

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Christ: The Head of the Church**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 2029B

As we come again this morning to the study of the word of God we come to the final message in our very special series on the anatomy of a church. In concluding the series we have really come to the most important message. We've tried to see the church in the analogy of a body. We've talked about the skeleton, basic foundational truths the church must be committed to. We've talked about the internal systems, spiritual attitudes that must exist in the hearts of its people. We've talked about muscle, the function of ministry, and we've talked about flesh the form that ministry takes.

But nobody would be complete without its head, and so in our study this morning I want us to look to the word of God to gain an understanding of the head of the body who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we've been saying an awful lot about the things that we are to do in the church, and you have responded so wonderfully things it's been a great encouragement to me, tremendous encouragement. You've heard the things that were very confrontive and very direct and very moving on our hearts, and I have seen the spirit of God bear fruit already in these areas. We really have majored for seven weeks on what we are to be doing, what we are to be believing, what we are to be thinking, what we are to be planning.

It would be very much out of balance if we didn't come to talk about the head who is Jesus Christ and what he is doing in his church. This by the way beloved is the ultimate comfort. You see the ultimate comfort is to know that with all of the things that we do and do so inadequately, with all of the things that we fail to do, with all of the mistakes that we make and all of the sins that so easily beset us in the race to do the will of God we have this overriding confidence that Christ is building his church. That is a tremendous encouragement and we want to talk about that.

Paul talked about it in Ephesians chapter 4 he said that we all are growing up into Him who is the head that Christ. Then he said this, listen from him, the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work. In other words Paul said we have to give everything we've got, we have to endeavor to do all we can do and be all we can be in the full knowledge that it is really power of Christ that makes it all work. This again beloved is the divine paradox isn't it? We give supreme effort and if anything is done it is of God, and it is supreme comfort to know that where we fail he succeeds. So I want this morning for us to focus on the one who is our head.

Without whom we can do what, nothing says Paul, nothing. As I was thinking of a passage we might examine I was drawn to the majestic benediction at the conclusion of the epistle to the Hebrews. Would you turn in your bibles to Hebrews 13 verses 20 and 21, and I really want to use this verse as just a point of contact with truth to move us about some other passages in the New Testament that will enrich our understanding of the work of the Lord for his church. We've talked for seven weeks about what we're to do and now we're going to talk about what Christ does for his church. Really this should be a series of its own, but we're pressed to condense it into one message.

It is by the way a majestic doxology, it's just dropped into the closing words of this great epistle. It says, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you which is well pleasing in Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever, amen." Beautiful doxology, beautiful benediction. But in a way that benediction wraps up in a summary form the work of Christ. In fact it even wraps up in a summary form the message of the epistle to the Hebrews, but we'll not look at it particularly in that regard. The doxology is intended as a closing praise for the God of peace, and he is so called because through the blood of Jesus Christ he has made peace with sinful men.

He is the God of peace who once was the God of wrath, the God of war, the God of judgment, the God of fury. But he has become to us the God of peace, not always a God of peace, but to us he becomes the God of peace through the blood of Jesus Christ when we make peace and he make peace with us. So it is a doxology to praise the God of peace, but in praising the God of peace it delineates how he became the God of peace through the work of Jesus Christ. It starts with the affirmation that he is the God of peace, it ends with the statement that he is to be glorified forever and ever, and the means to that is in the middle the work, the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does Christ do for his church? It's here in this passage that we get a glimpse of that as we begin to look at it. First of all, he is the savior of his church. Several things in this text point to the saving work of Christ in behalf of his church. The first one that I noted was his name Lord Jesus in verse 20. Jesus was to be his name says Matthew 1:21, "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." That name means Jehovah saves, it is Jeshua or Joshua of the Old Testament; it means Jehovah saves. So his very name is the name of one who saves.

Earlier the writer of Hebrews in chapter 2 in verse 9 and 10 wrote, "But we do see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God should taste death for man. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Jesus is the one who tasted death through every man. Jesus is the one who became the *archgos*, the pioneer, the captain, the leader, the trailblazer, the beginner of salvation.

