

CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH

EPHESIANS 5:25-27 • TV060B

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By
HENRY T. MAHAN

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Zebulon Baptist Church
6088 Zebulon Highway
Pikeville, KY 41501
PH: 606-631-9053

Ephesians 5:25-27

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

Our subject today: **“CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH.”**

And our text is **Ephesians 5:25-27**. Will you follow along as I read God’s Word.

Ephesians 5:25: *“Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

Here is a question we should ask; do I belong to that church which Jesus Christ loves? Am I a part of that church for which He gave himself? Do I belong to that glorified, sanctified, cleansed, church, which He shall present to Himself holy and without blemish?

Now let me remind you that this church of which I’m speaking and of which Paul is writing; *“Christ loved the church and gave himself for it that He might cleanse it and sanctify it with the washing of the Word and present it to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, holy without blemish;”* this church is not a material building.

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Oh the error, what error, what misunderstanding, has gripped the hearts of men and women in this day in regard to this matter right here. We call buildings, “churches.”

We point to a building down on the corner of a certain street and we say, “That’s the church;” that my friend is not the church, that’s not a church at all, that’s a building. That’s nothing more than a building. That’s all in the world it is.

These buildings on the corners are nothing in the world but houses in which the church meets. That’s not the church. God doesn’t dwell in temples made out of brick, stone, wood, mortar, and marble. God dwells in the hearts of His people.

You know that; you know that as well as I do. But oh what mistakes we make in this regard. The church is a building all right but a building of living stones, not bricks and stones and marble but living stone.

Our Lord said to Peter, “*Whom do you say that I am?*” And Peter said, “Well, you’re the Christ, the Son of the living God.” He said, “*Blessed are you Simon; flesh and blood didn’t reveal that to you but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto you that on this rock, (on this testimony, on this confession of faith), I’ll build my church.*”

You don’t build churches, God builds churches. Why, you can go out here and buy you 10,000 bricks and some sticks and stones and mortar and build you a house but you can’t build a church. God builds the church. He said, “*I’ll build my church.*” So, the church is not a material building.

Secondly: The church which Christ loves, in which Christ cleanses, called the, “*Glorious church;*” this church is not a local organization.

Now you have only to read the epistles of Paul. You read the epistles to the Corinthians and the epistle to the Ephesians and the Galatians and you’ll find that these local churches were inhabited by people that didn’t know the Lord.

You know, Paul said, “*All Israel is not Israel.*” Everybody that is called an “Israelite” is not of Israel. And everybody that’s called a “church member” is not a member of the church, not this church.

Many members of the churches are just names on the roll, that’s all. Go to your church roll. Ask the clerk to let you have the church roll and look it over and you will find as much dead wood there as you will find down by the seashore.

No, people are not members of Christ’s church just because they are a member of an organization on this earth that calls itself a church.

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And then this church which Christ loved, this church which He bought with His own blood; this church is not a denominational party. Listen to men talk; they say, “The church of England.”

England doesn't have a church. The Lord's got a church but England doesn't have a church. England has a Parliament. England has a king and England has a colony but England doesn't have a church. God's got a church.

And then they say the, “Church of Scotland.” Scotland doesn't have a church. And I hear people say, “The Methodist Church or the Baptist Church or the Episcopalian Church.” Baptist's don't have a church. The Methodist's don't have a church.

God has a church. Christ said, *“I'll build my church.”* I hear them say the “Catholic Church.” Catholic's don't have a church. They better not have a church. God has a church. The church is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He called it, *“My church. I will build my church.”*

And this is the church I'm talking about here. It's His church. I want to belong to that church which Christ loves. I want to be a part of that church for which He gave himself. I want to be a member of that church which He cleanses with His blood and cleanses and sanctifies it so perfectly that it doesn't have a wrinkle or a spot or any such thing.

And one of these days He's going to present that church, not that building down on the corner, and not that local group to which you belong, and not that denominational party; He's not going to present them.

But that church which He loves; He's going to present it to Himself in that great day, in that day of resurrection, in that day of His second coming, in that day of His great redemption. He's going to present that church to Himself and it's going to be holy and glorious and without blemish.

What is this church, this church which Christ loves? Well, let's listen to the Scripture!

First of all: That church is made up of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, all true believers. There are no false professors in that church. There are no rebels. There are no unregenerate people. There are no unbelievers. There are no hypocrites. There are no secret disciples in that church.

