

A GLORIOUS CHURCH

EPHESIANS 5:25-27 • TV138B

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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.”

Let’s look at a passage of Scripture found in the book of **Ephesians**. I am going to turn to the 5th chapter of the book of Ephesians and read for you **verses 25, 26, and 27**.

Here’s our subject today: “A GLORIOUS CHURCH.”

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 5:25**: *“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.”*

Now, my friends, the Word of God often speaks of the church as a local assembly, a local congregation of believers in a certain place.

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Many times in the Scriptures we read about the church at Corinth, the church at Galatia, and the church at Thessalonica, and the church here and the church there. It is talking about a local assembly of baptized believers who meet together and worship God in a certain place.

Now, these churches are assemblies of people who profess to believe on Christ and who have confessed Christ and claim to be in Him by faith.

These churches have pastors; they have elders and they have deacons and they meet on the Lord's Day and meet at other times for worship, and for prayer, and for praise, and for the preaching of the Word of God.

A church, you see, is not a building. A church is an assembly of people who meet in a building. They may meet in a cave, they may meet in a home, and they may meet out under a tent. They may meet in a fine, beautiful building.

But the church is not the building with a cross sitting on top of the steeple. That is not a church; a church is made up of people; it is an assembly of people. They meet for worship and prayer and praise.

The churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, the local church; they observe the ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Table. They hedge them about. They have been given the responsibility of distributing the elements of the Lord's Table.

They discipline the members and they ordain ministers and they train and teach ministers. The churches send missionaries and the churches teach the Word of God. The churches seek fellowship with other churches and the cooperation of other churches in supporting missionaries and preaching the Word all over the world.

But, every church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an independent, local, body of believers. They are engaged in the ministry of the Word and they are engaged in the worship of the Lord.

They have fellowship together and they cooperate together but they have no head but Christ. They don't belong to any organization; they belong to Christ; they are His churches.

Many times, when you read the Word of God, the word church has reference to those local assemblies, those local congregations of baptized believers, people who profess to know the Lord Jesus Christ, who love Him, and who serve Him.

But, the Word of God also speaks of "The church", for example: In the Scripture that I just read to you: "*husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.* It is called "*a glorious church.*"

Many times in the Scriptures this church is called the "*body of Christ*" of which Christ is the Head. It's called: "*The whole family of God in heaven and earth.*" It's called: "*God's building.*" It's called: "*The temple of the Holy Ghost.*"

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It's called the "*General assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven.*" Do you see that?

In my text and this is my topic, it is called: "*a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, not having any such thing but holy and without blemish (before God almighty).*"

Now, I have heard men say this; I have heard them say: "I'm not interested in where you go to church." Well, my friends; I am interested in where you go to church." It means a great deal to me; I am interested in where you worship.

I am interested in where you worship on the Lord's Day because it is important that you hear the Word of God. It's important that you hear the Gospel of God's grace preached in truth.

Now, my friends; I am not going anywhere where they entertain, where they socialize, and where they carry on a program and where they do everything but preach the Word of God, and I advise you not to go.

But, I am interested in where you go. I think you need to find a place where the Word of God is preached, where people are not ashamed of the Gospel of the grace of God, where they are not interested in numbers but they are interested in his glory, where they are not interested in a competitive spirit but they are interested in the Holy Spirit, in His presence and power. I am interested in where you go.

It is important that you be identified with a church of believers. You need fellowship. You need encouragement. You need edification. You need to be taught.

The apostle said: "*You desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God might be perfect (spiritually mature).*"

When our Lord left this earth, He left apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers to teach us and we need to get under the ministry of some faithful, God honoring, God-called, Scriptural pastor who teaches us the Word of God.

But, as I say; I'm interested in where you go and whom you are identified. The matter is of greatest importance!

You may not have a church in your community that preaches the Gospel. There are places where there are no churches, no church that preaches the true Gospel of God's grace. There may not be anyone in your community.

Here is what I am asking you; do you belong to that glorious church whose names are written in heaven? Do you belong to that church of the firstborn, that church which is the body of our Lord?

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Do you belong to that church which is the temple of the Holy Spirit; are you in that church, *“for Christ loved that church and he gave himself for it that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.”*

All right; here are some marks of that church and the membership of that church and the people that are in that church. Let me give you some marks of the people and see if I am in that church, or you:

First of all: I know this; all who are in that glorious church, the church of the firstborn, which He loved, which He purchased with His own blood; they are all saved through the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

They are saved by the Lord Jesus Christ; they know it, they profess it, they believe it and they rejoice in it *“for by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, not of works lest any man should boast.”* We are His workmanship.

