

## **The Greatest Love in All the World**

Ephesians 5:32-33

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, February 28, 2021

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. Before we get started in our sermon time, I just want to let you know I have some good news and some bad news for you. I have some encouraging news and some not so encouraging news. But the encouraging news is that the Shepherd's Conference is upon us; it's almost here. In fact, it will be held this coming Wednesday, that's when it'll be. It's going to start this Wednesday, March 3rd at 10am if you would like to tune into that. For those of you who are not familiar with it, the Shepherd's Conference is an event that is held every year on the campus of Grace Community Church in Los Angeles to help train men up in areas of Bible and doctrine. It's held to train pastors and leaders up on a number of subjects related to Scripture and theology and the Christian life. And it's something we like to go to every year. It's something that we like to attend regularly as a church. In fact, in the last several years, we've taken as many as a dozen guys there. We've taken a whole van load of men to sit under the preaching of men like John MacArthur, and Steve Lawson, and Al Mohler. And our guys have been tremendously blessed by that, they've been so encouraged by that time together. They come home, and we just can't stop talking about all the things that we've learned. So that is the good news. That conference is coming up, it's going to be this week. And that's the encouraging thing I want to share with you. The bad news is that we can't get there. The bad news is that we won't be able to attend due to the fact that the border is closed at this time; we can't get into the US. And to add to this, the conference itself is going to be a little different from what it normally is because it's not going to be an in-person conference, it's going to be online; it's going to be a virtual conference. Grace Community Church, you may have heard is undergoing some legal battles right now. It's going through some court cases with the governor, the state of California, over whether they can meet or not or over whether they can do public services because the state has told them not to and they're resisting that. So, they decided in light of that ongoing legal stuff, they thought it would be best to do the conference online, which actually works in our favor. It's a benefit to us because you can follow along. You can watch the conference on Wednesday morning at Grace Church.org, just go online there at that website. You can see it all, Grace church.org.

But all this is to say that ministry looks different for everybody right now, doesn't it? Church life looks different for everybody; it's a struggle for all of us. It's a battle that we're all having to face no matter where you live, no matter which side of the border; we're all in this together. It can be so easy to lose sight of that. It can be so easy to get discouraged because you feel like you're the only one but you're not. You're not the only Christian going through challenges right now. It's a worldwide thing. People all over the place are experiencing that type of thing. I had someone ask me recently, they said, how are things going in Canada right now? You know, how is the ministry there? And I said, it's the same as it is everywhere. The same struggles here that you see all across the globe. It may look a little differently here because of certain things, it may have its own sort of peculiarities, but the church is suffering everywhere right now. We're all in the midst of a fire. But you can take some hope in that; you can take some comfort in that because it means you're not alone. It means that as a Christian, that the trials you're facing are faced by everybody, your brothers and sisters, all across the planet; you stand shoulder to shoulder with them. You don't take it all on yourself, you share the burden with others. And so, remember that and take heart during these days. And check out the Shepherd's Conference if you're able to. Again, it's on Wednesday. And with that said, while we're talking about that this morning, while we're talking about standing

with others, I want to invite you to turn in your Bibles to a book that talks about that. I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. That is the book that we're in this morning. We're looking at the book of Ephesians and we're in chapter five, if you want to turn there.

And as you're doing that, I've told you before that we like to do expository preaching here as a church. We like to go through the Bible verse by verse, passage by passage. And as we've done that, in this book, we come to the end of chapter five. As we've gone through this book, verse by verse, we come to the last verses in that chapter and I just want to read it to you before we get started. If you would look in Ephesians five, verse 18 with me, we'll read through the rest of the chapter. It says this, it says,

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Wives be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. **FOR THIS REASON, A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.** This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it, that she respects her husband.

We're going to end the reading there. But just to say a few words about that, if you've been with us for a while, you'll know that we've spent a lot of time in the book of Ephesians as a church. In fact, I counted it up this past week. And so far, we've done 49 sermons in this book, we've done 49 messages, which is a lot: it's the longest series that we've ever done. This is the most time we've ever spent in one particular book of the Bible. And the reason we're going so slowly is because it tells us so much about God. I mean, the book of Ephesians tells us so much about what He has done for us, how He has changed our lives, how He saved us. And one thing it says in this passage is that He wants to fill us. If you look in verse 18, it says, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit". We went through that passage several months ago. And when we did, we noticed that it is a strange passage, it sounds kind of odd, talking about being drunk and being filled with the Spirit. But there's a beautiful truth in here, there's something wonderful, and that is that God wants to fill us up. The word "fill" here is *pleroo* in Greek it means fill up or fill to the top and until it spills over the sides, is the expression. And Paul says, this is what God wants to do with you now that you're a Christian, this is what the Spirit wants to do, He wants to fill you to the top, fill you with His presence to the point that it spills over. In fact, if you read chapters four through five, you notice the context is about how to deal with sin. There's so much sin that's mentioned in these chapters. And the point Paul is making here is that this is how you kill sin now; this is

