

The Church is Christ's Bride

Ephesians 5:22-33

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians presents a theological high watermark.
1. One of its great themes is the exalted place of the church in the will of God.
 2. A series of four lessons will challenge us to consider four images of the church provided for us by Paul.
 - a. The Church is Christ's **BODY**
 - b. The Church is Christ's **BELOVED**
 - c. The Church is Christ's **BUILDING**
 - d. The Church is Christ's **BRIDE**
- B. Today we will examine the Biblical truth that the Church is Christ's **BRIDE**.
- C. Lesson Text: **Ephesians 5:22-33**
- D. By the time we arrive in chapter 5 of Ephesians, we find Paul addressing practical Christian living. Yet even in his instruction on how the life is lived, the concept of church is rarely far from his mind.
1. In verses 15–18, Paul lays out four assignments for every Christian:
 - a. Be careful how you walk (v. 15)
 - b. Make the most of your time (v. 16)
 - c. Understand God's will (v. 17)
 - d. Live the Spirit-filled life (v. 18).
 2. He then points out the arenas where these assignments play out in life,
 - a. How we speak to each other (v. 19)
 - b. How we speak to the Lord (v. 20)
 - c. How we relate to each other (v. 21ff).
- E. At this point, Paul focuses in on the husband-wife relationship. Yet the concept of church is never far from his conscious thought.
1. In fact, Paul confesses in v. **32**, "The mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church," even as he discusses the Lord's expectations for husband-wife relationships.
 2. Notice how six times in this passage (vv. 23–33), Paul uses the word "church," **twice** he refers to the church as Christ's body, and **five** times he uses pronouns (*she* or *her*) to refer to the church.
 3. So, in speaking of the husband-wife relationship, Paul makes **thirteen** references to the church. It is clear in the mind of Paul that the church is Christ's bride!
 4. This is the same concept found in **Revelation 21:9**, where John quotes, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the lamb."

5. So, if the church is Christ's bride, what does Paul teach us about this relationship?
6. Consider how Christ the bridegroom relates with His bride.

THE CHURCH IS CHRIST'S BRIDE.

A. Consider first Christ's identity (vv. 23, 30).

1. Paul points out that Christ as the husband or bridegroom is both the head of the church and the Savior of the body (v. 23).
2. He then reiterates in verse 30, that we, collectively, are members of His body.
 - a. As **head**, Jesus provides authority and gives direction.
 - b. As the **Savior**, He is the deliver, protector and provider.
3. Jesus is to the church what husbands are to their wives (or their brides). . . . That's who He is!

B. Consider second Christ's activity (vv. 25, 29).

1. When we examine Paul's assessment of Jesus' role as husband, we find decisive actions.
 - a. First, Paul tells us that Christ loved the church.
 1. Of course, this picks up a previous theme that the church is the object of Christ's affection.
 2. We are His beloved. But more than simply being the objects of His love, we are in a covenant relationship with Him.
Christ loved the church and keeps on loving it!
 - b. Second, Paul tells us that love acted. Christ gave Himself.
 1. This, of course, refers to His sacrificial death on the cross.
 2. **We can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving!** .
And Christ expressed His love by giving Himself sacrificially and absolutely.
 3. Love held nothing back . . . Christ gave until he had nothing else to give.
 - c. Third, Paul tells us in verse 30 that Christ "nourishes" the church. This idea denotes the whole process of an ongoing maturing process.
 - d. Fourth, Paul tells us that Christ "cherishes" the church.
 1. Here, Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ has a deep and tender affection for His bride! It is great to be loved!
2. So, here we see Christ, His love, and the resulting activity motivated by love! And at this point, Paul relates where all of this is going.

C. Consider lastly Christ's intention (vv. 26, 27, 33).

1. Four times in this passage, Paul uses what we call a purpose clause. In short, Paul is saying . . . this is where this leads . . . this is what Christ wants to accomplish . . . this is why Christ did what He did for His bride.
 - a. **Christ did all this that He might *sanctify the church*.**
 1. This means He worked to make her pure and clean . . . His desire is to remove the stain of sin, the stain of worldliness, and the stain of the flesh.
 2. Paul points out that we are cleansed “by the washing of water with the word.” The “Word” here is “*thema*,” meaning the appropriated, obeyed Word of God.
 - b. **Christ did all this that He might *present to Himself the church in all her glory* (v. 27a).**
 1. In God’s timetable, a day has been marked on God’s eternal calendar, when the church will realize all of its fruitlessness, failures and shortcomings . . . All defects will be removed, and God Himself will present a glorious church, the Bride of Christ!
 2. **1 Corinthians 15:24** - "Then comes the end, when He [CHRIST] delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power."
 - c. **Christ did all this that the church might be *holy and blameless* (v. 27b).**
 1. Not only has corruption been removed but now virtue is affirmed.
 2. The church is holy , , , And the church is blameless in the sight of Almighty God! . . . Made so by the shed blood of Jesus Christ.
 - d. **Lastly, Christ did all this that the church might respect Him (v. 33).**
 1. This word is actually different from the earlier mandate that the church should be subject to Christ (v. 24) . . . It actually is our word for “fear.” It denotes a reverent respect.
 2. This expresses itself in being submissive.
2. Just as it is easier for a wife to be submissive to a husband who loves her unconditionally, so too the church is to be subject to and live in reverence toward Christ because of His great love. When we consider Christ’s love, its consequent activity and its ultimate intentions, certainly we can rejoice that we have been called to be the bride of Christ!

CONCLUSION:

- A. Are you a part of the Bride of Christ? . . . Are you a part of God's spiritual family? You can become such this very hour.
- B. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**