

Ephesians 10 Article

Why did Christ die? **To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless** (verses 26, 27).

Ceremonial baths were a regular feature in Jewish customs. Probably Paul is alluding here to the particular bath a bride underwent prior to her marriage ceremony. Symbolically, defilement was washed away, and purity was reinstated.

For the Christian, Paul may be saying that a similar cleansing unto holiness is effected by two agencies: the ‘washing of water’ and ‘through the word’. Baptism, the washing of water, is said by Calvin to be the outward symbol by which the inner and invisible work of sanctification is confirmed. This external rite must, however, be accompanied by the second means, the application of the word of the gospel. Scripture becomes the means by which the Spirit accomplishes his work of sanctification—the process of becoming holy and blameless. Diligent attention to the Scriptures is the ordained means by which God conforms us to the image of his Son, burning away the dross of sin that so thoroughly pollutes our lives. Jesus’ intention for his bride is to present her to the Father in her full splendor, without spot or wrinkle. He only wants the best for her.

‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ The mystical goal of marriage is the union of two people. That union does not annul or annihilate individual personalities. This stands in stark contrast to Eastern religions where the loss of personal identity takes place in the mystical union of marriage. In Christianity, the union is very profound. People become of one mind, one concern, and one passion. That goes deep in a healthy marriage; the two are like one person.

However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (verse 33). *Probably the most fragile mechanism in the whole creation is the male ego.* One of the most difficult things to admit or to understand is that there is probably nothing that a man wants more from his wife than her admiration. There is probably nothing that a woman wants more from her husband than his attention, taking her seriously and treating her with the greatest dignity. Here what we are getting at is the question of respect. If I exercise my headship over my wife in a tyrannical way, I am not respecting my wife. If my wife gives slavish obedience to me without any love, she is not respecting me. The whole basis of the relationship is built upon love, cherishing and respecting one another.¹

The church is pictured as the bride of Christ. It is interesting to compare the church to the first bride in the Bible, Eve (Gen. 2:18–25). She was taken from Adam’s side, and Christ’s side was pierced for us on the cross. She was formed when Adam was asleep, and Christ experienced the sleep of death to create the church. Eve shared Adam’s nature, and the church partakes of Christ’s nature (vv. 30–31). Eve was the object of her mate’s love and care, and Christ loves the church and cares for it. Adam was willing to become a sinner because of his love for his wife (1 Tim. 2:11–15), and Christ willingly was made sin because of His love for the church. Eve was formed and brought to Adam before sin entered the human family; the church was in the mind and heart of God before the foundation of the world. Note Rom. 7:4 and 2 Cor. 11:2 for the application of this truth of marriage to the individual believer and the local church.²

¹ Sproul, R. C. (1994). *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (137–139). Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (552). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.