



“What God Has Joined Together”

Part II

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Thank you for joining us today for a Bible study about primitive, pre-denominational Christianity. Our purpose is to indeed *let the Bible speak* because it is the lamp of God to light our path through life. Our appeal is to the scriptures for our faith and practice, and I hope that is your desire as well. We'll return to the theme we began last week, [What God Has Joined Together](#). That familiar phrase comes from the sacred institution of marriage between a man and a woman. When Jesus was once confronted by the Pharisees about Moses' teaching on divorce and remarriage, He answered their insincere and nefariously crafted question by going all the way back to the dawn of time and the beginning of marriage as God instituted it.

Matthew 19:4-6 “And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

The marital union of a man and woman that is approved and recognized by God is not to be broken. It cannot be broken, in fact, without sin being involved. Think about that: the union of marriage cannot be broken except by death without sin being involved somewhere. It is more than a civil contract, more than a civil institution, and even more importantly, it is a divine contract. To do anything that would destroy that union involves sin and shows contempt for God's arrangement.

Beyond marriage, which is what was under consideration in our text, there are other spiritual concepts that God has joined together in His great plan of redemption. In this second part of our study, we'll see how it does harm to the beauty and efficacy of God's plan and purpose—namely, our redemption—to separate those things.

Last week, we saw that there is a union not only in the gospel itself, but throughout the word of God, between the *grace* of God, the response of *faith*, and the *obedience* of faith, or between *grace, faith, and works* or *obedience*. Those things are often separated by men, but they are inseparably joined together by God. God's *grace* or *unmerited favor* is freely offered to sinful man. It cannot be earned, nor will it ever be deserved. BUT, it must be without exception received or accessed by faith, according to **Ephesians 2:8**. And faith without obedience is not true faith, according to **James 2**.

So, in short, the gospel not only offers pardon on the basis of grace, but it is also conditional in that it requires faith and it has commands that are to be obeyed in faith. The Bible NEVER says that we are saved by grace alone; it says that we are saved *by grace through faith* (**Ephesians 2:8**). The only place that the phrase "by faith alone" is used in the New Testament is in **James 2:24**.

James 2:24 "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

The *works* that James refers to are not works of human merit, for no work can merit the salvation of man. Rather, they are the works of faith; works of obedience to the gospel of Christ. Thus, the Bible doesn't merely say that we will be condemned if we refuse to believe the gospel—that is true. But it also says we will be condemned if we refuse to obey the gospel.

II Thessalonians 1:7-9 "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"

Obedience is not optional. It is not auxiliary or ancillary. It is not 'the icing on the cake' or something merely extra. It is not something that the Christian needs to simply try to do as a good measure. No, obedience to the gospel is essential because the Bible says Jesus is going to return and take vengeance on them *that obey not the gospel...*

Hebrews 5:9 "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;"

So, there is a review of last week's study in short. It is a perversion of the gospel to separate *grace, faith, and obedience*.

III. God has joined Christ and the church together.

This is another inseparable union as described in the word of God. This one is actually likened to the marriage bond between a man and a woman that we read about in our text. Look at what the apostle Paul had to say:

Ephesians 5:22-25 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"

Paul is giving a very practical instruction regarding the relationship of a husband to his wife and how the marital relationship is to be carried out. He likens that relationship to that of Christ and His spiritual bride, the church. He goes on:

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

Paul quotes Jesus' words from our text. In marriage, a man and woman become *one flesh*. Man cares for, protects, and nourishes his wife as he does his own self. She is part of him. In the same way, Paul over and over in his epistles describes the church using the metaphor *the body of Christ*. That's more than just an illustration of the church's members and their relationship to one another, as Paul emphasizes in **I Corinthians 12**, but it is first and foremost a picture of the relationship of the church to Christ. *The body of Christ*.

Consequently, the Bible even describes congregations of the church as *the churches of Christ*. That's a scriptural description.

Romans 16:16 "...The churches of Christ salute you."

