

The Candlestick - Pergamos

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the necessity of unwavering love and commitment to Christ while warning against the dangers of compromise and false teachings within the church.

Duration: 47:58

Scripture: Exodus 34:12, Isaiah 54:4

Topics: "Pergamos"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher criticizes the current state of preaching, claiming that many sermons focus on worldly pleasures rather than addressing sin and the significance of the cross. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus Christ has a rightful claim on our lives and that we are called to glorify God and have a love relationship with Him. The sermon also highlights the importance of having a burden for both saved and lost individuals, as Jesus died for all. The preacher uses the analogy of a wedding to illustrate the future event of the bride of Christ being gathered together in heaven. The sermon concludes by discussing the importance of speaking about Jesus without feeling ashamed and minimizing other worldly distractions.

Transcript

Know that your banner over us in this house is love. There is no other banner. It's love.

You cherish this church. You cherish this pride tonight. You cherish every soul that's in this house.

And oh Jesus, you want to speak to us tonight. Give us open hearts. Give us open ears.

Give us open lives, oh God, that you can speak to us. And if there be anything within us, Lord, that's dishonoring to you, help us to lay it down. Father, I thank you for this.

I thank you for strength, Lord, tonight. Thank you for the unction of your Holy Spirit. I thank you, Lord, that you are faithful, oh God, you are faithful to those vessels you call to speak your word.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Revelation 2.12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.

I know thy works, even where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is. And thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith. So here's a church that is right where the working of the devil is.

And they're a church that's holding fast to the name of Jesus, and they have not denied the faith. Even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth. So they have known suffering.

They have known death. I think this is a church that has known the cost of following the Lord. They have seen somebody that was held in esteem among them, slain for the cause of Christ.

He says in verse 14, But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. Now the doctrine of Balaam is basically the success and prosperity gospel. If I can boil it down to anything in this generation, that's what the doctrine of Balaam is.

Prophesying for reward. In verse 15 he says, So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. God says I hate this thing, and there are a few in your midst that are holding to this doctrine.

Repent, or else I will come to thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receive it.

The title of this message is called The Vow of the Nicolaitan Bride. Now the Nicolaitans, essentially speaking, there is a divergence of opinion throughout Bible commentaries as to who they were. But it is suggested that they were the followers of a man called Nicholas, who was a heretic.

They are supposed to have been a sect of Gnostics, who practiced and taught impure and immoral doctrines, such as the community of wives, or in other words it was acceptable to have more than one wife, that committing adultery and fornication was not sinful, and that eating meats offered unto idols was lawful. Isn't it interesting that when you look all throughout the churches in Revelation, you find a very similar thread in all of these churches. They have different names, but they bring the same doctrines in.

We see the same doctrines referred to in Pergamos, Revelation 2.14, the doctrines of Balaam, and also Jezebel and Thyatira in Revelation 2.20. There is a remnant of the Nicolaitans in every church age. They are sent of the devil with the express purpose of defiling the relationship of Christ to his church. They are sent to turn the hearts of God's people away from wholehearted love, love, consecration, and dedication to Jesus Christ and to his call and to his claim upon his church.

They preach and teach impure and immoral doctrines. The first one is the community of wives. Let me just read the scripture to you in Exodus 34, verses 12 to 14.

Moses said, Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee. But you shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves. And you will worship no other god.

For the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. And that's one thing that we need to understand about the Lord tonight. He is a jealous God.

He's jealous for his bride. He's not willing to let her heart be enraptured by other lovers. He's not willing to let her go without a fight.

He's going to come and fight for her with the word of his mouth. And that's what the Lord is doing in this generation. For those who have the ears to hear, Jesus Christ is reaching out beyond just the walls of this church.

He's reaching out throughout the nation now. And reaching out and fighting for a bride who has been divided in heart for so long. There are those that have come in and have taught the community of wives in the church that it's alright to love Jesus and love something else.

You can love the world, you can love your job, you can love your career, you can love this, you can love that, you can love money. They also say that the committing of adultery and fornication is not sinful. Now, the Apostle Paul said in Hebrews 13, 4, Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed is undefiled.

