

Who Am I...



In Christ Jesus

COME AND FIND OUT "WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST JESUS"

Author, Artist and Photographer
Rev. D. L. Bemis, M.Ed. 6/2006

Table of Contents

Chapter One
Adopted into the Royal Family of God

Chapter Two
I am the Branch-He is the Vine

Chapter Three
The Bride of Christ

Chapter 1
Adopted into the Royal Family of God
Ephesians 1:1-14

The majority of Christians do not know who they truly are in Christ. Today we will look at one idea that will bring us understanding of our position in Jesus Christ. Are you ready to have the Apostle Paul teach us? Are you ready to receive who you are in Christ? This is important, and it will change how you walk, talk, and act from this point on. Come now, let us reason together and let us discover who we are in Christ Jesus.

According to scripture we are “Adopted into the Royal Family of God,” and I ask you to meditate on this for a moment. This is the reason for this sermon, so that you will accept your adoption into His royal family and all that it entails.

Let me start with a beautiful story about a father who picked his daughter from a photograph, and by his personal choice received his daughter of destiny. The man was given his daughter at the airport. You might be thinking about this and say, “Who picks up a daughter at an airport?” Well, the man was about to import a little baby girl from Korea. This story is all about adoption. The man in our story - well, it is me!

My daughter of destiny, through adoption, is now 28 years old and going to have her first child. But let’s go back to the beginning. The year was 1978 and I had gone to the airport in Seattle, Washington, to pick up my new little baby girl. She was going to be my daughter by choice. I even saw a photograph of her before she was placed in my arms of love. The agency which had this little girl wanted to make sure I would take this little girl. Imagine; I was to be her father and I chose her; she did not choose me. I had a chance to turn her away and she could have stayed in the foreign country in the orphanage. But I wanted her. So when it comes to adoption, I know what I am talking about. In the gospel of John I want you to listen to these words spoken by Jesus: “*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*” (John 15:16) NKJV. Jesus is echoing what happened in my life when I adopted my little girl. She did not pick me, but I desired her.

I waited in the airport for the plane to land. The plane landed first in San Francisco, which became her legal point of entry. The flight was due in any minute when I heard the intercom system instructing everyone about this flight touching down in Seattle. And within moments the passengers would be departing.

I looked up and saw a woman who was alone, and she was carrying a baby. I greeted the woman who was the wife of the pilot of this commercial airliner. She flies around the world with her

husband and she loves to bring orphans to America. I saw a tiny baby in her arms as she walked down the walkway from the jet. For a moment I thought this could not be my daughter since the baby was so small. I knew the child I was going to be acquiring was six months old and this lady seemed to be holding a newborn. But to my surprise the lady seemed to know I was the little one's new father. She held out the six month old little Korean girl who was just six pounds in weight. She looked like a newborn baby she was so tiny.

Later I found out that in the orphanage she was wrapped in a blanket and tied onto the back of a lady that worked in the orphanage. This is why she acted so much like a newborn baby who cannot even hold up its head. But this was my little import and she was healthy, tiny, and staring out into the big world. She made eye contact with me and smiled from ear to ear. And I know I had a big smile upon my face as I reached out my arms to hold her for the first time. Our hearts bonded immediately.

Leia had slanted eyes and looked nothing like her new Caucasian Daddy. But I loved her from the moment I laid eyes on her. I picked her up and she smiled at me. I hugged her and kissed her little face. She was a good little baby and many hearts melted as she smiled at them.

Use your holy imagination for a moment and think - I have brown hair and she has black. I have hazel green eyes and she has dark brown, almost black, eyes. I am fair skinned and she has brown skin. She has almond shaped eyes but I saw such a sparkle, such a twinkle in her eyes as she looked up and accepted her newfound Daddy. We had unconditional love for each other from that moment on.

As the years flew by she took on the character of the Bemis family. She may not have looked like a Bemis by birth but she has become a true Bemis. I raised her as my own. I disciplined her as my own. She will tell you about the two spankings she received. As she tells the story, they were near death experiences. She loved to please, serve, and honor me.

As you can see I understand adoption. Adoption is very real to me, and I understand that the same concept is what the Apostle Paul is talking about in Romans:

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:14

God wants to bless us as I wanted to bless her. She received the blessings that I gave her. And she knew that she received those gifts not by works. When she was in her third year of college we bought her a BMW. The car was a classic and in great condition. In

less than two months she wrecked it. I would not buy her another. She knew my discipline and that I would not change my mind. I told her the next car is all on her. Well, long story cut short - She is now married to a wonderful man who is a doctor. The two of them are blessed and they had to sacrifice many things in their lives to be in the place they are today. Leia is a registered nurse and her husband is a doctor. They work together as a team to bring healing into the world they touch.

The cover design is me holding my new grandbaby. Leia has come full circle and now she can become the mommy she never had. My grandbaby doesn't look like me but she is in the Bemis family by new birth.

But now it is time look into God's Holy Scriptures to find Jesus' truth on this subject of adoption. We need to understand adoption, for it is who we are in Christ Jesus. And we need to learn how to accept our rightful position in the Royal family of God.

