

Christ's Love For The Church

Ephesians 5:25

There is an intertwining analogy between Christ's relationship with the church and the relationship of a husband and wife in marriage. The way Christ treats the church is how a husband should treat his wife. Likewise, as the church is subject unto Christ, so a wife should be submissive to her husband.

In this message I will focus on Christ's love for the church (v. 25).

I. **The ONE who loves**—Christ.

- Jesus— The Son of God... Creator of the universe... Bright and morning star... Lion of the tribe of Judah!
- The One who's name is "*Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.*"
- The One in whom dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily!
- The One of whom the Seraphim sing, "*Holy, Holy, Holy! is the Lord of hosts.*"
- The One to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord to the glory of the Father!
- The One who is the "*King of kings and Lord of lords.*"
- Who is the one who loves? The One who IS LOVE personified!

II. **The OBJECT of His love**—Church

➡ The world couldn't care less about the church, but Christ loves the church.

A. He loves the church **AFFECTIONATELY** (v. 29).

1. Tender love—Sympathetic... gentle care... comfort (He sent the Comforter). He is the God of all comfort.
2. ILLUS: You care for your own body. You feed it... you nourish it... you protect it... you cleanse it... you cloth it... you coddle/pamper it. Christ does the same for His church.

B. He loves the church **ABUNDANTLY**.

1. Infinite. A boundless love. He loved the church from all eternity. An everlasting, unending love.

2. Intense. On a clear night, a full moon shines intensely. But at dawn the moon's brightness fades away as a more intense light shines from the sun. Likewise, the intensity of Christ's love outshines all other loves.
 - ➔ A husband once confessed to his pastor, "Preacher, I fear I love my wife too much that God may take her from me." His pastor answered, "It is impossible to love your wife too much, unless you can love her more than Christ loves the church."
3. Intimate. Christ loves all mankind. But, He loves the church with a special intimate love. Otherwise, how could you compare the love of a husband for his wife to Christ's love?

A husband's love for his wife has something special about it. It stands alone and is reserved for only his wife. A husband may love other persons (his parents, children, friends), but the love he lavishes upon his wife is "one-of-a-kind." It is an intimate love that he gives to no one else but her.

Likewise, Christ loves the whole world. But, His love for the church is a unique and remarkable kind of love that is reserved for only those who are members of His church.

- C. He loves the church **ABSOLUTELY**. Agape love!
 1. Unparalleled. Undeserved. Unconditional. Unchanging.
 2. Nothing will change His love for the church. The church is may not be perfect—Composed of imperfect, sinful people—but He loves us still. It is His church. The church may fail at times, but His love never fails. His love is absolute.

III. The **OFFERING** of His love.

- A. **What He gave**—He gave Himself—He could give nothing greater!
 - Was e'er a gift like the Savior given? No, not one. No, not one!
 - 1. He did not just give His tears... His groans... nor His agony.
 - 2. He did not just give His time... His teachings... His prayers.

3. He didn't just give a donation—He gave Himself entirely! He held nothing back!
 4. He gave His Deity... His humanity. His body... His soul... His blood. His whole Person as the God-Man.
- ➡ And He gave it all FREELY... VOLUNTARILY... *“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!”*
- B. Notice, **what He gave Himself** ... (Gal. 1:4— *“Who*

- True love is seen in our actions. You don't just say the words, "I love you"—You live them. You act them out. So it is with Christ.
- A. The WORK. Christ is working to sanctify and cleanse His church. The church in it's earthly condition is imperfect. Before the church can reside in heaven, where nothing enters that defileth, the church must be sanctified and cleansed.
1. Sanctify (set apart, made holy).
 2. Cleansed of spots, wrinkles, and blemishes.
 - Spots and wrinkles are outward blemishes. The dirty world in which the church exists causes spots. The flesh still causes the wrinkles. But, spots and wrinkles exist only on the surface, and may be removed.
- B. The WORD: The work of sanctifying and cleansing is done through the agency of GOD'S WORD (v. 26).
1. Sanctified by the Word (John 17:17).
 2. Clean through the Word (John 15:3; Ps. 119:9)
 - The focal point of the church is the preaching of God's Word. If the preaching of God's Word is absent, the transforming power of the the church is gone. There is no sanctification or cleansing apart from the Word of God.

V. The OBJECTIVE of His love (v. 27).

- A. The PURPOSE—That Christ may "present the Church unto Himself a glorious Church."
1. The adjective "*glorious*" is found 45 times in the Bible. Almost every occurrence it used in reference to God or something connected to God ("*thy glorious name... glorious power... glorious throne... glorious gospel... His glorious body... glorious appearing... glorious church,*" etc.)
 2. There is nothing more "*glorious*" than the person of God. **Christ's goal for the church to reflect the character and glory of God.** The church's greatest glory is God's glory reflected in us and what we do.

3. Nothing defiles and distorts but sin. Take sin away and you have removed everything that can distort God's glory. With sin removed, the Church will be "*a glorious Church*" reflecting the image and glory of Christ.
- B. The PRESENTATION. This the church's destiny—To be presented unto Christ, "*a glorious church.*"
- When Christ raptures the church out of this world, He will change our vile bodies to be fashioned like unto His *GLORIOUS* body (Phil. 3:21). At that moment we will be just like Him—Glorious! Oh, what great and glorious love is this!

SUMMATION: Michael Griffiths wrote a book about the church titled, "*Cinderella with Amnesia.*"

You know the story of Cinderella. She goes to the ball and dances with the prince. The prince falls in love with her. But Cinderella has to leave before midnight. As she runs from the ballroom one of her slippers falls off.

The prince is left looking for the woman he loves. He orders the slipper be tried on the foot of every maiden in the land. The one on whom the slipper fits is to be brought to the palace.

Cinderella sits at home. She is dressed in rags. She is despised by her evil sisters and oppressed by her wicked stepmother. But her destiny is a life in the palace with the Prince who loves her.

Cinderella is a wonderful picture of the church. Sometimes she looks a bit ragged and tattered. There those who despise her, persecute her, and count her of little value. But Christ loves the church and He will present her to Himself in His palace.

Author Michael Griffiths takes up that picture: "The church is often like Cinderella... with amnesia." We sometimes lose sight of our Prince and our glorious future with Him throughout eternity. We need to remember who we are... to whom we belong... and where our eternal home is.

Christ will come and "present us to Himself." And when He does, the church will not be in rags or be oppressed. The church will be "without spot, wrinkle or any other blemish" (v. 27). The church will be glorious.

How will you respond to Christ's love for the church?

- We should also **love** the Church. We are called to be like Jesus. Let us love what He loves. I cannot understand why those who claim to love Jesus, show such little love for the church that Christ gave Himself for! If you love the church, you will attend its services.
- We should **labor** for it's growth. Get involved!
- We should be willing to **sacrifice** for it. Love is known by the sacrifices it makes. If you will sacrifice nothing, you love not. Hereby we know those that love not Christ—they sacrifice nothing for Him. What sacrifice will you suffer to advance Christ's cause. What will you sacrifice to make your church better.
- We should be willing, if need be, to **defend and fight** for the Church.

Jesus never gave up on the church, and never will. Neither should you or I.