He was made perfect in his own offering of himself. In fact the name Jesus speaks of our salvation so much so that the writer in Acts 4:12 says there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved in the name of Jesus. So his very name here speaks of his saving work, and so there is a praise note here as the benediction begins in just the name Jesus, the savior, but there's much more. For verse 20 says that he had done his saving work through the blood of the everlasting covenant. That's a marvelous phrase the blood of the everlasting covenant.

You see the Jews always knew that the sin had to be atoned for by blood, there was no other way and that's part of the message of this book of Hebrews back in chapter 9 and verse 18 we read this, "Where upon neither the first *covenant*," or the first testament, that is the old one under Moses, "was dedicated without blood." Every Jew knew that the ratification of the Old Covenant in Leviticus 17:11 was by blood. The Old Covenant was inaugurated and ratified by the shedding of blood, because it was by God's design that there had to be bloodshed to deal with sin.

Moses was God's agent to sprinkle that blood to ratify that covenant to set it in motion. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law he took the blood of calves and goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop and sprinkled both the book and all the people saying this is the blood of the covenant or testament which God has adjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. God is making a very major point here; there was blood everywhere. Blood all over the book of the law, blood all over the people, there was blood all over the tabernacle and all the vessels in the tabernacle. It was a bloody mess, blood every place.

God was saying that there is no covenant made with me without the shedding of blood, but all of that was only symbolic of the ultimate bloodshed that could bring men to peace with God. So it says in verse 22 almost all things are by the law purged with blood and without shedding of blood is what, no remission, no forgiveness, no peace with God. That's why Jesus ratified the New Covenant in Matthew 26:28 by saying this, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." And he was in effect saying that "My blood will be the inaugurator of a new covenant."

So covenants were made in blood, and if a man was to have peace with God it would be through the shedding of blood and no animal sacrifice could affect that true peace. There had to be the ultimate sacrifice of Christ of which the animal sacrifices were only previews and pictures. If you look again at what it says in Hebrews 13:20, it says it is the blood of the everlasting covenant. The Mosaic Covenant, the Old Covenant was not everlasting, it was a temporary covenant. It was only a shadow of things to come. It is replaced by the everlasting covenant; for Jesus Christ in one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified.

He by that one act of sacrifice brought about an everlasting salvation. In Hebrews 9:12 it says, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." The priest went in again and again and again and again, and there was sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice. Christ went in once, came out never again. He purchased for us eternal redemption. So we see in this passage that he is the savior of his church, that's his name and that was his work on the cross. Then we see also another phrase there at the beginning of verse 20 when it says, "the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus."

That also is a very essential element in his saving work. For when the father brought Jesus from the dead it was the father's stamp of approval on his finished work. We think of the resurrection as a means to our own resurrection. We think of the resurrection as a conquering of death which we too shall enjoy, and those are right ways to think, but they are not all encompassing. We must look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the single greatest affirmation of God's approval upon his saving work. When he raised him from the dead he was affirming that he had accomplished what he had gone to the cross to do.

So the saving work of Christ comes to us very clearly through verse 20, Jesus through his blood brings us into an everlasting covenant and in response the God of peace raises him from the dead. It is Christ who is, Paul says in Ephesians 2, our peace. He is our peace. He has made peace. In Colossians 1:20 it says through the blood of his cross, and I think that's why in Luke 10 I think it's verse 6 we are called sons of peace. So he's the savior of his church. Now beloved let me say what this means. This church is not a human organization, nor is any church of Jesus Christ.

You don't get into this church by signing up, you don't just become a member because you like the kind of folks that hang out here or you think it might be good for business or it might upgrade your lifestyle or you might like to get in on some of the fun things that we do or you might enjoy the music or it makes you feel better about yourself. No, you come into the church by virtue of the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and entrance belongs to those who are redeemed and washed through his precious blood. We're not building the church he's building it; it's his church. He's the savior of his church.

