

Christ's Love for the Church.

by Edward Payson

Christ's love for the church is demonstrated through his sacrifice and death, which sanctifies and cleanses the church, preparing it for heavenly mansions.

Scripture: John 13:34, John 15:13, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 5:25, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 10:22-23, 1 Peter 1:15, 1 John 4:19

Topics: "Christ's Love", "Church Sanctification"

Description

Edward Payson preaches about Christ's profound love for the church, emphasizing how He gave Himself to sanctify and cleanse it, presenting it as a glorious and spotless entity. Payson delves into the four key aspects of Christ's love: the object of His love being the universal church, the proof of His love through self-sacrifice, the design to sanctify and cleanse the church, and the means through the washing of water and the word. He urges believers to rejoice in Christ's love, strive for holiness, trust in His promises, and consider joining His real church to partake in His eternal blessings.

Transcript

"Christ 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"

Ephesians 5:25-27

his epistles to the Corinthians, St. Paul informs us that he determined to know or make known, nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Did he then intend so to confine himself to the doctrines of the cross, as to say nothing, in his preaching, of moral duties? By no means. All his epistles prove that he did not. But he intended to illustrate and enforce moral duties in an evangelical manner, by motives and illustrations derived from the cross of Christ. A striking instance of this we have in the context, in which he explains and inculcates the duties of husbands and wives.

We should be ready, at first view, to imagine that these duties have nothing to do with the doctrines of the gospel, and that they must be enforced by considerations derived from some other quarter. But the Apostle shows us that this would be a mistake. By alluding to the union between Christ and his church, he illustrates and enforces the duties of the married state in the most clear and striking manner possible. Wives, says he, 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.

Therefore, as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ 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 to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Thus, you see, that even while inculcating the duties resulting from the married state, the Apostle still adhered to his determination to preach nothing but Christ and him crucified.

In the passage thus introduced we have four things which deserve our attention I. The object of Christ's love; the CHURCH. II. The proof of his love; he gave himself for it. III. The design of his love; that he might sanctify, cleanse and present it to himself a glorious and spotless church. IV. The means by which he effects this; the washing of water and the word. A few reflections on these several particulars, will compose the following discourse. I. Let us consider the object of Christ's love; the church.

By the church here, you are doubtless sensible is not meant any particular church, as the church at Rome, at Corinth or Ephesus, but the church universal. You are also probably aware that the church universal which Christ loved, and for which he died, does not include all the members of his visible church, who are united to him by an external profession; for the Scriptures clearly teach, and melancholy experience incontestibly proves, that many of these are insincere, and either willfully deceive others, or are deceived themselves.

It is therefore the real, invisible church which is here intended, including all who ever have believed, or who ever will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a true and living faith; all, in a word, who were given to him by his Father in the covenant of redemption. In this covenant God promised his Son, that if he would make his soul an offering for sin, he should have a seed, and a people to serve him, and that this people should be made willing to serve him in the day of his power.

Of these persons Christ speaks, when he says, all that the Father hath given me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. To these also he refers in his last prayer: I have manifested thy name to them which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were and thou gavest them me. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them also, who shall believe on me through their word.

From these passages it appears, that the church, which was given to Christ, the church which he loves and for which he prays, includes all who did then believe, and all who should afterwards believe on him to the end of time. If any doubt this, and allege that Christ loves and prays for none till they actually become members of his visible church, we would refer them to the tenth chapter of John. We there find Christ saying, I am the good Shepherd, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

And other sheep I have, who are not of this fold. Them also I must bring; and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; or in other words, one church and one head. Here Christ evidently speaks of some of his sheep, who had not yet been brought into his fold, or visible church; and at the same time predicts that they shall be brought in, in due time. He does not therefore love persons, because they are members of his church; but they become members of his church, because he first loved them as given to him by his Father.

Agreeably we find him saying to his disciples, Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. And again he says to them, As the Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you. But he elsewhere tells us, that his Father loved him before the foundation of the world. If then he loves his disciples, even as the Father loves him, he must have loved them before the foundation of the world; and he may justly say to all his real disciples, as he does to his ancient church, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.

And as this love of God to his Son is sincere, ardent, constant and unchangeable, such must be the love of Christ to his church. This leads us to consider, as was proposed, II. The proof of Christ's love to his church; He gave himself for it. Observe what he gave; not merely his time, not his exertions, not his perfections, but himself, his whole self, without the least reserve. Such was the greatness, the intensity of his love for his church, that he devoted to it his body, his soul, his blood, his very life, to be disposed of as its welfare required, Observe too, to what he gave himself.

He gave himself up to disgrace and ignominy. Though he was in the form of God and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he humbled and made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and suffered himself to be despised and rejected of men. He gave himself up to the most abject poverty: Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich.

