

**Christ: The Head of the Church**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 2029B

**INTRODUCTION & REVIEW**

This lesson concludes our series on "The Anatomy of a Church. " We have now come to the most important part of our series. We have already talked about the church as a body:

**I. THE SKELETON**

**II. THE INTERNAL SYSTEMS**

**III. THE MUSCLES**

**IV. THE FLESH**

No body would be complete without a head. In this lesson, I want us to learn from the Word of God about the Head of the body, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. We have already talked about what we should be doing in the church, and it wouldn't be right if we didn't talk about the Head of the church and what He is doing in His church. By the way, it is very comforting to know that in spite of all the mistakes we make and all the sins that beset us as we attempt to do the will of God, Christ is building His church. That is a tremendous encouragement.

**V. THE HEAD**

In Ephesians 4, Paul said, ". . . we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 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" (vv. 15b-16; NIV). In other words, we are to endeavor to do everything we can in the church; but, it's the power of Christ that makes everything work. That is a divine paradox: We are to do everything with all our effort, yet it is God that accomplishes everything. It is great comfort to know that when we fail, He succeeds. Christ is our Head; without Him we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5b).

The passage that I thought might be most helpful for us to examine is the majestic benediction that concludes the Epistle to the Hebrews; that is, Hebrews 13:20-21. I want to use those verses as a base for our study of other passages in the New Testament that will enrich our understanding of the Lord's work for His church. Let's read them: "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 that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

That benediction summarizes the work of Christ. At the same time, it summarizes the message of the Epistle to the Hebrews, but we're not going to deal with that now. The doxology is intended to praise the God of peace. The Lord is called "the God of peace" because through the blood of Jesus Christ, He made peace with sinful men. For those of us that are saved, He was once the God of wrath and judgment, but now He is the God of peace.

Hebrews 13:20-21 is a doxology that praises 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, and ends with the statement that He is to be glorified forever and ever. God is glorified by the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does Christ do for His church? First, He is. . .

**A. The Savior of His Church**

**1. THE WORK OF SALVATIONEXPRESSED**

Three things in this text point to the saving work of Christ in behalf of His church. The first thing that

points to His saving work is. . .

*a. His Name (v. 20b)*. . . Lord Jesus. . . "In Matthew 1:21 we read, ". . . thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins. " Jesus means "Jehovah saves. " It is the Greek form of the Old Testament name Joshua. Jesus' name is the name of One that saves. Hebrews 2:9-10 says, "But we 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 every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. " Jesus is the One that tasted death for every man. He became "the captain [Gk. *archegos*=`the pioneer, or the beginner']" of salvation. He was made perfect in His own offering of Himself. Acts 4:12 says, ". . . there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. " Jesus' name speaks of His saving work. Another thing in the benediction that points to the saving work of Christ is. . . *b. His Blood (v. 20c)*". . . the blood of the everlasting covenant"1) The Ratification of the Old CovenantThe Jewish people knew that sin had to be atoned for by blood. That's part of the message of the book of Hebrews. In Hebrews 9:18 we read, "Whereupon, neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. " Every Jewish person knew that the ratification of the Old Covenant in Leviticus 17:11 was by blood. God required that there had to be bloodshed to deal with sin. Moses was God's agent to sprinkle the blood to ratify the Old Covenant: "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry" (Heb. 9:19-21). There was blood everywhere: on the book of the law, on the people, on the tabernacle, and on all the vessels in the tabernacle. 2) The Requirement of Both CovenantsGod was saying that there is no covenant made with Him without the shedding of blood. However, all of the bloodshed was only symbolic of the blood that would be shed by Christ to bring men to peace with God. Hebrews 9:22 says, ". . . almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission [forgiveness]. " That's why Jesus had to shed His blood to ratify the New Covenant. He said in Matthew 26:28, ". . . this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. " He was saying, in effect, "My blood will be the inaugurator of a new covenant. "Covenants were made in blood. If a man was to have peace with God, it had to be through the shedding of blood. Animal sacrifices couldn't bring that about; they were only a picture of the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, which brought true peace. 3) The Ramifications of the New CovenantNotice that Hebrews 13:20 says, ". . . the blood of the everlasting covenant. " The Mosaic Covenant--the Old Covenant--was not everlasting. It was a temporary covenant; it was a shadow of things to come (Heb. 10:1). Jesus Christ made an everlasting covenant: ". . . by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). By one act of sacrifice, Christ brought an everlasting salvation. Hebrews 9:12 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 for us. " Whereas the priests of Israel had to repeatedly make sacrifices in the holy place, Christ made one sacrifice, and purchased eternal redemption for us (Heb. 10:11-12). Another element of Christ's saving work is. . . *c. His Resurrection (v. 20a)*". . . the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus. . . "When the Father raised Jesus from the dead, He was showing His stamp of approval on Jesus' finished work. We think of Christ's resurrection as a means to our own resurrection. It's okay to think that, but there's much more to it than that. We must look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the single greatest affirmation of the Father's approval of Jesus' saving work. When the Father raised Jesus from the dead, He was affirming that Jesus had accomplished what He had gone to the cross to do. So, Hebrews 13:20 very clearly presents the saving work of Christ: Jesus, through His blood, brings us into an everlasting covenant. In response to the work that Jesus did, the God of peace raised Him from the dead. Paul