But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. And James, in James 4, 4, I shared it last time I spoke on Jezebel. He says, You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Now, friendship with the world is spoken to, in the word of God, as spiritual adultery. And yet, these teachers come into the body and they proclaim a gospel that says the committing of adultery and fornication is not sinful. That you can have other lovers, you can have other lives, you can love the things of this world, you can go after and lust after the things of this world and somehow it's going to be acceptable with God.

Beware of these things. They are sent to defile your relationship with Christ. Christ calls us to wholehearted, single-minded, a single-of-the-eye separation unto Him.

The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, the Scripture says, your whole body will be full of light. A single focus to live for Him, to love Him, to glorify Him in everything that we are and ever will be.

They also shared a teaching that the eating of meats offered to idols was lawful. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 7, the Apostle Paul says, Neither be ye idolaters as some of them were. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

You see, their pleasure becomes their God. And there are gospels out in the land, there's no shortage of them, that teach the people that it's alright to seek and pursue pleasure. If God prospers you, don't think about giving it to missions, or don't think about sharing it with the poor.

Go and buy yourself some kind of a pleasure thing, a play toy, and just have a wonderful time. You see, and they teach these things. And what it does is it takes the people's heart away from the purposes of God.

And it's so sad. Here's Christ at the right hand of the Father. He's interceding and weeping for the loss of this world, while so many of His bride are enamored with their playthings here in this world, and not sharing His hearts, not sharing the burden of the one who is supposedly their husband, the one that they're betrothed to.

The key word of the Nicolaitans is compromise. They say that consecration and holiness is legalistic and old-fashioned. Oh, my brothers and sisters, I've heard this over and over again throughout the years.

Beware of this. Legalistic and old-fashioned holiness and consecration. They preach doctrines of eat, drink, and be merry.

There's little preaching about sin, and very, very little, if anything, about the cross, which is the justifiable claim of Jesus Christ upon your life and upon my life. He laid a claim to our lives. We are bought with a price.

We're not our own. We're to glorify God. We're to enter into a love relationship with the Son of God, and love Him with all our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength.

And out of that love relationship comes a natural burden for the children of God, for His children, both saved and lost, the ones that He died for. That's where that burden comes out of. I love weddings.

Every wedding I go to, very often I start to cry at weddings. I don't know why that is. I hope it never stops.

No, I do know why that is. I've officiated at several weddings over the years, and at one wedding in particular, I remember I started crying so hard, I couldn't carry on with the vows. I couldn't even see the book.

It was just such a beautiful wedding. He loved her so much, she loved him. They were standing right in front of me.

They were saying their own vows to each other. It was so beautiful, I just started crying. I couldn't stop crying.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I kept wiping my eyes, and I couldn't see the paper.

I didn't know what to do next. What a beautiful wedding it was, though. Oh, it was just awesome.

It was the closest thing on this earth to Christ and His church that I've ever seen. What an expression of love. The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5, he said, verse 31 and 32, he said, For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. There's something so beautiful about a wedding, isn't there? When the groom is standing here, and the bride comes in, and there's such a focus on the bride, and the bride walks down the aisle, and everybody stands, and they look, and even the hardest of the hard. Have you noticed that? These crusty old guys that work on construction sites and places like that, and they, you know, I'm a man's man, and I'll never shed, and you glance around, you watch, and they fight hard to contain it, but there's a little tear that comes out the corner of their eye, and they just very quickly wipe it away, so nobody can see that really they're being touched inside.

And they don't know why they're being touched, but they're being touched because they're seeing a type and shadow. They're seeing a foreshadow of a day that's coming, when Jesus Christ is going to stand up at the right hand of the Father. The angel of the Lord is going to sound a trumpet.

The bride of Christ is going to rise. Both those that have died in the Lord and those who are still alive and remain, they're going to be gathered together into one glorious procession down an aisle in heaven. Hallelujah! To the throne of God! Oh, and what a day that's going to be! Hallelujah! Oh, in a marriage, in a marriage that's ordained and sanctioned by God, the Scripture says the two become one.

You see, there's no longer a distinction. Two people come into a wedding ceremony, they come from different families, they come from different backgrounds, they come with different names, and they come into that house and a miracle's about to take place. I've often shared that at weddings.

If you're looking for a miracle, keep your eyes on what's about to happen. Two people have come in and one person is going to walk out. There's going to be one flesh in God.

