

Week of Meetings 1974-06 Presentation of T-Church

by James R. Cochrane

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the blood of the Lamb in our preparation for the day when we will be presented to the Lord Jesus, and the ongoing work of sanctification that brings us more and more into His likeness.

Duration: 47:01

Scripture: Psalm 97:1, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 5:26-27, Revelation 19:7, Revelation 21:2

Topics: "Salvation Through Faith", "Freedom In Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the death of Charles Hayden Spurgeon, a renowned preacher in England. Spurgeon's final words, 'Jesus, die for me,' highlight the simplicity and power of his theology. The speaker emphasizes that the blood shed by Jesus 2,000 years ago is the only basis for our salvation and presentation before Jesus on the day of His glory. The sermon also explores the concept of praise and the idea that God is gracious in dealing with us, praising us for our actions that align with Jesus. The ultimate goal is for the church to be presented before Jesus, experiencing cleansing, forgiveness, peace, and freedom through His blood. The sermon draws parallels between the Exodus of Israel and our spiritual journey, highlighting the freedom from sin that comes through fellowship with Jesus. The speaker concludes by describing the future moment of full communion between Jesus and His people, using the imagery of a bride adorned for her husband.

Transcript

Revelation chapter 19 verse 1. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Alleluia, salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia, and her smoke rose up forever and ever.

And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God that sat on the throne saying, Alleluia, Amen. And a voice came out of the throne saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And he saith unto me, These are the true saints of God. May the Lord add his blessing this evening to this solemn and yet happy portion of his work. I have no intention this evening of making comments on the opening verses of the chapter which refer to that day of judgment when God acts against his enemies.

We do rejoice tonight because in reading the verses we find that above and beyond all of the actions of men, the Lord God omnipotent reigns, and our confidence is in God. Rather, I would direct your attention to verses 7, 8, and 9, where reference is made to the marriage of the Lamb. I think the last phrase of verse 7 is one of the most gracious phrases in all of the Bible, for it reads, For the Lamb, pardon me, for his wife hath made herself ready.

All of us here tonight who belong to the Lord Jesus and look forward to that day of his return and to our presentation to him on that occasion realize that what Paul said about himself is true of us and is true of all God's people, that we are what we are through the grace of God. And when this verse says, his wife hath made herself ready, we know that that readiness, that preparation is the work of the Lamb himself and of the Holy Spirit in our lives. But as we mentioned this morning, the Lord Jesus is coming back, and the Bible tells us, especially the New Testament, that his people will be presented to him.

It will be a glad, happy, and glorious moment when in his likeness and in full glory we are presented to him. Let me suggest to you tonight that there is at least a threefold preparation in the New Testament for that moment. It begins when we turn backwards and remember the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A number of portions could be read this evening, but I would like you to notice that in the book of the Revelation, and you need not turn to it, reference is made to the fact that through his blood he has freed us from our sins. He has freed us from our sins. That is the fundamental, basic preparation for that day when we shall see him face to face.

As a matter of fact, without that shedding of blood there would be no possibility that we would ever see the Lord Jesus, that we would ever be presented to him in holiness and in purity. Just recently in the Dominican Republic, not far from where I live, the government opened a great, beautiful plaza. I think it must be the largest in all of Santo Domingo.

A very beautiful work of art. It consists of a great plaza around which the highway passes, and then in the center there is a great archway. I am not going to guess how high it is, but you can see it from all over.

And standing under the archway is the image of a mother, and she holds in her hands the body of her son. This great plaza is called La Plaza de la Independencia, Independent Square. The mother is representative of all of the Dominican mothers over more than a hundred years who have lost sons and daughters as that people sought their independence.

First of all from Spain, then many times from Haiti on the same island, and then in more recent years from the dictator who ruled our country with an iron hand for so long. No one knows how many, but hundreds of thousands gave their lives over a hundred years to attain the independence that we have today. And our people remember, and they honor their dead, those who gave their life for our independence.

But there is no independence in the world, not in the United States, or any other place in the world that can be compared to the freedom that a man or a woman receives through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder that the book of the Revelation opens with a doxology of praise to the Lord Jesus, because through His blood He has freed us from our sins. He has set us free and brought us into fellowship with God.