says in Ephesians 2:14 that Christ is our peace. Colossians 1:20 says that Christ "made peace through the blood of His cross." That's why, according to Luke 10:6, a Christian is called "the son of peace." Grace Church is not a human organization, nor is any church of Jesus Christ. You don't get into this church just by signing a card. You don't become a member simply because you like the people here, or think it might be good for business, or want to upgrade your life-style. You don't become a part of the church just because you like the music or the fun activities. You come into the church by virtue of the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only those that are redeemed and washed with His precious blood belong to the church. 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 it.

## 2. THE WORK OF THE SAVIOR EXPLAINED

As the Savior of His church, Christ does two things. First. . . *a. He Loves His Church*<sup>1)</sup> The Precedence of His Love Christ's saving work is built upon His saving love. We love Him because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). God predetermined a 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. Christ loves us. His love redeemed us. It made Him give up His precious blood, which is more precious than any human commodity (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Ephesians 5:2 says, ". . . walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Christ loved us so much that He gave Himself for us. It's wonderful to know you're loved. He loved the church so much that He gave Himself for it. Sometimes when those of us that are leaders in the church are doing the best we can yet people still have unfulfilled needs or problems arise, we get anxious. We say, "Lord, this is my life and passion; I care for this church! Things are not going the way they should!" However, our grief should be assuaged by the fact that Christ loves the church infinitely more than we do. My heart is comforted by that fact that even when I grieve over a person that is not living as he should, Christ is also grieved and still loves that person. 2) The Permanence of His Love Christ loves His church. John 13:1 says, ". . . having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end." He doesn't stop loving His people because they fail or fall. He doesn't stop loving His people when they are indifferent to Him or because they don't take advantage of their opportunities, resources, and privileges. The One that knows everything there is to know loves even the people He knows so well. We are comforted by the fact that He loves His church. He predetermined to set His love upon us before the world began, and will fulfill that until the world is reborn in the future. He who knew no sin loved us so much that He became sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ is at work in His church, loving people into it and loving them while they're in it. His love is rising as a sweet-smelling fragrance to the nostrils of the Holy One (Eph. 5:2). 3) The Preeminence of His Love If Christ loves His church, then I need to love it, too. Because I know He loves His church, I know that He is infinitely more concerned than I could be about what happens to it. If I think I have the right to be concerned about the church because I'm investing my life in it, how much more is Jesus concerned because He gave His life for it! In Revelation 1:5-6 is a beautiful doxology of praise: ". . . Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us a kingdom of priests unto God. . . ." That's incomprehensible! The word "loveth" is in the present tense. He loves His church. Paul said, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). Christ loves His church. That's comforting to me. He loves the church far more than I do. That tells me that He will give His attention to the object of His love.

*b. He Builds His Church*<sup>1)</sup> The Originator of the Church Because Christ is the One that saves people, He is the One that builds the church. He brought us into His church, and adds others to it.