That's what the Scripture says. The two shall become one. Her desires, or his desires, now become her desires.

And her desires now become his desires. She is consumed with love for him. And the vows, I especially love vows at weddings where people make up their own right out of their heart.

As long as they're scriptural, that is, if they make them up out of their heart. I always tell people, go to Ephesians 5 and just read that and come out of that with a vow that comes out of your heart. And as he begins to speak to her and says, I promise to provide for you, and to love you, and to cherish you, and to protect you, and to stand with you, and all of these things that he says, and she turns to him and says, I promise to love you, and I promise to cherish you, and obey you, and raise your children, and all of these other things.

I've heard some beautiful, beautiful vows over the years. And it's so glorious when you hear this, because it's a type and shadow of a day that's coming. Oh, what a day that's going to be.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I can see in heaven, Jesus standing and the bride beginning to come in.

And what a glorious wedding that's going to be. But you know, the difference is that we state our vow to him here on this earth. When we come into that place, we're coming into the banquet hall now when we get into heaven.

You see, the wedding happens here on this earth. Did you know that? The wedding is here. We're stating our vows to him right now.

He's speaking to us, and we speak back to him. And the wedding relationship is being formed. The two are becoming one right here on this earth.

When the trumpet of the Lord sounds, it's not a bride-to-be, but it's a bride that's caught up into heaven. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Glory to God. We walk into the presence of the Lord, and it's not a separate identity coming in. It's not somebody with a different name.

It's somebody who knows him. It's somebody who's walked with him. It's somebody who's loved him.

It's somebody who's cherished him. It's somebody who's had him as the very first and foremost thing in her heart all the days of her life. It's someone who has yearned for him and longed for him, and he's longed for her.

Hallelujah. Like he says in the Song of Solomon, Oh my dove, my beloved, my lovely, rise up, let me hear your voice. Let me see your countenance from beyond the stairs.

Hallelujah. What a day that's going to be when the bride of Jesus is captured away from this earth and carried into the very presence of God. Oh, the vow of Jesus.

I want you to listen to the vow of Jesus to His bride. Jesus is here tonight, and every day, every time you open your heart and your ear, He speaks His vows once again. He's a lover like no other lover that this world has ever known.

There are a lot of men that state their vows at the altar, but you rarely ever hear anything about it again after the wedding day. But Jesus is not such. He states His vows over and over and over and over again, because He's a man of truth and He cannot lie.

Hallelujah. He says, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah chapter 31 and verse 3. John 15, 13 Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

And Jesus speaks to us tonight about the fact that He laid down His life for us, so that the enemy could not have power over our lives anymore. He laid down His life for us to cleanse us from our sins. He gave everything He had for us on this earth and continues to give of Himself for us this day.

He looks at us right in the eye and He says, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Hebrews chapter 13 verse 5. Think about that right now. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

Your struggles will be My struggles. Your enemies will be My enemies. Hallelujah.

Your weaknesses will be My weaknesses. Your concerns will be My concerns. I'll be there whenever you call.

There's a song we sing. He's as close as the mention of His name. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

Matthew 10, 32 Jesus looks at His bride and says, I will confess you before My Father which is in heaven. Hallelujah. I will confess you.

Isn't that nice to know tonight? That Jesus is confessing your name before the Father right this very moment. Did you know that? He's looking down at Times Square Church and He's going row by row, aisle upon aisle, line upon line, precept upon precept, person upon person, soul upon soul, and He's confessing your name before the Father. He'll point down and say, there's another Beloved One.

There's another Beloved One. There's another Beloved One that I love and I'm betrothed to. Hallelujah.

Jesus is not ashamed of you in heaven. Matthew 16, 19 You know, very often a man will, part of the condition of espousing, the parents allowing their daughter to be espoused to a man is that he has to prove that he will provide for her. And Matthew 16, 19, at least that's the way it used to be years ago.

Matthew 16, 19 Jesus says in His vow to us, I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Hallelujah. And whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

In other words, I will never leave you powerless or comfortless. Hallelujah. And lastly, look at John chapter 14 with me please.

John chapter 14. The promise of Jesus. The vow of Jesus to His true bride.

I want to show you what's going on in heaven right now. You probably already know it. John chapter 14, verse 1 Let not your heart be troubled.