He brings people into his church, let's talk about that. There are two elements of that I want to speak to. First he loves his church. His saving work is built upon his saving loving. We love him because he first loved us. It is God who predetermined the love relationship with us before we ever existed, and loved us while we hated him. Even when we were enemies God through his great love reconciled us to himself through the death of his son. He loves us, it was his love that redeemed us, it was his love that made him give up his precious blood; more precious than any human commodity.

In Ephesians chapter 5 there's a wonderful statement in verse 2 that you're familiar with no doubt. It says, "Walk in love, even as Christ also hath love us, and hath given himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling fragrance." Christ loved us so much he gave himself for us. It's wonderful to know you're loved, it's wonderful to know that. He loves the church, he loves the church so much he gave himself for the church. In the process of when we are ministering and giving our lives and all the best that we have, and we become anxious because the church isn't all that it ought to be, and we see people slipping through the cracks and we wonder why it doesn't come out the way it ought to come out.

We say to ourselves as men of God or ministers or those who lead Lord this is my life, this is my passion, I'm giving all that I have to this. I care about this, I live for this, and it isn't all that I want it to be, may our grief assuaged by the fact that he loves it infinitely more than we do. It is not my own heart comforted in the fact that when I am in grief over those who do not do as they ought to do, and do not respond as they ought to respond and I am grieved because of that; think how much he who loves the church infinitely is grieved, and yet still loves. He loves his church and having loved them, it says in John 13, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved unto perfection."

He doesn't stop loving his people because they fail. He doesn't stop loving his people because they fall. He doesn't stop loving his people because they are indifferent, because they don't take advantage of opportunity, resource and privilege. He doesn't stop loving them, and we must remember too that the one who knows infinitely everything there is to no loves even the people he knows so well, and we are comforted in the fact that he loves his church. He predetermined to set his love upon them before the world began and he in fact will fulfilled that until the world is reborn in eternity future.

He loves us so much that he became sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He is at work in his church, loving his people into the church and loving them while they're in the church. His love is rising to God it says in Ephesians 5:2 as a sweet smelling in the nostrils of the holy one. So comforting; Christ loves his church. That tells me I need to love his church in spite of things. It also tells me not to fear because if I'm concerned about the church I love he is infinitely more concerned about the church he loves. If I think that I have a right to be concerned because I've given so much of myself to the church then how much of himself has he given to the church that he should be so concerned too and far more than I.

In Revelation chapter 1 verse 5 there's just a beautiful statement there it says, and again it's a doxology of praise, it's a glorious, majestic benediction, and what it says is this. "Unto him that loves us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood and has made us priests unto God." Incomprehensible. He loves his church, present tense by the way, and what shall separate us from that love? Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. How about life,

death, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any other creation.

Never, having loved his own which were in the world he loves them unto perfection. It's so comforting to me I just hold onto it; he loves the church far more than I love the church. That says he'll give his attention to the object of his love. Secondly, when you think about him as a savior of the church you have to remember that he builds the church. As the one who saves he's the one who builds. He brings us in. He adds to his church, he frames it together that it might grow as a holy temple to himself. I love it in Matthew 16 one of my favorite passages I will build my church. What a great thought.

We're not in the church building business, he is. It's not my job to build a church or anybody else's, it not our job to contrive devices and means, schemes of human wisdom to build a church. He will build his church and the gates of Hades won't prevail against it. That is a euphemism for death, that's a Hebrew euphemism for death. Death is the ultimate weapon that's in the hand of the adversary according to Hebrews 2. Who has the power of death, Satan? What he is saying is I will build my church, and the worst that could be done killing them won't prevail against it. You kill the church and all you're doing is populating glory, that's all.

I'll build my church. I just want to be a part of the church he's building, that's all. I just want to be a part of the church he's building; that's why I'm so committed to the fact that we have work by the book. We don't want to do anything that's going to confuse us. We don't want to be using all the human devices to build the church, because then we don't know whether we did it or he did it. I don't want to live with that. I just want to be a part of what he's doing. I love what he says there, I will build not the church, I will build my church; what a great truth. He's the possessor. I'm often asked who owns your church. I like that question.