Oh, they may live in different countries and they may speak different languages and they may be old or young, rich or poor, educated or illiterate. But every member of this church, personally, individually, believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every member of this church, wherever that person is found; he can say with the apostle Peter, *“Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. And we believe and are sure that God sent you.”* Yes sir; the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. We believe that!

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That church which He loves is made up of all true believers, only true believers. There are no hypocrites and no false professors in that church, true believers, wherever they're found, in whatever country, in whatever dispensation, wherever they're found.

Secondly: That church is made up of God's elect from every dispensation, those who were given Him by the Father in eternity past, those who were redeemed by Him when He came to this earth and obeyed the law in their place and stead and went to the cross and died under God's wrath for their sins and was buried and rose again and ascended.

And those for whom He prays for right now and those who are quickened and called by His Holy Spirit, for He calls them, "*My sheep*;" He uses that possessive pronoun "*My sheep*;" He calls them "*My brethren*." He's not ashamed to call them, "*His brethren*." He calls them, "*His jewels*."

You know, you ladies have a jewelry box and whether you have expensive jewels or ten-cent store jewels, they are still your jewels. And you've got it there on your dresser and you open up your jewelry box and there are your jewels; they belong to you, you bought them. They are valuable to you.

There are some that your grandmother left you or your mother left you, a ring that your mother wore or something, your jewels; they belong to you. And our Lord said, "*He's going to make up His jewels*." They belong to Him; they're His.

And then He calls them, "*My body*." Oh yes, Abraham, Isaac, David, Peter, James, and John, Calvin, Luther, Spurgeon, Bunyan, Whitfield, Huss, John Knox, Jonathan Edwards, and all who love Him today make up that church, the elect of God, out of every dispensation.

And then now, you listen to me carefully; let's get right down to it. I use to know old preacher years ago named A.D. Muse. He preached down in Louisville, Kentucky. He had a tabernacle right down on old North Market Street, 505 North Market called, Heart's Harbor Tabernacle.

And old doctor Muse use to run a kitchen there and a preaching place. And he'd bring people in off the streets and preach to them and God saved lots of them. And he use to have this expression and he said, "Now, I'm going to do some cornbread, tator-roll preaching. I'm going to get down there just plain as I can so that you can understand me, so that there won't be any misunderstanding what I'm saying." Now you listen; that's what I'm going to try to do right now.

Thirdly: What is this church?

It is made up of all who have had a personal, true experience of grace in salvation with the living God. Now you're not a member of this church because you were sprinkled as an infant and made a member of a congregation; whether communicate or a non-communicate, catechized or non-catechized. A preacher doesn't sprinkle some water on your head and make you a member of this church.

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And then you're not a member of this church just because you have been voted into the membership. I always get amused at these churches that vote people in. The Scripture says, "*God added to the church daily such as should be saved.*"

And here we are raising our hands deciding whether we are going to vote a person in to God's church. The only one who has the keys to the church is the Lord Jesus Christ. The only one who can open the door and no man can shut it and no man can open it is the Lord of glory.

And you don't become a member of God's church because a group of people decided that they're going to let you be a member of their congregation. And I'm telling you this; they're not members of Christ's church just because they have a head-knowledge of theology.

And just because they have a head-knowledge of orthodoxy or just because their mother and father were members of the church and consequently they started going to the same place because their parents went, and not because they've been recruited into the church by zealous soul-winners; that doesn't make you a member of His church.

The people who are members of this church; (now listen to me) are those who have been quickened by the Holy Spirit: "*Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*"

The kingdom of God is the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God is the family of our Lord Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the only person who can enter that kingdom is that person who has been quickened and awakened and given life by the Spirit of God, through the Word of God, that person who has been convicted of sin and brought to mourn over sin and to grieve over sin and to cry for mercy, that person who has been brought to see Christ as his Lord and Saviour crucified, risen, coming again, reigning, interceding, the Advocate, the Mediator.

He has seen the Lord Jesus Christ; "*He that seeth the Son and believeth on Him hath everlasting life.*" How do you see the Son, with these eyes? No sir! You see Him with the eyes of faith.

You see Him as your Lord, as your Saviour, as your Prophet, as your Priest, as your King, as your substitute, as your representative, as your righteousness, as your sanctification, as all things; you see Christ. You understand that this is what He is to you and this is who He is to you.