You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. What a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful scene this is. Jesus, continuously restating His vow to you and I. There's a true bride in the church.

A bride that loves Him. That yearns for Him. And as our brother shared at three o'clock, a bride that considers it reasonable to go anywhere that God sends her.

She will do anything that God speaks to her. Because she loves Him. She's not moving under condemnation, she moves under compassion.

Because she knows His heart. And whatever is in His heart becomes in her heart. Part of her heart.

And she moves in unison with Him. That's why the Scripture says, How can two walk together except they be agreed? How can a bride walk with a bridegroom unless the two of them have one heart and one mind? Have you ever noticed over the years people have a loving marriage relationship? The longer they're together, they start even looking like each other. They talk like each other.

It's like one person speaks and they've both spoken. That's what the bride is all about. The longer we're with Jesus, the more we look like Him.

We talk like Him. Because His heart is in us. He's captivated us.

There's a true bride in the church. But there's also a bride that has gotten snared by this doctrine of the Nicolaitans. There's a bride in this generation that we're living in, in as much as in John's generation, that is going to the altar with a vow that grieves the heart of Jesus.

I call it the vow of the Nicolaitan bride. And Jesus just finishes speaking His promises and He tells her how much He loves her. And He tells her how much He cares.

And then she looks back at Him and looks Him in the eye and begins to state, I've got six vows of the Nicolaitan bride. And I want to share them with you because God put them on my heart. And she looks at Him and all heaven is assembled and the crowd is there and God the Father is witnessed and the Holy Ghost is there.

The angels are there and this Nicolaitan bride comes up before the throne. And she begins to state her vow to Him. She believes it's a reasonable vow.

She believes it's all that is required of her. And that's the sad thing. She's fallen under some kind of a sway.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans. She looks Him in the eye. All of heaven is standing up.

It's a beautiful moment. And all of a sudden there's a shockwave that goes through heaven at what comes out of her mouth. Because it's not the vow of a bride that's truly enraptured with love for her husband.

There's something different about this bride. She says firstly, I promise to love you as long as you don't put any demands on me. John chapter 21.

Turn there please with me. There are many people that say, Jesus, in this generation I will love you and I'll be part of your church and I'll be your bride as long as you don't put any demands on me. Now in John chapter 21, verse 15, the scripture says, So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Now Simon Peter had gone through a very rough experience.

And maybe it would have been justifiable for Peter to say, Lord, it's been pretty rough on me. I've been weeping for days. I've denied your name.

It's been hard. I'm confused. I don't fully understand everything that's been going on.

I need some breathing space. I will love you, but don't put any demands on me. Verse 15 says, So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He said unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest I love thee.

He said unto him, Feed my lambs. Peter, I'm putting a demand on your life. I'm going to put my word within you.

I'm going to put my heart within you, but I want you to do something with it. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He said unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest I love thee. He said unto him, Feed my sheep.

Peter, I'm putting a demand on your life. He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee.

And Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep. If you love me, Peter, I have children out there. If you love me, true bride of Christ, I have sons and daughters that are not yet saved, that don't yet have understanding.

I have ones that are weak. I have ones that are prey to the tactics and lies of the devil. If you love me, you'll love my children.

If you love me, you'll consider it reasonable to pour your life out as a living sacrifice for the call that I have upon you. The Nicolaitan bride, leaving the whole of heaven in horror at the very first thing she says, turns to him again and says, I promise to communicate with you periodically and when it is convenient. Now, can you imagine a bride like this, a wedding like this happening at Times Square Church, where the bride came with such a vow? Can you imagine the shock? Can you imagine how it would so take away from the ceremony, the beauty of everything that's going on, to start hearing these things come out of her mouth? I promise to communicate with you periodically and when it's convenient.

Do you know how many people are supposedly the bride of Christ and their prayer life is just periodic communication and under the banner of convenience? But listen to what David said, and listen to what made David a man after God's heart. In Psalm 5, he said, Give ear to my words, O Lord. Consider my meditation.

Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God. For unto Thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord.

In the morning will I direct my prayer and unto Thee will look up. It's an awful marriage that you would be in where you got up in the morning out of bed and your wife or husband doesn't want to talk to you until that evening. That would be a terrible situation to be in.