Who owns or church the Lord Jesus Christ. He purchased it with his own precious blood. He owns it, he builds it, in fact you know something he adds to the church daily such as should be saved. He's in the church building business. In John 10 he says I know my sheep, my sheep know me. They hear my voice, they follow me. My sheep, I like that. We belong to him, he's the builder, owner, purchaser, chief cornerstone, foundation, possessor. It's his church, it's being built with a certainty, bound up in the promise of God that cannot fail.

Against all opposition, against all threats, against all carnality, against all human ineptitude, against all indifference, apathy, apostasy, liberalism, denominationalism and every other ism and spasm and all the rest of it he's building his church. He's building his church. 1 Corinthians 3:9 says you're God's building. Ephesians 2 says you've been built up a holy temple, a habitation of the spirit. Paul says to Timothy I'm telling you how you ought to behave in the church of the living God, it's his church. So he's the savior and he loves and builds his church.

Secondly, in Hebrews 13:20 he's the shepherd. It's a lovely, lovely thought. He is the great shepherd of the sheep it says. As the savior he loves and builds, as the shepherd he has some very unique and special functions too. But first of all we want to note that he's the great shepherd. In contrast to all other shepherds who are just earthly he is the great shepherd. Psalm 77:20 said of Moses, "Thou did lead thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron," and they were shepherds, but not great shepherds. Three times in the New Testament it calls Jesus Christ the shepherd.

John 10 he's the good shepherd. 1 Peter 5 he's the chief shepherd, and Hebrews 13 he's the great shepherd. Good shepherd, chief shepherd, great shepherd. You know in scripture I counted over half a dozen places at least where the bible identifies ungodly peoples as nations with this title. They were as sheep without what, a shepherd. So if we are believing we are sheep, what, with a shepherd? We were meeting a week or so ago with our men and we were talking and discussing and trying to develop a way to do a better job of shepherding, and I come away from times like that.

Because people say these people aren't getting involved, and these people aren't following through, and we're losing some people over here, and we've got folks we haven't seen for a long time and we wonder where they went, and we're trying to track them down. We have all these logistical issues to try to resolve and you go away and you say Lord how are we going to keep track of these people. They don't come for a few weeks, where are they or are they ill and we don't know it or we hear about a tragedy and we haven't talked to the people to find out if they're really moving along with the Lord, if their salvation is really genuine. There's anxiety in their heart and you worry about it, and I tell you some of those times I go home and I find myself staring at the ceiling with my mind filled with the thought of how can we shepherd the sheep. But we're comforted in this beloved, that the great shepherd is shepherding his sheep.

I think sometimes we think if a person gets saved and doesn't get into a follow up program they'll lose salvation; we've got to help the Holy Spirit along. You can't just leave people up to the Lord. You got to get them in the program. We're not out of balance on that; as long as we understand we want to have all the tools, but the Lord is the shepherd and I'm not going to worry about his sheep. I'm going to do all I can to be involved, but they're his sheep. I want to be faithful to what he gives me, but I can't maintain my sanity if I feel I've got ultimate responsibility.

I'll give my whole heart to it not because I think it depends on me. You want a perspective get this perspective. I don't serve the Lord Jesus Christ, teach his word or whatever. None of us do as elders or leaders of the church, pastors; none of us do that because we feel we're responsible for the church. I don't know about you but I do it because I want to be a part of what Christ is doing that's all. You know something he'll build his church with or without me. That's right. Listen, if the gates of Hell can't prevail against you do you think John MacArthur could? He'll build his church without me.

But I lose, and my whole hearted service to Christ and all of our whole hearted service to Christ is not to help God do what he otherwise couldn't, it's to be a part of what he's doing. What a joy, and so we shepherd with all our hearts and the best way we can. But when we run out of resources and we don't know what to do or what to say, we just don't know how to take care of people and meet their needs the way they ought to be met we have to lean back and say, but the great shepherd is the shepherd isn't he. I was told yesterday of a lady who gave birth to a child at our church, she died and the child is premature, on life support systems and time period without oxygen to the brain all this.

