

Divine Washing

Julien B.C., November 7, 2008 (Special Meeting)

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Ephesians 5:22-33

This text is full of advice from God about the divine order for men and women. It is very suitable for a lesson to married people about how to treat each other; but most of all about how to view each other. We might think there is nothing in here for single folks, but this is in fact, a template for a man or woman to use when thinking about taking a wife or husband. There is enough material in these verses to launch an entire seminar or semester long course about man/woman relationships. It is rich with relevance to people both past, present, and future.

As men and women, we can do no better than to study these words of scripture to get guidance for how we are to conduct our relations with our spouses. There is so much we could say to men and women about this, but I must go on to our main theme:

Let's focus on Verse 25-27: Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might **sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word**, 27 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. The Purpose and Effect of Christ's Sacrificial Love Relative to His Church

A. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it..."

- The Lord intends generation by generation to set His church apart from all other institutions
- Each of Christ's assemblies is a little nation of spiritual Israel in a world full of idolatry
- That setting apart is intended for the purpose of Christ having unique and exclusive access to His church without third party intrusions (use illustration of our marriage night and the visitors)
- That cleansing process and the fruits of it reveals other purposes Christ intends in setting His church apart:
- Part of that setting apart is for the purpose of distinguishing the behavior of children of the eternal King from all others who follow some other master
- Part of that setting apart is for the purpose of singling out a people to carry out His gospel purposes in the world

So: B. Vv.26-27: He sanctifies and cleanses His church "That he might present it to himself a glorious church..."

II. The Way The Purpose Is Accomplished: “with the washing of water by the word”

- ❖ This phrase in our text holds the key to how a church gets set apart to Christ
- ❖ It holds the key to how a church receives effective cleansing from those things which defile and compromise spiritual service and worship
- ❖ It holds the key to how a church grows into a state where Jesus Christ’s work in its midst is such that it becomes a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.
- ❖ **Some things about this process of washing of water by the word must be realized:**
 - A. The Word Has To Be Available and Used - (see 2Chronicles 34:8, 15)**
 - One essential element of this washing is the agency of the ministry
 - There needs to be a minister who applies the word (2Tim. 4:2 - Preach the word. Be instant in season and out of season).
 - That word has to be the words of God (Heb 4:12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
 - Mat 24:11 **And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.**
 - One critical element to remember, however:
 - Use and discovery of the Word of God does not lie exclusively in what is done by the preacher in the pulpit.
 - In other words, use of the Word is not simply to sit and hear the word
 - James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and **not hearers only**, deceiving your own selves. A church standing for the word is not a church that boasts of having a preacher that preaches all the word (churches are bound by the leading of the Holy Spirit to be proactive in use of the Word as a group.
 - Listen to this promise from Christ to the church at Philadelphia in Rev. 3:10 **Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.)**
 - Paul had something like this in mind when he wrote to the church at Thessalonica and penned these words: (1Thess 1:8) For from you **sounded out the word of the Lord** not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also **in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad**; so that we need not to speak any thing.
 - ✓ A church is discovering and using the Word of God when that Word is “sounding out” from it
 - ✓ A church is discovering and using the word when people talk about the faith exhibited by the church’s deeds and the deeds of it’s members
 - ✓ A church that handles the Word of God honestly and without selectivity will find it spiritually washing the members
 - Now, let's think about an illustration of how the opposite of this is done:
 - There is an account in Jeremiah 36 in which God directed that prophet to write a

book to Jehoiakim, then king of Judah and son of the great and godly Josiah, former king of Judah. God told Jeremiah to write all the things that the Lord intended to do to Judah in His anger, and read it in the Lord's house to all the people. So Jeremiah calls Baruch, the scribe and has him write his words down, and because Jeremiah cannot go into the Lord's house he directs Baruch to go. Baruch goes on the Lord's day and reads it in the high court of the temple. Some of the religious and political leaders of the day questioned Baruch about it and then went and told the king what had been read. The king had the book brought to him and as he read the book when he would finish reading certain pages he would simply cut them out of the book with a penknife and throw them in the fire.