I know that some might be in situations like that. And if you'll turn to Christ, God can get you over that. But that would be a horrible situation.

If you really love Jesus, who do you want to talk to first thing in the morning if you really love somebody? You know, it's sad to say, some people spend more time talking to their dog than they do to God in their home when they get up in the morning. Hi, boy, how are you? Boy, did you have a good night, boy? And their prayer life is a shambles. And imagine how it must feel.

Imagine how a husband feels if his wife spent more time talking to the dog in the morning than she does to him. How is it that people think that we can get away with this kind of a shabby vow to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords? Our Savior, Jesus Christ. We're not to get into some kind of a bondage.

We're not to come downstairs. Could you imagine a husband or wife that said, OK, I'll get in my head. I've got to talk to my wife.

I've got to be faithful to the vow to communicate. And so I come downstairs and, good morning, how are you? How was the toast? How was the dog? How was the kids? And just start to wrap off all... And some people pray like that. Communication is heart to heart.

It's because we love Him with all of our heart. We want to spend time with Him. Lord, I love You this morning.

God, it's wonderful to be in Your presence. It's wonderful to be starting out a new day knowing that I'm not walking alone, that You're with me, O God. You can see into the future.

You already know what I'm going to face before I even get there. Thank You, Lord, for Your promise to never leave me nor forsake me. The Lord, all He's ever looked for from His bride is heart to heart communication, a heart to heart thing.

Then the Nicolaitan bride looks at Him and as if the two firsts weren't bad enough, she looks and says, I promise to try to keep my other lovers to a minimum. Can you imagine that kind of a wedding? Can you imagine that kind of a bride? It just... It staggers our imagination. The whole church at this point would be in an uproar.

Yet, as I read earlier, James says, Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. We're not to have other lovers. The Nicolaitans taught that it was alright to have other wives and other lovers, but it isn't.

We're to love Him with all of our heart and our soul and our mind and our strength. Then she looks again and she says, I promise to obey You as long as it doesn't put any hardship on me. I promise to obey You as long as it doesn't put any hardship on me.

Look at the book of Acts, please, chapter 9. I want to show you something from the life of the apostle Paul. It's at a time when a man called Ananias was sent to pray for Paul immediately after his conversion experience on the Damascus road. There's no guarantee in serving God that it won't put hardship on your life.

It is conceivable that you could die serving God. Acts, chapter 9, verse 15. Ananias came into Paul and he says, But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way.

And here's the instruction for Ananias to bring to Paul. For he's a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

And Paul loved the Lord, loved Jesus. He didn't consider hardship. What did he call? He was stoned.

He was shipwrecked. He was left for dead. He was in perils continually.

And he says, But my momentary light affliction is I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Present light affliction, my momentary affliction, I don't consider it hardship because I know him and I love him and he knows me and he loves me. The Nicolaitan bride now looks again at the bridegroom and says, I promise to give to your children as long as it doesn't put me in a position of want.

I want you to think about this for a moment. There are so many people in the body of Christ who only give to a point of convenience. They don't give anywhere beyond anything that would cause them pain or want in their own life.

That's not really the heart of a bride, is it now? God has children all over the world that he wants to touch, places that he needs to go and have his bride go and speak on his behalf. What an awful thing if we had a wedding in Times Square Church and a bride stood here and said, I promise to give to your children as long as it doesn't put me in a position of want or put me in a position of hardship or put me in a place where I'm not comfortable. Isn't that what we heard this afternoon at 3 o'clock that God wants to kick us out of our comfort zone and into the place where we can become of use to him and useful servants to him? Say, so many people never accomplish the plans of God in and for their lives because they're not willing to give beyond the standard of personal convenience.

But I bring to your mind once again that Scripture time and again as often as God puts it on my lips, I shall speak it where Paul said, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service. A living sacrifice. That's a reasonable service.

Lastly, she looks at him and she says something that would if the others weren't bad enough this last one would if I were the man in that place if the others weren't bad enough this last one would crush me. It would finish me off. She looks at him and says, I promise to tell others about you but only in situations where I know that speaking your name won't make me feel ashamed.

I promise to tell others about you but only in situations where I know that speaking your name won't make me feel ashamed. How would you feel as a wife? How would you feel tonight as a husband if you went to a social gathering or you went to somebody's house or you went just anywhere in society and the people said, who's that with you? We notice that you're not alone. Somebody is with you.

