

A Glorious Church

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[0:00] Ephesians 5.24 Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be unto their own husbands in everything.

! 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.

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it and cherisheth it, even as the Lord, the church. Now when I read these verses in Ephesians 5, all the husbands might be thinking, oh no, it's going to pick on me now, or the wives might think that. But I'm not actually talking about the husbands and wives so much.

So I'm using this verse to talk about the church, the church, and what God wants for his church. He wants it to be a glorious church, a glorious church.

[1:27] God has designed the church, he's invented it, he's instituted it, he's created the church to be his own special people, his precious blood-bought people. And these verses talk about the church and how the church should be, how he's meant to be.

And I know I've talked about the church of late, and I just love talking about the church. The church is important. It's valuable. It's precious. And verse 24, it talks about that the wives should be subject to their husbands as the church is subject unto Christ.

One of the things about the church is the church should be submitted. Submitted to Christ. There should be that wonderful order where Christ is the head.

And we know in some circles the people, as human beings, claim to be the heads of churches. And we know that is false and untrue. The only head is Christ.

He is the head of the church, our saviour. And the church should be submitted, surrendered, subject unto that one who is the head, unto his lordship and authority.

[2:34] And the second thing, in verse 25 it says, Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. Church, you're loved.

As saints, as God's precious blood-bought people, you are loved. Loved so fully and absolutely. Christ loves his church.

He loves it. He gave himself for it. He surrendered himself for it. This was agape love.

Unconditional. Unreserved. Undeserved.

Agape love. Selfless. Self-sacrificing love. Not a selfish love. We know what the world often terms as love is pretty hollow and shallow in comparison with that.

Yet Christ's love is agape love. It's self-sacrificing love. It's not some warm and fuzzy, tingly, fuzzy, emotional thing per se as such or on its own.

[3:44] It's love that is devotion. That's committed. That's love that is not returned. Love that is not deserved. Love that is self-sacrificing.

That's the kind of love that you are loved with today. We just can't conceive of it, can we? His love. His great love. His gracious love. His undeserved love.

And it's love, Calvary love. Love that bled for you. That's the kind of love that he has for you. You are loved. And you are sanctified. Verse 26, it says, The word has got a wonderful cleansing action. The word has got a washing, a cleansing. And Christians are sanctified in Christ Jesus, it says. 1 Corinthians 1 verse 2. Sanctified in Christ Jesus.

And of the Corinthians, these were some of whom it was said that they were real ratbags. They were really, you know, really the dregs. Some of them, as you read the concepts of 1 Corinthians, how it says that some of them were into all kinds of mischief and corruption.

[4:58] And yet, it says that now you're washed. You are cleansed. And that's the wonderful truth of the gospel, isn't it? That God can take the worst and the most unworthy and make us his very own precious subjects of his kingdom.

His royal subjects. And that's the kind of love, the kind of sanctifying that happens. To sanctify, it means to make holy. That's what God can do for you.

That we can be made holy, set apart for God's service. And there's a wonderful sense where there's holy ground. There's a sense where we are his and his ours. And we're set apart.

We're pulled out. We're extracted from the world. And we made his, purified from pollution and guilt of sin. So we see we are submitted, or we should be, to his headship, to his lordship, to his authority.

We are loved with that love of Calvary, with that grace that he gave himself for us. And we are sanctified. And we are glorious.

[6:06] We are glorious. Verse 27, that he might present it to himself. It's got the sense of like a bride presented to a husband. And I know I've seen some wonderful wedding pictures and photos and a video of a beautiful wedding in India.

And I saw this stunning couple. And the wife was resplendent in her glory as the bride for her husband. And what a beautiful sense of that scripture.

It's that sense of the church, isn't it? Of the church fitted out, resplendent and glorious in the splendour of it, of the wedding.

And we know one day it says that we will be, as the marriage supper of the Lamb, we will be presented. And one day we will be presented as a glorious church, as a beautiful bride, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that they should be holy and without blemish.

And Vine, one of the commentators, the Vine's dictionary, he says of glorious, it means held in honour. Held in honour, of high repute.

[7:18] It's of high regard. It's splendid. That's what God wants for his church, to be something glorious and splendid and beautiful. And we know in Ephesians 3 it says, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

God wants his glory to be in the church. We know in the Old Testament days the Shekinah glory, it filled the temple, it filled the gathering place of the people.