Paul said, *“For he hath made him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”* Peter said: *“Beloved; you know, (every one of you know, whatever you do know, you know this) that you were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers but you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.”*

There may be false professors in our local churches and I’m sure there are. There may be hypocrites in your local assembly, and I’m sure there are, no doubt there are.

There was Judas; we all know about him. There was Demus; Paul said: *“he left me; he loved the world and he didn’t love the Lord.”* There was Simon Magus who Peter said: *“was in the gall of bitterness.”* There was Ananias and Sapphira that were carried out of the church building dead.

There may be false professors and hypocrites and carnal religionists in your congregation but I will tell you this: in that in the Lord’s glorious church they are all saved. They are all God’s elect; they are all God’s sheep; they are all of God’s children and they are all of God’s jewels.

Men don’t vote them into that church and men can’t vote them out. The heavenly Father chose them in Christ *“before the foundation of the world.”* The Lord Jesus Christ in love and mercy came down to this earth and suffered and died and paid for their sins and the Holy Spirit of God arrested them on their Damascus road to hell and called them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes sir; Christ loved them, that glorious church. Christ gave himself for them, that glorious church. Christ washed them, every one of them, in that glorious church. Christ sanctified them, in that glorious church, and Christ will present them to Father, *“not having spot or blemish, but holy and unblameable.”*

Do you see that? That’s the first mark of this glorious church; Christ loved them and He washed them, and He gave Himself for them and He sanctified them, every one of them. They are all saved

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by the grace of God. There's not a spot, not a wrinkle, and there's not a blemish, nor any such thing in that body of Christ.

They don't claim righteousness of their own. Paul said: "I haven't arrived; I'm not perfect but I reach out and lay hold of upon that for which I have been laid hold of by Christ." David said, "I pursue God; I seek the Lord,"

Secondly: All who are in that glorious church have several things in common!

They may have lived in different generations and they may have lived in different countries. They may be black or white, or red or yellow. They may be called by different names. They may be Baptists and Presbyterians, Episcopalians or whatever denomination.

They may have many different lifestyles and dress habits but I will tell you this: they all have these things in common; they are all born again of the same Spirit, every one of them. *"Except a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

They all confess their sins. Not a one of them claims to be without sin. Every one of them confesses their sin and repents toward God. *"Except you repent you will perish."* Now that's so!

They all believe Christ is the only Redeemer. He has no rivals; He's the only Redeemer. Christ died for their sin. Every one of them will say:

"I once was lost
But now I'm found
And by God's grace
I'm heaven bound.

My only hope
My only plea
Is that when Christ died
He died for me."

Go back to the year 1500 and they will say the same thing. Come up to 1981 and they will say the same thing. Go over to China, Africa, Mexico, India, France, or wherever, and they will say the same thing: *"Christ is my hope, Christ in you the hope of glory."*

They all draw their faith from the same source, the Bible: *"faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."* I don't care where you find a believer; the foundation of his faith is the Word of God.

The object of his faith is Christ but the foundation of his faith is not in feeling or experience or environment or the visual aids of religion; it's the Word of God. *"God hath said, so that we may boldly say: the Lord is my helper."*

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They all worship the true and living God. They worship; they worship the true and living God. They all love Christ and they all love one another.

It doesn't matter what age they are: in Christ there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, there is neither white nor black, and there is neither old nor young. They love Christ.

You cut into the mind of the believer you will find thoughts of Christ. Cut into his heart and you will find love for Christ. Cut into his soul and you will find a panting and desire to be like Christ, wherever you find it.

They all desire to walk in holiness and truth. *"They will be satisfied when they awake in his likeness"* and not until.

Oh, they are happy here walking with Christ. They are happy here in fellowship with one another. They are as happy as a man can be away from home. But, they will be satisfied when *"they awake in his likeness."*

They are all indwelt in the same Spirit, every last one of them. There is not a one of them that is not regenerated by the Holy Spirit and redeemed by the Son and called by the Word of God, not a one of them, wherever you might find them.

Thirdly: All who are in this glorious church; (now listen to me), and I hear a lot about ecumenical movements and getting together and all of this stuff; now you listen to me and there are a lot of divisions among religionists and I'm not surprised, they are worshipping different gods and they are preaching different gospels and they are going different directions.