- I tell this story to make a point that a lot of churches are acting like that about the Word of God nowadays. And, I am afraid a lot of preachers are acting like Jehoiakim also.
- If a part of the Word of God doesn't suit how they want to do, they just take the penknife of their own minds and sort of redact that part of scripture out of their teaching and preaching.

B. The Word Has To Have a Cleansing Effect

- See a contrast in **John 13:10-11** Jesus saith to him (Peter), He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. 11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. (Point: Judas was around all the time when Jesus was teaching his disciples.
 - Just because the Word of God is around does not mean it will act cleansingly upon the people who hear it. We have to face the fact that the Word of God will never cleanse some people because they are not in a spiritual condition to be washed by the word.
 - If everybody was washed by the word that heard it, then there would never be any conflicts in one of the Lord's churches.
 - There would never be any disagreement between member and member, between pastor and members.
 - But we thank God that for true believers who have no issue with the Lord, the Word of God does act like spiritual water and does perform a great cleansing upon them.
 - As water, when you get in a shower, washes all the dirt of the day's work down the drain, so the Word of God, as it acts like a cleanser on God's people removes spiritual dirt from their spiritual persons.
- BUT: The cleansing effect of the Word is only realized when the Lord's people expose themselves to it. Those who hide from the potential effect of the Word will remain polluted by their own carnal habits, thoughts, and principles.
 - Listen to Christ's words from John 15:3 - Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.
 - This is a principle that works on the people of God when they are attentive to

the Lord's words...but not otherwise.

- David is thinking about cleansing when he wrote Psalms 119:9 and the lesson it gives us fits more than young men. He says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word." Paying attention to the Word of God when thinking about our "ways." Good advice for a church.
- That same chapter sings about hiding God's word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (v.11); delighting ourselves in His statutes and not forgetting His Word (v.16); being quickened according to His Word (v.25); God establishing His Word to us (v.38); trusting in His Word (v.42); hoping in His Word (vv.74, 81); refusing to walk in an evil way in order to keep His Word (v. 101); His Word as a lamp and a light (v. 105); loving His pure Word (v.140); meditating in His Word (v.148); Standing in awe of His Word (v.161); rejoicing in His Word like somebody who has found a rich treasure trove (v.162);

Divine Washing

He pulled me from the hole I'd fallen in
And looked me up and down again.
It's muddy down in that place, I said,
His eyes left me and found that hole instead.

Again, I felt His eyes appraising me as silence filled the air
I took a look myself and knew at once what sight had made him stare.
There on my clothes I saw a dirty muddy mess,
It was a sight, I must confess!

I need a washing, I opined
To which his head inclined.
Then with a nod, he turned and went back to His work
And left me feeling like a jerk!

I stood there in the warmness of the day,
As clouds arose and trees began to sway,
When of a sudden rain began to fall,
Its welcome wetness purging dirt and grime, and all.

With no great rush, but steadily it ran
Down skin and clothes and hair as though it had a plan.
In minutes looking on in pleasure and surprise,
I saw a cleaner me appear before my very eyes.

And standing there, to me it all came clear,
As I saw water cleanse me here,
That this was how God's Word doth work,
On souls in whom the faults of Adam lurk.

We in our world of woe and erring ways
Find dirt enough to foul the glory of our days,
But washing comes through power of His great Word,
When we as quickened souls His voice have heard.

Like eagles we can soar to spirit heights
When we have washed from us what fouls and blights.
Our souls set free from that which makes us small,
We're large as lions when Words divine wash us withal.

So let us seek with newborn wills of grace,
To find His perfect will and run the race,
Seize on His Word which makes us free,
And know each day Christ's liberty!

Robert P. Myers, 2007