

Wrinkle-Free Bride

Have you ever heard the expression “going to hell in a handbasket”? Doesn’t it sometimes seem—at least, judging by our leaders—as if that’s what the body of Christ is doing? We have high-profile charismatic preachers divorcing their wives to marry someone else, evangelical pastors falling prey to Internet pornography, mainline denominational priests sexually abusing their congregants’ children and, more recently, a homosexual priest being raised up to the position of bishop. As a Christian journalist, I hear the reports—and I cringe.

But I have learned that if we focus on what we see, we can easily become discouraged. So I choose to keep my eyes on Jesus, the magnificent Bridegroom, and my heart anchored in His Word, which tells us that Christ gave Himself for the church “that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27, NKJV, emphasis added). His plan is for us to be a glorious church—a beautiful, wrinkle-free bride.

With all the sin in the ranks, we may not look like this kind of bride yet, but we will. How do I know? Because the Bible says that “He who has begun a good work in [us] will complete it” (Phil. 1:6, emphasis added). It also says that we are not stuck in our current state but are continually being transformed by the Spirit of the Lord into the image of Christ (see 2 Cor. 3:18).

However, that doesn’t mean we are to become complacent or accepting of sin in ourselves or others. We need to cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Here’s how:

First, through prayer. Our primary focus in prayer needs to be our relationship with Jesus. He wants us to be in communion with Him and to yearn for Him as a true bride does for her

beloved. Our hunger and our love for Him will grow as we regularly acknowledge His presence and worship Him.

Second, through humility. If we're honest, we have to admit that it's not only our leaders who have spots and wrinkles. The rest of us have them, too, and the only way we're going to get rid of them is to humble ourselves, repent and receive God's grace to walk in holiness (see 1 Pet. 5:5).

Finally, through intention. In our Timeless Treasures selection, William Law states that the reason Christians fall into sin, particularly habitual sin, is that they don't have pleasing God as their primary intention. Just as the manufacturer sets a compass always to point north, we must set our hearts to please Him in all that we think, say and do.

Jesus isn't coming back for just a few of us; He wants the entire church for His bride. Isn't it time we prepare for His return? Let's get serious about living the kind of life He died to make possible—one that is spotless and wrinkle-free.