The Apostle Paul says:

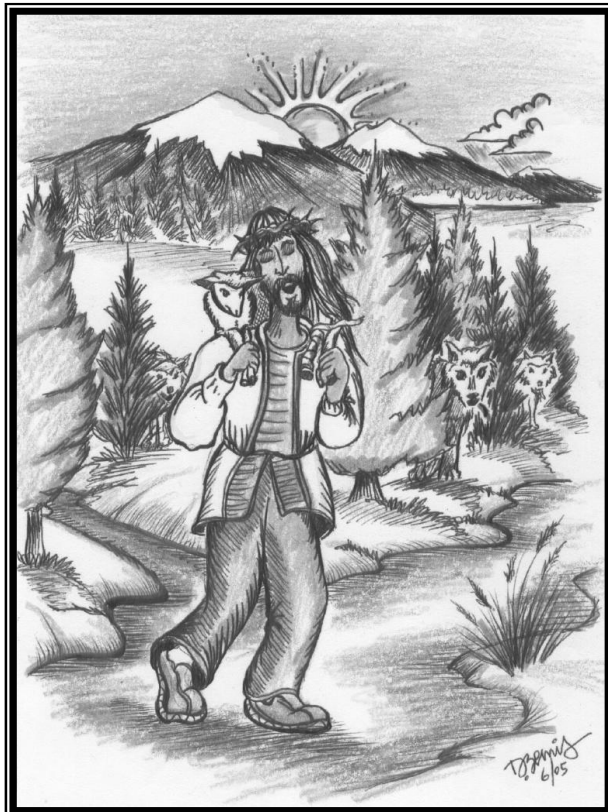
*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He***



Leia with Kristina

made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.(Ephesians 1:1-14) NKJV

The one area I have emphasized for you to pay especially close attention to is easily understood - that the Lord God Almighty chose us. He chose us as I did my daughter. The Lord, the Alpha and Omega, made it a point to want us before the foundation of the world was set. Meditate on this for a moment. His predestination for us is to be holy, pure, and clean as His sons and daughters of royalty. He predestined us to be adopted into His royal family. Don't just glance over this idea but think for a moment about what this means to you as a person. Think about this deep inside your heart. The Lord did not have to adopt us, but He wanted to do so out of His great love for us. I did not have to adopt my daughter, but out of my love for her I did. I desired that her destiny would be forever changed and that she would be taken out of the orphanage. The same is true of our Heavenly Father. He wants your destiny changed for the better. I did not want her to stay an orphan. The Lord does not want any of us to



stay as orphans. The Lord of Truth will never leave us as orphans nor will he ever abandon us as people do. Listen to this scripture:

“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me. (Isaiah 49:15-16) NKJV

I love the fact that the Lord wanted to adopt me and make me His own. Now this means:

- No more rejection
- No more abandonment
- No more loneliness

Meditate on this for a moment. God is for us, not against us. Everyone is predestined to be adopted by the Lord into His Royal family. This is God’s great plan for all of mankind. But we must accept this plan and make it our own. Our destiny is determined upon accepting God as our Father.

Now let us make this personal. The Lord predestined me for adoption before the foundations of the world were established. He does not want me to be an orphan. He does not want me to be rejected. He wants me living with Him and in Him. And just like my daughter grew under my roof the Lord now wants me to grow under His roof. Just like my daughter grew in her character, and when she matured she really grew into a true Bemis. The Lord of Host wants us to mature and take on His character. He wants us to look and act more and more like Him.

Jesus said it this way:

And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. John 10:4

And again:

I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not

of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10:9-16)

Jesus said that His sheep know His voice and will follow Him. This can happen when you decide to accept the adoption that the Lord offers to us. We now have a family and we belong to His royal family.

- Not children of beggars
- Not children of liars
- Not orphans
- Not children of poverty
- Not children of molesters
- Not children of abusers
- Not children of thieves
- Not children of haters
- Not children of adultery
- Not children of rape
- Not children of neglect
- Not children of shame
- Not children of hopelessness
- Not children of death and sickness
- Not children of curses
- Not children of witches
- Not children of the devil
- Not children of evil

And the list goes on and on. We are children adopted by God into His royal family. We are heirs to the Royal Kingdom. And we were bought at a great price. The price of adoption that God paid was His only begotten Son, which was sacrificed for me.

Many Christians know in their mind about God and His desire to adopt us, but they do not receive this in their heart. We need to live like we belong to one big family. We need to know that He is our adopted Father. Our spirits can now say, “Abba Father,” because we know who our daddy is. As Jesus says to our hearts today, “*and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.* We are to be one family with one Daddy. Listen to my daughter’s life.

My daughter was rejected by her biological mother, she was abandoned by her biological father, and she had to let go of her rejection and abandonment to receive adoption as a free gift of God’s love for her. She was abandoned by her birth country but accepted into God’s Kingdom. If she hung onto her rejection then she would never accept me as her father. But Leia, a little Korean girl, chose to let go of her personal hurts to receive God’s destiny for adoption. And God’s choice was this Caucasian man from America.

Do you hear what the Spirit of God is saying to the church? Do you hear what the Spirit is saying to your heart right now? You have a family, you have a Father, and you belong to a Royal Family - the Family of God.

Now, if you can truly receive this understanding and embrace the fact that you are adopted into the Royal family, then your heart must change also.

- No more begging - for you are a child of Royalty.
- No more a liar - for you are a child of Truth.
- No more an orphan - for you are a child with a Father.
- No more living in poverty - for you are a child with a rich Father.
- No more molested - for you are a child of purity.
- No more a child of abuse - for you are a child of destiny.
- No more a child of thieves - for you are a child with blessings.
- No more a child of haters - for you are a child of love.
- No more a child of adultery - for you are a child of faithfulness.
- No more a children of rape - for you are a child of beauty.
- No more a child of neglect - for you are a child of promise.
- No more a child of shame - for you are a child clothed in royalty.
- No more a child of hopelessness - for you are a child of faith and of hope.
- No more a child of death and sickness - for you are a child of the Great Physician.
- No more a child of curse - for you are a child of blessings.
- No more a child of witches - for you are a child of God.
- No more a child of the devil - for you are a child of the Lord God Almighty.
- No more a child of evil - for you are a child of good.

Yet this past weekend I saw Christians who were begging people for donations at the local K-Mart. We are not beggars; we are children of the King. We must believe this by faith and then start walking as children of a King. Everything will change in your life when you can wrap your arms around this teaching.

Listen to this scripture as we close:

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the

Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:1-7)

If you have accepted son-ship through adoption, then according to God’s inspired word you are heir of God through Christ. And there you have it in black and white written by the Apostle Paul. So today, accept your position in Christ Jesus as an adopted son or daughter of great destiny through the promise of God’s Word.

