

# Jehovah-Jesus, the Lover, Husband, and Glorifier of His Church

by Thomas Bradbury

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*Christ's love for the Church is a demonstration of His everlasting, spontaneous, uninfluenced, free, unchangeable, inexhaustible, and invincible love, which motivates Him to give Himself for the Church and to present it to Himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 56:5, John 3:16, John 17:19, John 17:23, 1 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 2:4, Ephesians 5:25, Hebrews 10:17, 1 Peter 1:22

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

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## Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches on the profound love of Christ for the Church, emphasizing how husbands should love their wives sacrificially, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The epistle of Ephesians is highlighted as a revelation of the fellowship and privileges of God's family, showcasing the spiritual union and high calling of believers in Christ. The sermon delves into the sanctification and cleansing work of Christ through the Word, aiming to present the Church as a glorious and spotless bride, holy and without blemish, reflecting the perfection and beauty of Christ.

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## Transcript

Preached in Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning, June 30th, 1878

"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." (Ephesians 5:25-27)

The design of the Holy Ghost in inspiring the apostle Paul to write this marvellous epistle was to set forth the fellowship, privileges, and immunities of the family of the living God. God's elect, who are brought to the spiritual knowledge of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus, not only know that they are born again and possess certain evidences indicating Jehovah's care and concern over them, but something higher, grander, and more glorious, as declared by the Holy Ghost in Isa. 56:5, "Even unto them will I give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: and I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."

There appears to me a spiritual exposition of this in the second chapter of this epistle, where, after a description of the Church and people of God in their natural state, the apostle says, "But." That is a marvellous "But" of the Lord God Almighty, appearing like a glorious breakwater, over which the floods of sin, corruption, death, and hell can never come. On the other side of God's "But" they seethe, boil, roll, and roar, but there they must for ever stay. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:4-6) This is marvellous grace.

Wrathful children even as others, disobedient and rebellious ones, choosing to follow the devil, and delighting in any place rather than that where God records His name and where His worshipping people are gathered together, yet loved by Him "even when were dead in sins." That is the love I like. See! Loved in Christ. Quickened with Christ. Saved by Christ. Raised with Christ. Seated with Christ. All things fleshly, beggarly, and sensuous excluded, while the living children of God stand in the glorious perfection of the Son of His love, and rejoice in the Divinely-communicated fact, that as He is up yonder, so are they down here.

As He is on the other side of judgment, having put away all sin, spoiled principalities and powers, rendered Satan ineffectual in all his designs, so are they. All sin gone. No condemnation in Him. "Though sinning, yet free from all sin." It is a gracious privilege to glory in a forgetting God. A God who never forgets His children, but remembers not their sins. For you, who are free from sin, accepted in the Beloved, without fault before His throne, and are holy and without blame before Him, yet sensible every day of sins and infirmities, failures, and falls, this is a glorious truth, that your sins which harass and annoy you, your sins which make you sick of yourselves, your sins and your iniquities are remembered no more by your covenant God and Father. (Heb. 10:17) Is not that worth knowing and experiencing?

Ah, my dear friends, there is nothing like it. It is the glory of God's Gospel, and that glory pervades the whole of this epistle, and overflows in showers of love, life, and liberty to the children of the living God.

This epistle, in its construction and contents, is rightly styled "The Family Epistle." In it is revealed the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of His elect and redeemed brethren. It brings to view the household of God with Christ its Steward and Provider. It sets forth the family of God with Jesus its First-born and Protector. It discovers to us the children of God, the brethren of the Brother once born for adversity who follow Him, and with Him experience the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

In it there is a peculiar feature; may God enable you to remember it. There is not a word in it concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is this? Because a present Christ is the theme of the whole epistle. Christ in living and loving union with His own, seated together with them in the heavenlies, giving them to know that as He is accepted, so are they; as He is righteous, so are they; as He is holy, so are they; as He is without sin, so are they; as He is high in the glory of God the Father, so are they.