Most of you know that here tonight are familiar with the Bible. You will remember the exodus of Israel when the blood was shed and applied to the door, the sign that a people had been bought by God and they were brought out of slavery and through a long, dark forty years of wandering and finally into a promised land. The story is a gripping story, but the spiritual reality far surpasses the story of the book of Exodus.

And many of us here tonight know how sweet it is to come into fellowship with the Lord Jesus and to be free from that bondage of sin. Now that, I repeat once again, is the foundation of the work that God has done in order to bring us and to present us in His presence without spot and without blemish. But the blood has brought forth not just freedom.

You know, in the Dominican Republic we have political freedom. We are not like the new nations of Africa that are restless in their newness and that are full of antagonism towards the countries of Europe that dominated them for so long. In the Dominican Republic our national independence goes back now over a hundred years.

We have been freed politically from Spain and from the power of Haiti, but in our freedom in the Dominican Republic we have not yet, in over a hundred years, found what we are nationally looking for. We seem to pass from one crisis to another, as perhaps as you do in the United States or most of the other nations of the world. But we find in Colossians 1 that the Lord Jesus, through His blood, has not only given to us freedom, but we find in this chapter that we have been reconciled to God.

And I read to you in Colossians 1, verse 19, the words of the Apostle Paul, and it reads as follows, For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell, and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. By Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven, and you, in the sense of something very special, and you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight. There is a great purpose in the work that God has done for us.

He has freed us from the power of sin, but the purpose is reconciliation with Himself and to be brought into a state of peace in the sense of order, of stability, of purpose in our lives. And with all due respect to the different philosophies of the world today, it is only the Christian who finds real purpose to his existence in the world. That's because we have been reconciled back to God and been brought back to God.

We are in a state of peace, of order, and of purpose. But not only this, you may remember that in the book of Genesis there were two brothers, Cain and Abel, and Cain rose up one day and in cold blood he murdered his brother. And God came to Cain and He said, Where is your brother? Now Cain made some excuses, but God pressed the issue and He said to Cain, What have you done? For the blood of your brother cries unto Me from the ground.

It was blood that cried for revenge, and God heard the cry, and He came down and He dealt with Cain. How beautiful to come to the New Testament and find, as we remembered this morning, that the Lord's violent death at Calvary, both physically and spiritually on our behalf, His blood shed for us, speaks of better things than the blood of Abel. For His blood pleads our cause for mercy and grace from God.

Thus in the blood shed by the Lord Jesus there is no call for revenge, but an offer of forgiveness, of cleansing for all of us who receive Him as our Savior and Lord. I remember, and I know you're all familiar with this incident, but I remember how deeply it impressed me when as a young man I read for the first time concerning the death of Charles Hayden Spurgeon, that great master preacher in England so many years ago. Gathered round his bed were a few friends and relatives and as he came to the end of his life, this is what Mr. Spurgeon said, my brethren, my theology has become very simple.

It consists of four words, Jesus, die for me. Now that blood shed two thousand years ago is the only possible basis for our presentation before the Lord Jesus on that coming day of His glory and His power. No wonder in the book of the Revelation you find the four living creatures, and then the twenty-four elders, and then that great number of angelic beings, and then the whole creation caught up in a new song of praise to the Lamb that was slain.

For it is through that blood that God has set the basis of bringing us back to Himself. But there is another aspect to this preparation and I would like to mention it to you now. Please turn with me to Ephesians chapter five where Paul speaks again of this relationship between the Lord Jesus and His people as that relationship which we think of in human terms as marriage.

Ephesians chapter five and verse twenty-five, husbands love your wives. Even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. Now this work referred to in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven is the expression of the deep love of Christ for His people.

It is described in these words that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. There may be some illustration here of that Old Testament ceremony of the labor in the tabernacle and also in the temple, symbolic of regeneration as we come into the presence of God. Perhaps a more correct rendering of verse twenty-six would be as follows, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it with the washing of water by the Word.

That is, there is a work of cleansing, of washing, that God has done in our lives that will enable us on that coming day to stand before the Lord Jesus, now listen to these words, a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and that it should be holy and without blemish. There is no possibility that it refers to something that we achieve. This rather is the direct work of God through washing and regeneration as He brings us into that state of cleanliness, spiritual cleanliness, in His presence.