how you defeat it, you fill yourself with the Spirit of God; you fill yourself with His word. Verse 19, says that as you do that, this is what happens; you will worship. You will sing songs and hymns and spiritual songs. Verse 21 says you'll be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. In other words, it will change your relationships now, it'll change the way you interact with others. You will be subject to them; you'll kill your own pride and your own ego for their sake. In verse 22, it says, the greatest place this will occur is in the home, the greatest place you'll be subject to one another is with your family. Because that's the greatest relationship you have, and those are the people that are the most important to you on Earth.

It's been said that, you know, we've all heard this expression, "home is where the heart is" and building off of that Paul says, home is where the spirit is, home is where God should be, because these are the people you interact with the most. You see your wife and kids; you see your husbands and kids when you don't see anybody else. At times when the doors are closed, and lights are off, and the real you comes out and then at that time, Paul says, the real you needs to look like this; it needs to be filled with the Spirit of God.

The context for this is really interesting because I've told you before Paul was a single man, he was never married. So, he didn't have a family, he didn't have a wife and kids, so he didn't know what that was like from experience. But just using common sense, he says, if we're going to talk about relationships, if we're going to talk about interacting with people, we've got to start here in the most obvious place imaginable. And as Paul does this in chapter five, he makes an interesting comparison here, he makes an interesting analogy. If you look in verse 22, he says, "wives be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body". And then if you look down in verse 32, I just want to read this to you because that was the beginning and here's the end of the passage in verse 32, "This mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church". That's the bookends of this passage. That's the beginning and the end of it. Here, Paul compares Christ to the family. He compares our relationship to each other to Christ's relationship to the church. And of all things to compare it to, that's a pretty powerful thing, isn't it? Of all things to talk about with your home and your family, that's the most humbling thing because if you're like most of us, you don't feel like your home always looks like Christ and the church. It doesn't always look like something that's so high and lofty but that's the comparison here.

Paul says, when you were saved, when you became a Christian, Jesus became your closest friend on Earth; He became your closest companion. And that's how you should treat your husband. That's how you should treat your wife, with that kind of closeness, with that kind of intimacy. You shouldn't treat them like total strangers, you shouldn't treat them like enemies. You treat them like this. You couldn't find a higher standard to compare this to, you couldn't find a higher level. In fact, talking about this, verse 28 says, "So husbands ought also to love their wives as their own bodies, just as Christ also does the church." Paul says this because there's nothing closer to you than your body. There's nothing closer to you than your skin because it goes wherever you go, it does whatever you do. And in the same way he says, treat your wife this way, because that's how Christ treats the church. And we've said quite a bit in previous weeks about the husband's role in all of this and the wife's role as well. We looked at the human side of this, we've looked at the manward side, but we haven't said much about Christ at this point. We haven't talked about what this passage says about Him and His love for the church. That's what we're going to do today. In fact, the Bible says this several different ways. It makes this kind of comparison of Christ and the church several ways. For example, it says that you had been baptized with Christ. When you were saved, you were immersed or dunked into His presence, just as someone goes down into the water, and they're covered up, and so, when you're saved, your soul goes down into Him. And it's covered up in Him so that there's no part of

you that's not touched by Christ. It also says, the Bible says we have been crucified with Him, and resurrected with Him. Taking it a step further, it says just as Jesus hung on the cross, just as He died there, and He was punished there and He rose from the grave, so you experienced that too, when you became a Christian. You went through that with Him. When He was hanging on the cross, you were on His mind; He was dying for your sins. It boggles the mind, doesn't it? It's hard to fathom. Scripture also says that we have been created in Christ and we have been formed in Christ. It says you have been buried with Him and seated in the heavenly places so that your soul is as good as there now. Your spirit is as good as saved in the heavenlies.