With an epistle like this, abounding with Gospel grace, we may well come to the conclusion that there is no necessity for legal precepts to guide and govern those who enjoy such spiritual privileges and immunities. Yet in reading this epistle we come across portions which some would term "precept upon precept." But I do not call them so, neither does the Holy Ghost. Counsels of love are given on new covenant ground. See, here we have a person once dead in trespasses and sins, but now quickened into spiritual life by the Holy Ghost, and brought into the experience of life union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the accomplishment of the Divine purpose he is married to the object of his heart's affections, and of the two made one it may be said in the language of Peter, they are "HEIRS TOGETHER OF THE GRACE OF LIFE." (1 Pet. 3:7) To such a man as this, and to all such, there is a necessity for this spiritual counsel and heavenly advice, "Husbands, love your wives." The child of God who is a partaker of the Divine nature, blessed with a new heart, and with experimental union to a precious Christ, knows something of the enmity of his carnal mind, the incorrigibility of his wretched nature, and the imperiousness of his perverse will, and is brought again and again to feel that without the constraining and restraining power of omnipotent and sovereign grace he cannot maintain with comfort to others the closest and tenderest relationships in life.

Is he a husband? He mourns his lack of gentleness, and sighs in secret over his snappishness, his cross looks and hasty tempers. Yes, he knows and feels by bitter experience that without special grace he cannot perform his promises of love and of fond affection. Were this not the truth, the Holy Ghost, by Paul, would never have given this gracious admonition to husbands. "Husbands," you, blessed in heavenly places in Christ; "Husbands," you, who have experienced the resurrection power of Christ; "Husbands," you, whose hearts have been broken with a sense of God's eternal and unchanging love to you; "Husbands, love your wives."

Is that legal? No, it is not, for the apostle was not then standing upon legal ground, but was lifted up clean out of the old ground of legality into blessed and hallowed oneness with the great and glorious Head and Husband of the Church.

"Husbands love your wives." Why are we to love our wives? If I were a mere moralist, and I stood up to expound the Scriptures in a legal spirit, I might lecture and advise a husband thus: You know, sir, you have taken that woman from the bosom of her family, from the embrace of a mother, and from the care and concern of a loving father; you have been the means of separating her from the sympathies of a lifetime, and from associations which have a tender place in her affections and feelings, therefore it is your duty, as an upright and honest man, to love, nourish, and cherish her.

But Paul, and those who are spiritually one with him, take not so low ground as that. He stood on higher ground, and so do I. It is not mine this morning to lecture husbands, but by the grace and guidance of God's blessed Spirit to deal out a few hints respecting the ground the apostle occupied when, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he wrote these precious and salutary words, "Husbands, love your wives." Why? "Even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it."

That was the ground for godly and gracious counsel. Tell me, you who are blessed with a good hope through grace and have godly wives, how do you love them? Is it merely with the warmth and ardour of youthful affection? I remember something of that, but it is a mere bubble upon the ocean of earthly experience which must cease and pass away for ever. You love her as a sister in Christ Jesus, and the blessedness of knowing that you are "heirs together of the grace of life" is beyond the power of description.

The wife stands in Christ on a glorious and gracious equality with her husband. She is loved with the same love, blessed with the same spiritual provision, watched over with the same tender care, washed in the same atoning blood, attired in the same garments of glory and beauty, lives upon the same heavenly food, and resides where lordly man cannot assert his superiority over her. In Christ Jesus husband and wife are one spirit. In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, but a new creation.

In Christ Jesus no degrees, but blessed equality, perfect identity, spiritual oneness; therefore, "Husbands, love your wives." As the Holy Ghost leads you by His gracious power into the knowledge of what you are in Christ Jesus, as He melts your heart by the shedding abroad of the love of a covenant God, as He brings you into the sweet apprehension of your portion in Him, and the dowry He has given to her with whom you are one flesh, and when the command comes home with power, you can no more help but love than I can help speaking out those truths which God has so graciously revealed in me.

One has well said, "God's commandings are God's enablings." When He brings His own commands home to the heart, willing obedience is rendered, not according to fleshly notions of duty, but according to Divine predestination and omnipotent love. It is now our lot to notice, by the guidance of the blessed Spirit, the ground upon which the apostle stood.

CHRIST'S LOVE--"Even as Christ also loved the Church."

CHRIST'S GIFT--"And gave Himself for it."

CHRIST'S WORK--"That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word."

CHRIST'S GLORY--"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."