Those that have been born again, made new creatures in Christ Jesus, who walk with the King, those: "*Who count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, that they may win Christ and be found in Him, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Christ Jesus. O that I may know Him and in the power of His resurrection.*"

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You know the pastor. But do you know the Lord? You know the Board of Deacons; do you know the Lord? You know the choir director; do you know the Lord? You know the catechism but do you know the Lord?

You know the history of the church? Fine; do you know the Lord? You can know all these other things and not be a member of His church. Those who are members of His church are those who are His people, His sheep, His body, His bride and His family.

Oh my friend; this is the object, this is the goal of my life is to be a member of this church, the church which Christ loved, the church for which He gave Himself, the church of which he said, *“The gates of hell cannot prevail against it.”*

Oh you watch the old-time churches down in Egypt and other places, in Corinth and all of those places; they’re gone now. Where did they go? They were local churches. They were evangelistic churches and they were expectant churches. They’re gone now.

But His church is not gone, His church is not gone. *“The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*

Let me tell you what He said about this church!

First of all: He said: *“He loved this church;”* He loved it!

And I’ll tell you this, He’s always loved it. Read in your Bible **Jeremiah 31:3**; read this Scripture. He said in **Jeremiah 31:3**; *“The Lord hath appeared of old saying unto me, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”*

How long has God loved His church, always? *“I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness I’ve drawn you.”* “Do you know why I have drawn you to myself, because I loved you? Do you know why I wooed you, quickened you, and redeemed you, because I loved you?”

Jesus Christ didn’t come into this world to get God into the notion of loving men; *“For God so loved the world that He gave His Son.”* He’s the gift of God’s love. He came into this world to redeem us because He loved us, not because we loved Him, but because He loved us.

John 13:1 says: *“Having loved His own He loved them to the end,”* having loved, already loved them; they’re already His. He said in **Romans chapter 9:10-13**: *“Rebecca conceived by our father Isaac. And the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth. It was said to her the elder shall serve the younger; Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated.”* That’s in the Bible twice in **Malachi chapter 1 and Romans chapter 9**: *“Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.”*

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Christ loved the church. *“He loved it with an everlasting love.”* And then you watch this; He loved His church when there was nothing in her to merit His love, nothing. We didn’t love God; He loved us. There was nothing lovely about us.

While listening to Paul talking about us in **Ephesians 2** he said: *“We had our conversation, our (citizenship, our behavior), in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of our flesh and of our mind. We were by nature children of wrath just like everybody else. But God who is rich in His mercy toward us, for His great love, wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ.”*

He loved us with an everlasting love and He loved us when there was nothing about us to love. When we were enemies Christ died for us.

You know, men by nature love that which is beautiful. God loves that which is unlovely. Men by nature love that which attracts them. God loves those who are against Him, who hate Him. Men love those that love them. God loves us, even when we despised Him.

Men start out loving and do to some circumstances they change but God never changes. He said, *“I am the Lord; I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”* *The gifts and calling of God are without change.”* His love is an everlasting love. His love is an infinite love.

**“Love so vast that naught can bond
Love too deep for thought to understand
Love which made the Lord of all
To drink the wormwood and the gall**

**Love which led Him to the cross
Bearing there such awful loss
Love which brought Him to the gloom
Yes, the cold darkness of a tomb**

**Love which would not let Him rest
Till His chosen, all are blessed
Tell they all for whom He died
Live rejoicing at His side.”**

Secondly; Christ loved that church, but more than that, He not only loved her, but He gave Himself for it. Now you need to hear this, by nature we’re not fit company for Christ. That’s right, by nature we can’t walk with Him.

“Two can’t walk together except they be agreed.” By nature we cannot fellowship with Him because we are sinners. By the law we are guilty. We come short of His glory. We are under condemnation. By justice we’re condemned to die, *“And the judge of the earth must do right.”*

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But Christ loved this church and He purposed to have this church. He purposed to fellowship with this church. He has set His love upon this church and He'll have this church, how? There's only one way; He bought it with His own blood.

You know, Paul said: *"You're bought with a price."* You're not your own; you belong to Him, He bought you. *"He died that He might be Lord of the dead and of the living. What the law could not do because of the weakness of our flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh condemned sin in the flesh;"* both the power and penalty of the law satisfied when He paid the penalty for sin.

