

The Nature, Purpose and Effect of Christ's Love

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth M Ferguson

[0 : 00] And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, there it not be once named among you, as becometh saints, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.

For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them, for ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

[1 : 17] And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light, but whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things, and to God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the saviour of the body.

[2 : 41] Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to 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 and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they too shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular, so love his wife, even as himself, and the wife see that she reverends her husband.

Amen. May God bless to us that reading from his word, and to his name be all the praise. Let us now sing to his praise from Psalm 106. Psalm 106, verses 1-5.

[4 : 15] Give praise and thanks unto the Lord, for bountiful is he, his tender mercy doth endure unto eternity. God's mighty works who can express, or show forth all his praise.

Blessed are they that judgment keep, and justly do always. Remember me, Lord, with that love, which thou to thine dost bear, with thy salvation, O my God, to visit me, draw near, that I thy chosen's good may see, and in their joy rejoice, and may with thine inheritance triumph with cheerful voice.

These verses 1-5, and after we sing, they would also be in need of us in prayer, please. Give praise and thanks unto the Lord. Amen. for bountiful is thee, ■t gen de mercy, The heaven given to eternity.

God might be more to none extent. O show forth all little things.

Blessed are they, the judgment ye unjustly do always.

[6 : 02] Remember me, Lord, with the love which thou tonight hast been.

When thy salvation, O my God, to listen me, glory earn.

That guide thy chosen to this sea, and in their joy rejoice.

And with thy meritans triumph with cheerful voice.

Now as the Lord enables us, let us turn to consider words which we have in this chapter we've read together. From the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians in chapter 5.

[7 : 21] And reading again at verse 25. 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. One or two thoughts on these words.

Now the apostle Paul is mentioned in Acts chapter 18 at verse 19.

And also in Acts chapter 19. In relation to the times he visited the church at Ephesus. Ephesus. And Ephesus was not a godly city by any standard.

[8 : 40] It was the centre of the worship of Diana. And the temple of Diana was a very grand building in itself.

But very impure and godless in the practices that were carried out within its walls and in association with its worship.

But nevertheless the apostle Paul went to Ephesus. And we read in chapter 19 and at verse 18 some of the effects of his preaching.

It says, Verse 17, And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus. And fear fell on them all.

And the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came and confessed. And showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts.

[9 : 53] Brought their books together. And burned them before men. All men. And they counted the price of them. And founded 50,000 pieces of silver.

These were people who had been involved in, I suppose we could call it witchcraft. Or something of that nature. And the gospel had so prevailed in Ephesus.

That some of these people were converted. And they came and burnt the books, the reference books they were using in their black art. And it amounts to a lot of money.

The Lord was greatly blessed. The word of the Lord was greatly blessed in Ephesus. And in this particular chapter 5, the apostle comes to addressing the Christians in Ephesus.

And from the beginning of the chapter, he gives them directions as how they ought to live. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.

[11 : 06] And walk in love as Christ also hath loved us. And hath given himself for us. An offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

You see the standard of love. That he requires of the Christians in Ephesus. Walk in love, he says.

As Christ also hath loved us. And hath given himself for us. Well that is a total commitment required of those who are Christians.

That they are to walk in love to Christ. Primarily love to God. And love to one another. The apostle Peter says that we are to love one another out of a pure heart.

Fervently. And in other parts of the scripture, the apostle is using the standard of Christ's life and service to show forth the kind of lifestyle we should have.

[12 : 18] If you look at Philippians chapter 2 for example, he says, Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus. The same kind of mind.

He came from heaven. And he took to himself human nature. And he suffered the just one in the room of the unjust.

That he might bring them to God. In other words, the apostle says, Don't be self-centered. But like Christ, Have the interests of others at heart.

That is what he says in Philippians. And if you look also in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, He is talking about the liberality of people in relation to the giving, to the church.

And he says, Christ, who was so rich, in that he was in perfect fellowship with God, from all eternity.

[13 : 22] Nevertheless, it says, He made himself poor, that you, through his poverty, might be made rich. So he is using the example of our Lord and Saviour in these ways.

To prompt us to live Christ-like lives ourselves. And when you think of the place in which this church was, Ephesus, a very busy city.

A city full of activities. People coming from the eastern countries. People coming from the Roman side, from the west. There was a lot of traffic.

A lot of involvement with foreign lifestyles. And godless lifestyles. But the church in Ephesus needs to hold its focus, looking unto Jesus.