But now, Paul says this one more way, he talks about salvation with one more analogy and he says here in this passage that you have been married to Him. You've been married to Him; you've been joined together with Him like a spouse, you've been put together with Him like a bride. And that might be the greatest comparison of all if you're putting all those together. This might be the most important one, because it's one thing to say you're baptized into something but it's another thing to say you married it, right? You see the difference there? It's one thing to say that you have been crucified and resurrected with something but it's another thing to say you have become the bride, you're one flesh with them, because that's more personal. This is so much more intimate than that. That's Paul's point here. When you were saved, Christ took on a personal relationship with you. Now I understand that phrase has been abused a lot, but it's correct in this sense; He got personally involved in your life. He didn't save you from a distance, He didn't save you from a mile away, He did it right close up. And you can't die for someone's sins without getting personal with them. You can't pay for someone's lust and pride and adultery and covetousness and all that mess without getting intimately involved in their lives. That's what Christ did for you, when He saved you. That's why verse 32 calls this a mystery, or a *mysterion* in Greek. That means it's something that cannot be fully understood, it can be understood this much but it can't be understood that much. You can understand part of this but at the end of the day, this is too deep to grasp. These are waters that we can't fully swim in. I mean, to think about the fact that Jesus would do this for you, that He would love you like this and treat you like this, and respond to your sin this way, it's too much. It's too much because who are you to receive this honor? Who are you to be married to this kind of husband?

And I might add that this is something - I think this is something that has really been lost on the church today. This idea of wonder and mystery about our salvation has completely been forgotten by us. Because we take a verse like John 3:16, which says, "God so loved the world", we take that to mean that He loves everybody equally, He loves everybody the same no matter whether they repent or not, and whether they believe or not, no matter what they do, and that's simply not true. He has a special love for Christians. That's what the New Testament is all about. Or we take a passage like John 3:16, to mean that God is so in love with us. God is so infatuated with us that He just can't help Himself. He's so amazed at how wonderful we are. That's not what this says. In fact, it's just the opposite. It's so much deeper than that. This is talking about the love of God, not the love of man. This is talking about the love of heaven, not the love of the earth. It's something totally different. One commentator said it this way, he said, "When we speak of the love of God, we must never make the mistake of dragging His love down to our level. We must never make the mistake of replacing divine love with human love and saying it's just like ours. Instead, this is a picture of the way Jesus loves us. We were like a slave sold on the auction block of sin and He is the one who came to buy us back. We love because He first loved us".

You know, I mentioned this, and I make such a point of it because I hear so many people today saying they don't feel close to God. I hear so many people saying they feel so far away as if God has left them, and God has abandoned them, and God doesn't care. That may be the most common complaint I hear among Christians today.

But Paul says you shouldn't feel that way. Paul says there's no reason to be like that because God hasn't abandoned you, He's done this, He's married you; He's taken you in. I also mentioned this because some people take it a step further and they wonder why has God left us right now? Why has God left the nation of Canada to fight all this stuff all by ourselves? Friends, God hasn't left you. He isn't going anywhere. This passage says He's your husband. He loves you like a spouse would. He's with you every step of the way. We need to get our minds around that this morning. We need to understand what that means.

Theologians have come up with a term for this. They call it our mystical union with Christ or our spiritual union with Him because this is what happens at our salvation. Our souls are united to Christ, our spirits are joined with Him. It hasn't happened to our body yet, it hasn't happened to our flesh, but it's happened to our soul and our inner man, to the point that where He goes, we go, and what He does, we do. We're in a marriage, we're in a union and nothing's ever going to change that now. And I remember, several years ago, I was invited to speak at a prison in South Dakota and I was very nervous about it because I've never been in a prison before let alone preached in one. But I'll always remember what one of the men told me when I walked through the door, one of the Christians that came to help us with the conference. He said, it's so good to see you here because I know you brought God with you because where His people go, He goes; He travels with them. Friends, he's right. God goes where His people go, even into a prison, even in the jail.

And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning is this idea of our union with Christ. And so, if you're taking notes, in Ephesians five, we're going to look at three lessons from our union with Christ. That's our outline for today, that's what this is about. If you're taking notes in Ephesians five, we're going to look at the entire passage, but we're really explaining the very end of it, we're going to look at three lessons from our union with Christ. And we're going to do this because this doctrine is so important for us as Christians, it's so essential that we can't leave this chapter without saying a few words about it. We can't close it out without going back and talking about it in some detail because this is what salvation is all about. This is what the Christian life is all about. When you believe in Jesus, you are united to Him. The two of you are one. It's not as if Jesus is over there, and you're over there, and you're trying to find Him, and you don't know where He is. That's not what the Christian life is about. It's not what salvation is about. It's not as if God is up here, and He's up in heaven, and you're down here trying to work your way up to Him, trying to be good enough, and smart enough and godly enough, and all that kind of stuff. Salvation is about the fact that you're with Him now. He is inside you now, this moment, this instant, you're not waiting for it to happen. It's already happened. You're not trying to create it; it's already been done. You just need to understand it and live like it.