And likewise God wants his glory to be resident, to be present, to be president in our midst. And him to get the glory, that Christ will get the glory. And Christ's church is meant to be that glorious church.

It's meant to be holy. As we know our Lord says in the Old and New Testaments, he says, Be ye holy, for I am holy. 1 Peter 1, 16.

Set apart for special purposes. God's church is special. It's set apart. It's wonderfully glorious. It's especially a gathered people that have been pulled out, taken out, called out, and called together to be a holy people.

[8:33] And then it says, Not only holy, but without blemish. It means flawless. It means like the Old Testament sacrifices were flawless. They would scrutinise that lamb and see, is there any defect?

Is there anything that would discount this lamb from being a sacrifice? And if there was, it was put aside. And they would search for another. The Old Testament sacrificial animal had to be flawless, free of defects.

And that's what the church is meant to be. Holy and without blemish. And we know one day it will be. One day when he presents it to himself. And yet, of today's day and age, when we think of, What is the church?

You can ask the question, What is the church? What image comes to mind? Of some people, they might think, The church is, It's a, what? A group of nice people.

And you are that this morning. You are a group of nice people. They might think, It's a social club. And yes, we can have some social times. We can have some recreation and enjoyment together and enjoy one another's company.

[9:37] It could be a social club with traditions. And, you know, every church has got a certain element of tradition or ritual or a way of doing things and jargon. And that can be true.

It can not always be necessarily a wrong thing to have some element of tradition or some kind of jargon. I guess as long as it's not in a kind of negative way.

The church could be some kind of interest group or political action group. And there's times when we do take attention to laws or acts of bills of parliament and we might protest or be concerned and express that through voting or through writing letters and so on to politicians.

Could it be a collection of sanctimonious killjoys or hypocrites? Sometimes church can be like that. It can be where people look down on others, holier than thou, with their nose in the air, putting others down.

God forbid that that should be true of us. That we can be real. We can be authentic. We can be genuine. We can be considerate of those around us, especially those that might be lost.

[10:50] You know, we can come to this church and I was talking to someone just laying, assuming they were a Christian. And they're not a Christian yet, but they're searching and they're just so close. So close.

And we praise God that some might come and meet with us. They're not Christians yet, but they're searching, they're seeking, there's something there. Yeah, there's something here that, yeah, I want to hear more about this.

I want to learn more about this one. And I'm just thinking. Then don't leave it too late. There's some in the Bible that says they were almost a Christian, but they weren't quite there yet.

If you're almost a Christian and bang, your time's up. Sorry, you left it too late. There's no second chance when you get there to think, oh, I was going to do it. I was just putting it off.

Don't put it off to become a Christian today. People today, become a Christian now. Today is the acceptance time. Seek prayer, seek counsel from a brother, a Christian woman or man that you know here today and say, look, I've been interested for a while and I want to commit today to Christ.

[11:53] Make that commitment today by faith and it'll be the most blessed day of your life. And people, the church has been said, it's been all of those kind of things, a social club, an interest group, a collection of people, political action group, but the church is much, much more than that.

It's a blood-bought group of people, an assembly, a gathering of people that despite all its flaws and weaknesses, we are the church, God's people, his saints, and we're meant to be the most powerful force on earth for good across the centuries and there's times when it has been.

The church has been. Of course, we know there's been times where they've called it the dark ages where the church didn't really shine its light so much and that's probably why it's called the dark ages because the light of the world, you are the salt, the light, it wasn't shining or acting so bright and you're meant to be light, you're meant to be salt and salt is like a preservative, it's got a delightful seasoning, a flavour in this corruption-prone, unsavoury society.

That's what God wants us to be. So shine your light, let your light so shine before men that they may glorify your Father which is in heaven. Now 1 Timothy 3.15 says of the church that it's meant to be the pillar and ground of the truth.

Now a pillar is a column, it's a column that supports the roof or porch of a building. If you pull that column down the church is going to, the building is going to fall.

[13:25] It's a bit like I was thinking picking up people today in the bus and driving up there's some steep drives and there's some steep drives and I pull that brake on and it doesn't feel like it's all that biting that hard and some of the kids sometimes they muck around with the gears and the brakes and everything and I thought God forbid that they muck around with that brake because I'm going to go slamming into the house opposite and that's the sense that the brake is important to the bus, the column of the church is important to the church.

The pillar and ground of the truth, that's what the church is meant to be. We're meant to be based on the truth, supporting and upholding the truth of God and our mission is to support and uphold the truth.