Oh, that's nobody. Oh, it's just a friend. Oh, it's just somebody that I talk to occasionally.

And if that was your wife speaking and you knew or your husband and you knew they were ashamed of you in public ashamed of you how would you feel? And yet the Nicolaitan bride is ashamed of Jesus. Ashamed. Going into public places or going into people's homes or in the neighborhood, the community, the office.

People will, an opportunity will arise to speak about her husband and she won't speak because she's ashamed of him. And Jesus said in Luke chapter 9, He said to them, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it.

But whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory and in His Father's and of the holy angels. If there were such a bride making such a series of vows to a righteous man, if you were at the wedding, if there was a wedding at this church and the bridegroom was standing here and the bride came and you had just witnessed these vows, I would venture against that the bulk of those that are here tonight would stand to your feet and say, Don't marry that woman.

You're a fool. If the preacher said, Is there anybody here has a lawful reason why this man can't be married to this woman? The objector may now so state, If I'd be on my feet, I don't know about you. I'd say, Don't marry.

You're an absolute fool to marry this woman. She has a heart full of adultery. She will be ashamed of you.

You won't be able to put any demands on her. She won't communicate with you. She'll have other lovers in her life.

She won't obey you if it puts hardship on her. She won't give to your children. Your children will be in rags.

She won't care for them. She won't love them and cherish them. She'll be ashamed of you in public.

Only a fool, you'd say, would want such a bride. And in the natural sense, that would possibly be true. Jesus said to Pergamos in Revelation 2.16, He says, Repent, or else I will come to thee quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Most bridegrooms would walk out on such a bride in an absolute indignant rage. If it were me, or if it were you, a lot of the men that are here in this church tonight, if you were standing here and that vow was said to you, you would walk out of this place in an absolute rage, saying, How could I have been such a fool? How could I have been deceived by such an unrighteous woman? How could I have ever thought of giving her my heart and letting her heart come into mine? How could I have ever thought of becoming one with such a woman? And most men in the natural world would walk out and everybody would stand up and clap and say, Justifiably so. Cast this harlot woman out of your life.

But that's not what Jesus does. That's not the heart of Jesus. He's merciful and kind.

He is an ever-loving God. He reaches out to even those that are ashamed of His name. Oh, the absolute love of Jesus that so far surpasses anything that you and I could ever know.

The humility of Jesus that all over the world the Nicolaitan bride is stating her vows to Him. And yet He stands firm. He doesn't move.

He stands unshakable. And He reaches out and woos her. And says, Come back and rethink your position.

I'll not move and every word I've ever said to you will be true. Turn to the book of Hosea, please. The Old Testament.

Hallelujah. Hosea chapter 2. Hosea was a man with a difficult commission. He had been commissioned by the Lord to betroth a prostitute unto Himself who was unfaithful to Him.

And God did it to Hosea, caused him to do that so that he would come to an understanding how the Lord felt about an unfaithful and an unrighteous people that were called by His name. And in Hosea chapter 2, we begin to see the heart of God. It is quite possible tonight that you have seen at least one of those vows in your heart.

But now I have a word from the Lord for you tonight. And I want you to hear this clearly. God speaks to us for healing and not hurt.

He speaks to us for life and not death. He speaks love. When you understand the heart of Jesus tonight, it should cause you to get up.

Even if you have embraced a portion of the Nicolaitan doctrine in your heart, it should cause you to get up and run to Him. And fall upon His feet and say, Forgive me for being an unrighteous bride, but thank you Jesus for being such a loving husband. You've never moved.

You've never shaken. You deserve. I deserve to be cast off.

I deserve to be thrown away from you. That's what David, when David said, Oh Lord, if you dealt with me according as I deserve, who could stand before you? Cast me not away from thy presence, O God. Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

In chapter 2, the Lord says, Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi and to your sisters Ruma, plead with your mother, plead for she is not my wife and neither am I her husband. Let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight and her adulteries from between her breasts. Lest I strip her naked and set her as in the day that she was born and make her as a wilderness and set her like a dry land and slay her with thirst.