He gave himself up to sorrow, suffering, shame and reproach. All they that see me, says he, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

Behold and see, all ye that pass by, if there be any sorrow like my sorrow. He was indeed a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He gave himself up into the hands of his bitterest and most implacable enemies. This is above all things disagreeable and hateful to nature. Few things can be conceived of more abhorrent to our feelings, than to be delivered into the power of raging, insulting, blood-thirsty foes, who will exhaust all the arts of cruelty in tormenting us, and mock our dying agonies with scoffs, revilings, and the exclamations of savage triumph.

What, my friends, could induce you to throw yourselves into a dark and loathsome pit, filled with deadly serpents, scorpions, and other poisonous and disgusting reptiles, all brandishing their envenomed stings, and eager to devour you? Yet this world, into which the Son of God voluntarily descended for our sakes, was far more hateful, dreadful, and loathsome to his holy nature, than such a pit would be to us; and the poisonous rage of serpents and scorpions, is far inferior in malignity and in the sufferings which it can inflict, to that rancorous enmity which exists in the hearts of sinners, to which Christ gave himself up.

Nor was this all. He also gave himself up to the powers of darkness, who harassed and tormented his mind, incomparably worse than men could his body. The prince of this world, said he, cometh. He saw him approaching; approaching to fill his soul with unutterable anguish, and fulfil the prediction that he should bruise Christ's heel, that is his human nature. We see in the case of Job what the powers of darkness can do, and how unspeakably they can torture and distract the soul, even while controlled by divine power.

What then must Christ have suffered from them, when they were permitted without restraint, to exert all their rage and cruelty to destroy him, if possible; and if not, to increase to the utmost his wretchedness.

Yet to this Christ gave himself up for his church. But the proofs of his love do not end here. He also gave himself up to the wrath of God; to the curse of his broken law. He surrendered himself up as a sinner into the hands of incensed justice; and while he thus stood in the sinner's place.

God treated him as if he had been a sinner. He hid his face from him; set the terrors of his wrath in array against him, made him the mark of those arrows, the poison of which drinks up the spirits, and plunged the flaming sword deep in his inmost soul. In this, the very essence of his sufferings consisted. All that men and devils could do, he bore without a groan. But when the weight of divine wrath crushed him down, when his Father's face was hidden from his view; and he beheld him only in the character of an awful, holy, avenging God, as a consuming fire to sinful creatures, then his anguish could no longer be concealed, but burst forth in that heart-rending exclamation, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!

Such were the sufferings which Christ endured for the sake of his church; such the proofs of love which he has given it. And what proofs can be conceived of, more strong or satisfactory? We think it a proof of love to perform acts of kindness to others, when we can do it without much personal suffering or inconvenience. Should we redeem a friend from slavery at the expense of our whole fortune, we should expect that his gratitude for such a proof of affection, would cease but with his life.

And should we sacrifice our life to preserve his, it would be acknowledged by all that we had given the strongest possible evidence of our love; for greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend. Yet all this would be nothing, and less than nothing in comparison with what Christ has done for his church; with what he has done, not for friends, but for rebels and enemies. Well then may he commend the greatness of his love, in that while we were enemies, he died for us,-died such a death as no one ever suffered or can suffer.

I am aware, however, that we are prone to evade these proofs of his love, by imagining that pain,, shame, and death, were not so terrible to Christ, as they are to us. But this is a gross mistake. He had the same natural aversion to these evils, the same unwillingness to suffer them, which we have; and nothing but love, the most ardent and intense, could have conquered this unwillingness, and led him, patient and resigned as a lamb, to the slaughter. We proceed now to consider, III.

His design in thus giving himself for his church. It was to sanctify, cleanse, and present it to himself a glorious and spotless church, without the least moral defilement. You need not be told that love naturally desires the society of the object beloved. Since then Christ loves his church, he cannot but desire that it should be with him where he is; and agreeably, we find him in his last prayer soliciting this favor of his Father. But before his church can reside with him in heaven, it is necessary that it should be prepared for those holy mansions; for we are told that nothing which defileth can enter there, and every member of his church is originally defiled by the pollutions of sin.

He himself compares it, in its natural state, to a naked, polluted, helpless infant, cast out to perish in its blood. Such was the state in which he foresaw his church, when it first became the object of his love; and from this state, it was the design of his sufferings and death to raise it. It is styled his body, his members, and he intends that this body shall be like the head, perfectly holy, harmless, and undefiled. It is also styled his bride, his consort, his spouse; and he intends that his bride shall be made worthy of such a husband.