And we're going to talk about that this morning with three lessons from our union with Christ. The first one is this, Jesus loves you. It's pretty simple isn't it. That's pretty straightforward. Let's just make this real simple today. The first lesson from our union with Christ is that Jesus loves you. And I almost hesitate to say that because that's such a cliché statement nowadays. I almost kind of changed it up because that such an abused statement but it's a biblical one. It's true. And if you read in verses 25 to 27, it tells you how Jesus loves you. And it says this in verse 25, "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she would be holy and blameless." Just to say a few words about this, if you notice, as you read this, you can tell that there is some pretty deep stuff in here. There is some heavy stuff, which is why we're going back over it today. That's why we're looking at it again. But as you read this, Paul is saying something unusual here. He's saying something strange, at least to his

audience anyway. To the first century, this was a weird passage to read because he gave more attention to the husbands than he does to the wives here. He's writing about the home and he gave more attention to the men than the women, which was not a very common thing to do. It was very unusual because they didn't think the men had any duties in the home. They didn't think that the husband had any responsibilities. He could just go to work, come home, prop up his feet, and watch TV. Some homes haven't changed that much in 2000 years. But that was the way they looked at it. And here Paul says otherwise, he says a believer can't do this because he tells the husbands to love their wives. That word is *agape* in Greek. It is the highest form of love in the Greek language; it was the highest standard of love that they had. And then a selfless love or an unconditional love. It's the kind of love that was given without expecting anything in return. The Greeks had several words for love, but all the other ones had the idea that I love that because it loves me back. I give and it gives back. That's the whole meaning of the relationship. *Agape* was in another category. *Agape* says, I love, period, no matter what comes back. And Paul says a husband should love his wife like that. He should love her with the same kind of attention. Why? Well, verse 25 tells you why. Because that is how Christ loved us. That's what Jesus did for us. He's the standard. He is the model. And so, we just do what He did. We just act the same way He did toward us. Jesus wasn't a bully toward us. He wasn't a dictator. He wasn't a tyrant who went to work and came home and propped his feet up. He didn't do that. Therefore, we shouldn't do that for our wives.

In fact, just to show you this, as you look back over this text, you can also tell this is a one-sided thing and that we read in here about Christ and the church, you can tell it's a one-sided effort. And what I mean is that verse 25, says, Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her and that means Christ made the sacrifice, Christ did the giving, not the other way around. You didn't do anything. In verse 25, you did not contribute to your salvation at all. Then verse 26 says this, it says, "So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word." Now Paul says this was all of Him too. This is what Jesus did. He sanctified you or He cleansed you off. I mean, He didn't just marry you, He gave you a bath. He didn't just love you, but he scrubbed you off because you were dirty when Jesus saved you, weren't you? You were covered in filth, and He took care of that. It's a humbling thing to think about. Most marriages I know, everybody takes a shower beforehand, they clean themselves up. In this marriage, Jesus cleaned you.

Then verse 27, says this. It says, "that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she would be holy and blameless." We haven't said a lot about verse 27 in previous weeks, we haven't discussed it much, but we all know it's a tradition for brides to make themselves beautiful on their wedding day. It's a tradition for them to make themselves as lovely as possible by removing all spots and blemishes. They cover them up with makeup and cosmetics and that sort of thing until they look blameless, until they look perfect. Now Paul says Jesus does that. In this wedding, He gave you a total makeover. He didn't just clean you off, He took care of the makeup as well. Because He does everything in this, this is all about Him. All the beauty that you have came from God, came from Christ in salvation. The reason I'm mentioning this, the reason we're studying it today is because this is something that we're not used to. This type of love is something that's foreign to us. It was foreign in the first century, but it's really foreign today because if you think about it, your marriage was not like this, was it? Your relationship to your spouse was not a one-sided affair. You got married because you liked each other. You got married because you found her attractive, and she found you attractive and it was a reciprocal thing; it was mutual, both sides. That's how romance works. Do you like me? Do you like me? Yes. And then you get married. This isn't like that. This isn't that kind of marriage. Because when Jesus saved you, you were not attractive, were you? When He married you and died for you and went to the cross, you were ugly, you were hideous, you were a sinful wretch, and covered in sin, spots and wrinkles

everywhere. So, all the attraction came from Him, all the beauty came from Him because you didn't have any; you had nothing to give Him that He would want. You know, we don't have too many pre-arranged marriages today. It's pretty rare here in Canada. But I've been told that when people do that, when they do a pre-arranged marriage, they at least want to see pictures first. They at least want to see what the other person looks like, so they know what they're getting into in their relationship.