"God in the fullness of time sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were born under the law." And He gave Himself for us; that's how he bought this church. That's how He ransomed this church. That's how He redeemed this church. *"The just died for the unjust."* The sinless was made sinful that the sinful might be sinless.

And He sanctified this church, how, through the Word? Did you ever read that hymn of Augustus Toplady, Rock of Ages which says:

**"Be of sin the double cure
Save from wrath
And make me pure."**

He saves us from the wrath of sin by His blood, from the power of sin, by His Word. That's how we're sanctified. *"Desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby."* Christ loved the church. I want to be a member of it. Christ gave Himself for the church. I want to be a part of it.

Thirdly and last: *"Christ will present that church to himself, a glorious church"*

Now my friend, we read of the great churches of the past. In the New Testament, there were churches at Colossae and Galatia, to which Paul wrote that blessed letters. And these sent out missionaries all over the world.

They were generous, gracious, wonderful churches, but not glorious churches. They had their spots and they had their wrinkles and they had many such things. They were not perfect.

And then we read about the old churches, you know, back 100, 200, years ago. I read the other day about the Moravians; what a great people. Do you know some of those Moravian preachers actually sold themselves into slavery so they could preach to the slaves?

That's right! They put themselves on the slave block and sold themselves so that they could preach to them. Did you know that some of them even entered leper colonies and became lepers so they could preach to the lepers? Great people, but not a glorious church; they had their error too. They had their spots.

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And then Spurgeon's great church with its orphanage; thousands of boys and girls, with its preacher school, hundreds of ministerial students, with its libraries, books and everything; well it's gone today.

It wasn't a glorious church. It had its spots and it had its error. And our churches today, some of them, some of the congregations are making every effort to preach God's Word. They hadn't gone into the entertainment business; they were preaching God's Word.

They were trying to be true to this Book. But try as they may they are not glorious churches. What is this glorious church?

First of all: Here it is; the whole of the redeemed of all ages gathered as one, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the brightness of His glory, and they'll ever be, everyone will be just like Him.

Can you imagine that to be just like the Lord? He said that He's going to present this church to Himself. In His presence, they are going to stand in His presence justified and glorified. They are going to be just like Him, every member of this church, not one missing.

Oh, there's plenty of room in heaven but there are no vacancies. Every name place; there is somebody seated at the marriage supper of the Lamb. And every one of them are going to be just like the Lord.

And do you know what He said about them? He says; "They're going to be without spot, not one spot, not one stain, not one thought, not one motive, not one imagination, not one slip, not one fall, without spot."

And they're going to be without wrinkle. Do you know what wrinkles mean? Some of us do. Wrinkles mean two things, old age and weakness. But this church is ever new and eternally strong.

And then He adds; "*And they shall be without any such thing.*" Whatever you want to mention, this church is going to be perfect. Can you imagine it?

You know, there was a little girl who was blind from an accident at birth. She grew to be about 9 or 10 years old. A specialist came to town and her mother took her to this specialist. And the man told her there was a possibility that her daughter could be operated on and her sight restored.

And the mother said, "Well, we'll do anything or pay anything or go anywhere." Well, he gave them a place to go and the things to do. So they took the little girl and she was operated on.

And they bandaged up her eyes and wrapped bandages around her head. She stayed in the hospital a few days and she went home. And the time came to take the bandages off. They didn't know whether the operation was a success or whether it wasn't.

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The doctor came to the house and he was going to take the bandage off and the mother said, "Let's take her out in the yard." It was in the afternoon and the grass was green and the roses were blooming and the birds were singing and the sky was blue and the white clouds floating overhead and the sun was shining.

They sat her down in a chair. Her mother and daddy put on the nicest clothes they had, you know. They stood there in front of the rose garden and the doctor stood behind the little girl and he clipped the bandages and they fell away.

And she began to blink her little eyes and finally she opened them and she looked all around and tears came down her cheeks. And she said, "Mommy; why didn't you tell me it was so pretty, why didn't you tell me?"

And the mother said, "Well honey I tried to tell you but you were blind and you couldn't see." And my friend I tried to tell you, His church, that glorious church, that glorious day when we are going to be like Christ; oh why didn't you tell me?

Well somebody tried to and you just wouldn't listen. Will you say; "Lord; speak thy servant heareth? Teach me Lord; show mercy to my heart!"