He fitly frames the church together that it would grow as a holy temple to Himself (Eph. 2:21). I love what He said in Matthew 16:18: "... I will build My church. ..." What a great thought! We aren't in the church-building business; He is. It's not my job to build the church, and it's not your job, either. We are not to use human wisdom or methods to build the church. Christ will build the church, "and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18b). The phrase "gates of hades" is a Hebrew euphemism for death (see Rev. 1:18). Death is the ultimate weapon that's in the hand of the adversary (Heb. 2:14). Who has the power of death? Satan. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus was saying, "I will build My church, and even killing the saints won't prevail against it. If Satan kills those in the church, then he is just populating glory. "I want to be a part of the church Christ is building. That's why I'm so committed to the fact that we have to go by the Bible. We don't want to do anything that's going to confuse us: We don't want to be using human devices to build the church because then we won'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. 2) The Owner of the Church I love what He says in Matthew 16:18: He doesn't say, "I will build the church"; He says, "I will build My church. " What a great truth! He is the possessor of the church. People often ask me, "Who owns your church?" The Lord Jesus Christ does! He purchased it with His own precious blood. He owns it, and He builds it. In fact, He adds to the church daily those who are to be saved (Ac. 2:47b). He's in the church-building business. In John 10:27, Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. " I like that. We belong to Him. He's the builder, owner, purchaser, chief cornerstone, and foundation of the church. The church is His. It's being built and He has promised that it cannot fail. Opposition, threats, carnality, human ineptitude, indifference, apostasy, liberalism, and denominationalism will not prevail against the church. Christ is building His church. First Corinthians 3:9 says, "... ye are God's building. " Ephesians 2:21-22 says that you've been built into a holy temple in the Lord, "in whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. " Paul told Timothy, "These things write I unto thee. . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church. . . " (1 Tim. 3:14a, 15). The church belongs to the Lord. Christ is the Savior of His church. He loves it and builds it. Second, He is. . .

## **B. The Shepherd of His Church**

Hebrews 13:20 calls the Lord the "great Shepherd of the sheep. " That's a lovely thought. As the Shepherd, He has some very unique functions.

First, I want you to note that He's the Great Shepherd. In contrast to all other shepherds that are just earthly, He's the Great Shepherd. Psalm 77:20 says, "Thou didst lead Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. " Moses and Aaron were shepherds, but not Great Shepherds. Jesus is called the Shepherd three times in the New Testament: In John 10:11, He's the "good shepherd," in 1 Peter 5:4, He's the "chief Shepherd," and in Hebrews 13:20, He's the "great Shepherd. " I have found several places where the Bible refers to ungodly people as sheep without a shepherd (Num. 27:17; 1 Kgs. 22:17; 2 Chron. 18:16; Ezk. 34:5, 8; Zech. 10:2; Mt. 9:36; Mk. 6:34). Believers are sheep with a shepherd.

## **Relying on the Great Shepherd**

At a recent meeting we had for the leaders at Grace Church, we were discussing how we can develop a better way to shepherd people in our church. Some of the leaders were saying, "Certain people are not getting involved, and others are not following through on their responsibilities. We've lost contact with some people, and there are others that have been gone for a long time that we're trying to track down. " When I leave a meeting like that, I think, "Lord, how are we going to keep track of the people we have? How can we better shepherd them?" Sometimes people become ill and we don't know about it, or a tragedy happens. There are people that we haven't been able to talk with to find out how their relationship is with the Lord, or find out if their salvation is really genuine. I find myself frequently wondering how we can shepherd the sheep. But all of us can take comfort in this: The Great Shepherd is shepherding His sheep. Sometimes when a saved person doesn't get into a

follow-up program, we act like he will lose his salvation. We say, "We have to help the Holy Spirit along. We can't just leave people up to the Lord. We've got to get them into a program." It's good to watch over and help God's people, but we must remember that the Lord is the Shepherd. I'm not going to worry about His sheep. I want to be faithful to the sheep He has entrusted to my care and I'll do all that I can to help them, but they're His sheep.

