

Tim Conway Preaching on The Love of Christ at a Wedding

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Before we get these two married, they asked me to say a word to you first. So what I would like to do is first, read to you from the Word of God. Now I have to caution you, I have done some weddings just recently where just simply reading this verse that I'm going to read to you, from God's Word, caused people to be angry. You say, oh, what does it have to do with that it makes people angry? It has to do with a woman's responsibility to her husband and the husband's responsibility to his wife. That's all it is. It's a text from the Bible that is very suitable for just such an occasion as this. What could it possibly say that would cause people to get so riled up and so offended and so bent out of shape at weddings? What could we read from the Word of God? I'm going to read from Ephesians 5:22 and following. And I caution you already, this is God's Word. What I tell you is on the authority of God Almighty Himself. I'm not making this up. I want you to know that.

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior. Now, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word. So that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish."

Now yes, women, if you're married, by the authority of God, you are called to submit to your husband. You are called to submit to your husband even as the church has been called to submit to Christ Himself. Now let's look on the other side of this thing. Husbands are to love as Christ loved the church. In other words, if we're looking for a pattern on how to treat our wives, how to live with our wives, how to dwell with our wives, how to love our wives, what God wants us to know is Christ Himself is the pattern. He is the standard. His love for a spouse is the mark. There's no greater expression of love than the way Christ loves His bride, the church. Now men, we should stand in awe of that. Here's the standard.

Now let me tell you this, the apostle tells us in one place that the love of Christ surpasses knowledge. Ok, I have some knowledge. You have some knowledge. But the apostle says that the love that Christ has for His church, it surpasses knowledge. So, if I were going to try to explain that love to you in perfection today, the apostle is telling me I can't do it. Because it goes beyond my knowledge. So what I'm about to try to do is literally impossible. In the fullness of it, it's impossible. For me to try to describe to you what that love is that Christ has for His church, that love that is now a pattern for this man as he marries this woman and for every other man here that's married. To try to describe that is simply, by the testimony of the Word of God itself, is an impossibility.

But I just want to try to give you a glimpse. By way of trying to help you realize something about the love that Christ has for His church. Now the church isn't a building. Some

people look at this and they say, "Well, this is the church." That's not the church. The church is God's people. The churches are those that He purchased with his blood, that He gave Himself up for.

And here, I want to try to describe this love to you just a little bit. Let me give you an example. Let's suppose all of a sudden, all of us see at this wedding... We look over here, and the wedding's over, we all come over to where the reception's going to be held. And suddenly we see a man standing over there. He is the most handsome man that you have ever laid eyes on in your life. Now, here, I'm trying to describe to you Christ's love. The first thing I want to tell you about it is it's unselfish. Let me tell you something about this. Let's suppose we see a man over here in the reception, I mean this guy is handsome. To you ladies, he's this drop dead gorgeous guy. We see him over there. I mean, you have never seen a guy that looks this handsome. Ever. He may be the most handsome guy on the face of the earth.

And you see him and you begin to talk to him, and he tells you that he's here with his fiance. But he's not with her right now. Where is she? Maybe she's inside, she's doing something. The ladies' room? You don't see her. And what are you imagining? You're imagining, no doubt, a beautiful woman is going to walk out of this place, a woman whose beauty is going to be comparable to his. But all of a sudden, what happens? This bent, broken, diseased, ugly woman with sores all over her, I mean just hideous. She comes out and his face lights up and he looks at her and you can see it in his eyes. He loves her. And you look and you can barely hold down your food she is so grotesque and disgusting to even lay your eyes on.

Folks, I am trying to come somewhat close to the love that Christ has for His church. Listen, His love is unselfish. In other words, He does not take a bride for anything that He sees in her. Folks, I am describing to you what a sinner looks like. The fact is that those Christ sets His love on are diseased inside. There is filth, and there is sin, and there is decay, and there is death. Christ, when He sets His love on His church, He doesn't set His love there for what He can get.

And let me tell you, that is a love that is not like our love. Because even the most righteous man sets his love on a woman and marries a woman for something that he sees in her. But with Christ, He has an unselfish love. Christ has chosen to come to this earth and to save sinners. That is His church. Saved sinners.

What love is this? It is a love that doesn't have an equal. It is love that surpasses knowledge. Look, He does not set His love on people because of beauty He sees in them. In setting His love upon people, He has determined by that love to make them beautiful. To make what is ugly beautiful. Is that not what we read? He takes an ugly bride. I'm not saying that about Priscilla. What I am saying is that's what's true of the love of Christ. What I'm saying is, it's easier - far, far, far easier, for Andre to love Priscilla, than for Christ to love me. And what He saw in me, when He saved me. And when Christ takes an ugly bride, like me, it's in order to beautify that bride. Because He says it's in order to cleanse her by the washing of water with the Word so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Christ loves to impart His loveliness to the object of His love.

Look, to be loved by anybody is a joy, right? I mean in this world, in this life, one of the most precious things we have is to be loved by somebody. When you find people who are loved

by nobody, they're miserable people. To be loved by anybody is a precious thing. But the fact that infinite God would love sinners, that God the Son would choose to lay His affections - and look, if I told you that Christ came along and pitied wretched sinners, we could say, "Well, we understand that." But if I told you that He showed mercy to sinners, well, that's another thing. But when I tell you that Christ Himself came to delight in, to actually set His most, His deepest, His profoundest affection and love on those who are wretched... Folks, if you're here today, and you don't know this love I feel sorry that you don't know this love. Truly sorry. If you could but imagine the sweetness of that love.

And I just want to say one thing in ending here, how much did He love her? Yes, it was unselfish love, but let me show you to what extent he went to love her. I don't doubt that Andre hasn't made sacrifices for Priscilla already. And God will call him to make many others, but what is it that Christ sacrificed? If we can say another thing about His love for His church, it's sacrificial. What did He do? He gave Himself up.

Folks, if you've ever thought of the love Christ has for His church as cheap or if it's a light thing, you need to consider this: When it says He gave Himself... it means that in order to purchase His bride, He had to walk through the most unimaginable horrors. The night before Jesus Christ went to the cross, He recoiled in horror so much so that He sweat great drops of blood. He said, "Father, if it's possible, take this cup away from Me. If there's any way else to purchase this bride." And His Father said there is no other way. There is no other way to purchase that bride. There is no other way to show the extent of the love that I have for My people but to endure what You must endure.

And what did He endure? He gave Himself up. He gave Himself to the very wrath of God. He gave Himself to suffer what sin demanded. And He paid it to the fullest. He drank that cup of wrath empty. Folks, that is love. Sacrifice, unselfish. Why? To purchase that bride and to purify her. To make her like Him. And to take her where He is. He came from glory to get His bride. Whom did He come to seek? He came to seek and save sinners. And to take them to Himself. And take them back to glory with Him. That is love. And there is no other love like it in this world. What a standard! What a standard! We just stand in awe of it. We just stand in awe. And God gave us human marriage as a little picture of that great relationship that He, the King, the Great Husband, has for His bride, the church. Folks, that is Gospel. That is good news. That is glorious! That is the best message for sinners on the face of this earth. And in it we see the picture of marriage. Which is where we want these two to be very quickly.