

Spiritual Adultery, Part 2

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Assembly

Introduction:

According to **Ephesians 5:23-32**, the relationship between Christ and His church is related to the relationship between a husband and wife. Jesus is the groom and the church is His bride. We are the bride of Christ. In like manner, when we, whether as individual Christians or as a collective congregation, turn from the path of the Lord and start following after something or someone else, we are considered adulterers. We learned in our last lesson that when we have little loyalty to the Lord and His way (**Hosea 6:4**), when we forget God and follow other lovers (**Hosea 2:13**) and when we forsake the Lord (**Hosea 1:2**), we are committing harlotry. We also examined some of the “harlots” seeking to entice us away from the Lord—materialism, pleasure, popularity and self. Like the harlot of **Proverbs 7**, these temptations seek to allure us, leading us away from the Lord. We must be careful, for the fun we believe they offer, they will only provide death. In this lesson, we want to ask how does spiritual adultery occur and how do we overcome it if we have fallen?

Discussion:

- I. How does spiritual harlotry happen?
 - A. Rarely does a married man or woman wake up one day and decide, “I think I will commit adultery today.” It is usually a much longer process. Spiritual adultery is very similar. Rarely do Christians or churches wake up one morning and say, “I think I will abandon the Lord today.” It is usually a longer process.
 - B. It begins as it did in Ephesus, as demonstrated in **Revelation 2:4**. They had left their first love. Despite all the issues they got technically correct, they had abandoned their initial devotion to the Lord. This calls to mind the passage about Israel in **Jeremiah 2:2**. God talked about the betrothal love of Israel when she would follow Him throughout the wilderness because of her love. Yet, that initial love vanished. With Ephesus, it was replaced with a traditional minded going through the motions. They still knew what was right and wrong and still lived by it. But their motivation was no longer that betrothal love for God. “At least they were still doing what was right,” we might say. Yet, God’s warning was to repent and do what they had done at first (**Revelation 2:5**). Their dwindling love was, in fact, affecting how they acted. Really this is to be expected. Though a church like Ephesus might look like it is one of impeccable doctrinal purity, because it is no longer motivated by love for God and His will, spiritual adultery is merely around the corner. They are no longer doing what they do because they are devoted to God, but because they are used to it. As soon as some harlot comes along and entices them in another direction, they will follow.
 - C. **Hosea 4:6** demonstrates another issue that leads to spiritual idolatry—lack of knowledge. **Isaiah 5:13** makes a similar statement. **Ephesians 5:15-17** and **II Peter 1:5-8**, both demonstrate that knowledge is an important part of serving the Lord. Yet today, how many people know their Bibles. I am amazed at the number of Bible discussions in which the strongest argument made is, “I just can’t believe that would matter to God.” Or “Look at all the good we are doing. Do you really think God is opposed to that?” There was a day and age when Christians knew they were to back up what they did with book, chapter and verse. In order to accomplish this, they had to know their Bibles. Now, far too many simply rely on their preachers. “He will tell us if it is wrong.” Like David who neglected to seek out God’s will on the matter of transporting the ark (**I Chronicles 15:13**), too many today are doing what they want because they think it is good. Church supported colleges, private schools, orphans’ homes, soup kitchens and other social gospel organization are rampant—but can we find the book, chapter and verse for those things? “I think it is a good work” is not good enough. We need to know the scripture and follow the pattern it establishes. Not enough are doing what God said, because they know God’s will. God said if we reject knowledge, He will reject us from being His priests. How much time are we spending in the Word, getting to know it?
 - D. **Hosea 7:7** describes the path to spiritual harlotry for Israel when it claimed the people no longer called on God. They had rejected God and now they no longer sought Him. No doubt they believed they did (cf. **Hosea 8:2**). But their calling on God was a farce. They were no longer concerned about what He really said. In fact, **Hosea 4:10** says they had quit giving heed to the

Lord. Like those in **Isaiah 66:3-4**, they offered some kind of worship to God, but it was useless because they no longer listened to Him, even when He called. Let's face it. Not everything God commands is fun, easy or popular. The question is, are we going to do what God says or what we want?

- E. **Hosea 4:12** demonstrated the next step of this harlotrous walk. Having rejected knowledge and no longer seeking God or giving Him heed, they began to consult the wooden idols. **Hosea 5:11** says they began to follow the commands of men. Jesus rebuked this behavior in **Matthew 15:8-9**. How many Christians today follow more closely **The Purpose Driven Life** than they do the Bible? How many churches follow more closely **The Purpose Driven Church**? Are there good things in these books? Undoubtedly. Are they God's word? Undoubtedly not. When we want to know how we should live in our marriages, on the job or in school, where do we turn? When we want to know how the local congregation should worship and work, to whom do we look? Do we turn to God's or do we consult the wooden images of societal opinion? Do we look to God's Word or **Chicken Soup for the Soul**? Do we turn to the revelation of the Spirit that came through the apostles or to the myriad of books from the erudite professors of our favorite college? When we stop consulting the Lord and start consulting everyone else, we have walked headlong into harlotry. Our worship is vain, we might as well not even be here.

II. How do we overcome?

- A. **Hosea 13:4** says we must know no other God except Jehovah. There is no savior besides Him. Despite our harlotries (and yes, in a sense, we have all committed them), He will receive those who turn to Him and Him alone for salvation.
- B. Look at **Hosea 14**. It provides what we must do.
1. We must confess our iniquities and seek God's mercy (**vs. 2**), just as John explained in **I John 1:9**. The Greek word for "confess" is "homologeō" which means to say the same thing as. We must say about our sins the same thing God says about them. We must realize how dirty and disgusting they are. We must realize there is neither one ounce of justification for them nor one iota of ability to pay for them. Thus we need to seek God's mercy.
 2. Further, we must repent (**vs. 3**). Repentance is a change of thought that produces a change of action. As Israel was to renounce seeking the comfort and aid of Assyria, war horses and idols made with hands, we must renounce whatever harlots we have followed after, whether they be personal or congregational. We must forsake them and turn back to God.
 3. We must be wise and discerning, walking only in the ways of the Lord (**vs. 9**). **II Timothy 3:16-17** says the Scripture will equip us for every good work. We must walk in the ways outlined in Scripture seeking book, chapter and verse for what we do.
- C. When we follow this course, God will forgive and heal us (**Hosea 14:4-7**).

Conclusion:

Remember how we began this study last week. Israel was accused of all out harlotry, but they were apparently oblivious to their awful predicament. According to **Hosea 8:2**, they cried out to the Lord saying they knew Him. But **Hosea 5:4** clearly explained they did not know the Lord. We must take care, brethren. We must never believe because we are Christ's church, everything we feel like doing or everything we are doing is fine. If we are not careful, we will find that we have rejected knowledge, quit calling on and heeding the Lord. We will find that we are living by the counsels of idols and men. We will find that we are in the throes of spiritual adultery and, like too many that have found themselves in the arms of a sinful lover, wonder how it happened. But we can stop. We can forsake the lovers of harlotry and turn back to the Lord at anytime and He will forgive us. Praise the Lord.