Every member of his church must therefore be perfectly freed from all corporeal weaknesses and infirmities; from all spiritual blemishes and imperfections. Their bodies must be changed, and made like

unto his glorious body, and their spirits rendered perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect. The work by which this glorious transformation is to be effected, is already begun in the hearts of all who believe, and will in due time be fully accomplished. And the same work will commence, and be carried on to perfection in the hearts of all who shall believe on him hereafter.

And when his mystical body is complete, when every member of it is brought into his church, then the Lord of the world will come. Then Christ will appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The bodies of his people will be raised incorruptible and immortal, and be caught up by angels to meet their Lord in the air; where the whole multitude of the redeemed will be presented to him as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, and perfectly prepared to accompany their Redeemer to heaven, and there live and reign with him forever and ever.

Then will the design for which he gave himself up to poverty, pain, shame and death, be fully accomplished, and he will see the glorious fruits of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. This leads us to consider, as was proposed, IV. The means by which Christ accomplishes this great work. The apostle in our text mentions two, the washing of water, and the word. What is here called the washing of water, is in another passage styled the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

That the influences of the Holy Spirit are very frequently compared to water, you need not be told; and the reason of this comparison is, that as water cleanses the body from pollution, so the Holy Spirit purifies the soul from the defilement of sin. By the washing of water, in our text, is therefore intended the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit, by which every real member of the church of Christ is renewed in the spirit of his mind, and sanctified or cleansed from moral pollution.

Agreeably the apostle writes to the members of the Corinthian church, Ye are washed, ye are justified ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. These sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit Christ procured for his church, by his sufferings and death. When he ascended on high, leading captivity captive, he received gifts for men, and of these gifts the Holy Spirit was the principal. This gift he is constantly pouring out upon his church in showers of divine grace, to sanctify and cleanse it, agreeably to his promise in the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.

The instrumental means by which this great work is effected, is the word of God. His church are sanctified and cleansed faith the Spirit, but by the word; for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. This word is the grand instrument by which the Spirit of God awakens the future members of Christ's church, from spiritual slumber, convinces them of their naturally sinful and miserable condition, and creates them anew, or regenerates them to a new life. Hence they are said to be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.

The work of sanctification, thus begun by the instrumentality of the word, is carried on to perfection by means of the same word; agreeably to our Saviour's petition to his Father, Sanctify them through thy truth. The subject we have been considering is full of consolation to the church of Christ; but we cannot partake of this consolation, unless we have a well-grounded hope that we are real members of his church. We may be members of his visible church, and yet have no connection with his real church: and some present may be members of his real church whose doubts respecting their own character have hitherto prevented them from uniting with his visible church.

Let it then improve this subject, 1. For self-examination, that we may ascertain whether we truly belong to the church of Christ or not. You have already been reminded, that Christ gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it from all pollution. If, then, you are real members of his church, he has already begun this glorious work in your hearts. He has awakened you from your slumbers, convinced you that you are guilty, miserable sinners, wholly polluted by the defilements of sin, entirely unfit to enter heaven, and justly exposed to everlasting condemnation, without any possibility of escaping it by your own merits.

He has also renewed you in the spirit of your minds, caused you to hate, loathe, and repent of your sins, to embrace him as your only Saviour by a living faith, and to long, and pray, and strive after universal holiness. In one word, he has made you new creatures; for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Now if this great change has been effected in your hearts, you are real members of the church of Christ, whether you belong to his visible church or not; and if you do not, you may, and you ought to unite yourself to it without delay; for Christ loves and has given himself for you.

Hence, 2. Those who have reason to hope that they belong to the real church of Christ, may improve this subject for their encouragement and consolation. To all such it does indeed afford abundant cause for rejoicing. You may each one of you say, with confidence, Christ loves me. Yes, the Son of God, the Creator of the world, the brightness of his Father's glory, the chief among ten thousand in whom dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily, condescends to love me, a poor sinful worm of the dust; loves me better than I love my parents, better than I love my children, better than I love brother or sister or friend; nay, better than I love myself; loves me with a love stronger than death and lasting as eternity.

He not only loves me, but has given himself for me; has died that I may live; live forever with him in heaven. And is not this cause of rejoicing? If the most amiable and excellent of the human race would become your friend and companion, would you not rejoice? If this most amiable and excellent friend was also a powerful monarch, able to defend, enrich, and load you with honors, would you not rejoice still more. How then ought the Christian to rejoice in the love of Him who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, who is the perfection of uncreated excellence, glory, and beauty; whose love knows no bounds, no interruption, intermission or end; who possesses unerring wisdom to guide, and omnipotent power to defend them.