I wouldn't be able to maintain my sanity if I felt I was ultimately responsible for Christ's sheep. My whole heart is in what I'm doing for His sheep, but it's not because I think it all depends on me.

Those of us who serve the Lord at Grace Church don't do so because we feel responsible for the church; we serve because we want to be a part of what Christ is doing. Do you know what? Christ will build His church with or without us. If the gates of hell can't prevail against it, then we certainly can't. Our service to Christ is not to do what He can't do; it's to be a part of what He is doing. What a joy! At Grace Church, we serve the Lord with our whole heart. But when we run out of resources and don't know what to do to meet people's needs, we can lean back and say, "The Lord is the Great Shepherd."

Recently, a woman in our church died when she gave birth to a child. The baby was premature, and had to be put on life support systems. It had also been without oxygen to the brain for a short period of time. Imagine the situation the father was in. We thought, "What can we say?" But we can fall back on the fact that the Great Shepherd shepherds His sheep. That's where human resources come to an end. The Lord is the Great Shepherd, the chief Shepherd, and the good Shepherd.

As the Great Shepherd, there are two things that the Lord does:

#### 1. HE EQUIPS HIS CHURCH

*a. The Process* In Hebrews 13:21, we read that the Great Shepherd, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, "[makes] you perfect in every good work to do His will." The reason He perfected us in salvation was to cause us to do His will. He's perfecting and equipping us to do His will. He uses His Word to shape us. All Scripture was given by God so "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17). He's given us His Word, and He's given us gifted men to help equip us: ". . . He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints. . ." (Eph. 4:11-

12a). There is another way that we are perfected: First Peter 5:10 says that after we have suffered a while, the Lord will make us perfect. He gives us trials so that the Word can work in our lives. John 15:2-3 says that the Word prunes us. So, God gave us the Scriptures and brought us gifted men to equip us. He also gives us trials and painful suffering. Why? Because that's what forces us to apply the Word. That's the refining process. When you struggle with sin and suffering, you see boiling up within you the ugliness of your own sin. As a result, you learn to hate sin more. Those are the times when you may question God and have doubts. Through those times, you'll learn to hate your own sinfulness and doubts. It's good when you're driven to your knees, because that's when you want to draw nigh to God. Those are the times when you will long for heaven and deliverance from this world. Suffering does a good thing to you. The Lord brings suffering to people's lives. Preachers only bring the Word.

*b. The Power* The Lord equips, builds up, and strengthens us. He gives us the power of the Holy Spirit. He said, ". . . ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Ac. 1:8). In John 15:16 He said that we would go forth and bear much fruit, and in John 7:38 He said, ". . . out of [your] belly shall flow rivers of living water." Christ is equipping His church.

*The Privilege of Participating in Christ's Work* At Grace Church, we're involved in training people. We disciple and evangelize. We're working as hard as we can, continually remembering that the Lord is equipping His church. He's doing that through the Word, through trials, and through the power of the Spirit of God. We're not doing those things because the church depends on us; we're doing them because we want to be a part of what He's doing. I can't think of a greater privilege.

*c. The Passion* Ephesians 5:29 is a verse that is normally used to speak of

marriage, but more than anything, it speaks of the church: ". . . no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." The Lord nourishes and cherishes the church. Nourish means "to feed." Cherish means "to warm with body heat." The term cherish is used to speak of a nursing mother in 1 Thessalonians 2:7. In a sense, then, Ephesians 5:29 is saying that the Lord nurtures His beloved church. That speaks of intimacy. The Lord cherishes us--He warms us with His body heat to melt or soften us. The Lord shepherds, feeds, and warms us; He melts us down to reshape us. That's a beautiful thought. Christ is at work in His church. It's comforting to know that. Sometimes I get frustrated and say, "Lord, how can we get people more committed? How can we make them more equipped and get them growing?" But I'm comforted by the fact that He is taking care of that. He's equipping, nourishing, and cherishing His church.