The doctrinal term, the theological term, is justification, that we have been justified from all our sins. Now, the great purpose of the Lord Jesus is to sanctify it, having cleansed us with the washing of water by the Word. You need not turn to it, but let me read to you from Titus chapter three and verse four, a similar thought from the same author, Paul, but after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appears, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Now in Ephesians five and in Titus three, there is reference to a basic fundamental work of God in our lives, and then there is reference to an ongoing work of God in our lives day by day. The fundamental work is the washing, the regeneration. Peter says that we are born again, born anew, by the God who has spoken, worked in our hearts, and He has cleansed us.

In Titus, one has suggested these three thoughts. The washing is a change in condition. We were once soiled and tainted and spoiled by sin, but God has washed us.

It is a change of condition. This thought of regeneration is a change of status. We have been born into the family of God.

Back in Ephesians chapter five, the phrase that corresponds to these truths is, having washed us by the water of the Word, that regeneration and cleansing, the direct work of God in our hearts. But the ongoing work in Ephesians five is that work of sanctification. And here in Titus chapter three, the renewing of the Holy Ghost, that renewal is a change in disposition.

When the Spirit speaks to grow more and more into the likeness of the Lord Jesus. You are all familiar with the apostolic exhortations. We are not to grieve the Holy Spirit.

We are not to quench the Holy Spirit. We are not to resist the work of the Holy Spirit, for He has been given to us to lead us on day by day, that what we are now will correspond to what we will be on that day when we stand before the Lord Jesus. And He works in our hearts.

All of you tonight who have had pastoral experience, and I know that many of you have, know what Paul means when he writes in 2 Corinthians chapter eleven and speaks about that church at Corinth and says as follows, Would to God you would bear with me a little in my fall, and indeed bear with me, for I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, but I fear less by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Paul, who has already written about that glorious day when we shall be presented spotless, holy, blameless in the presence of the Lord Jesus, is anxious, is working, is fearful that this local congregation will be drawn away and will not go on steadfastly in the things of God.

And as a true pastor, he works and he prays that he might help them on in their Christian experience to present them before the Lord Jesus as a chaste virgin. All pastors have that burden. Paul talks about carrying the care of all the churches in his heart, for though we know what we shall be in the purpose of God, it is God's design, it is the longing of the Spirit of God, and it is the pastor's burden that the people of God now will grow into that likeness morally day by day.

This is done as we come to the Word of God, as we spend time in the presence of God, as Peter says, as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first pope that ever used the word Gregory was known as Gregory, and he died in the year 604. He was pope for approximately 15 years, and he wrote these words, Holy Scripture is the letter of God Almighty to his creatures.

Learn God's heart in God's words. And as we come to this book, we move right into the heart of God to understand what he is like, and it is the Spirit's intention to make us like children of the highest, that we will correspond and show forth those virtues that belong to the Lord Jesus. Now, we have noticed that foundation preparation for our presentation before the Lord Jesus, that awesome price of his precious

blood that was shed at Calvary.

We have noticed very briefly how God through his Word speaks to our hearts, and we experience that washing, that regeneration from which flows through all the days of our life, that continuing work of sanctification, that renewing of the Holy Ghost as he brings us more and more into the likeness of the Lord Jesus. But surely tonight you will agree with me that that foundation work, which is the basis of all that we shall be forever, and what we are today as a result of the Spirit's work thus far in our lives, between those two things there is a tension. All of us are aware of our failures, of our shortcomings, not to say our sins, of those things that happen in our lives for which we are responsible that bring sorrow to the heart of God and bring shame on our own lives.

What we are now and what we shall be then, there is no doubt that there is a tension between those two things, and it must be dealt with. So when you come into the epistles of Paul, references made to what he calls the judgment seat of Christ, or in Romans, the judgment seat of God. Now, that is not a judgment of condemnation.

That is not a judgment of purgatory. That is judgment in the sense of appraisal. Let me read to you tonight just one or two of these verses, going back first of all to the Old Testament, where perhaps the seed is planted of this particular thought.

We read, for God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Now, in the New Testament, we find these words, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Each man's work shall be made manifest of what sort it is.

So then, each one of us shall give an account of himself to God. Language could not be clearer. There is a day coming when we will stand in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and our lives must be appraised.