Let us bow our hearts and pray: “Father, I chose this day to accept my adoption into the Royal family of God. I want to receive this in my heart and I want to start walking as Your adopted child. Forgive me for begging and forgive me for not understanding who I am in You. You have designed a great plan for me and I now want to walk in Your divine plan of love. I chose this day to accept You as my true Heavenly Father and I Your true child of hope. Lord God Almighty, fill my heart with Your breath of life. Lord, fill my bones with Your royal blood. Lord, teach me and show me how to grow more and more in Your holy character. Amen and amen.”

Homework time:

- What did you learn from this article?
- What has the Spirit of God taught you personally in this anointed article when it pertains to your own thoughts?
- Write your own prayer. Your prayer should reflect



what you have personally learned from the Holy Spirit.

- Memorize this scripture by writing it down (Romans 8:14)
- Memorize this scripture by writing it down and then sign and date once you have completed this task. (Ephesians 1:5)

Adopted into His Royal Family, His Royal Ambassador, and Heir to His Royal Kingdom through Christ Jesus, Chaplain Duane Lee Bemis

Chapter 2

I am the “Branch - He is the Vine”

John 15:1-17

Here we are again in need of a word from God. We need Him to tell us who we are in Him. This time let us listen to Jesus as we sit at His feet allowing His words to sink into our spirits. You can see the drawing that the Lord gave me for this chapter. Let us turn in our Bibles to John chapter 15 and study His words of absolute truth. Listen to Jesus. He says:

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” Verse 1

According to Jesus, He is the vine and His Father is the one who cares for the vine. What is a vinedresser? In the King James version this is translated as Husbandman. In the New Living Translation it is translated as gardener. What this means is His Father will care for the vine. The Father will water the vine so it can grow. The Father will inspect the vine and prune it according to the good of the vine. The Father knows how to care for His vine and He knows when it needs to be fertilized. The Father is the one inspecting the vine for fruit. He looks for fruit that remains and is plentiful. What have we learned from verse one?

- 1. Jesus is the vine!**
- 2. The Father’s role is to care for the vine.**

Now let us look at the next verse, verse two, and let your heart hear the teaching of Jesus to better understand who we are in Jesus Christ:

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” Verse 2



We read that we are the branch. It is critical to understand our position in this verse. We are the branch. We are not the vine, but the branch that has been grafted into the vine. We are the wild branch that He chose to graft into Himself. We are to be in Him bearing fruit. Meditate upon this for a moment. He is looking for fruit of righteousness, not fruit of the world. He is looking for Spiritual fruit, and if He finds none then the Father will prune this branch off the vine. The Vinedresser is looking for peace, joy, and love. The Gardener is looking for witnessing, sharing, and leading others to the Vine. If the Husbandman finds nothing, if He finds no fruit, then He will sever that branch out of the vine. A branch that produces no fruit only drains the Vine of valuable nutrients that could be used for someone else's growth.

So the real question is, what does the Father find in you? Does He find Spiritual growth? Or does He find that you are still growing grumpy, complaining, and profanity fruit? Are you still growing fruit of stubbornness, pride, and lewdness? We had better repent.

The next section of verse two is for us who desire to produce more fruit. The Scripture stated that if we bear good fruit, the Father, the Vinedresser - or as some translations word it, the Gardener - is still going to prune us. But this time it comes with a promise. The promise is that the Lord wants us to bear even bigger and better fruit. But we must allow the Gardener to prune those ugly branches off for this promise to happen.

We have to let the Vinedresser come in and prune off any branch that He finds undesirable. Let Him prune unforgiveness, bitterness, and hatred. Let the Lord have your rejection, abandonment, and loneliness. It is all for our benefit and the Vine's benefit that more and better fruit will grow.

Now I want to tell you that there is nothing pretty about this process. As a matter of fact, pruning is ugly, hurtful, and uncomfortable. Did you hear that? Letting God cut pornography from your life so that you can bear bigger fruit is hard. In the pruning process you will feel painful. You will feel stripped of self. You will even feel at times as though you are naked as the Lord chops off more and more of the old you.

As I was meditating upon this portion of scripture I could almost see Jesus in the vineyard sitting by the grapes growing on the vine as He taught His followers these spiritual truths. I see Him in His sandals sitting in the shade of the grape plants. I can see in the distance the gardener caring for the plants. I can see the Lord and His disciples eating a bunch of red juicy grapes right off the vine. Do you see this image in your holy imagination? Well, let us listen some more as we sit with the disciples in the vineyard. Quiet your mind so you can hear His gentle voice of love. Right now I see

Him turning and looking you right in your eyes. You make eye contact with the “Vine” as He speaks again:

“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” Verse 3

Why would He say this? We are already clean? Why would he utter such a statement? He wants us to know is that we are clean once we are in Him. And after we are in Him, His Father is looking for fruit. After we are in Him then we are drinking in the good and clean nutrients found in Him. In Him we are clean. In Him we can produce good fruit. Then in Him we are clean. Clean from the toxins of hate, bitterness, and anger. Clean from pornography. Clean from rejection and abandonment. Clean from the evils of this world. Oh dear reader, drink from the living water that flows freely through the Vine into your branches. Are you thirsty? Come and drink as much and for as long as you need. Did you receive from Jesus what He is saying in the Spirit? He is telling you that you are clean. Clean from all those old memories that haunt you. Clean from past hurts. Clean from those negative words spoken to you many years ago. He is telling you that if you allow the Father to prune you, that even images of war, death, and blood can be cut off from your life. He has the power to clean you. And yes, no matter what it is that troubles you, He has the power to clean you so you can produce good fruit that will remain in your life.