Really there are two churches. There are two. In effect, you could say there are two churches and they're both in Revelation 3. Revelation 3, we see the church of Laodicea and the church of Philadelphia.

You could see in a sense some have compared those seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 to be times in history, time periods in different churches through history.

You could see that to a degree and you could say really there's kind of two of the present day or the end time of the Laodicean and of the Philadelphian. Laodicean had the characteristic that it was slack, lukewarm, compromising, in error and falsehood and deception.

[14:57] The Philadelphia church was, as it stands for, Philadelphia, the love of the brethren. The Philadelphian church had a love of the brethren and one church is selfish, power hungry, sinful, the other is authentic, loving, Bible based and godly.

One has a long history of stirring up conflict and persecution or compromise, the other has sought to bless and deliver men and women from their guilt, shame, fear and ignorance, present biblical salvation.

One is a false church, accounts of it, masquerading, masquerading as the real thing but whose head is Satan. The other is the true church founded by Jesus Christ mirroring his authentic character through acts of love, self-sacrifice, courage and truth, a glorious church.

The Lord Jesus himself predicted that the false church would come. The church as God has designed it is meant to be an amazing, dynamic, well-changing force exerting a powerful influence upon the earth and we're meant to be that salt, that light and people today think about am I in a church that is standing on the Bible, the pillar and ground of the truth, that the word is the foundation for what we believe and practice, that it's not about what's popular or the fad or the latest craze or the latest latter-day thinking or trends of the time.

We're based on the pillar and ground of the truth, the word of God. And you could think about churches today and you could say this about a church where there's a story told that there's four people in a church, four people in the church whose names are everybody, somebody, anybody and nobody.

[17:02] Funny names to have but that was their names in this church. And the church had financial responsibilities and everybody was asked to help. Everybody was sure that somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it. But you know who did it? Nobody. It ended up that everybody blamed somebody when nobody did what anybody could have done.

Then the church grounds needed some work and somebody was asked to help. But somebody got angry about that because anybody could have done it just as well and after all it was really everybody's job.

In the end the work was given to nobody and nobody did a fine job. On and on this went. Whenever work was to be done nobody could always be counted on.

Nobody visited the sick. Nobody gave liberally. Nobody shared his faith. In short nobody was a very faithful member. Finally the day came when somebody left the church and took anybody and everybody with him.

[18:03] Guess who was left? Nobody. Someone has said that the church is filled with willing people some willing to work and some willing to let them. You know for people today the church is a body is meant for us all to play a part and to take an active role and so don't leave it to nobody.

Let's encourage one another to be a part of the work and find something to do and do it with all your mind. See what you can do. Be faithful. Be serving and find that which God can put on your heart and give you the grace to do.

And we see the church as our text goes on it says that we're told that the church is a body of people that as the husband nourishes and cherishes the wife Christ nourishes and cherishes us.

Verse 29 He feeds the church He fosters it Our Lord gives His nurture and His tender care That is what God wants to do for you to give us His nurture His tender love and yet it's a sad thing that sometimes we miss out because we're not here That can happen We miss out that tender love and that care that nurturing and that nourishing That's why it's helpful if we can assemble wherever we can whenever we can so we don't miss out What does it mean to be a biblical church?

The purpose of the church What's the church for? It's a place of revival a place of relationship a place for community a place where God's word can be preached and declared and heard and received a place where we can seek for God's power and a place where we can have a great awakening a great openness to God's spirit working and especially the mission of the church is to see people regenerated and woe betide me if I'm not declaring the gospel clearly and soundly enough and I know for us that our believers we know the gospel and perhaps we don't need to hear it but we know that there's some that may not be saved they need to hear that message and we need to emphasize the gospel and declare it and minister it amongst ourselves witness as we get opportunity because the church's mission is truly the same mission that our saviour had in Luke 19:10 he says for the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost it's truly the church's mission is the continuation of our lord's mission so if you're a christian today your mission if you choose to accept it is to do his mission and you shouldn't choose to accept it you should say yes sir amen if he's told you to do it there's no oh