## 2. HE INTERCEDES FOR HIS CHURCH

Just like a shepherd would protect his sheep by fighting off a wolf, the Lord Jesus Christ fights off the adversary who constantly comes before the throne of God to accuse Christians. Satan accuses us as he accused Job (Job 1:7-12; 2:1-5). However, Jesus comes to our rescue. He is our defender, intercessor, advocate, and sympathizer. He is our High Priest. In John 17:9, 11, He said, ". . . I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. . . . Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are." Jesus prayed for those that belonged to Him in that marvelous passage. His high priestly work can be seen elsewhere in the New Testament:*a. 1 John 2:1* John said, ". . . if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" In other words, when you sin and accusation is brought before the throne of God, Jesus stands as your advocate and says, "Father, My blood paid for that sin." That's why no sin can be charged against God's elect (Rom. 8:33-34). Is God going to charge your sin against you when He has already justified you? Is there some information that He didn't have before that will go against you? Is there a higher court than God? Will Christ condemn you when He already bore your sin in His own body on the tree? Will He who perfectly expiated all your sin hold any sin against you? Never! Christ always intercedes for those that are in His church. He talks to the Father about our needs, too, because we have many needs. *b. Hebrews 4:15* The writer of Hebrews said, "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Christ knows exactly what we go through, so He's able to succor, or help us (Heb. 2:18). He is a perfect High Priest: ". . . He ever liveth to make intercession for [us]" (Heb. 7:25b). He experienced hunger, thirst, and fatigue. He was taught. Christ was loved and hated. He was raised in a family. He loved, hated, and marveled. Our Lord was glad, sad, angry, sarcastic, and grieved. He was overcome by future events (such as His crucifixion). Christ exercised faith, read Scripture, and prayed all night. He poured out His heart over the pain of man and wept when His own heart ached. The Lord has been through what we've been through. He's sympathetic and He defends us. Christ is our faithful High Priest, always interceding for us. As our Shepherd, He nurtures us, cherishes us, and equips us to do His will. He also intercedes as our High Priest on our behalf, making sure that no sin is charged against us. His blood keeps on cleansing us from all sin (1 Jn. 1:9). Third, Christ is. . .

## C. The Sovereign of His Church

Looking again at our text, Hebrews 13:20-21, notice the word "Lord" in verse 20. The Greek word for that, kurios, is used ninety-two times in the New Testament.

There are various meanings of the word, but when it is used in the New Testament in reference to the Son of God, it means "sovereign One, or One who is in complete authority." He is the Lord--the Sovereign--of His church. Ephesians 1:22-23 says that God "hath 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." Christ is in charge.

Colossians 1:18-19 says the same thing: ". . . He is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born [Gk. prototokos=`the preeminent One'] . . . that in all things He might have

the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. "

The concept of Lord has to do with the fact that Jesus Christ is the sovereign One. The Lord manifests His sovereignty in the church in two ways. First. . .

## 1. HE RULES HIS CHURCH

As Lord of His church, He is its ruler. If anyone asks us who is in charge of Grace Church, we tell him, "Jesus Christ. " Ephesians 5:23 says, ". . . Christ is the head of the church. . . ." The word "head" is the Greek word kephale, which speaks of being first, prominent, or supreme. As the Head, He has all the authority in His church. *a. Through the Discipline of Errant Believers*In Revelation 1:12-15, we see Christ moving among candlesticks, which represent His church. He has feet like fine bronze, and burning, penetrating eyes that search the sin that needs to be crushed out of His church. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Jesus wasn't talking about His presence at a prayer meeting; He was talking about being with two or three witnesses that confirm the sin of someone in the discipline process. The whole passage is about discipline. Jesus said, "Don't hesitate to discipline people. When you've called together the right witnesses and affirmed the sin, I'm there in your midst disciplining with you. " You are only binding on earth what has been bound in heaven, and loosing on earth whatever has already been loosed in heaven (Mt. 18:18). You act in behalf of Christ. *b. Through the Discernment of Elders*Christ rules His church. He rules through a plurality of godly men, or elders. At Grace Church, we have nearly fifty elders, and our one goal is to do what Christ wants us to do. We know most of what He wants to do because it's written in the Bible. When the Scripture is silent about a certain issue, then it's up to us to discern the mind of God prayerfully, thoughtfully, and patiently. We wait until God shows us what He wants us to do. That's why we've always been committed to unanimous agreement on a matter. God only has one will, so we know we have to be unanimous. It's up to all of us that are undershepherds to know what His will is. We seek His mind until we come to an understanding of what His will is. I don't want that responsibility for myself, nor would any one person in his right mind. It's hard enough to have to answer for your own life without having to answer for a host of others. So, as a group, we seek the mind of God through prayer until the Spirit of God reveals His will. He is the ruler of the church, and all we want to do is discern His will. That's why we follow the Bible so closely--it helps us. Second, Christ not only rules His church. . .