The father's left without a wife and with a child like this. You say what do you say, and you stumble around and then you fall back on the fact that the great shepherd shepherds his sheep, doesn't he. That's where human resources come to an end, but the Lord is the great shepherd, chief shepherd, good shepherd. As such two things we look at that he does. First, he equips. Notice in verse 21 that they great shepherd of the sheep through means of the blood of the everlasting covenant makes you perfect in every good work to do his will.

The reason he perfected us in salvation, the reason he brought us to saving perfection in himself was in order to cause us to do his will. He's perfecting us to do his will. He's equipping us to do his will. It's so wonderful. He uses the word to shape us and mold us into his will. Given scripture it says I n 2 Timothy 3:16 for what purpose that the man of God may be perfect, equipped, thoroughly furnished to all good works. So he's given us his word, and then he's given us gifted men. Ephesians 4 and he gave some apostles and prophets and evangelist in teaching pastors or teaching shepherds for the perfecting, for the equipping of the saints.

So he gives the word and he gives us the word, and not only the word, but some uniquely gifted men of God who can pour that word into us. Then he gives us teachers, and then according to 1 Peter 5:10 it says after you suffer a while the Lord makes you perfect. He gives us trials in which the word can work. In John's gospel chapter 15 it says the word is like a knife and it prunes us. So you take the word brought to us individually and brought to us through gifted men and then the Lord comes in and brings suffering. After you've suffered a while the Lord puts us through trials and temptations and painful suffering, why? Because that's the context in which we are forced to apply the word.

You see it's when I'm in the struggle, when I've been struggling with sin and struggling with suffering, going through anxiety and pain and grief in my life. When I'm going through the troubled times, those are the times when I see boiling up within me the ugliness of my own sinfulness and I learn to hate sin more. Those are the times when I may question God and doubt, and I learn to hate my own doubts and my own sinfulness more. Those are the times when I'm driven to my knees and that's good.

The times when I want to drown out at God and that's good. The times when I long for Heaven and deliverance from this world and that's good.



So suffering works a good thing. So the Lord brings the suffering, we bring the word. Preachers aren't supposed to bring the suffering, don't get confused on what your duty is; the Lord will take care of that. You bring the word. So the Lord equips, builds up, strengthens; he gives us the power of the Holy Spirit. He says you shall be my witnesses after the spirit's power comes upon you in Acts 1:8. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the outermost part of the earth, and you'll go forth he says in John 15 and bear much fruit. Out of your belly in John 7 will flow rivers of living water. So he's equipping his church.

It's so wonderful, we have training class, we've been talking about this. We have discipling, we've got to be involved in evangelism, and all the time we're working as hard as we can work we're remembering in our mind that the Lord is equipping his church, he's doing it through the word, through trials, through the power of the spirit of God. That's so wonderful, and it isn't up to us. We're doing our best because we want to be a part of what he's doing. I can't think of a greater privilege. In Ephesians 5:26 a verse that normally is used to speak of marriage, but really perhaps more than anything speaks of the church.

It says no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it even as the Lord the church. The Lord nourishes and cherishes the church; two beautiful words. Nourish means to feed and cherish means to warm with body heat. It would be like a nursing mother. The term cherish is used as a nursing mother in 1 Thessalonians 2:7. It's as if the Lord takes in his beloved and nurses and nurtures and warms. It means to warm with body heat, to melt or to soften. Here's intimacy; the Lord comes and shepherds us feeding us and warming us and melting us down to reshape us; beautiful thought. He's at work, that's a comforting thing. When I've run out of resources, when I've run out of ideas, when I am frustrating in my mind I say Lord how do we get people more committed, how do we get them moving along, more equipped, more faithful, growing, maturing.