My friend, I see in the Spirit and the Lord is offering you a ripe red grape personally picked by Him. Just reach out and take it and relax in His presence. Imagine the Lord Himself teaching you. In Jesus’ eyes I see His burning desire for His bride, His church, and that she would be clean. And His desire is for you and your healthiness. His desire pierces deep into your soul and you see the fire in His eyes just for you. He tells you, “Relax and enjoy,” as you tremble in His presence and in His love. And I see that you hunger for Him to speak more and more to your heart. And Jesus nods His head as He reads the thoughts that are housed inside your mind.

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” Verse 4

Live in the Vine. In short, only in Him can we find real life, and without Him we are worthless. We can do nothing without Him. The Lord is telling us once again that our true position in Jesus is that we are the branches, and once again His desire for us is that we bear fruit. And if we do not live in Him we will bear no fruit worthy of our Heavenly calling. I love the word “Abide” for it means to live, to remain, and even steadfastness. There can be no room for

divorcing Jesus. We must remain in steadfastness with Him and in Him. In Him is life and life abundant. Oh, do you hear what the Spirit is saying to the church? As for me, I am eating the grape out of His hand and I am enjoying the juices. I am loving every moment in His presence listening to Him teach me.

Did you notice that the Lord made this scripture personal? “Neither can you,” bear fruit unless we are in Him. I can see spiritually as He reaches into the dirt and picks up a dead branch that has been broken off the vine as He teaches us this important concept. I love the clarity of His message. I love the graphic visual I see in my mind as He relates the vine and the relationship it has with the branches. I can use my holy imagination and see Him passing around the dead branch as His disciples nod their heads in thought and understanding. I can see that they are getting it. I can even see my head nodding as I get it. I do not know about you, but I want more. Listen once again to Jesus as the Vine continues His illustration.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” Verses 5 and 6

These are His words of truth. According to the Vine, if we are in Him and stay in Him then we are going to produce much fruit. Just like He offers life and life abundant (John 10:10) in our text He goes beyond fruit. In this portion of scriptures He says not just fruit but much fruit. This is important for it shows us that in Him we can have more. In Him our hearts will find our purpose and that purpose is to bring forth much fruit.

Let me stop here and tell you a little story. I found out that the messages that the Lord has given me are on the air through Christian radio in Guadalajara, Mexico. I found out that another man is using the written messages in Spanish in his church in Acapulco. Yet another is using the messages in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and still another is using them in Peru. Another former inmate is using them in Mexico City, Mexico. As His branch I know I am to produce much fruit. I am in Him and therefore I must produce much fruit. And I must stay in Him. This happens because He is the vine and I know my place, which is the branch drinking in the living water. This can only happen because I have allowed God to prune everything out of my life that He saw wrong. I know who I am in Christ Jesus and I am His branch. I just love being His branch to bring God all the glory. Oh, how my cup runs over!

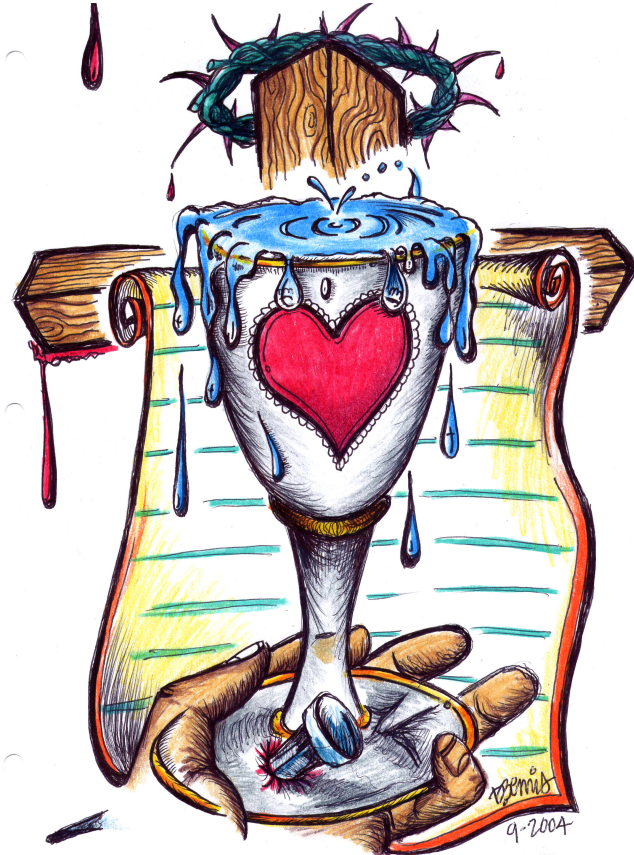
Once again as we look at the words of Jesus we find what He will do with those braches that are not in Him. He throws those

withered branches into the fire. I wonder if Jesus gathered some of the dried and dead braches off the ground and built a small fire right before their eyes. Once again I can see all their heads nodding with great understanding. I can see someone playing in the fire with their own dead branch they found on the ground. I see that someone is YOU! I believe Jesus is telling us or showing us that there is a real hell, and in hell everyone will be burned. But the main thing He is teaching us is that without Him there is no life, no fruit, and no love.

I can see Jesus reaching over and He puts His arm around your shoulder and touches your heart as He continues:

*“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”
Verses 7 and 8*

He tells us that His plan for our life is that we have great fruit and that our fruit brings the Father glory. Many Christians love verse seven by itself. But many take this scripture out of context. But we have just read it in context and we can have what we ask for when it aligns with the entire portion of scripture. We can ask if it will bring God glory and if we are truly in the Vine. The good nutrients of the vine are flowing through our life, words, and our actions. Then we can ask with a right motive. And in all of this, it brings God glory, not ourselves. The Father has a great plan, and that plan for every disciple is great fruit. We must bear fruit, Godly fruit of His love. Many a Christian will tell you that Jesus is the vine and that they are the braches, but



where's their fruit? I see, hear, and know of their complaining - that's the wrong kind of fruit! I know of their laziness, their hurtful words, and their darkened heart. But for a moment I want you to think about your own life. What did Jesus see in your life last week? Did He find you praying? What about giving and tithing? Or did He find you using profanity and pornography?