I. CHRIST'S LOVE--"Even as Christ also loved the Church." The fullness and vastness of the subject cause my spirit to thrill, and the very thought of it makes me feel it presumption on my part to attempt to expatiate on a theme so grand and so glorious. It takes a man clean off old covenant ground. He does not love his wife because of her position, or because she owns a splendid fortune, or because of her natural beauty, or because of her chastity, meekness, modesty, or refinement. Not that. If a man is married to a woman possessing these gifts and accomplishments, when he is brought to view her in the beauty and comeliness of Christ they all disappear. These fading and fleeting things may go to the dunghill for what he cares; he treats them as altogether lighter than vanity, while he delights in her whom God made one flesh with himself, as spiritually one with him in the person of the heavenly Bridegroom, a precious Christ. Does he love her? This is the secret reason, "even as Christ also loved the Church." Let me ask you, How did Christ love the Church? With a love that no mortal can touch or equal. His love was--

EVERLASTING. Such is the love of our most glorious Christ to His Church, His bride, whom He took to Himself in the everlasting council as the gift of the Father. His love knew no beginning, it will know no end. See how He speaks to the Father concerning this love in John 17:23,24: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me....for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." O how precious is that declaration of His love to the weeping prophet: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3) As is the life of God, so is His love. Tell me when He existed not, and I will tell you when love dwelt not in the bosom of Christ toward His bride. Love everlasting? Yes, and something more.

SPONTANEOUS. What is that? Without restraint. Christ's love flows forth from Himself independently of any outward cause. It is not subject to any change or caprice, but is a free, full, and illimitable flow of His affection to His Church. How is this love to be traced up to its source? This cannot be, only as He, the great and glorious Love, gives us a gracious lift and carries us in His arms of love into the secret place where He unfolds to His own the beauties of His kingdom and the joys of His Father's house.

UNINFLUENCED. Many times in public have I repeated those precious words, and oftener in private:

"What was there in me that could merit esteem,

Or give the Creator delight?

'Twas 'Even so, Father,' I ever must sing,

Because it seemed good in Thy sight."

No, there was nothing in the object loved to draw forth His notice, concern, and care. Nothing in me to cause my Brother, my Saviour, my Lover, my Husband to save and succour me. If He were a fitful or fanciful lover, one moment of the day He might look upon me with fond affection and the next scare me from His presence with deserved frowns. But His love is uninfluenced.

"He saw me ruined in the fall,

Yet loved me notwithstanding all;

He saved me from my lost estate;

His lovingkindness, O how great."

FREE. Ay, freer than the air we breathe. Free as the rays of light which flow from yonder sun at His bidding, rays which flow forth where He wills, and none can hinder them. Loved for nothing, and that in the face of innumerable sins and transgressions,

UNCHANGABLE.

"Zion's Friend in nothing alters,

Though all others may and do;

His is love that never falters,

Always to its object true."

"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John 13:1) Did Peter fall? He loved him even then. Did the eleven forsake Him? He loved them still.

INEXHAUSTIBLE. As yonder sun has given forth its light to millions upon millions of human beings, and with its warmth and heat has brought forth the fruits and fullness of the earth for their sustenance, so the love of Christ found Abel, David, Rahab, Peter, Mary, and me, and thee. With all this reception of His love there is no decreasing its store. It is not according to the perversion of John 1:16, "Out of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." No "out of" there. It is, "And of His fullness have all we received." His fullness, which is ever overflowing, but never for a moment diminished. Christ's heart of love ever overflows, and the cry of our hearts is, Lord, let some of the drops of that overflowing of the fullness of everlasting love fall on me in these parched places of the wilderness.

INVINCIBLE LOVE. Do you ask why? Think of the incorrigibility of your nature, think of the enmity of your carnal mind, think of the obstinacy of your will, think of the deceitfulness and desperate depravity of your

hearts. What know you of these? As taught of God, you must confess they are as bad today as ever they were, and, according to your own judgment and experience, ten times worse. But it is a marvellous and surprising mercy that sometimes, the more I feel my incorrigibility, enmity, deceitfulness, and depravity, the more His love seems to be showered upon me, the more I am brought into the melting experience of the love of my covenant God, Saviour, Lover, and Husband.

Invincible! Satan cannot bring it to an end. Sin cannot affect it. Hell cannot hinder it. Infirmities cannot change it. My continued emptiness cannot exhaust it. "Love is strong as death," mightier than many waters. Look at that precious portion in Solomon's Song 8:6,7, it is worth thinking about: "Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm; for love is string as death." We think we are very great and grand sometimes, and assert our wills, desires, and determinations, but before we have the opportunity the king of terrors gives us some indications of his approach.