You see, that's where the Nicolaitan bride always ends up. Dry, just like the Laodicean church. Just dry and naked and dying of thirst.

And I will not have mercy upon her children, for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother hath played the harlot she has conceived them and done shamefully. For she said I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water and my wool and my flax and my oil and my drink.

And isn't that what so much of what has called itself the bride of Christ in this generation has done? Oh folks, it so grieves the heart of God. All of these people stuck in this success and prosperity doctrine. They're out there, they're running after bread and water and wool and flax and oil and drink and they've forsaken Him and they don't even know it.

Therefore behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns and make a wall and she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them. She shall seek them and she shall not find them.

You see, God says, I'm going to obscure the way and I'm going to make it a barren path so that she will turn back to Me. That's how much the Lord yearns for His bride. Even though she has done these things, even though she has gone after other lovers, I'm going to hedge her way and build a wall around her so she can't find satisfaction in these things so that she will turn back to Me again.

Then she shall say, I will go and return to my first husband. For then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil and multiplied her silver and gold which they prepared for Baal.

Therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof and my wine in the season thereof and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers and none shall deliver her out of My hand. The Lord says, I'm going to expose it.

I'm going to come and fight against it with the word of My mouth. Isn't that what God said He was going to do to this church in Pergamos? I will fight against it, this doctrine of the Nicolaitans, with the word of My mouth and will expose and discover the lewdness of this Nicolaitan bride in the sight of all her lovers. And she will be put in a place where nobody, not one of her lovers, will ever deliver her out of My hand.

You see, because God wants her back. It's an incredible thing when we realize what's in the heart of Christ. The absolute humility in the heart of Christ.

He wants her back. He wants His bride back. He's a jealous God.

He's not willing to let her go with any other lover. I will also cause her mirth to cease, her feast days, her moons, her new moons, her Sabbaths and all her solemn feasts. In other words, she won't find pleasure in anything out there.

I will destroy her vines and her fig trees whereupon she has said, these are My rewards that My lovers have given Me. And I will make them a forest and the beasts of the field shall eat them. I will visit upon her the days of Balaam wherein she burned incense to them and she decked herself with earrings and her jewels and she went after her lovers and forgot Me, saith the Lord.

Therefore, behold, verse 14, I will allure her, in other words, I will draw her once again. I will speak kindly to her and I will bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably to her. I will give her her vineyards from thence and the valley of Achor for a door of hope.

And she shall sing there as in the days of her youth. And as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. In other words, the Lord said, I'm going to reach out to this bride.

I'm going to reach out to this Nicolaitan bride and I'm going to bring her back because I remember how much she did love Me in the beginning before she was ensnared by these other things. And I'm going to reach out to her and I'm going to bring her home. This is what God's doing in this generation.

He's reaching out even through My voice tonight. He's reaching out through other places all throughout the land and the world. He's reaching out for His bride even those that have gone away from Him and have

not been faithful to Him.

He's reaching out and saying, I love you with an everlasting love. A woman might forget her nursing child, but I cannot forget thee. I have engraved thee on the palms of My hands.

And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, verse 16, that thou shalt call Me Ishi, and shalt call Me no more Bailey. In other words, you're going to call Me husband. You're going to call Me lover.

You're going to call Me the closest one to your entire being. You're going to know Me in that day. You're going to understand who I am.

For I will take away the names of Balaam out of her mouth. They shall no more be remembered by their name. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground.

And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth. And I will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto Me forever.

Hallelujah. Yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness and in judgment and in loving kindness and in mercies. Jesus is saying, I'm not letting you go.

I'm not letting My bride go. I'm not letting other lovers captivate her heart. I bought her with a price.

She's Mine. Hallelujah. And I'm going to fight for her with the word of My mouth.

I'm going to deliver her out of her captivities and bring her home unto Me. And I'm going to betroth her unto Me again. This time in righteousness.

Hallelujah. This time she will make a clear and a clean vow to Me. This time in judgment.

This time she will allow the Holy Spirit to come in power and examine every motive, every intent of her heart. Hallelujah. This time in loving kindness.

She will know Me. She will love Me. She will understand how much I care for her.

Hallelujah. And in mercy. She will know My mercy.

She will know that I love her. She will know that I'm ready to cleanse. She will know that I'm not a husband like any other in the universe.