It ought not to be a frightening thought, for surely none of us would want to move on to those endless ages of eternal glory, taking anything that belongs to sin or to the things of this world, or to self-centeredness. They must be dealt with. It is a solemn thought, for many of us have used our energies at different times in our lives for those things that are not consistent with the character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have given our time and our energy and our talents, and all that we have done is accumulate wood, hay and stubble. Thus the day is coming when we shall stand before him, and then we will fully understand. For from his point of view, we will look back on our lives, and an account will be given, and we will clearly see that which has been of self, and that which, on the other hand, has been the result of the Spirit of God working in our hearts.

That which has been of self will go up in smoke, for that is a judgment of fire. That is an appraisal that must deal with those things that do not belong in the presence of God, and we will see them go. And I believe we will bow our heads and thank God that now, once, all those things that belong to the old nature, all that has been done for self, will be gone and forgotten forever.

I must not minimize the importance of that experience, for the Bible clearly says that some of us will suffer loss. That is, those rewards that could have been ours, those things that we could have done for the Lord Jesus, and for which we would have received just wages. We will have suffered loss.

We have missed those opportunities. On the other hand, there is a beautiful verse in the New Testament which reads, Then shall every man receive praise of God. Perhaps God is far more gracious in dealing with us than we are in dealing with each other.

And as He looks at us, there is that which the Spirit of God has brought out, consistent with the Lord Jesus, and there will be praise on that occasion for those things that are in harmony with our Savior. Thus, as we move on now for our closing comments, and we think of that day when the church will be presented before the Lord Jesus, we have the thought of cleansing, of forgiveness, of peace, of freedom. We have had the application of sanctification growing in the grace of the Lord Jesus.

We have had the tension between what we are and what we shall be dealt with at the judgment seat of Christ. Now, in the portion we have read this evening, we find that the people of God are presented on that glorious day as the bride to the Lord Jesus. Let me take you again to the book of Revelation and chapter 19, verse 7. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to the Lord Jesus Christ through Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.

Chapter 21, verse 2, And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The great mysteries of eternity are surely beyond our clear and full comprehension. How gracious of God to tell us something about them in terms that we can understand.

Many of you here tonight of our sisters in the Lord remember the day of their marriage. Many of us who are men remember that day when our companions for life were united with us in the presence of God and of our families and of our friends. This great moment of full communion between the Lord Jesus and His people is described in that terminology of bride, which speaks of youth, which speaks of beauty, which speaks of purity.

All of us who know what we are by nature cannot help but marvel at the grace of God that can reach down and pick up people like ourselves and do such a tremendous work that we will come down from the presence of God on that occasion like a bride. Youth, beauty, purity, seen in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The following verse in Revelation chapter 19, verse 8, says, And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.

Many brides appear in the Bible. Eve was the bride and she was deceived for the downfall of herself and her husband Isaac. Many of you know the story of Rebecca.

She was the bride that deceived her husband Isaac. And then you have Rachel, the bride of Jacob who schemed to have a son. All of them have their defects, their shortcomings, their moral blemishes.

But this bride is unique, for this bride comes down from God and there is no spot, there is no blemish. The moral perfection of the church on that day can only be measured by the moral perfection of the Lord Jesus. Words that are used to describe his perfection when he came into the world are the words that are used to describe the beauty of the church on that day when she is presented to the Lord Jesus.

The white dress speaks of the upright, just and godly deeds or conduct of the saints. If you are familiar with the Amplified New Testament, the thought is expressed in those words. May I pause for a practical note? Remember, every time you give a soft answer to any expression of wrath, you are acting consistent with the character of the Lord Jesus.

It is like a thread in that fine linen, white and clean, that will surround the bride on that occasion. I make the suggestion that that beautiful dress of purity and cleanliness will be a testimony to the work of the Spirit of God in the lives of all the people of God all down through the centuries as he has worked to bring out in them that likeness to the Lord Jesus. There you have the sum total of the work of the Spirit of God impressed on the church and now revealed for all of eternity.

That dress of fine linen, clean and white, the righteous acts and deeds of God's people under the inspiration and direction of the Spirit of God. Some of you are from Scotland and you may remember Samuel Rutherford, that great man in Scotland. I read the story when I was a boy and remember on the last day of his life, while still in the dungeon where he spent a great deal of time, because of his faithfulness to God, he received by a messenger a summons to appear that day before the court, the royal court.