Loved ones exhibit the hectic flush, or the sunken eye, and our spirits quiver with dread anxiety as we hear the hollow cough. These to us are certain indications of approaching dissolution. Where are we? Why, my dear friends, if you are like me, such things take all the stamina out of you. You are reminded that ere long the time of separation must come. Some have offered crowns and kingdoms for life to be prolonged a day; but this could never be. "There is no discharge in that war."

Death comes, and its strength is irresistible, invincible, and cannot be put off. So the love of Christ is strong as death. Before its power all things must retire and flee away. When it appears, and is sweetly enjoyed, the death of free-will, fleshly wisdom, vain confidence, and self-righteousness takes place. But look. "Jealousy is cruel as the grave." It has been well said: "Where true love is found, there is sure to be more or less of jealousy." Do not I look over those who are near and dear to me with fonder affection, more regard, and greater attention than I do over others?

Certainly I do. It must be so according to the law of nature. When we look at this in the light of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," we see Him looking upon His own with jealousy. He cannot bear any object to come between Him and His bride. Every fleshly lover He will overthrow. "The idols He will utterly abolish." As the grave is ever open and ever crying, "Give, give!" so his jealousy is ever on the alert to hide out of sight everything that would come between Him and the object of His heart's affections.

Look still further. "The coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Fire and flood, illustrative of the overwhelming power of Divine love and jealousy. Fire and water are good servants, but terrible masters. Let fire gain the mastery, and we are powerless. Let the waters swell and rage, and where are we? So, when Jehovah-Jesus comes in His fiery chariot of love, and takes us up to sit with Him in heavenly places, the world, the flesh, and the devil cannot stand before His invincibility.

II. CHRIST'S GIFT--"And gave Himself for it." A glorious portion that. "He gave Himself." It is a precious truth which we often find in God's blessed Word that the Father gave the Son. See John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Turn to Rom. 8:32, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" But our text says: "And gave Himself for it." This shows that the will of the One was the will of the other.

The Father's will did no violence to that of Christ, neither was the latter in any wise opposed to the former. Let us look at a few portions in which we shall see Christ's gift of Himself in willing and loving obedience to His Father. Matt. 20:28, "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to

give His life a ransom for many." Gal. 1:4, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world." Gal. 2:20, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

He who was one with the Father in essence, will, and work, before the foundation of the world gave Himself in covenant to do the Father's bidding on the behalf of His people. In the fullness of time He came from heaven's highest glory to earth's deepest misery. He cried, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:7) Without the doing of this will no sinner could approach unto God, and every sinner must have been "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." (2 Thess. 1:9) In this doing He rendered unto God perfect obedience to His law, perfect conformity to His mind, perfect acquiescence to His judgment, and perfect submission to His will.

This, Jehovah demanded from the first Adam who failed in every point; but was willingly and fully performed by the last Adam. In the fullness of time He became true flesh and blood like unto us, to obey, suffer, and satisfy. He was a babe in Bethlehem. He was a youth at Nazareth. He was a man at Calvary. He who was high in heaven's glory, the one Object of the worship and adoration of glorified saints and angels, was compassed by a woman. (Jer. 31:22) When He took upon Him to deliver His bride, the Church, from sin, and death, and hell, He did not abhor the virgin's womb.

He hung as a poor weak babe upon the breast of His sinful mother. Why? I need not go any farther than this to answer--Because I was once a babe, and for me He came down from heaven to know feelingly and experimentally the infirmities of my babyhood. He was a youth. Why? Because He knew that I should be a youth in after days to sigh, "Lord, remember not the sins of my youth;" but remember for me the righteousness of the youth at Nazareth." Oh, what a mercy it is for me to know that the righteousness of the youthful Jesus has chased every youthful sin away from the sight of my God.

He was a Man. As such He gave Himself for His bride, in all the sorrows of His soul, in all the compassions of His heart, in all the sympathies of His sinless nature, in every look of love, in every word of grace, in every word of life, and in every graceful movement of His matchless body. He gave Himself to descend to the gloomy horrors of dark Gethsemane. Sometimes we are led by the Spirit to hold sweet and sacred communion with Him there. From heaven to earth, and to hell, for His bride, the God-Man descended.

On Calvary He became as it were the butt of all hell's spleen, malignity, and wrath. Here He endured the hiding of His Father's face. Here He bore the weight of all the accumulated sins, transgressions, and iniquities of all His people, and mine among them. Here He was crushed, and bruised, and distressed, so as to cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Why was this? That He might have a fellow feeling with the living members of His body in those spots of dreariness and weariness in the wilderness where they are forced to cry, "O my Father, not this trouble; my Father, not this disappointment; O my Father, not this bereavement."