What Paul is saying here is that that would not have helped you to send pictures to your husband. It would not have helped you to show Him what you look like because you looked terrible. You were a sinful mess and yet He saved you anyway. And yet He did all of this anyway because salvation is all of God. It's what the Christian religion is all about, isn't it? It's what the Christian faith is all about. It's not about the good things that you've done. It's not about the beauty that you bring to things. It's all about Christ. He's the hero of the whole story. And the hymn says it this way, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling". That's the keystone of our faith.

You know, on July 8, 1741, in Enfield, Connecticut, Jonathan Edwards preached what some considered to be the most famous sermon ever preached on American soil. You may have heard of it before. It was called, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. And it was about this subject. It was about this topic. The fact that Jesus did it all; He did everything to save us because we were too sinful. We were wretches in God's eyes. In fact, the message he preached was so powerful that it made his audience roll in the aisles and cry out to God for mercy. There was weeping and wailing and that sort of thing. But in his own words, here's what Edwards said in the sermon, he said, "There's nothing that keeps wicked men out of hell at any one moment, except the mere pleasure of God. And by the mere pleasure of God, I mean His sovereign pleasure, His all-powerful pleasure restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, nothing else but God's sovereign will has a hand in the preservation of the wicked. Your wickedness makes you as heavy as lead. It drives you down with great weight and pressure towards hell. And if God were to let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend into the bottomless gulf, like a rock through a spider's web. At that moment, you would see that your health, your best contrivance and efforts and all your righteousness would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell than a piece of thread." And yet Edwards goes on to say that Jesus saw you in that pitiful condition; Jesus saw you in that helpless state and He saved you.

He saw you when you were that wicked, when you were that wretched, when you were that ugly, and He died for you because He loved you and for no other reason. He did this because He cared and that's all. He didn't do it because He liked what He saw in you. He didn't do it because He was so in love with you, and He couldn't help Himself or something like that. It was the opposite. He hated what He saw in you, He was angry about it, so He went to the cross and changed it and He died in your place. This is a kind of love that we don't have on this earth, do we? This is the kind of love you can't find in any other religion on the planet. You study Buddhism, study Islam and Allah and you'll find none of those gods or anything like this. They were angry. They were wrathful. They were some of them righteous in a certain way. But none of them were gracious. None of them were merciful by dying for their subjects. This is entirely unique to the Christian religion. It's been said that a gift is not cheap when it costs everything you have. And that's what this did. That's what the cross did. It cost Jesus everything He had.

Which brings us to another point to consider, another lesson for our union with Christ. The first one is that Jesus loves you. And again, I said, we're keeping things simple here. But the first lesson from our union with Christ is

that He loves you, which means that He cares about you, He's concerned to the point that He would die for you and give everything that He has. Which brings us to the next point, another lesson for our union with Christ. And that is this, Jesus will never leave you. A second lesson for our union with Christ is that Jesus will never leave you, which means if He does this, if He loves you this way, then not only will He love you, but He'll never stop. If you're married to Him, if you're one with Him and joined to Him, not only will He care for you like a husband would, but He'll never quit. He'll never stop loving you. I won't read this passage to you again for the sake of time, for we've already done that but as you look back through it, this is very touching. It's very moving the way Paul writes here, because he doesn't just say that Jesus loves you and then stops. He doesn't just say that He cares and leaves it at that, he goes into detail over this. Our men in the Iron Man's Bible Study, studied the book of Romans this morning, but Paul does that in the book of Romans, he starts talking about the love of God and he won't stop, verse after verse, chapter after chapter. He does that here. Because again, this was so strange at the time, it was so unusual for a husband to treat his wife this way that Paul felt like he had to give an explanation otherwise nobody would know what he's talking about. And as he does that, he goes into this verse that we just looked at. I want to study with you again, verse 27. because there's some really rich stuff in here that we haven't had a chance to talk about yet. Verse 27 says, "that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she would be holy and blameless". I don't want to repeat anything that we've already said about that verse, but I do want to say a word or two about it because it can be easy to read something like this and overlook it. But remember, we're talking about a mystery here. Later on, verse 32, says this is all a mystery, which means this is a deep thing to study, it takes one or two or three glances, you can't just go through it quickly. Some of you like mystery novels, and you like mystery stories. Well, you know, it takes a long time to work through a mystery novel. Well, this is a mysterious doctrine here. It's going to take time to look at it. But what Paul is saying in verse 27, one of the things he's saying is that this is how long Jesus' love will last for you. This is how long it will continue. It will continue until He presents us to Himself in all our glory, the church in all its glory.

