

How Did Christ Love the Church?

Ephesians 5:25-27

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Introduction: Why do we have a Valentine's Day? "It originated as a Christian feast day honoring one or two early Christian martyrs named Saint Valentine &, through later folk traditions, has become a significant cultural, religious, & commercial celebration of romance & love in many regions of the world" (Wikipedia). The emphasis today centers on love, evidenced by romance, roses, & red hearts. The issue for the believer is how do we define "love." There are 4 Greek words for love, 3 of which are found in the N.T. "*Eros*" referred to a sensual, sexual, selfish love, with a goal of self-satisfaction. This word is not used in the Bible. "*Phileo*" refers primarily to an emotional, reciprocal, love, found in our English city "Philadelphia" – the city of brotherly love. "*Storge*" is used of affection within the family, a love of kindred (cf. II Tim. 3:3, "*without affection*"). And then there is "*agape*" defined as sacrificial, unselfish, giving love, motivated by sole concern for the well-being of the beloved (cf. John 3:16). I bring you to Ephesians 5:25-29, where Paul exhorts, "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, & gave Himself for it.*" Our emphasis this morning is not so much on a husband's love for his wife (though we will see that command here), but rather, how did Christ love the Church?

I. Christ loved the church with a **sacrificing** love (:25)

A. Christ's sacrifice:

1. His love declared - John 13:1, "*...having loved His own ...He loved them unto the end.*"
2. His love demonstrated - John 10:11 & 15, "*...the Good Shepherd giveth His life...*"

B. Comparable sacrifice:

1. What about our love for our church?
2. What about our love for our community?
3. What about our love for our castle (home)?

Summary: Are we willing to sacrifice of our time, transportation & treasure? When was the last time you made a "sacrifice" of your time or effort?

Application: Husband, what have you sacrificed lately for your wife?

II. Christ loved the church with a **sanctifying** love (:26-27)

A. In the past Christ gave His life for the Church > Redemption (initial sanctification):

1. Ephesians 5:2, "*...as Christ also hath loved us, & hath given Himself for us...*"
2. Acts 20:28, "*...the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.*"

B. In the present Christ sanctifies & cleanses His Church > Sanctification (continual):

1. "*Sanctify*"
 - a. Defined as "to set apart." Scofield says, "Set apart for the use of God, or rendered sacred by the divine presence." (His footnote on "*holy mount*" in II Peter 1:18.)
 - b. Demonstrated in the ceremony of marriage > each is set apart from all others to each other.
2. "*Cleanse*"
 - a. The picture of spiritual cleansing - John 13:4-17 (Foot-washing today? Daily cleansing?)
 - b. The purpose of spiritual cleansing - Revelation 3:19, "*As many as I love, I rebuke & chasten: be zealous therefore, & repent*" (cf. Ephesians 5:27).

Application: How much of a sanctifying influence do we have on others? (1) By our exhortation - Hebrews 10:24-25; or, (2) By our encouragement - Galatians 6:1-5?

- C. In the future Christ presents His Church blameless (:27) > Glorification (eternal sanctification):
1. Christ will present His Church “*not having spot*” –
 - a. “Spots are caused by defilement on the outside” (Wiersbe).
 - b. James 1:27, “*Pure religion...to keep himself unspotted from the world.*”
 2. Christ will present His Church “*not having wrinkle*” –
 - a. “Wrinkles are caused by decay on the inside” (Wiersbe).
 - b. Physical wrinkles are the result of old age, but spiritual maturity (“old age”) should lessen internal decay – greater conformity to Christ.

Summary: “Like a beautiful bride, the church ought to be clean & youthful, which is possible through the Spirit of God using the Word of God. One day the church will be presented in heaven ‘*a glorious church*’ at the coming of Jesus Christ (Jude 24, “*Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, & to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy...*”)” (Wiersbe).

III. Christ loved the church with a **satisfying** love (:29)

A. “*Nourisheth... even as the Lord the church.*”

1. Defined:
 - a. “Provides what is needed to live & flourish” (RSB).
 - b. To supply nutriment, to feed.
2. Demonstrated:
 - a. Christ feeds His church with spiritual provision > Matthew 4:4.
 - b. Christ feeds His church with physical provision > Philippians 4:19.

B. “*Cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.*”

1. Defined:
 - a. “Protects from danger & harm” (RSB).
 - b. To provide protection (implies the idea of warmth – closeness).
2. Demonstrated:
 - a. Christ protects His church by His presence > Hebrews 13:5-6.
 - b. Christ protects His church with His power > Philippians 2:13 (& cf. Hebrews 13:20-21).

Application: This speaks of the husband's provision of love, loyalty, & labor (support) as well his the husband's protection by learning (I Peter 3:7) & leading (Joshua 24:15)

Conclusion: In John 13:34-35, Christ says, “*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.*” Here Christ identifies who we are to love (“*one another*”), He illustrates how we are to love (“*as I have loved you*”), & He indicates why we are to love (“*By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples*”). In addition to the people & the purpose of this commandment, Christ gives us the pattern: “*as I have loved you.*” That pattern is revealed to us in Ephesians 5:25-29. Christ loved the church with a sacrificing, sanctifying, & satisfying love. Christ has given us the example & Peter exhorts us to “*follow His steps*” (I Peter 2:21). How about you this morning? Husbands are particularly admonished here, but the pattern set is for all of us (John 13:34-35). Will we commit to love others as Christ loves His Church?