[21:00] I'm going to think about witnessing I'm going to say yes sir tell me where to go show me what to do find what he wants you to do and do it and it's clear from the word of god he wants you to witness he wants you to be his witnesses and preaching the gospel is the primary mission of the church it's what our lord's given us to do to evangelize the world it's the purpose for every believer it's been said that in the holy land if you go to the holy land apparently to a place called the church of the holy sepulchre and the god will take you to this place and there's a red stone beneath the great dome of the church and the god says now right here is the center of the world because this is where Jesus stood when he gave the great commission and said to the disciples go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature he that believeth in his baptize shall be saved but he that believeth not shall be damned and as Matthew's account all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy ghost teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you and lie with you always even unto the end of the world so as much as we don't know whether he stood on that red stone we really don't I wasn't! we're not certain of that we're not certain whether that was the exact place that he stood but in a sense it is the center of the church's obligation to the world isn't it when he left he left that message he left that commission he left that command that mandate that calling for you and we're under that same obligation to preach the gospel and people just to close I'm going the really purposes of the church and our purpose is to have an awakening is to have a reviving again is to have revival it's an awakening it's a refreshing it's an opening again a being made alive again made aware and alert again and heedful again of what he wants us to be and to do as his church to become that glorious church we need his refreshing his awakening his reviving again and Jonathan Edwards an old time preacher there's a famous sermon where people were crying out in response to the words of this message and it's still true today what this preacher was saying of the great dread danger of those who are Christless of the Christians who need to kick up the back side I don't know how to put that delicately but we need Christians need to be awakened we need to be provoked we need to be stirred again stirred again I love that message provoke unto love and to good works and I said it before of late you're going to get sick of me saying it but we need to be provoked and we need to be provoked again to love and to good works here's what Jonathan Edwards says just to close bear with me it's a bit of a quote here oh sinner consider oh sinner consider the fearful danger you are in it's a great furnace of wrath a wide and bottomless pit full of the fire of wrath that you are held over in the hand of that God whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell you hang by a slender thread with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it and ready every moment to singe it and burn it asunder and you have no interest in any mediator and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself nothing to keep off the flames of wrath nothing of your own nothing that you have ever done nothing that you can do to induce God to spare you one moment your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead and to tend down with a great weight and pressure towards hell and if God should let you go you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf and your healthy constitution and your own care and all your righteousness would have no more

influence to uphold you and to keep you out of hell than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock these are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads full of the dreadful storm and big with thunder and were it not for the restraining hand of God it would immediately burst forth upon you the sovereign pleasure of God for the present stays his rough wind otherwise it would come with fury and your destruction would come like a whirlwind and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor

Jonathan Edwards was picturing the danger of neglecting so great a salvation he pictured these people as like held by a thread of a spider's web over the great chasm and the roaring flames of hell and that's how close we are to hell it's only God's grace that holds us that saves us that rescues us from hell it's only his favour his grace his undeserved mercy that he extends his salvation while he still offers it don't don't refuse it and Christian don't neglect it and of all his sermons Edwards preached this with penetrating force for three days Edwards had not eaten a mouthful of food for three nights he had not closed his eyes in sleep over and over again he had been saying to God give me New England give me New England and when he arose from his knees and made his way to the pulpit they say he looked as if he had been gazing straight into the face of God that was what [27:21] God did for Edwards God can do it through you as his church we're still his church we're still his people he's still the same God and people today do we think of where we stand these people when they heard this message he had to call out because of the commotion he had to stop them and request that they be quiet so he could finish the sermon because they were crying out they were crying out there was people saying Mr Edwards have mercy there was people holding on to the backs of pews lest they should slip into the pits most thought the day of judgment had dawned upon them we need a conviction don't we we need a refreshing an awakening a reviving again to be that glorious church to see what great glory and grace he's given to us to be that submitted church submitted to Christ our Lord and Master as the authority as the head of his church to be that church that recognises his love for us that one who gave himself for us to see that sanctifying and cleansing that he wants to give by the washing of water by the word as the word would just flow and cleanse us as it would just wash us as it's preached as it's read as it's studied as we heed its message it'll have that washing effect and we can be that glorious church one day without spot or wrinkle or any such thing we will be a church that's founded square and fair and central on that pillar and ground of the truth the word of God the truth of God we won't be led astray by latter day views or ideas or fads and fashions of men but we'll be led by the spirit of God in accordance with the word of God for the glory of God let us pray heavenly father we praise your glorious name we thank you lord for the glorious work of calvary and lord for the glorious resurrection of Christ from the dead and we thank you lord that unto you be glory in your church by Christ Jesus world without end in Jesus name

Amen