Lord we need new ways to do it, new levels of commitment, and I'm comforted in the fact that he's doing it. He's moving his church along. He's equipping his church. He's nourishing, cherishing his church. Great comfort. Secondly, as shepherd he intercedes for his church. Just like a shepherd would go out and fight off the wolf the Lord Jesus Christ fights off the adversary who comes constantly before the throne of God to accuse the brethren. He comes before the throne of God to accuse us as he did to accuse Job, and Jesus comes to our rescue and defends us.

He is our defender, he is our intercessor, he is our advocate, he is our empathizer, he is our sympathizer, he is our high priest; what a great thought. You see him in John 17 as he prays to the father, he says, Father I pray not for those that are in the world, but for those who you've given unto me that they may be one. Father, I pray that it maybe one with me as I am one with you, and he prays for his own in that marvelous passage. You see continuing through the New Testament his high priest he worked. 1 John 2 says if any many sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous. In other

words when you sin and the accusation of your sin is brought before the throne of God Jesus stands as your advocate and says Father that sin is paid for.

That sin is paid for, my blood paid for that sin and that's why no sin can be charged against God's elect. Is God going to charge it against you as his elect when he has elected you, is he going to charge it against you when he has justified you already. Shall God that justified you once charge some sin against your account? Is there information he didn't have or a higher court than God? Shall Christ condemn you who bore your sin in his own body on the tree? Shall he who perfectly expiated all your sin have some sin that he will hold you, not on your life? So there is that ever, ever interceding Christ.

So he intercedes for his church. He talks to the Father about our needs too, because we have many needs. He is not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was at all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He knows exactly what we go through and so he's able to suckle us or help us it says in Hebrews 2:18. He is a perfect high priest, Hebrews 7:25 says whoever lives to make intercession for us. He was hungry, he was thirsty, he was overcome with fatigue, he slept, he was taught, he grew, he was loved, he was hated, he loved, he hated. He was astonished, he marveled, he was glad, he was sad, he was angry, he was indignant, he was sarcastic, he was grieved, he was troubled, he was overcome by future events.

He exercised faith, he read scripture, he prayed all night, he poured out his heart over the pain of men and he wept when his own heart ached. He's been there, sympathetic, empathetic and defending us. Great thought. He is our faithful high priest, always interceding. So we see him then as shepherd; on the one hand feeding in a nurturing kind of cherishing kind of relationship to equip his church to do his will. In another sense he intercedes on our behalf, making sure there's never anything against us; his blood keeps on cleansing us from all sin. 1 John 1:9 savior of his church, shepherd of his church. Thirdly, he's sovereign of his church.

Look again at the text and notice the word Lord, 92 times *kurios* is used in the New Testament, and we may discuss various shades and meanings of the word but one thing is very clear; when it is used in the New Testament in reference to the son of God it means sovereign one, it means controlling one, it means one who is in complete authority. He is the Lord, he is the sovereign in his own church. It tells us in Ephesians chapter 1 that God has put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. He is charge.

Colossians chapter 1 says essentially the same thing in verse 19 it says, "It pleased the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell." There for in verse 18 says he's the head of the church, he's the beginning, he's the *protokos*, the preeminent one that in all things he might have the preeminence. So the concept of Lord has to do with the fact that Jesus Christ is the sovereign one. Now that

manifest itself in the church again in two ways that I want to emphasize for you. First, he rules his church. As the Lord of his church he rules his church. Let me tell you something folks if anyone ask you who is in charge of Grace Church you tell them Jesus Christ.

That is not being said facetiously, Jesus Christ is the head of this church. Ephesians 5:23 says he's the head. The word used there is *kephal*, basically has to do with the idea of being first or being prominent or being supreme or being the determiner. The one who's calling the shots, the sovereign is the idea again; he is the head of his church. That's repeated several places in the New Testament, and as the head he has the authority in his church, he rules in his church. You see him in Revelation 1 and he's moving among the candlesticks each representative of his church, and he's trimming the lamps, and he's coming with bronzed feet and burning, penetrating eyes as he searches out the sin that needs to be crushed out of his church.