And then, in verse 25, he speaks to husbands, in the same vein, of encouraging people to live a Christ-like life.

[14 : 36] And he says, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, and so on.

I'd just like to say three things. First of all, the nature of Christ's love. And secondly, the purpose of his love.

The purpose of his love, in verse 26, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. And the long-lasting effects of it, in verse 27, 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.

These three things, just for a few moments. Firstly, Christ loved the church. Now, what was the object of his love like in herself?

Well, the apostle Paul says that we are all sinners. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous.

[16 : 04] No, not one. And because we are sinners by nature, the sin has gone so deeply into our very makeup that we cannot improve ourselves.

We cannot, in our own strength, improve our standing. or improve our character in the presence of God. But it says here that Christ loved the church.

What does this involve? Well, it says in the scriptures that he loved them with an everlasting love. A love from all eternity.

An electing love. A love that wasn't looking for anything that Christ would find in us to deserve his love.

There was nothing at all that would attract his love to us. You remember when Esther, in the book of Esther, was among those who were going to be ushered into the presence of King Ahasuerus.

[17 : 25] And the Bible says that they had to go through a process of cleansing and beautifying and making them acceptable and beautiful for the King.

That's not the way it is with those whom Christ loves. He loves us although we are impure. He loves his people, I should say, although they are impure, although they are sinners by nature and practice.

he loved them and he gave proof of his love. It says here he loved the church and he gave himself for it.

What does that involve? Well there are so many things that one could say in relation to this. He gave himself for it. It means that he was willing to come into this world to take human nature to join it to his own eternal person all because he loved the church and he came to take human nature as our mediator and as our mediator he fulfilled the law in all its details so that the just demand of the law would not be asked of us.

He took our room and our place and he lived a perfectly holy life and he died an atoning death.

[19 : 12] He gave himself unto death so that he would redeem us from the wrath that our sins deserved.

he gave his back to the smiter he gave his beard to those who pulled the hair he gave himself as a ransom for his people.

Awake O sword the prophet Zechariah says Awake O sword against my shepherd the man who is my fellow.

Who's talking there? Well God the Father is talking addressing the sword of God's justice and he asks the sword to awaken and to be plunged right to the hilt into the experience of his of his own fellow his own son so that the justice of God be fully satisfied.

And it says here Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. There wasn't anything that needed to be given for the church that he didn't give.

[20 : 50] God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

love this love is a wonderful love. It's a love that draws people to him who loves them.

I have loved you with an everlasting love and with loving kindness have I drawn you. Haven't you felt something of this love drawing you?

Drawing you to the scriptures drawing you to the place of prayer drawing you to the means of grace drawing you to God's people just like Ruth of old was able to say your people are my people and your God is my God.

She made choice of the Lord and his people because God's love had drawn her in a day of grace.

[22 : 06] That's the first thing. The people whom the Lord has loved he gave himself for them. And secondly what was the reason for his doing this?

Well in verse 26 a reason is given that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

That he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water with the washing of water by the word. The word sanctify has this particular meaning here that he might separate the church.

That he might set it aside for himself. That is what the Lord does when he effectually calls his people by his word and spirit.

He calls them out of darkness into his marvelous light. He calls them out of the bondage of sin into fellowship with himself.

[23 : 30] He separates them from the company that they used to have and with whom they delighted in sin. And he joins them to himself and the people of God walking in a holy life.

That is what only the Lord can do that. And he gave himself for the church that he might sanctify it, separate it from sin and from eternal wrath unto himself.

Do you feel in your own heart that such an effect has been had upon your life? through the gospel preaching and through the word of God that you have been separated from the sins of your life and you decide to turn your back upon them and follow the Lord.

This was true in the church of Thessalonica. It says about them that they turned to God from idols to serve the living and through God and to wait for his son from heaven.

The Lord Jesus Christ his glorious work as mediator and saviour means that the elect of God are sanctified are separated by the effectual call of the Holy Spirit.

[25 : 13] But the next thing it says here is that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

You see baptism is a symbol it's a symbol of the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse all of our sins away.

And there's a pointer I think here also to the laver of water that was used at the tabernacle and at the temple in Jerusalem that the priests had before they began serving at the temple or at the tabernacle they had to wash in this laver that was full of water.

And there is a pointer here to that laver and also the water of baptism. Not that baptism in itself has any power at all.