"Two can't walk together except they be agreed;" it's an impossibility. Two fellows can't walk together one going north and one going south; you can't expect them to. Two people can't walk together and one walking on the upper-road and one walking on the carnal lower-road.

They are not going to walk together; they have got to be agreed. They have got to be born of the same Spirit, washed in the same blood, sanctified by the same God, trusting in the same Lord and living by the same Word, going in the same direction.

But, there is unity among believers. They may not agree on every point in regard to church government. Charles Spurgeon and Jonathan Edwards were poles apart on church government. John Calvin and Martin Luther and Augustus Toplady were greatly differing in regards to church government.

They may not agree on dress. They may wear black clothes or white clothes. They may dress like the people in the tribes of Africa with few clothes and they may dress like those in Alaska with furs around their heads.

They may disagree on prophecy and days and forms of worship. But, I am telling you this; every believer is in agreement on the weightier matters of faith, in perfect agreement they are one heart and

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one mind on these things because they are taught by one spirit. These are the weightier matters of the Word of God.

First of all: Every believer; I don't care where you find them, you can find three or four of them in the farthest reaches of the world in the farthest corners of this world and bring them together, and every one of them will agree that God is on the throne.

That's exactly right! I don't care where you find them; they will agree with you that God is sovereign, that the Lord God is King: *"that God does according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this earth."*

The Scripture says: *"Be still and know one thing, that I am God. Look unto me and be ye saved. I'm God."* Every one of them knows that God is on the throne and they worship the Lord God, they obey the Lord God. They submit to the Lord God and they surrender to the Lord God.

He's Sovereign and He's King. Jesus Christ is God. They don't have any doubt about that. If He's not God He's an imposter; He's a liar. He's in hell if He's not God. He said: *"I am God; I and my Father are one."*

God the Father said Jesus Christ was God. I don't understand the Trinity and you don't either but I believe it. God said: *"Let us make man."* The Scripture says: *"There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost these three are on."*

The Father said: *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."* The Father said to the Son: *"thy throne O God is forever."* *"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."*

"Thou shalt call his name Jesus, (Saviour)." *"A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son. Call his name Immanuel God with us. A child is born a Son is given. His name shall be called: Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."*

I will tell you something else they all know, every believer; they know that man is a fallen creature. They know that in Adam, we all died. They know about *"one man's disobedience, judgment, condemnation, and death passed upon all men."*

They don't talk about the good works of man or the flame of life that is in every soul and the little spark of life that needs to be fanned by some soul-winner. They know that *"man is dead in trespasses and in sin."*

If he's made alive, God will have to make him alive. If he receives life it will be a gift. If he is saved it will be God who saves him. They know that; they know that man is dead in sin.

They also know something else: they know that salvation is by the grace of God, not of works. Every one of them knows that. They know that *"of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."* They know that.

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They know this: *“they know that as many as received him, to them gave he the power (right, the privilege), to become Sons of God who were born, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, (not of natural inheritance), but born of God.”*

They know that Christ alone is the Redeemer; that Christ alone is the Saviour, and that Christ alone is our righteousness and holiness. They all know that it is *“the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.”* They all know that.

They all know the value of God’s Word and they speak according to the Word of God and where the Word is silent they are silent.

I’m telling you this also: where you find believers you will find unity of faith. You will find unity of heart and unity of spirit.

Where you find true believers, men who treasure the Word, who bow before the throne of God, who know their sins, who look to Christ for their salvation, who know that *“in Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and we are complete in him.”* They also know, that Christ is made to us, *“wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that no flesh should glory in his presence.”* They are in unity on these vital things.

Oh, they may conduct their services differently and they may sing different types of songs. They may have a different idea about prophecy and the millennium. Some may be pre, post, or amillennial. They may have a different ideas about judgments and so-forth, but they know who Christ is.

They know: *“Once I was blind; but now I see.”* It’s by his grace that we have been saved.

All right; I will tell you something else about this glorious church: All that are in this glorious church will endure to the end. That’s right; they will still walk in faith.

Our Lord said: *“They will never perish.”* They came to Him and they said: *“If you be the Christ, why don’t you tell us plainly?”* He said: *“I told you; you didn’t believe me; because you are not of my sheep.”*

“I say unto you: my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands. My Father gave them to me and is greater than all. No man can pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

Christ said: *“I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Not one bone of his precious body shall be broken. Not one child of the Lord God shall be disowned and cast out, disinherited, not one sheep shall be plucked from His fold, not one sheep. He is going to bring them all home.