And as he read it he said to the messenger, please take back this message. I cannot come, for I have been called this day to a higher court. And within a few hours he passed out of this world into the presence of God.

Samuel Rutherford wrote some beautiful lines that were put into the form of poetry by a woman, if I remember right, by the name of Cousin. But the thoughts came from Samuel Rutherford and these words, we only have a few verses in our hymn books, it's a long beautiful poem. But it goes as follows, the bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face.

I will not gaze at glory, but on the king of grace. Not at the crown he giveth, but on his pierced hand. The lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land.

The German mystic Tauer, who lived around the year 1400, is quoted by Erich Sauer in one of his books of having written these words, that when at last God gives the crown, he will not crown us, but he will crown Christ in us, for only Christ is worthy of a crown. Thus that dress of fine linen, clean and white, is nothing more and nothing less, but the expression of the beauty in the Lord Jesus, brought into our lives now by the power of the Spirit of God, which will be preserved and projected on throughout all of eternity as that shining garment of his people. In closing, Revelation 19, verse 9, And he said unto me, Right, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And he said unto me, These are the true saints of God. We all know about a bride, we all know about the dress of bride, and we all know about the bridal reception, the wedding reception. These common things in our lives are used by God to point us on to eternal realities which undoubtedly are beyond our comprehension tonight.

But as we meet with our friends on the wedding day to rejoice together, so on that day we begin that eternal union of full joy and happiness with the Lord Jesus. I don't know how many of you friends remember the Old Testament in our local churches, and in that hymn book you find this hymn, and I read one verse of it to you tonight, Our home is with God, and our path has been trod by the faithful of ages old, and us he will bring as on eagles' wings to our place in the marriage hall. Then shall we sing as the bride of the King of the blood that has bought us so nigh to bask in the blaze of the Ancient of Days enthroned above the sky.

Well we shall begin that eternal song of praise and joy in that great mass. As I close tonight, let me take you back to a pagan, somewhat sensual Old Testament story that has to do with a beautiful young woman

called Esther. Many fair maidens were brought into the presence of a king who had disposed of his queen and was looking for a new queen, and in the story of Esther you find these words, And thus came every maiden unto the king.

And the Bible says, Whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the kingdom of the house of women unto the king's house. There was a great parade over a long period of time as he looked for the ideal queen. When those maidens were brought into the royal house they were given all they needed for purification.

And the story says concerning Esther, And the maiden pleased him, the keeper of the women, and she obtained kindness of him, and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her and seven maidens, which were made to be given her out of the king's house. And he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women. There was special favor and attention to Esther.

So when that time of preparation was over and the maidens went into the king, they could take with them anything they wanted in order to impress the king. There is a beautiful part about Esther, and I leave it with you tonight, where the Bible says, Now when the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hagai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. What had been given to her was all that she needed, and she asked for nothing else.

And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Esther. All that she required was what had been given to her.

Before the Lord Jesus left, he gave us the promise, I will send you the comforter. And the Holy Spirit was given in power on the day of Pentecost, and he indwells his people today. And all that we need now to correspond in our present lives to what we shall be on that day we have in the work of the Spirit of God.

If like some of the maidens, we go outside looking for other things through selfishness, through pride, whatever it may be, those things must be dealt with and removed at the judgment seat of Christ. But if our lives are open to the workings of the Spirit of God like Esther, we require nothing else. And on that great and glorious day, we will be loved by the Lord Jesus, honored and glorified forever, as he himself presents to himself the bride for which he died two thousand years ago.

At the close of the Bible, again the term bride is used, and you need not turn to it. The Spirit and the bride say, Come. The answer comes from the Lord Jesus.

Surely I come quickly. And then the response again from the people of God, Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus. We await his coming, and though we know so little about it, we have this great comfort that on that day we shall be presented without spot in the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Please take your hymn books, and we'll sing hymn number 629, words written by Mr. J. N. Darby almost a hundred years ago. And is it so, I shall be like thy son? Is this the grace which he for me has won? Father of glory, thought beyond all thought, in glory to his own blessed likeness brought. Let us stand this evening and sing the last three verses of hymn number 629.

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