Only here it's symbolised by the work and the power of the blood of Jesus Christ enabling us to know the cleansing power of the blood as it cleanses our sins away.

[26 : 48] The washing of water water is by the word of God as used in the hand of the Holy Spirit that sanctifies us, cleanses us, gives us to grow in grace and in holiness.

The word of God. That's why it's so important for us to be reading the word, to be listening to the word of God explained and expounded and preached.

It's so important to pray over the word that the Lord would use it to shape our thinking and our outlook and our longings and our lifestyle.

Think of when you read about the Ten Commandments. The kind of lifestyle God requires of you.

And when you come face to face with the requirements of God as revealed in the Ten Commandments, you ask, Lord, give me grace to walk in your ways.

[28 : 10] And when you come to realize what the scripture says about yourself, the word of God explains to you what you're like by nature.

And you realize you need to be cleansed from your sin. And you need to have the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon your heart, upon your mind, upon your lifestyle.

And you come and you ask the Lord, send forth your light and your spirit, giving me to walk in your ways in a way that would please you, that you might sanctify me, that you might sanctify me, cleansing me as I go on, step by step in life, that you might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

And then thirdly, it looks forward to the completion of that process that the Lord has undertaken in a day of grace in our hearts and lives.

And it's looking forward to a moment and a time, verse 27, that he might present the church to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

[29 : 54] You see, this is the great end for which the Lord Jesus has come into the world. He laid down his life as a ransom for his people.

He shed his blood that their sins may be cleansed. And this is the ultimate and end of the plan he had for them, that he might present it as a church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Do you remember what the Catechism says about when believers die? The souls of believers at their death are made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory, their bodies being still united to Christ, pressed in their graves until the resurrection.

And at the resurrection, believers shall be raised in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

He's talking here that he is going to present the church to himself as a glorious church. he's talking about the day of his second coming, the day of the glorifying of all of the saints, soul and body, and they will be presented faultless in the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

[31 : 50] what does it mean when it says that he is to present it to himself a glorious church? Well, one of the commentators said something like this.

He said he is to have such delight in every one of his people that day. It's as if he is seeing himself in them all.

And that's exactly what the Apostle John says. We know not yet what we shall be, but we know that when we see him we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

There won't be anyone there who shall be one iota of what Christ purposed for them.

from all eternity. They shall be Christ-like in thought, in word, in action. It's as if he sees himself perfectly in them.

[33 : 05] Now here, at the moment, we are far from that. but because he has to sanctify us holy, to make us perfectly holy at last, the process of sanctification will continue until such time as we bear his image.

Just like the scripture says, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. the church in glory, the church in glory, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

maybe you feel many dark spots on your thinking this evening. Many dark spots in the way you live.

Many feelings, shortcomings, and you bring these things to the Lord in prayer. Cleanse me from all of these spots.

Cleanse me from the leprosy that wants to prevail upon my mind and upon my heart and life. But the time will come where none of these spots can be seen because the Lord has completely removed them.

[34 : 36] Not a spot or a wrinkle or any such thing. There are a lot of wrinkles in our lives as we are here walking this wilderness journey.

And if you ever noticed the ladies when they do the ironing, some of the garments are fairly wrinkled when they come out of the washing line.

But they have to put the hot iron on them and maybe a steam iron. And once the iron passes over these wrinkled bits, the wrinkles disappear.

Well, very often it's the hot iron of trial and affliction that the Lord uses to smooth our lives out and to take out the wrinkles that are there.

The shortcomings, the sins, the things we ourselves don't want. But he undertakes to take all of these things away and at last they shall be without a spot or a wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish.

[36 : 00] Without one blemish. Isn't it amazing when you think of your own life this evening and the number of blemishes that you yourself can identify to say nothing of what he sees in my heart and life.

But the time is coming where none of these will be seen. None of these will be present because they have been dealt with. That is why Christ loved the church.

He gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. There is going to be in the experience of all of the elect people the washing of regeneration so that they are justified and at last they will be sanctified completely because the Lord has undertaken to do that wonderful work for them.

And he will present it to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

That is where the prophecy of Isaiah will be fulfilled when it says of them that their sun shall no more go down, neither shall their moon withdraw itself.

[37 : 37] They shall be in the presence of the Lord in perfect eternal light. No night there. Oh, to have a portion in that blessedness.

Amen.■ Hold on to doin' happen I have a