I can see Jesus looking right into your heart and I see Him reminding you of a couple of missed opportunities to testify of His love. But I can also see Him communicating to you to just repent and live. And then I see Him turn to the rest of His disciples and with the motion of His hand He begins again:

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.”
Verse 9

Could “love” be the greatest fruit that He desires of His branches? I think so; we need to live, eat, and drink in the fullness of His love. If we drink of His love, then the fruit that grows off our life will be full of His love. And this juicy and ripe love is what everyone wants to eat.

The Lord also tells us that He loves us. Now, stop and drink, eat, and absorb this truth. If this is true then there is no stranger, no outcast, and no orphan in God's Vine. Did you receive that? In God's Vine there is no rejected, no bitterness, and no one who is lonely. He is with us, He is in us, and in His vine those fruitless branches as pruned off. We are loved beyond a love that the world could ever understand. And if you receive His words, His promises found in this scripture, then you know that you are truly loved. Jesus said that He loves you. And we are to remain in this love, so be steadfast in His love as you grow more and more love fruit. And



this love fruit will glorify our Heavenly Father as promised by Jesus.

Stop for a moment and re-read that last paragraph. Meditate on His words of love; they are so important for our understanding of who we are in Him. Abide in His love; live in His love so you can grow fruit of love that will reach the orphan, the outcast, and the lonely. Go and re-read that paragraph; please be obedient for the Lord does not want you to miss who you are in the Vine.

Did you read that paragraph? Well, I hope you did. Now let us again listen to the Vine:

*“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”
Verse 10*

Jesus lives in His Father’s love and now it is our turn to live in the love offered through Jesus. If we love Him we naturally will walk in obedience to every one of His commandments. We love Him so we obey Him. This means fruit of tithing, sacrifice, and offerings if we love Him. Does Jesus find these fruits of obedience in your life? If not, then I guess you do not truly love Him. For true disciples that love Jesus grow fruit of obedience. This is the fruit that Jesus is looking for to find out who are His true disciples. If you love Him then demonstrate your love through obedience to all His commandments. You cannot pick and chose which ones you will obey. If you love Him, obey Him as He obeyed the Father.

I can see Him pointing to His disciples as He stands to His feet. He is showing them how to live as His disciples, and that is through obedience and love. We must have both fruits of obedience and love growing off our branches that are in Him if we are going to be His disciples. To be His followers we must grow in His love as we remain in Him.

I can see Jesus start walking out of the vineyard as He closes His teaching session. He starts walking off and utters these words:

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” Verse 11

Once again we find no lack in Jesus. He gives life and life abundant. Then fruit and much fruit, and now joy and joy to the fullest. All of this comes after all the verses we just studied. You get joy that remains and your joy will be to the fullest when:

1. We are in Him
2. We allow the Father to prune us
3. We remain in Him
4. We are steadfast in His love
5. We are clean in Him
6. We produce love fruit

7. We glorify the Father
8. We are obedient to the voice of God

Then our joy will be full. All scripture needs to be studied in context and we will have verse eleven when we are established through the other ten verses. No pruning - no joy. No love - no joy. No fruit - no joy to the fullest. Are you getting the idea? No obedience - no joy; no steadfastness - no joy; and no remaining in His love - no joy. So, if you want joy and joy to the fullness, then stay and remain in the Vine.

Once again I see into the Spirit and I see Jesus back on the road as they are walking and Jesus adds:

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” Verses 12-14

Jesus wants to make sure there is no room for error. He commands us to love one another. He wants us to love the Catholic, He wants us to love the Muslim, and He wants us to love one another, yet in our churches there is such a shortage of genuine love for one another. But it is a command from Jesus. And He has demonstrated His love by laying down His life for you and me.

Next I want you to receive His words that He calls us friends. Stop for a moment and think on this. Need a friend? Jesus wants to be a friend that is better than any earthly friend you could ever imagine. We have a friend in Jesus. He will answer every call. He will never place you on hold nor will you get a busy signal when you call on Him. And because of all this He asks us to obey His commands. Do you love Him? Then obey Him. Lay your life down for Jesus.

I can see Jesus stopping on the road for everyone to catch up with Him. I can see some of the faces in the small gathering down by the river of Grace. Their faces are trying to take in the idea that Jesus just called them friends. Friends with the King of kings, friends with the Alpha and Omega, and friends with the Prince of Peace - oh that sounds good. So, as for me, I will show my love by being obedient and laying my life down for Jesus - MY FRIEND! And then Jesus turns and starts off towards town and once again He continues His teachings:

“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” Verse 15

Jesus promises us, His friends, His branches, that He will reveal things to us that He and the Father have discussed. We are not just servants; we are now His friends and as friends we have access to the Father's wisdom.

I see a few of His friends skipping along to make sure they do not miss a single word that comes out of the mouth of Jesus. Are you keeping up? Come now as Jesus closes this session with us and listen one more time to the gentle whisper of Jesus as He stops and gathers us all around Himself:

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.” Verses 16 and 17

Once again He reemphasizes the command to love one another. We have no choice; this is a command from Jesus. We must bear fruit of love. And that fruit of love is for one another.

Once again we see that we are designed to produce Godly fruit and this fruit should remain as we live in Christ and He in us. But the main point that touches the core of my being is that fact that He chose us. We are His chosen. Now, meditate on this again for a moment. Pitch your tent here and absorb this great spiritual truth uttered by Him. We did not choose our parents but Jesus chose us into His royal family. Yes, you are chosen and loved. You are His friend. Please receive who you are in Him. In Him you are:

- You are “Chosen”
- You are “Appointed” to grow fruit - much fruit
- You can be “Full of Joy”
- You are “Clean”
- You are “Pruned” for more fruit
- You are His “Friend”
- You are in “Him”
- You are the “Branch”
- You are to “Glorify the Father”
- You are to be “Obedient to the voice of God”

The time has come to pray together and to answer the following questions about what you have learned.