That should be how the church is described today, if we understand the relationship of one to the other. We're not the bride of Martin Luther or the bride of England, or the bride of any other entity, theologian or man. We are the bride of Christ and we should fittingly wear His name and not some other. Frankly, it's an insult to Christ when churches choose another name above or beyond one that emphasizes the church's relationship to Christ.

But it's not really surprising that men call the church by other names and designations today because people have to a great degree divorced Christ from His church. I know that, because there is a rapidly increasing number of people who claim or believe that one can follow Christ and not be part of the church. They make a very serious delineation between what it means to be *in Christ* and what it means to be *in the church*.

Many people describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious," but what they really mean is that they have spiritual thoughts (perhaps they believe in God, or may even claim they believe in Jesus), but then claim no church affiliation. They are not active in the work of any local church, but may simply say that they "follow Jesus" or some other kind of religious order or structure. Sounds good, but is it right? Is it possible to be a member of the church and not have a relationship with Jesus? In the eyes of men, that would be possible, but in the eyes of God, no.

To men, associating yourself with a church, attending its assemblies or claiming membership in a congregation will no more make you a Christian than walking into a hospital will make you a doctor or walking into a garage makes you a mechanic. But, on the other hand, a man isn't really a doctor if he never enters a medical facility or hospital.

First of all, Christ and the church are inseparable because of what the church IS. In one sense, it is a spiritual congregation or assembly. The word *church* is actually a poor translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which basically means *called out*. It first refers to those people “called out” from the world by the gospel, saved in Christ, and thus separated unto Christ. In other words, the word *church* applies to *all who are in a saved relationship to God through Christ Jesus*—in this age, through obedience to the gospel.

Acts 2:47 “...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

After those people on the Day of Pentecost heard and were convicted by the gospel, thus believing in Jesus and turning from their sins in repentance, they were baptized that same day *for the remission of sins*. Consequently, the Lord added those who were being saved *daily* or *day by day* to the church. Notice that: the Lord added those who were saved to the church. He still does that, by the way. So, a) the church is a definite thing that one can be added to, and b) the Lord is the One who adds us to it when we’re saved.

Think about it: if the Lord adds every person to the church who is saved, what does that say about a person who wants nothing to do with the church? This talk that has become so popular today, *I love Jesus, but I don’t belong to the church*, that’s just wrong. You can’t be saved if you’re not part of the church because if you have been saved, the Lord has added you to the church.

Someone says, *But that’s not really talking about a local church, but a universal church*. Contextually, true enough. But the universal church is made up of Christians who are members of the church locally where they live. There is no other manifestation of the church than what we see locally. The only visible, active, organized manifestation of the Lord’s church is that of local churches of Christ; congregations of Christians who assemble together, serve together under the leadership of local shepherds, and edify each other. Most of the epistles of the New Testament were written to such groups of Christians. Friend, it is inconceivable to think of Christians living back in the first century who claimed to love, serve, and follow Christ who were NOT an active part of such a local group of Christians. In fact, we can read in **Hebrews** of some who were placing distance between themselves and the local church. Because of the threat of persecution, they were tempted to go back to temple worship under the old law, and they were not only sinning by so doing, but also placing their souls in grave danger of rejecting Christ altogether and departing into complete and utter apostasy. They are not only warned not to become apostate, but it went further than that:

Hebrews 10:25 “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Brother, sister, my friend, if you think you are serving and pleasing the Lord, but you are not part of a local church who honors and carries out the will of God in worship and work according to the Lord’s instructions in His word, you are deceiving yourself. You cannot be subject to a king unless you are a citizen of his kingdom. Jesus is the king over His kingdom, and His kingdom on earth is the church (**Matthew 16:18-19**). How can someone say, *I want Jesus to be my king, but I want nothing to do with His kingdom*? How can you be *married to Christ* if you’re not part of that which the Bible calls *His bride*? How can you be a child of God and fellow heir to the blessings of God if you want nothing to do with His family? The Bible calls the church *the house of God* (**I Timothy 3:15**). How can you say you’re redeemed by His blood while then denouncing and refusing association with His church? Paul said to the elders of a local church in the city of Ephesus:

Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

You see, people are teaching a false and dangerous doctrine when they lead you to believe that you can be a Christian without being part of a church. The church is Christ’s bride. If you insult, reject, denounce or otherwise want nothing to do with His bride, how can you love Christ? Because Christ loves His bride and He loves His bride more than you love your husband or wife, I can promise you that. If people claim to care for you but hate your spouse whom you love, what do you think about that? How do you react to them? How do you think Christ reacts to people who scorn His bride? God has joined together, in a sacred and saving union, His son Christ Jesus and His church for which He died. Man cannot separate that union without rejecting the plan and purpose of the heavenly Father. There is no such thing as salvation outside of the church of Jesus Christ.