Oh, my dear friends, He has sent lots to Thomas Bradbury's during this year of 1878; but not one too many for His own glory, or for the good, the comfort, and consolation of His child. If it be His will that fierce furnace-work must be passed through, let me bow submissively before Him, and cry, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

"He gave Himself." Oh, how blessed it is to contemplate Christ's gift of Himself in all the perfection of His blood-shedding and obedience--so perfect and complete that in that glorious work Jehovah's all-seeing

eye could not detect a flaw; and as one of the old saints declared, "It is a righteousness which an angel's tear would soil." In this robe of righteousness He clothes, adorns, and beautifies His bride, while with the sympathies of His loving heart He cheers and comforts her during the little while of her journey to His Kingly palace-home. He gave Himself in the combination of His Divine and human perfections, as proved in His all-prevalent intercession before the throne. He knew, and He still knows, the spots of weakness and weariness, darkness and desertion, which His bride experiences in the wilderness, and He shows Himself a Husband ever ready to succour, and ever nigh at hand to bless. When she is ready to perish, fainting, and unable to speak a word for herself, then He will prove to her the preciousness of that glorious truth contained in Prov. 31:8: "Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction." Yonder He is, in the heights of glory; and of Him we may sing--

"Past suffering now, the tender heart

Of Jesus on His Father's throne,

In all our sorrows bears a part,

And feels them as He felt His own."

He intends by-and-by--and the time will not be long, but short at the longest--to call His bride to meet Him in the air, and so shall she be ever with her Lord.

III. CHRIST'S WORK--"That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." I wish you to notice these two words, "sanctify and cleanse." This was accomplished by the perfect work and blood-shedding of Christ upon Calvary. The Church was perfectly sanctified and cleansed, and everything that stood before God against it was removed out of the way. What does the word "sanctify" mean? To set apart, to lay aside, to free, to separate, to secure from violation. How does this appear in God's blessed Word? Vastly different to the fleshly and sentimental rubbish so prevalent on every hand. Fleshly perfectionists would have us believe that sanctification is a certain process by which dirty old Adam is made clean, and slovenly old Adam is made tidy. But that won't do for God's living people. They know that sanctification is His work from first to last. Experimental sanctification is the manifestation and unfolding of the mystery of the Divine life in redeemed sinners, those brought into living oneness with their glorious Head and Husband. Look at sanctification as it is set forth in the Old Testament. You read in Gen. 2:3, "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Does that mean that every seventh day would be clean, without clouds, free from rain, and murk, and dirt? It means nothing of the kind. Notice the types and sacrifices. Sanctified fields. Sanctified oxen. Sanctified men. Sanctified clothing. On the great day of atonement Aaron appeared with his sanctified coat and breaches of fine linen, and these, when soiled with the filth of the sanctified beasts slain in sacrifice, were just as holy, just as much sanctified, as they were when clean. This reveals the distinction between sanctification and purity. Sanctification exists where impurity is mourned over and hated.

But the sanctification or separation of the text is set forth in Gen. 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." I am not a very good hand at giving advice, but here I would dare to say to any of you who are about to be married, "Cleave to your wives." Do not run to your mother with any grievance, real or fancied, that you may have. Rest assured such a way of acting is a prolific source of unhappiness and misery. And so in the case of the wife, let her seek for the heart of her husband to safely trust in her, and let her not carry her complaints to her mother. It is far better for married folk to leave father and mother, have a house of their own, cleave

one to another, and take counsel of the Lord; for you may depend upon it a mother-in-law, in the generality of cases, will try to rule and reign, and that man or woman who submits to such a state in opposition to the Divine institution, must be a simpleton indeed. See how blessedly and spiritually the Lord sets this forth in that epitome of Solomon's Song (Ps. 45) "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him." This is experimental and practical sanctification wrought in the heart of the bride by the grace, love, and power of the heavenly Bridegroom. No separation like this. When once the soul obtains a spiritual view of the beauties of Jesus' person and salvation, the charms of all earthly things disappear.

Sanctification is set forth in its seven-fold, or perfect, aspect in the New Testament. Two passages also prove it not to be a progressive work in the flesh. See John 10:36, "Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world." Also, John 17:19, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." No growing purity in Christ, and yet the Father sanctified Him and He sanctified Himself. What does that mean? He was given wholly up to the work of His people's salvation, that they might be wholly and unreservedly His. See!