“Father of truth, I hear what You are saying through Your only begotten Son. He is the vine and I am the branch. I receive the idea that You want fruit, and to bear better fruit I must allow You to prune me. I surrender to Your pruning so I can someday produce even bigger and better fruit that will bring You all the glory. I accept

that You chose me first and that You call me friend. Yes, I receive that You are my friend, no longer just Your servant. Lord, teach me great and mighty things as I am in the VINE. Amen”

- Did you receive? I want you to tell me, on a separate paper, about what the Spirit taught you from reading this chapter.
- Your turn to pray according to what you personally learned.
- Who are you in Jesus Christ? Which promise of Jesus are you going to meditate on this week?
- Memorize one of the verses from John chapter 15. Which verse are you going to memorize?

A pruned branch in the VINE, Chaplain Duane Lee Bemis

Chapter 3

I am the "Bride of Christ"

Revelation 19:1-7

Isaiah 62

I was minding my own business as I was driving down the road. I am a Chaplain over four prisons and I have many challenges each day. This day I was praying over a recent division that was taking place behind the razor wire. One inmate wants his own church service for his special denomination. I had talked with him many times about the church inside the prison. I told him we have to lay down denominational issues and just build God's Kingdom. We only have one chapel so all Protestant denominations must learn tolerance and the importance of a church united. Over the last four years this message of unity has been received by most of the churches in the four prisons and they have all grown. One church started with one inmate four years ago and now we have 80 to 90 men in each service. The total population of the prison is 900 men. So to be reaching nearly 10% of the total population is a tribute to our God-given message of truth and hope laced with mercy and grace found in the Spirit of unity through one flock with one pastor (John 10:16).

In prison we do not have room for the each denomination to have their own service. We might have at one time the Baptist,



Methodist, United Methodist, Greek Orthodox, Apostolic, Foursquare, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Episcopal, Assemblies of God and more. Hence I have spent my time preaching John Chapter 10 and that Jesus says, "One flock with one Shepard." But every now and then an inmate desires to break off from unity and he wants to cause division of Jesus' one flock. As I was driving my car in the midst of thunder and lightning I knew in my spirit that the Lord was about to speak. I turned off the radio and began praying to the Lord. I was binding in the Spirit the "spirit of division" on earth as the scriptures tells us (Matthew 18:19), when the Lord spoke to my heart. I knew this problem is a Spiritual problem, which the Lord hates. But listen to His words and the vision that He gave me in September 2006.

"Son, My bride is fractured, torn, and broken. She is dirty, unclean, and defiled. She is not ready for the Bridegroom. And I have called you to prepare and make ready My Bride for Me. As you prepared your daughter for her husband so prepare My Bride for Me."

With this word and this vision of a broken and dirty Bride my heart sunk. My heart was griped with holy fear. I began to cry and meditate on these words of truth.

- What are we doing to prepare the Bride for Christ?
- What am I doing to make ready His Bride?
- What are the elders of the churches doing to prepare and make ready the Bride for Christ?
- What are we doing to make sure we are ready for the Bridegroom personally?

I was sick in my spirit as I pondered and mulled over His words of sadness.

What follows in this article has everything to do with our position in Christ as His Bride. As His Bride, what steps are we taking to prepare ourselves for Him? What are we doing to His bride, and are we helping or hindering His bride from getting ready?

Well, let us start this exploration into His holy word with a prayer.

"Father of all truth, I desire that You talk to us from Your point of view. We are tired of the world's understanding, intellect, and shallow thoughts; we want You to teach us and help us prepare our hearts for the wedding of the Lamb. Lord, help us to be ready for the wedding feast. Yes Lord yes, come, for the Bride says come to wedding feast of the Lamb. Hallelujah and amen to the Lord God almighty who is and was and is to come, amen."

Let us start in the back of God's Holy Bible in the book of Revelation and listen to these words of truth:

*After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the **marriage of the Lamb has come**, and His wife has made herself ready." (Revelation 19:1-7) NKJV*

As you can see with your own eyes the Bride belongs to the Lamb. The Bride does not belong to any one denomination or any one person's theology. The Bride belongs to Him and Him alone. We are to rejoice that the marriage of the Lamb is coming. But you and I both see that the Bride has made herself ready in our text. But I ask, is the church ready for the wedding of the Lamb? Let me share the rest of the story with you.

On that same day as the Lord was speaking to me I had a vision as the Lord poured out His Spirit upon me, a man who is all flesh (Joel 2:28-30). On the day I heard those dreadful words from Christ and I saw a vision that I know is true. And as scriptures in Habakkuk state, (delete that) we should write down the vision so we can run with it and I have done just that (Habakkuk 2:2-3). In that vision I saw this:

"Then I saw a denomination holding the right arm of the Bride and he was trying to pull her one way all the while another denomination on the Bride's left was pulling her in yet another direction. The Bride looked all confused and hurt. Then another denomination came in and was pulling her by her left leg and another was on her right leg. Her dress was tearing and her heart was sad, confused, and even tormented by religion. I then saw a denomination forcing the Bride under the water and she looked as though the Bride of Christ was drowning."

On that day and right after these last words were uttered, that I heard a voice from Heaven like many rushing waters and from the midst of the lightning and thunder that was all around me, that I heard my Lord say:

“There is even a denomination that denies that the Bride talk to Me, her Bridegroom. They tell the Bride I am too busy and that she must only talk to My mother. This should not be, for the Bride is to know the Bridegroom’s voice.”