## 2. HE TEACHES HIS CHURCH

Christ teaches His church; that's part of His ruling. He has authority to exercise in all matters and He has authority to teach all truth. He's our Teacher. His will is revealed through His Word and through human instruments, but He's the Teacher. In fact, He told that to the disciples several times in the Gospel of John (14:20, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 12-14). In John 14:20, Jesus said, ". . . ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." How are you going to know that? Verse 26 says, ". . . the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you." In John 15:26, Jesus said, ". . . when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." In other words, "The Spirit will tell you what you need to know about Me. " In addition, Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Nevertheless, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (Jn. 16:12- 14). The Lord rules and teaches His church through the Word and the Spirit. We have the Word of God and the Spirit to help us. First John 2:20 says that we can draw on the Spirit for knowledge. Verse 27 says that we have an anointing from God; we don't need worldly, human teachers that don't know the Scriptures. Christ rules His church through His Word, the Holy Spirit, and the lives of gifted men of God. As a pastor, I'm not to give you my own opinion

on things. I'm not to talk about social issues that aren't related to the Word of God. I'm to open to you the Word of God so that you may know the mind of God and the heart of the Savior. Christ is the Teacher. I'm only a waiter. I didn't cook the meal; I'm only supposed to deliver it to you hot without messing it up. Christ is not only the Savior that loves and builds His church, the Shepherd that equips and intercedes for His church, and the Sovereign that rules and teaches His church; He is also. . .

#### **D. The Sanctifier of His Church**

Christ is the sanctifier that purifies and glorifies His church. According to Hebrews 13:21, Christ is "working in you." It's so good to know that He is working in us! He's the sanctifier. Christ is the One that sets us apart from sin. He's the One that purifies us, and leads us to give Him glory forever.

##### **1. THE MATTER OF PURIFYING THE CHURCH**

When you see a Christian that has sin in his life, I'm sure that you feel concern for him. You want to see him get rid of his sin. Sometimes when you confront a person, the discipline process goes on and on. There was one man at our church that we confronted when he sinned, and he said he would get out of his sin. But he got back into it again, and we had to confront him again. We kept having to discipline him. When you have a situation like that and your heart is grieved over the situation, the only comfort you have is knowing that Christ is the purifier of His church.

##### **2. THE METHODS OF PURIFYING THE CHURCH**

If the person you are disciplining is a Christian, then Christ may purify His church by removing him. He may cause the death of a believer that is unfaithful, which happened in 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 (see also 1 John 5:16). Christ may also purify His church by strengthening a sinning Christian and bringing him into holiness. That's His goal: to purify believers. Ephesians 5:25-26 says, "... Christ... loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Christ wants His church pure, so that ultimately "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" (v. 27). Christ is the purifier and glorifier of His church. Glorification is simply ultimate purification. Someday, we will be to the praise of the glory of God. Through Jesus Christ, the God of peace will receive glory forever and ever from us (Jd. 25). Christ is at work purging us. It's so comforting to know that! He's also bringing us to glory. When we get to heaven, we'll be perfect; we'll be without blemish.

#### **Conclusion**

I hope it's as helpful for you to hear these things as it is to me. It's comforting to know the fact that Christ hasn't left us with the responsibility of building His church. Let me repeat a key thought I mentioned earlier: We're not doing what Christ can't do. We're not building the church because He needs us to build it. If Grace Church blew up today, the church of Jesus Christ would move ahead. If all the leaders of Grace Church dropped dead, the church would still grow. Christ does not need us to build His church.