Now, if you think about what he's saying here, obviously this hasn't happened yet. Obviously, the church has not been presented to Jesus yet in all its glory. I mean, you can just look at the church today and tell it doesn't look like that, does it? It's not blameless, it's got spots and wrinkles on it. And some places churches have a black eye, I mean, it's just a mess. So, this is yet to come, this is down the road. But he says Jesus will love us until this day, and theologians have also come up with a term for this. They call it the wedding supper of the Lamb or the wedding feast because this is the time when the church will be fully married to Christ in every sense of the term. This is the time where we'll be united to Him once and for all. The union will be complete it will be consummated. Revelation 19 describes this day when it says, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him because the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has prepared herself." There again you see the idea of preparation. "It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, write, blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And as you read on in the book of Revelation, you find out that that's all right before Jesus returns; that event happens right before He comes back. But the author John says, right before Jesus returns, this is what He does: He's married to the church, the two become one entirely. And on that day, the church will clothe itself in fine linen. It'll clothe itself in white robes, which are the righteous acts of the saints. Here in Ephesians five, we will have no spot or wrinkle; we will be blameless, as well. But the point is that Jesus will stay with us until that day comes. Jesus will stay with His church until the wedding supper arrives. He's not going to leave ahead of time. He's not going to cut out on us when the going gets tough or life gets hard. This is a permanent wedding; this is an eternal relationship because He'll be with us to the end.

This is important, you need to remember this because so many people are afraid of losing their salvation today. So many Christians are scared that they're going to lose this relationship to Christ because they think they're going to sin too much, or they're going to fail too much or blow it somehow. Paul says you can't do that, because it doesn't depend on you, it depends on Him. You can't lose your salvation, because it's not up to you, it's up to Jesus and He loses nothing.

This is all so important. By the way, it's not like you're going to get to the wedding supper and Jesus is going to look around at the table and say, Hey, where's that guy? I don't know what I did with him. It doesn't work that way. Everybody will be there who's supposed to be there and that includes you if you're in Christ. This is also important to so many people who are second guessing their salvation today. They question it because they go around saying, "Am I saved?" "Or am I not?" "Am I a Christian?" "Or am I not?" "Have I done enough?" "Have I been good enough?" That's not what this is about either. This has nothing to do with what you have done. It's about what He has done. It's not about your work, it's about His works. All you have to do is rest in it, you just need to trust in it, and He'll take care of you.

This leads to an application here, just a simple way to apply this to our lives, but this means that you're not alone. I said a few words about that a moment ago, but just a simple way to apply this. This means that whatever you're going through, no matter how bad it is, you're never alone as a Christian, because Jesus is always with you, every step of the way. I can't say this enough, I really can't emphasize it enough, but you're never alone. As a Christian, God will never abandon you. It may feel that way at times. There may be times when you wrestle with that, but it will never happen. He will always care about you. He will always be with you. He'll stick with you to the end. You see it right here in this text, Jesus cares enough to present you to Himself. He cares enough to take your soul from this life into the next, from this world into eternity, all the way to the wedding supper. You think about all the saints that are going to be sitting there. I've often wondered who I would be sitting beside. I kind of want to sit beside John the Baptist personally, he'd be quite a fascinating guy to talk to. But you'll be with them all because they're in Christ. You know, if you've ever watched a romance movie before, you'll know that it's very common to hear the man say to the woman, "I'll love you forever." Right? "I will never let you go", which sounds so romantic. I mean, it sounds so wonderful. But the fact is, it's not true. It's just not reality because one day he's going to die, and at that point, his earthly love for her will stop because he won't be on the earth anymore. Let me tell you this, friends, it's not that way with Christ. His love never stops. It never dies. It'll be with you till the end.

