bride of Christ Sleeps at Her Own Peril* along with its four companion books (*The Doorway to Rest*; *The Pathway to Rest*; *The Dangers to Rest*; and *The Battle For Rest*) to challenge the bride to wake up and fulfill the role the Lord has given her in His Kingdom. By anyone's clock, the time until the return of Christ is growing very short. *Wake Up And Rest* is a timely challenge the bride can ill afford to ignore, for if she does she does so at her own peril.

The four key parts of the Lord's message to His bride recorded in this book are drawn from the writings of Solomon, Paul and Jesus Himself. They represent the journey of the Jewish bride as she lives out her betrothal, as she waits and watches for the return of her bridegroom. The example she presents to the bride of Christ is a message that Tom has been preaching for the past 30 years. This book is a reflection of the urgency the Lord has impressed upon him for the bride to wake up and remember to whom she has committed herself and make herself ready for His soon return. The hour grows short and there is much at stake, both here and now and for all eternity. The question is... *will she wake up?*

## OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

Available At  
[www.WalkWithGod.org](http://www.WalkWithGod.org)

***The Doorway To Rest—The Brides’ Invitation...*** When we consider Solomon’s Song we can easily see the relationship between Christ and His bride portrayed in many ways. Think of the “sun’s” relationship with the moon being like our relationship with the “Son.” This book is a detailed, verse-by-verse study of the *Song of Solomon*, revealing the true view of bride of Christ through His eyes and a life changing view of the bridegroom through the eyes of the bride as she opens *The Doorway to Rest*.

***The Pathway To Rest—The Brides’ Purpose...*** As we looked at the message of the *Song of Solomon* we were given a clear picture of not only who our bridegroom is, but equally important how He sees us and how we should see Him. His invitation opened the doorway to His Rest and now, as we walk out the days of our *ketubah*—our betrothal—we need to find out what that means and what it entails along *The Pathway To Rest*. For that we turn to the book of *Hebrews*, where we learn through each verse what sewing our wedding dress means and how important it is for us to be ready and watching for His soon return as we move up the path to spiritual maturity.

***The Dangers To Rest—The Bride’s Warning...*** We have been inundated with not the shout of triumph but the incessant worldly scream of pending disaster. The country’s economics have been turned upside down and fear and panic have grabbed the headlines as the Middle East falls into chaos. The news is full of rampant pandemics, meteorological disasters, hopeless individuals committing tragic acts and families destroyed. And sadly, the majority of the bride of Christ is not prepared for His return. We have allowed the world and its supreme ruler to distract us from the path the lies in front of us. Now He has finally

released me to write this verse-by-verse study—*The Dangers To Rest*—out of the book of *Revelation* that He put on my heart 18 years ago concerning His letters that not only deal with why He is coming back but also what we, His bride, are supposed to be doing and not doing as we wait and watch.

### ***The Battle For Rest—The Bride’s Armor...*** Spiritual

warfare is a war between the forces of God and the forces of rebellion led by Satan. And the bride is engaged in this spiritual war between light and darkness, good and evil, heaven and hell and Christ and Satan. But sadly, many aren’t even aware of the fact that they are in a spiritual battle every day of their life. As believing Christians we’re in a grim conflict and we’re not on a worldly cruise ship or a showboat; it’s a battleship. It’s a fight to the finish with no holds barred and we can’t be neutral and we can’t call a truce. This war is a personal one; very personal. In *The Battle For Rest* I have taken a detailed verse-by-verse study of the part of the book of *Ephesians* that deals with the enemy, his strategies and his goals and most importantly the battle orders we have been given to ensure victory over those personal strongholds.

***The Way of Enoch...*** In this series I have attempted to open the door to a solid foundational study by looking at our Walk With God in eight volumes. Each volume takes a look at a key fundamental part of our walk. They were written with the goal of challenging the bride of Christ to firm up her underpinning and step into the Spirit-filled, victorious, and abundant life that Jesus has for her in His Rest. And to accomplish that we need to draw near to Him through the leading of the Holy Spirit. It’s with Him in the Holiest Place where we will find His mercy and grace in the power of His blood. This series explores the foundation and sound scriptural doctrine that underlies God’s plan for our lives through a journey beginning with learning who God really is and culminating with discovering how we are to walk out a loving and obedient relationship with our bridegroom.

Volume 1—*Your Life In Christ*

Volume 2—*The Spirit-Filled Christian*

Volume 3—*Foundations of Faith*  
Volume 4—*The Word of God*  
Volume 5—*Principles of Prayer*  
Volume 6—*Authority of the Believer*  
Volume 7—*Walk The Walk*  
Volume 8—*The Obedient Lifestyle.*

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