You say, "Then why are we to work so hard?" I'll tell you why: Because there's nothing more marvelous, thrilling, glorious, joy-producing, and soul-satisfying than to be a part of what Jesus Christ is building for His eternal glory!

#### **Focusing on the Facts**

1. What three things in Hebrews 13:20 point to the saving work of Christ in behalf of His church?
2. What does the name Jesus mean? What does Acts 4:12 say about the name of Jesus?
3. How must sin be atoned for?
4. What was the bloodshed in the Old Testament symbolic of?
5. Was the Old Covenant permanent? Support your answer with Scripture. What did Christ obtain for us after He entered once into the Holy Place (Heb. 9:12)?



6. What was the single greatest affirmation of the Father's approval of Jesus' saving work?
7. What is Christ's saving work built upon? What was Christ willing to do for us (1 Pet. 1:18-19)?
8. Does Christ ever stop loving His people? Support your answer with Scripture.
9. What did Paul say could not separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom. 8:38-39)
10. Who is building the church? Explain the significance of the phrase "the gates of hades shall not prevail against [the church]." (Mt. 16:18b)
11. How do we know who owns the church? Support your answer with different verses.
12. Jesus is called the \_\_\_\_\_ Shepherd (Jn. 10:11), the \_\_\_\_\_ Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), and the \_\_\_\_\_ Shepherd (Heb. 13:20).
13. Explain the different ways Christ equips us to do His will.
14. What are trials and suffering good for? Why?
15. What is the source of our power to do God's will?
16. What do the words nourish and cherish tell us about the nature of the relationship between Christ and His sheep? (Eph. 5:29)
17. As our intercessor, what does Jesus defend us from?
18. Why can't a sin be charged against God's elect?
19. What was the writer of Hebrews saying when he said, "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"? (Heb. 4:15)
20. What does the word "Lord" mean in Hebrews 13:20? Using Scripture, support the fact that Christ is sovereign over the church.
21. Explain the two ways that Christ rules His church.
22. What agent is Christ using to teach His church (Jn. 14:26)? What did Christ say that agent would do (Jn. 16:13-14)?
23. In what two ways does Christ purify His church? Why does Christ want His church pure (Eph. 5:27)?
24. If Christ does not need us to build His church, then why should we work so hard in the church?

### **Pondering the Principles**

1. A human body is dependent upon its head for survival. Without the head, muscles would not coordinate, nerves would not be able to process their information, and glands would not secrete properly. Without the brain, the body would have absolutely no guidance. Describe in your own words what the church would be like without guidance from Christ. Include some thoughts on how preaching, teaching, discipling, caring for others' needs, and submission to spiritual authorities would be affected.
2. Imagine all the signals that are relayed through the nervous system from the various muscles of the body to the brain and back when a baseball player swings his bat to hit a ball. While he is swinging the bat, his eyes follow the ball, picking up information for the brain, which continually tells the muscles of the arms, hands, shoulders, and torso what to do. If the ballplayer happened to get a disease that destroyed his nervous system or muscles, then his body would no longer be able to cooperate with the commands of the brain. Using that picture, explain why it is so important that every person (including you!) in the body of Christ purge himself from sin, and "be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and fit for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21).
3. Hebrews 13:20 calls the Lord the "great Shepherd of the sheep." Ephesians 5:29 speaks of the fact that Christ nourishes and cherishes those that are in His church. Read John 10:2-4, 9, 11, 14, and 28. According to those verses, what does Christ do for His sheep? Make a list of specific things the Great Shepherd has done for you, and thank Him for those things in prayer.
4. Do you submit to the authority of the government? Why does the government need to make laws for society? Describe the consequences you would suffer for breaking the law in the following ways:

speeding, stealing, lying in court, counterfeiting money, or murdering someone. As a Christian, do you submit to the authority of Christ in the church? Are there things you are doing now that violate how Jesus commanded for you to live? Mention several different possible spiritual or physical consequences you would suffer if you didn't submit completely to Christ's rule. Make sure that you, as a part of the body of Christ, have made Christ sovereign in every area of your life!

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2026 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).