This means that Jesus is with you no matter where you go. He's with you in the car and He's with you at the store. It means that He'll travel with you in the house, He'll go with you to the office. And like I said earlier, He'll go with you in jail. He'll be with you in prison. As I say that I can't help but think of Pastor James Coates in Edmonton right now; I can't help but think of his situation there because that's where he is, he's in a jail cell. And some of you are familiar with the story there and what's going on, but as you watch it, it makes you wonder what what's happening in our country. What are things coming to? And to be honest, I don't have all the answers to that, I don't know. But I know Jesus is with him there. He's with his people, anywhere, even in a place like that. He's with you today, no matter what you're going through because He will never leave you, which leads to one more point to talk about this morning.

One more lesson for our union with Christ, just to review these other ones. The first one is that He loves you. The first lesson for our union in Christ is that Jesus loves you, which means that He cares about you, He's concerned in a special way just like a husband would be. The second, He will never leave you. The second lesson for a union

with Christ is that He will never leave you. Even though there's probably times where you think He should, even though there may be times when you think you've blown it, and you've gone too far. But this passage here says not only will He love you, but He'll love you to the end. Not only will He start the marriage, He'll end it; He will take it all the way to completion because that's the kind of Savior that you have.

And it brings us to one more thing to talk about, one more lesson for our union with Christ. And this one might be the greatest one of all, the most encouraging one. And that is that Jesus will always be gentle with you. A third and a final lesson for our union with Christ is that Jesus will always be gentle with you, which means that not only will He love you and never leave you, but He'll do this as well: He'll be kind about it. He'll be soft and tender hearted. You don't have a husband who wants to rough you up. You don't have a spouse who wants to bully you. He wants to do something so much more than that.

If you look in verse 25 again, just to read some of this, it says,

Husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church.

You know, one thing that jumps out at you, as you read this is the tone here. Right? One thing that you notice is the mode of expression, because Paul is very gentle here. He's very soft. And what he says is very unusual for him. He was not always a very soft guy. If you read some of Paul's letters, you'll know that there were times where he was pretty blunt, times where he was pretty harsh, but there's no place for that here. He doesn't need to talk like that now, because this is about love. This is about marriage. And so, he uses the proper tone for that. When you're married to someone, you're not supposed to be harsh to them. You're supposed to be gentle. He didn't marry a punching bag; he married a lady. And you can see this in some of the ways that this is written here. For example, you can see how many times the word love is repeated in this passage. It's repeated over and over again, five times in here to remind you this is how Jesus treated you in a loving way. But you also see it in verses 28 and 29 that I just read to you, because he mentions here that, "no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it", that phrase nourish and cherishes, that means to keep something safe. You provide for it, is the idea. Not just physically or materially but you provide for it emotionally and spiritually as well. You do it on a personal level. So that whatever your wife needs, you get. You know, she needs you to talk to her, you talk to her. She needs you to listen, you listen. She needs you to pray and read scripture and do that. Not because she's bossing you around, or she's leading the marriage, but because you are as a husband, and you do it this way is what Paul is saying here, because that's the way Christ did it. You treat your wife like that because that's what He does with you. You need something, He gets it for you. You're hurting, He steps in to help. You want to talk He talks. You want to listen, He listens. He's always available. Some of the Scriptures call him a Wonderful Counselor. That's what that means. He gives wonderful counsel. Some of you have been around bad counselors before; you've been around people that give you bad words of wisdom. He never does that. One commentator said this, he said, "The Lord made it absolutely clear that the chief characteristic for a husband and marriage is gentleness because humility is the cornerstone for his position. It's the main thing and the person who exemplified this the most was Jesus Christ Himself. He was gentle toward us, so we can be gentle toward others".

And we don't often think of Jesus this way because the cross was such a harsh thing. It was so cruel. We often think of how tough He was, and how hard it was to endure that and make it make it through and then be resurrected. But He wasn't just hard. He was the Lamb of God. He was the friend of sinners. The word cherish here sheds a lot of light on this because in Greek it literally means to keep something warm, to keep it from getting cold. Paul says Jesus does that with us. He's not cold toward us. He's not frigid and icy. We've all known husbands who were like that to their wives. They were icy and cold toward them every time. They talk. They're short and quick and rude. Not this husband, not Christ. He cherishes us. He treats us like a gentle husband. And here's what this means today, friends, here's practically what it means. It means no matter what you're going through today, no matter what happened, no matter how bad it is, you can get through it knowing that Jesus is like this with you. He is gentle toward you. He is warm toward you. He's not playing games with you. He's not messing around. Jesus doesn't do that. He's using it to help you.