He is the Lord of his church; that is why in Matthew 18 where you have the discipline process and sin being dealt with there. It says when two or three are gathered together there am I in the midst of them, and it isn't two or three in a prayer meeting. It's two or three witnesses who confirm the sin of someone in a discipline. The whole passage is about discipline and he says don't hesitate to do it, because when you've called together the right witnesses and affirmed the sin you don't need to hold back because I'm there in the midst doing it with you. So you're only binding on earth what's already been bound in Heaven, and you're only loosening on earth what's already been loosed in Heaven.

So you act in behalf of Christ, great truth. He rules his church and he rules through a plurality of godly men as he always has, and that's why we have 50 some elders at Grace Church and we have one goal. Our single goal is to do what Christ wants us to do. Now we know a lot of what he wants us to do because it's written here, and where the book doesn't speak and where we don't have information in the scripture itself to speak to a certain issue it's up to us to discern the mind of God prayerfully, thoughtfully, patiently; to wait until God unfolds to us the thing he wants to do. That's why we've always been committed to the fact that everything we decide, 50 plus men is unanimous or we don't do it, it unanimous.

Because God only has one will, it's up to all of us who are as it were under shepherds of Jesus Christ to know what that will is. It's up to us to know what Christ wants to do in his church, and we will seek his mind until all of us come to an understanding of what that mind is. Christ rules this church, I don't want the responsibility nor does any human who thinks clearly. It's bad enough to have to answer for your own life without having to answer for a whole host of others. So we seek the mind of God through prayer until the spirit of God reveals his will. But he is the ruler of his church.

The only thing we want to do is discern his will, that's all we want to do. We want to discern his will. That's why we go by this book; that simplifies it. Secondly, as we think about the Lord Jesus Christ in his church he not only rules his church, but he teaches his church; that's part of his ruling. He has

authority to exercise in all matters and he has authority to reveal in all truth. He's our teacher, he will be revealed through his word, his will is revealed through human instruments, but he's the teacher.

In fact he said to the disciples in the gospel of John several times that this would be the case. In John 14 I believe it's verse 20 he says you will know that I am in my Father and you are in me and I am in you; you're going to know these things. You're going to know a lot of things. How are you going to know that; verse 26 "The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, he'll bring all things to your remembrance whatever I have said unto you."

Verse 26 of chapter 15, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father of the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me." He'll tell you about me. He'll tell you what you need to know. Chapter 16 verse 12, "I have yet many things to tell you, you can't bear them now. Nevertheless when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth; he'll not speak of himself; but whatever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you the things to come. And he will glorify me: for he shall receive from me, and give it unto you."

So see the Lord keeps the control in place. He rules and he feeds and teaches his church through the word and the spirit. So when we go to the word of God we see what's clear in the word and we draw on the spirit; that's 1 John 2:20 and 27. It says, "We have an anointing from God." We don't need human teachers, we have an anointing from God. That is earthly, worldly teachers outside the kingdom who don't know the word of God. We don't need that kind of wisdom, because we have an anointing from God and anointing is none other than the Holy Spirit. So we have the word of God and the author of the Spirit of God pouring truth through the gifted men of God and thus Christ is leading his church.

I'm not here to give you my opinion on anything, if I ever do that you run me out of town. I'm not here to give you my opinion on anything. I'm not here to talk on social issues that aren't relative to the word of God. I'm here to open to you the word of God that you may know the mind of God and the heart of the Savior that he may teach his church. I've said this before and I say it again I'm only a waiter. I didn't cook the meal, I'm only supposed to deliver it without messing it up, and get it to you hot. Lastly, he's not only the Savior who loves and builds his church, and the shepherd who equips and intercedes for his church, and the sovereign who rules and teaches his church, but he's the sanctifier who purifies and glorifies his church.

He's the sanctifier who purifies and glorifies his church. Look at verse 21, "the ultimate goal is to work in you." That's so good. You see it's so good to know that he's in work in us isn't it? He's the sanctifier, he's the one setting us apart from sin, he's the one purifying us, and also he's the one leading us to give him glory forever and ever. He's the sanctifier, purifier, glorifier. We get concerned and you do too. You see somebody that's a Christian, but there's sin in their life and you just – you worry about it and you want to see them out of that, and you confront them and maybe the discipline

process goes on.