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He said: *“I came down from heaven not to do my will but the will of him that sent me and this is the will of him that sent me that of all which he has given me; I will lose nothing, (not a hoof nor a hair shall be left behind), but I will lose nothing and raise it up again at the last day.”*

“And they shall all be taught of God and everyone that heareth the Father will come to me and I will raise him up at the last day.” Not one believer, not one jewel, shall be absent from his crown!

“That soul that on Jesus
Hath leaned for repose,
He said: I will not, I will not,
Desert to its foes.

That soul though all hell
Should endeavor to shake
I’ll never, no never
No never forsake.”

“The gates of hell shall not prevail against us.”

Fifthly: I’ll tell you something else: all who are in this church, all who are in this glorious church shall have pardon at the first resurrection, in that first resurrection.

My friend, there are just two resurrections. There’s the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the rebel, the resurrection of the saved and the resurrection of the damned; each will have a part.

I don’t know what’s going to happen out yonder. I know that Christ is coming. I know that my judgment is over. I know that in Christ there is no judgment, there’s no condemnation, I face no sins and I’m in Christ, whether I have been saved five minutes or five years; I am in Christ, justified and have all things.

I don’t know what’s going to take place out there but I do know this: when the Lord Jesus come back, every believer is coming out of the grave and those that live will be changed in a moment, in a *“twinkling of an eye and caught up together with him to meet the Lord in the air.”*

I don’t know much about the rapture; I don’t know much about the tribulation, and you don’t either; it’s speculation. You are wasting your time studying it and spending all your time, when you ought to be studying His first coming and what He did for you on the cross.

You need to be involved in the person of Christ, not in a bunch of events and advents that haven’t come to pass yet; leave that to the Lord, He will take care of that. It will turn out alright!

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But, I say this to you: every believer is going to have a part in the marriage supper of the Lamb. Everyone of this glorious church will be raised with Christ and changed into the likeness and image of Christ and enjoy the eternal glory of the Son.

I'm talking about Abel to Abraham. I'm talking about from Eunuch to Elijah. I'm talking about from Noah to Nehemiah. I'm talking about David to Daniel. I'm talking about from Jeremiah to John. I'm talking about from Matthew to Martin Luther and from John the Baptist to John Calvin and from Charles Spurgeon to you and me.

This is the church of the firstborn. You can call it the church of the wilderness or the church in the Old Testament or New Testament, but that glorious church, that church of the firstborn, that church that He loved and purchased with his own blood!

Every last one of them is going to be singing the same song. This is the church of the firstborn, the household of faith, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the royal priesthood, the chosen generation, the holy people of God.

Somebody said: "When all the earthly glory is passed away, when all the earthly organizations, thrones and powers and nations and principalities on earth have come to nothing and faded away, then shall this glorious church be presented without spot or blemish in the presence of the Lord God and shall dwell forever with Him."

And the word says: "*Who are these and whence came they? These are they who came out of great tribulation and washed their robes and them white in the blood of the lamb.*"

And you may say: "That's talking about the seven years."

Brother, I don't expect you will go through any more tribulation that Job did, or anymore tribulation than Abraham, or anymore tribulation than Noah did, or anymore tribulation than Moses did.

"They sang a new song saying: Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

One final thing: I ask you if you are a member of this church. You may belong to your church. I hear people talk about it and say: "I belong to this church."

I hear preachers talk about "my church and my people." You might have the form and the ceremony and the ritual of religion but my friend, I want to know this: are you a member of his glorious church, the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven?

You may have the outward privileges of your denomination. You may even hold an office; Judas did. You man even recognize the right creed and the right doctrine. You might even be a preacher or a teacher.

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My friend; life is to know Christ; it is to be found in Him. It is a heart faith: “*with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.*” It’s being taught in the heart by the Holy Spirit of Christ person, who He is.

You may be a Baptist, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, a Nazarene, or whatever but my friend, you may not be a Christian.

“The church’s one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is his new creation
By water and the blood.

From heaven he came and sought her
To be his holy bride,
With his own blood he bought her
And for her life he died.

Elect from every nation
Yet one for all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, and one birth.

And one holy name she blesses
She partakes of one holy food
And to one hope she presses
With every grace endued.”

“O that I may win Christ and be found in him. Oh that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, that I may be conformed to his blessed image. O that I may win Christ!”