



Enduring Our Betrothal

“For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:3).

God knew the Church would have need of encouragement during her betrothal (or sanctification) period, while she is still separated from Jesus until the date set for their uniting. While it is difficult enough to be separated from the one you love, especially in hostile surroundings, there is also so much to prepare for in marriage. How does one prepare for the Lord Jesus? What must the Bride do to make herself ready? If it was up to her, the list would be as far as the east is from the west, because she knows she can never prepare herself enough for Him. Thankfully, the Bride is not left to her own devices. She is not left to figure out how she will prepare herself for her wedding day. Jesus does that for her through His Holy Spirit and the Word that He has left for her while He is preparing a place for them.

Jesus sanctifies His own Church. He changes her, for He *“loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless”* (Ephesians 5:25-27). Her responsibility in her betrothal period is to submit herself to endure this change—the sanctifying work her Lord does in her through the instruction and discipline of the Word and the Holy Spirit. She is His new creation, and she is made for Him to be acceptable and united as one with Him.

Lucifer was also made for God. He was created to be God’s servant, and as the highest

of angels, we can know that God gave him great authority and respect. But he was not content with what God had made him, and he would not abide God’s plan for him. Instead of saying with the Bride, *“all the days of my struggle I will wait until my change comes”* (Job 14:14b), Lucifer rebelled, deciding that God had not made him right. Rather than endure God’s plan in his life, he decided to try and change himself. In Isaiah, he proudly declares, *“I will make myself like the Most High”* (Isaiah 14:14b). Lucifer is saying, “I will change myself, and I will make myself acceptable to God on my own terms.”

Today also, so many people are discontent with who and what they are. They are frustrated with who God has made them (and what He requires of them), and they want to force Him to accept them on their terms. There are also so many voices in the world telling us we can (or must) change ourselves, and many deceivers offer to change us, if we but submit to them. But only God can change us to be acceptable to Himself, according to His will.

The Church is changed at the Cross, born again, saved from God’s wrath, and betrothed to Jesus, given the Spirit as a pledge (2 Cor. 1:22). Now, during her betrothal she daily gives her life (desires, expectations, plans) over to Him to be changed by Him, for Him, to be like Him. She suffers with Him, and He makes her glorious (Romans 8:17) and worthy (2 Thess. 1:5). She gives up everything, being crucified with Him (Galatians 2:20), and He gives her all things in Himself (John 16:15). Satan hates and persecutes the Church, because Jesus gave Himself for her, He is preparing her for Himself, and she endures His preparation which makes her truly holy, blameless, and glorious for when her Bridegroom returns for her. May we look to Jesus and not lose heart while we await His return! Come, Lord Jesus!