We talked today about a guy who just keeps getting into sin and then he says he's going to stop and then he keeps getting in again, and then he comes out and again he's in and out and here we are again needing to go back through the discipline again. You become so grieving in your heart over these kinds of things, and the only comfort you have that if he belongs to Jesus Christ he is the purifier of his church. Maybe that he'll purify his church with removal, it may be he'll purify his church with the death of a believer who's unfaithful as in 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 John 5. It may be that he'll purify his church by strengthening that Christian and drawing them into holiness; that's for him to do.

But his goal is to do that, that's what it says in Ephesian 5, listen to what it says. "Husbands love your wives as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." Why'd he do that? Why did he do that? That he might sanctify, set it apart from the world, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. He wants his church pure and clean, in order that ultimately he might present it to himself a glorious church; that's the glory of the church. He purifies it to bring it to glory that he might have a church which is without spot, without wrinkle or any such thing but holy and without blemish.

So he's the purifier and the glorifier, he purifies, ultimately he glorifies, and glorifying is simply ultimate purification isn't it. Someday we will be to the praise of the glory of God, and through Jesus Christ, the God of peace we'll receive glory forever and ever, amen from us. Christ purifies and he's at work purifying, purging, that's so comforting to know that and bringing us to glory. When we get up there folks we'll all be perfect, without spot, without blemish. I hope it's as hopeful to you to hear these things as it is to me. That we're not alone in this deal, and let me say it again what I said earlier, it's a key thought.

Listen, we're not doing what Christ can't do folks. We're not building the church because he needs us to build it. If Grace Church blew up today, I don't expect it, if it did the church of Jesus Christ would move ahead. If I dropped dead and every one of our leaders did the church would move ahead. He does not need us to build his church. You say why are we working so hard, I'll tell you why, because there's no more marvelous, thrilling, glorious, joy producing, soul satisfying function than to be a part of what Jesus Christ is building for his eternal glory.

A reporter came up to the construction site of St. Paul's Cathedral in London many years ago. He was doing a story on the building of that great cathedral. He said to a guy there with a bunch of stones in his hand, he said what are you doing. He said can't you see what I'm doing, I'm sticking stones in here to build this thing. Just more stones all the time, just carrying these stones. He went to a second guy and he said what are you doing. He said I'm earning a living, I've got a family and a bunch of children; I'm earning a living. He went to a third fellow and he said what are you doing. He said I'm helping Sir Christopher Wren build St. Paul's Cathedral. That's a different perspective isn't it?

What are you doing? I'm sticking these stones in here; I've got to do this you know. I'm earning a living, after all I'm a Christian I've got to do something spiritual. No, I'm a part of Christ building his eternal kingdom. What a glorious sight. Father we thank you that you've given us your word and left us with no doubt and no confusion as to what it means to us, and what it requires of us. Yet, you've also given us yourself and it's really your work. Do it Lord, do it for your glory and let us be a part not because you need us, but because we want to be a part of something that's eternal. We want to show our love, we want to work with you, we want to know the joy and thrill and blessing that comes to the obedient and faithful, diligent.

In the silence of this moment you might offer to the Lord some thanks for the Savior who loved you and built you into his church. For the shepherd who equips you, intercedes for you, for the sovereign who rules and teaches you, for the sanctifier who purifies and ultimately will glorify you. Your heart ought to be filled with thanksgiving. Some of you don't even know the Lord, and maybe there's a moving in your heart of the Spirit of God and a prompting that says I want Christ to take my sin away. I want him to be Lord in my life.

I want to turn the destiny of life over to him. Seek him in that regard, open your heart to him in response to the prompting of the Spirit of God. Others of you perhaps sense the need to belong to a fellowship, to become a part of this church or any church where Christ is lifted up and exalted and you can serve his Holy Name. Let your heart be easily plied by the Spirit of God.

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