IV. God has joined the properties of spirit and truth.

You might call this the joining of *motive and method*. You may recall in **John 4** that Jesus met a Samaritan woman who had come to the well to draw water. When she came to recognize Jesus as a prophet of God, she asked Him a question about worship. She and her people had been worshipping in ignorance and Jesus says so. He then goes on to tell her this:

John 4:23-24 “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Any worship or service to God MUST involve those two vital elements: spirit and truth. Jesus doesn’t say it might, it ought to, it should or can. He said it *must*. But again, men have sought to separate what God has joined together. One might say, *What’s important is that it’s done in the right way, in truth, that we go by the book or word of God* (which is what truth is—**John 17:17**). Then on the other hand, one might say, *No, that’s really not what’s important. What is important is that we have a pure heart. And no matter how we worship, we worship with the right motive.* You’ll find many people who believe that. Thus, they say that God will really receive any kind of worship as long as it comes from a good heart. My question is: why not both? Why does one exclude the other? Why does one have to be set against the other, as though we can only focus on one or the other? Yes, service to God must come from a clean and pure heart; Jesus taught that without question. Yes, worship must engage not merely our outer man and actions, but our inner man and his heart, too. And worship that does not do that is vain. That’s very true. But, you see, Jesus placed equal emphasis on truth and spirit. He didn’t put more emphasis on it, but He put just as much emphasis upon it.

Just as worship in truth without spirit is dead and ineffectual, so worship in spirit without truth is trite and sinful. People believe that if they feel good about their worship or if it creates some wonderful emotion or warm feeling within them, it must be of God. It must be all right. Not so, says Jesus. Not only our worship, but ALL of our service and obedience to God must come from a pure and worshipful heart or else God doesn’t receive it. But it must come from an obedient heart as well. Worship without truth is what Paul called *will worship* (**Colossians 2:23**). Rather Paul said this:

Romans 1:9 “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son...”

Paul said he served with his spirit within and according to the gospel. So must our worship and service be today if God is to accept it.

Make no mistake: there IS worship that God does not accept. God does not accept all worship. It takes more than one just saying, *I love God, so I'm just going to launch out and worship Him in some way, and He will receive that.* You read the Bible beginning with worship itself in the book of **Genesis** and God has never received worship on that basis. He has always required that worship be at His direction, and there is worship yet today that God will not accept. It's not just that that comes from an unclean heart, but also that which comes from the will of man as opposed to the will of God.

II Thessalonians 2:15 “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”

What does that mean if it doesn't mean that we're to follow apostolic practices in the exact way they were originally revealed to be followed? What does that mean if we're not to do things according to the Bible instead of whatever way we choose?

I Corinthians 11:2 “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.”

That means *those things that he delivered them by inspiration.* In other words, doing Bible things in Bible ways. We are to let the Bible speak about how we are to worship and serve the Lord. Yes, in spirit—but also in truth. God has joined those two things together. Don't let people separate them.

The Bible reveals to us a pattern for how we are to worship God. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He showed us how we are to do it in the gospel accounts of **Matthew, Mark and Luke**, as well as Paul's later account in **I Corinthians 11**. The Bible tells us we are to *sing and make melody in (our) hearts unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:19)* and it says nothing else about offering any other kind of music to the Lord. The Bible also tells us who is to do the preaching and under what circumstance or kind of environment. The Bible regulates these things, as well as when we are to come together for worship and to break bread. What God's word says about those things matters—just as much as the heart and spirit in which we do it. *What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

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