Sanctified by God the Father. (Jude 1)

Sanctified in Christ Jesus. (1 Cor. 1:2)

Sanctified by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:11)

Sanctified through the truth. (John 17:19)

Sanctified by faith. (Acts 26:18)

Sanctified by blood. (Heb. 13:12)

Sanctified wholly. (1 Thess. 5:23)

Wholly, perfectly sanctified because Christ is my sanctification, and I am sanctified in Him. As Christ is in the view of the Father, so am I. Christ my Wisdom. Christ my Righteousness. Christ my Sanctification. Christ my Redemption. Christ my Glory. Christ my All in all. "That He might sanctify it." How does He sanctify it? By the power of the Holy Ghost, and the communication of the Word of truth. His words, which are spirit and life in their communication, separate the elect from the corrupt and carnal mass surrounding them.

"And cleanse it." There is something very humiliating, yet God-glorifying, and Christ-exalting here. Turn with me to Rev. 14:1-5. The Lamb with His virgin company stand on Mount Sion, and of them it is said: "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." Virgins! What a glorious truth! They appear unceasingly in all the virgin purity of their covenant standing in Christ. Though they fell in Adam, in or from their standing in Christ they never fall. Though they fall again and again in their soul's experience, and though they are oftentimes covered with the mud and mire of their corruptions and depravity, yet oft as they fall, and experience their sinfulness, corruptions, and defilement, He is there. What for? To thwart the devil, to defend His own, and to take His bride and cleanse her from every sin and from all pollution in the full, free fountain of His rich atoning blood. How blessedly this is set

before us in 1 Cor. 6:11, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Look again at 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Look at that word cleanseth. I cannot refrain from keeping it prominently before you. The sin you contracted yesterday, and that you mourned over this morning, all cleansed away--

"With the washing of water." What water is this? Not natural water. Not water as a religious or ecclesiastical requirement; but that of which Moses sang in Deut. 32:2, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." There you have the water. Come to Isaiah 55:10, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven." The rain with its present blessing clearing the air and refreshing the earth. Snow, which comes down very cold, and tarries for a few moments, a few hours, a few days, and I have seen it for a few months before the melting time came. I remember Eph. 3:19, coming like a bit of snow to me when I was a lad, but the Sun of Righteousness, with melting power, did not shine upon it for many years after. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth." That is the spiritual and life-giving water. It is not from the preacher's mouth, but from the mouth of a covenant God in Christ Jesus. "It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa. 55:11) Turn to Ezek. 36:25, "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." What can that water be but the Gospel of the grace of God applied by the Spirit's power?

Come to the New Testament. Christ said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5) Water! This has not the most remote allusion to the ordinance of baptism, not to that awful delusion--baptismal regeneration--which is eating like a gangrene at the Protestantism of the Establishment of this country. "Born of water." This is the water of life that Moses dispensed; (Deut. 32:2) the water of salvation of which Isaiah prophesied; (Isaiah 12:3) the water of sovereign goodness flowing from the house of God, conveying life whithersoever it comes. (Ezek. 47:1-9) It is the water Jesus alluded to when He said to His eleven disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3) Peter speaks of its purifying and life-giving power in 1 Peter 1:22,23: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "The washing of water by the Word." What word is this? The Covenanting Word; (Haggai 2:5) the Creating Word; (Ps. 33:6) the Incarnate Word; (John 1:14) the Living Word. (Heb. 4:12) It is He who applies the water of life, salvation, and purification of the soul of His bride, granting to her thereby a gracious exemption from sin, corruption, condemnation, death, and hell.

IV. CHRIST'S GLORY--"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." A glorious Church robed in the garments of glory and beauty, blessed with all spiritual blessings, adorned with all the glory of His person, and filled with all the fullness of God. In her own estimation she is black and full of the plague-spots of sin; but He graciously whispers to her sorrowing heart, "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee." (Songs 4:7) She mourns because she feels her innumerable sins, and cannot stand in His gracious presence with

confidence; but He comforts her with the sweet assurance that her sins, which are many, are all forgiven, her, all washed away by His atoning blood, all cast behind God's back, all thrown into the depths of the sea of eternal oblivion, from whence neither Satan nor all the powers of hell can bring them again to influence a covenant God against His daughter-in-love. "The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold." (Ps. 45:13) May the Lord grant unto us clearer conceptions and more blessed experiences of these blessed truths.

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