I could not find comfort in His words of truth; all I could do was cry. For more than a week I would just cry at the Lord’s words about His Bride and what religion is doing to her heart. He continued to tell me about those who steal the Bride away from Him by having the Bride look at imperfect man and not the Perfect One. I saw that others in the church throw mud all over the Bride’s clothes. And yet another runs around behind the Bride and shoves knives into her in the back. With their decisive words of complaining they tarnish the Bride of Christ. I saw her dress spotted with blood and stained from bitterness, hurt, and rejection. Over and over all I could do was cry. The Bride was covered with spots of offense, hatred, and molestation. She was covered with unforgiveness, pain, and negativity. My heart just cried even more. Oh Lord, help me prepare Your bride for You!

And now I ask you; what are we doing to the Bride of Christ? Are you criticizing the Lord’s church? Are you speaking against the church and its members? More importantly, what are you doing to prepare and make ready the Bride for Christ? The 24 elders were rejoicing for the Bride was ready for the wedding of the Lamb. But many Christians only know how to point their fingers and their hurtful words to defile the Bride. Many in the church are doing nothing about the condition of Christ’s Bride. They are diffidently not preparing the Bride for the Bridegroom. And they are not ready themselves for the great Bridegroom of Heaven. And what should the Bride look like according to God? Well, let us look again to His word of truth; read and listen to what the Spirit is saying to those who will hear:

And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.” And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship

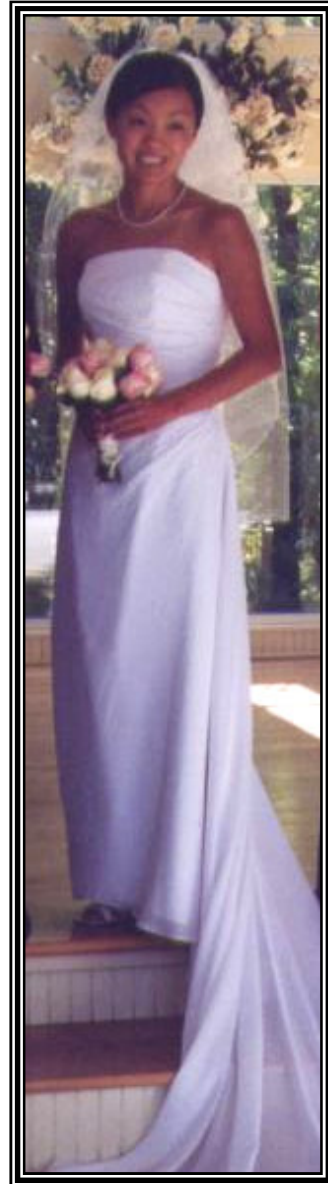
God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”
(Revelation 19:8-10)

The Bride is to be clean, bright, and mighty fine. Her eyes should be on the Perfect One - her Bridegroom. She is righteous, which means she is right before Him. She should have that sparkle in her eyes for her Christ and Him alone. She should be prepared to follow Him. She should know His voice, His smell, and even His look. And then the two shall become one. Sounds like the original words of Christ when He said: *“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be **one flock and one shepherd.**”* (John 10:16) Notice God’s math: one plus one equals ONE.

1+1=1 and the two shall be ONE!

I also want you to perceive that everyone should be rejoicing and glad, yet most of Christendom is sad, angry, bitter, and unforgiving. Oh, I long for the Bride to be joyful and ready to walk down the aisle towards her Bridegroom with love in her heart and in her eyes. Let us prepare and make ready the Bride. Let us do this by becoming less in her eyes and He, the Christ and Bridegroom, becoming the most important thing in her life. John the Baptist said it like this, *“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.”* (John 3:29-30) Let us all point the Bride to the Bridegroom. Just like in Revelation 19:10 we see the man in this verse backed away so that Christ would become more. “Oh Lord touch our hearts right now to prepare ourselves for You. And then let us start getting busy preparing and getting ready the church for the wedding of the Lamb.”

The Lord reminded me about our daughter’s marriage and how for years we have been preparing her for her Bridegroom. Her eyes needed to be ready to be placed on him and him alone. Her eyes are not to be on



me or my wife. She needed to have her heart sold out to the man that God placed in her life. The same is true spiritually. As leaders in the church we should be preparing the bride for Christ. Their eyes must be upon Him and Him alone. There needs to be joy about their marriage and their hearts must be bright and clean to receive each other wholeheartedly. The same is true spiritually. We must turn all people's hearts toward Him and they should have great joy as they prepare for the wedding. Leia had great joy in preparing for her husband. You can see the smile that is on her heart as she is readied herself for her bridegroom. Do you have a smile across your heart about preparing for Jesus? Let us continue to look into His word to find His truth.

Next let us turn to the Old Testament book of Isaiah and read the following:

For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. (Isaiah 62:1-3)

Once again we see the condition of brightness and righteousness, which means clean and pure. Brightness and righteousness also mean to be right before God. What are we doing to make sure we are right in God's eyes? One way we can do this is by keeping our focus upon Him, the perfect Bridegroom of pure and holy love. We should make sure the lamp of salvation stays burning bright and clean. We must have enough oil in the lamp to continue to burn (Mathew 25). We must kindle our first love over again and again (Revelation 2:1-7). We must draw ever closer in intimacy and truthfulness as we develop a long-term relationship with the Bridegroom. I will not hold my peace about the fact that it is NOT about religion, theology, denominations, or even what college we get our degrees in theology from. **It is all about a relationship with Jesus.** He is the Bridegroom; even John the Baptist figured that out and he rejoiced. We know that this relationship is for eternity not just until death do us part. Are you hearing what the Spirit of God is saying?