We have a common saying in our church that people like to use and that the people say, "I'm doing better than I deserve". Ask someone how is your week? "I'm doing better than I deserve." Well, that's true because Jesus is doing this for you. You know, we don't always look at it this way. We don't always think of it in these terms. Because when the Coronavirus comes or the lockdowns come or the restrictions continue and the government cracks down, we want to shake our fists at heaven and say, "Why God, why?" When they start locking up pastors, when they started doing things like that, we want to shake our fist at the sky and say, "Why are you doing this to me God?" "Why do you hate us so much?" Friends, you've got to remember what this says. It says God doesn't hate you. He loves you. It says He's not out to get you. He's on your side and He's being gentle toward you. He's using all those things for your good to build you up. You know, I don't know if you've ever read the book of Job before, but if you have, Job starts off by telling them about the time that Satan had to go to God first to get permission to tempt Job. Do you remember that story? He had to go into the council of heaven to get consent which means that there is a council of heaven. What that means is that there is a place where decisions like that are made before God, they're not random. They're not an accident. Which means that when God allows pain, He allows it for good. When He permits hard times, He does it to bless us, not to hurt us. We have to remember that. We get it so backwards today. These trials and tribulations are given to us from the hand of a good God. The world doesn't know that. They don't see it that way because they don't have a husband like this. They're not married to Christ, but you are. And so, when those things happen, you have to look at them through totally different eyes. You're a blood bought child of God now, and those things shouldn't trouble you so much. Think of the good He's doing in your life.

And that leads me to ask you the question, friends, are you doing that today? I mean, are you trusting in the good that He's doing? Are you resting in the fact that God is being gentle with you? I mean, when the trials come and troubles arise, do you remember that they don't just happen? They're not just random. There is a council in heaven deciding all of this. Does that give you hope? You know, to ask this another way, as you've read this passage, and you studied it, do you understand how much Jesus loves you? Do you see all of this? It is a mystery. It is a deep thing but it's important. I tell you this, friends, no one else loves you like this. No one else on the planet. Your husband on this earth may love you but he doesn't love you like this. Your wife may love you, but she can't come close to what this is talking about; your kids can't, your friends can't because this is the love of God. It comes from a higher place and it's something that only someone who trusts in Christ can truly know. You know, in my studies, this week, I came across a story of a man who was trying to teach this lesson to his son, and he was trying to teach him about the love of Christ. So, he did something bizarre. When the boy came home from school, the father took off his belt and he handed it to the son. And he said, I want you to hit me 10 times, one for every one

of your sins. With tears in his eyes, the boy did it. And afterwards, the father explained, he said, I did that to show you how much Jesus love for you. That's what He did for you on the cross. Which is almost true. That's almost correct but it actually goes deeper than that. It goes much deeper because the truth is that God hit himself on the cross. The truth is that God struck himself. He didn't strike a third party. He killed His only son. He killed His one and only child. And He did it because He loved you and for no other reason. He did it because He cared. Friends, will you believe that this morning? Will you put your hope in that? Let me pray that you will.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I feel as we've come to the end of this message that we have dove into a mystery. And we have looked at something that can never be fully understood, and I feel like we've just scratched the surface. We've swallowed an elephant and spit out the tail. Yet at the same time Father, we know that anything that we do to learn more of your word and study more of your cross and learn more of your Son is for our eternal benefit, so this was a good thing to discuss this morning. And I pray for my friends here Lord, the ones who know you and walk with you and draw near to you that this would bring them even closer. That as they reflect on these truths that they know so well, they would grow closer to their Husband, closer to the One who loves them the most. And for those who are lost in our church Lord, those who are unsaved, and they come week in and week out or they watch online but they don't know this Jesus, they don't know this love; this is all foreign to them; Lord, I pray this morning You would open their eyes to that and provoke them to repent. This is a love that is open for anyone who believes; this is a love that is available to any sinner, any lost soul, any man, woman or child, that they would just put their faith in the Savior, and I pray that some would do that this morning. God, would you help us to go about our day from this point on with a spirit of wonder in our hearts. For you to do this for us, it should leave us speechless. May we have a sense of that this morning. We love you, Father, we love you, Jesus. Thank You for your love for us and we pray this all in your name. Amen.

Well, thank you for joining us for another online message here at Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. If you would like to know more about our church, you can find us online at [Gracefellowshipchilliwack.com](http://Gracefellowshipchilliwack.com) or just look us up on our YouTube channel. Just type in Grace Fellowship Chilliwack and our material will show up there. That's all for this morning, may the Lord bless you and have a wonderful day.