Surely, my Christian hearers, if you will not rejoice in the love of such a friend, you can rejoice in nothing. Well may the apostle call upon you to rejoice in the Lord, to rejoice in the Lord always, to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. What if you are poor? In possessing such a Friend, you possess all things. What if you have no other friends! Is not such a Friend enough to satisfy you? Is he not worthy of all your affection, and will he not more than return it?

Rejoice then in your eternal, almighty, unchangeable Friend, and begin now to sing the song of the redeemed, exclaiming, Now unto him that was slain, that loved us, and gave himself for us, and redeemed us to God by his blood, be ascribed riches, and honor and glory, and power and blessing. 3. While you thus rejoice in Christ's love, endeavor to return it. Strive to love with your whole hearts him who first loved you. Give your whole selves to him who has already given himself for you.

Remember that you are no longer your own, for you are bought with a price. Glorify him then in your souls and bodies which are his; and let his love constrain you to live for him who died for you. Surely, if his love does not constrain you thus to live, it must be because you do not realize it. Surely, you cannot refuse to

love and live to him, who is so infinitely lovely, and who loves you with such an intense and unalterable affection, notwithstanding all your unworthiness, His language to you is, as my Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

I have not called you servants, but friends, and then are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. O then, love, love and praise with all your powers this infinitely gracious, condescending and affectionate friend, who declares that though mothers should forget and cease to love their infants, he will not forget or cease to love his church. Let our love to him be equally unchanging. Though parents should forget their children, and children cease to love their parents; though the titles of brother and sister, husband and wife, should cease to excite affection; though every other tie should be dissolved, and all other love banished from the earth, yet never let the church cease given himself for it. 4.

While you have this friend, be careful to trust in his love, to confide in him unreservedly without the least anxiety, doubt or suspicion. You well know that nothing grieves us more than the jealousies and suspicions of our friends, that we do not love them. Beware then that you do not grieve this best of friends, by indulging them. He surely has a right to be believed, when he professes to love his people, since he has already given them such strong and infallible proofs of his affection.

His promises and assurances come to us sealed with his own life-blood; and if he loved us and gave himself for us while we were yet enemies, how shall he not also with himself freely give us all things. We appeal to yourselves, would he who has freely given you his blood, his life; he who has suffered so much for your sakes; would he deny you more wealth, more friends, more temporal comforts, if he saw that they would prove really beneficial! Would he ever afflict you, if it were not absolutely to love him who has loved and necessary for your good?

To die for you, cost him much; to give you mere temporal blessings would cost him nothing. Since then he has done the former, can he be unwilling to do the latter? If his love has led him to do that which was most difficult, will it not lead him to do what is most easy? And has he not promised that he will withhold from you no good thing? that he will cause all things to work together for your good? that he will never leave you nor forsake you? Why then, oh ye of little faith, why do ye doubt?

Why do you distress yourselves and grieve him by needless anxieties respecting what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, or how you shall be carried through the trials and difficulties which are before you in your way to heaven? Banish, I beseech you, all your groundless fears and anxieties. Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you; and while you love and praise him for all that is past, so trust him for all that is to come. 5. Did Christ give himself for the church with a view to render it perfectly holy, without any blemish or imperfection?

How strong then are our obligations, and how great our encouragement, to aim at universal holiness. What, oh Christian, do you above all things desire? Is it not to be holy as Christ is holy, and to be with him where he is? And does not he ardently desire the same? Did he not give himself for you for this very purpose, that he might sanctify, cleanse, and present you to himself, perfectly glorious and holy? And will he fail of accomplishing his purpose? No; as certainly as Christ has died, so certainly shall every real member of his church, every one who truly hates and mourns for sin, be presented to him at last, freed from every spot and blemish.

Arise, then, ye who are weak, wounded, and desponding, and renew the conflict with sin. While endeavoring to subdue it, you are fighting the battles of Christ; you are engaged in a cause which is dear

to him; you are contending with his enemies, as well as yours; he has determined that they must and shall be conquered. Fight then courageously a short time longer, and the victory shall be certainly yours. The object of Christ's death must not, shall not, cannot be frustrated; but every member of his real church shall be made perfectly like him, and see him as he is.

Soon will the blessed day arrive, when he will present to himself the whole church of his redeemed, as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. In this number you will then be found, and sit down with him forever at his marriage supper in heaven. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, comfort and encourage one another in your Christian warfare with these words. Lastly, Does Christ thus love his church? How desirable then is it, my impenitent hearers, that you should become members of it, and thus share in his love.

Mistake me not, however. We wish not to induce you to make a hypocritical profession; for this would not render you members of his church. But we wish you to unite yourselves to his real church; to join yourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. Till you do this, you have no right to hope for a share in the blessings which Christ has purchased; but having done this, you shall finally become members of the church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and be partakers of the glory that shall be there revealed.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/edward-payson/christs-love-for-the-church/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net