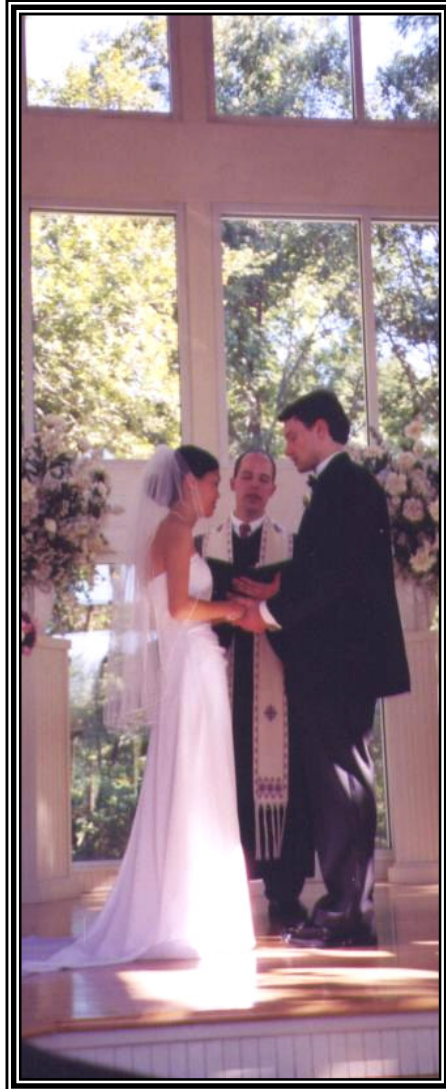
When my wife and I were married the Lord had given me verse three of Isaiah 62 to speak as my vow to her. The Lord instructed me that my wife was very precious to Him and I had better be careful in how I handled her. I had better be watchful how I spoke to her. The same is true today in reference to the Bride of Christ, as she sits as a royal diadem in His nail pierced hands. We all had better be wary how we deal with His Bride because His

delight is in her. His Bride is special, precious, and in His hand. She is likening to a beautiful diamond tiara resting in His grasp and we had better be very cautious what we say and do to His Bride.

I also want you to see that in this portion of our text that He will give to us a new name. Just like in the natural relationships between bride and bridegroom we give each other new names. Names uttered between the bride and bridegroom as affection and endearing towards each other. New names such as: honey, sweetie, cutie pie, pumpkin and more. But many of us have other names we call out when we are mad at each other - dear saint of God, be guarded with His Bride.

Let us go back to the words found in Isaiah:

You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. (Isaiah 62:4)



I know that you saw the fact that as His Bride we are no longer forsaken and desolate. So why do so many in the church run around with attitudes that they are still rejected? Or let me put it this way - as we look at the Bride her heart is still filled with rejection, loneliness, and abandonment issues. Hence defiling her heart and she is not ready for the Bridegroom.

- What are we doing to change this?
- What are we doing to make her ready for the Bridegroom?
- Are you running around with these old issues still in your heart?

We can get rid of them through the shed blood of Christ. Do you see yourself as a royal diadem in His hands? Receive today His hand of love and cast rejection from your heart. Let us get ready for the Bridegroom of Glory.

In this portion of the text the Lord gives us a new Hebraic name and it is “Hephzibah” which literally means (delete that) “My

delight is in her.” Listen with your heart and receive this new name that the Lord not only thinks about you but His delight is in you. That means His enjoyment, pleasure, joy and happiness is found in His relationship with you. Stop for a moment and think about this! He wants to enjoy His time with you. He wants to take great pleasure in His relationship with you. He finds great joy in your presence. He will find great delight especially if we are making ourselves ready and available to spend time with Him. His happiness in us is if we are preparing for Him just like a bride prepares for her bridegroom.

- Are you spending time with Jesus?
- Are you longing for more and more time with Him to develop a relationship with Him?
- Are you getting ready?
- Are you preparing for Him?
- Do you still feel rejected at times?
- Do you still feel alone and desolate at times?

Dear reader, I want you to understand that no one can do this for you. You must draw near to Him and He will draw near to you. You must take the first step by faith toward Him to have this great love relationship with His proven love. Yes, His love is proven in that while we were yet sinners He died for us. He made the first move and now we need to react to His love demonstrated by His great sacrifice. He sacrificed His very heart and soul just so He could have a Bridegroom and Bride relationship with you. Hear what the Spirit is saying to the wife-to-be of the Lamb. Look at the photograph of human marriage and see our spiritual marriage will echo this.

Eric is looking into the eyes of Leia and their mutual love for each other goes deep. All that were present that day saw their admiration for each other. The Pastor who married these two asked me, “How did you raise Leia to be such a wonderful lady in the Lord?” I told him that God challenged me to raise her to be a successful lady. Every decision that my wife and I made was based upon if it will help Leia reach her God-given destiny. Are you letting the Spirit of God give you insight into how to prepare for the great Bridegroom of Heaven? Once again, this is not denominational but relational. Marriage is for those who know each other and draw strength from being in each other’s company. Listen again to scripture:

*For as a young man marries a virgin,
So shall your sons marry you;
And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
So shall your God rejoice over you.
(Isaiah 62:5)*

Can you imagine that Jesus desires to rejoice over you? Even with all our faults and shortcomings He wants to rejoice over us. He not only wants this but He does rejoice over every person who says yes to His marriage proposal. He wants to take great delight in our relationship, as He also wants to rejoice over our relationship with Him. The time has come to accept this and rejoice back as you send your love out and Jesus responds. Listen again to more from Isaiah 62

*Go through,
Go through the gates!
Prepare the way for the people;
Build up,
Build up the highway!
Take out the stones,
Lift up a banner for the peoples!
(Isaiah 62:10)*

We see the words, prepare and build up, so what are you doing to build other up and preparing them to marry Jesus?

What are we doing in others to focus them upon Jesus only? What are we doing to re-focus our own heart back to Jesus? The time has come to know who we are to be in Christ Jesus! The time has come to prepare and to build up this relationship that we have with Jesus and to take it to a new level of intimacy.

- The time has now come to think about what the Spirit is saying to the church. Or what the Spirit is saying to your heart?
- What is it that you personally gleaned from reading this article? Explain:
- Time to say your own personal prayer...
- Memorize one scripture from this article that touched your heart personally.

The Bride of Christ, Chaplain Duane Bemis