Says the Lord. He is different than any other man is. Hallelujah.

His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. His kindness is from generation to generation. He sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Hallelujah. I will even betroth Thee unto Me in faithfulness and Thou shalt know the Lord. You will know Me.

Scripture says You will know the truth and the truth shall set you free. You will know Me. I will betroth Thee unto Me in faithfulness.

You will come to Me and You will be a faithful bride in this last hour of time. The Lord says I come for a bride without spot and without wrinkle. I come for a cleansed and purified bride.

I come for a bride that is one in spirit with Me. I come for a bride that knows My heart and walks according to My word and My ways. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. And it shall come to pass in that day I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens and they shall hear the earth and the earth shall hear the corn, the wine and the oil and they shall hear Jezreel and I will sow her unto Me in the earth and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy and I will say to them which were not My people thou art My people and they shall say thou art My God. Hallelujah.

Thou art My God. The Lord is speaking this hour to this church in North America. He's about to pull out the carpets of all the other lovers, all the things that have captivated the hearts of God's people.

In a moment, in a day, the success and prosperity of preachers will be wiped right out of the house of God because their doctrine is a lie and God will move in power and save those that can still hear His Word and still want to love Him. I'll go back to Isaiah. One last scripture.

Isaiah chapter 54. I hope tonight that you can sense the love of God for you in this house tonight. How much He loves you.

How much He loves you. Even if you have embraced some of these things in your heart. It's not so much a doctrine.

It's an embracing of the heart. If you're one of those that's ashamed of Him or one that is so hesitant to give of yourself if it hurts. Every time it starts to hurt when you give, you pull back again.

But that's not the heart of Christ. Isaiah chapter 54, verse 4. I found it interesting that Pastor David preached from verse 11 to 17 and I'm going from verse 4 to 8 this night. He says, Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame, for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth and not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

For thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall He be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth when thou wast refused, saith the Lord, thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. Would you stand please. Jesus is here tonight and He is at this altar at a meeting place with you and with me.

He has come, He has shared His word with us tonight. His word is constant, it will never change. He has declared His vows unto you and unto me.

He has declared His faithfulness to us, and He has declared His mercy even to those that have departed from a wholehearted loving and saving relationship with Him. But yet He doesn't walk out, He remains. And He says, If you will come to Me I will betroth you unto Me in faithfulness.

I will reveal Myself unto you, you will no longer call Me Bailey, you will call Me Ishi, you will know who I am as your husband. You will call Me your husband. There will be a difference in you, there will be a change.

He has already stated His vow tonight, and now He is looking for His bride to state her vow. I want to open this altar tonight. If God has spoken to your heart, and somewhere down the line you have embraced something of the Nicolaitans in your heart, maybe you are one of those who can say, Lord I am ashamed of you, I am ashamed of Myself, how could I be ashamed of the One that I love? How could I do this thing? Lord, I hold back when it comes to giving to your children, when it comes to giving, just giving till it hurts, I hold back.

God, I don't communicate with you the way I should. There is something wrong in our relationship, there seems to be a communication breakdown. I know it is on my part, Lord, not on Yours.

I come tonight, Father, and there is some that would say, I have got other lovers in my life, and Lord, forgive me tonight for this. Others would just say, Lord, I have loved You, and I have asked You not to put demands on my life, but now I come, and I come as a faithful bride, and if You put demands on my life, Lord, I will accept them, and I will accept them as of a good husband that knows what he is doing. I have entrusted my life unto You.

I am going to ask You, if God the Holy Spirit has spoken to You tonight through His Word, would You slip out of Your seat, up in the balcony, go to the sides, down the main sanctuary, and come forward, and you are going to state your vows unto the Lord tonight. As a bride, remember the wedding takes place here. It takes place on this side of eternity, not in heaven.

It takes place here. Up there is the wedding banquet. Here is the wedding.

And some of you have fallen short in your marriage vows, and you need to come. Your marriage vows to the Lord, and you need to come and make it right. I want to tell you something.

If you will make your vows with God right, some people here that are having trouble in their home, you will find that that trouble in your home will make itself right too as well. Your vows to God have got to be in place first. And then your vows to one another can be fulfilled.

Hallelujah. Create in me a clean heart, O God.

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