

Ephesians 15-01-11a

Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for your daily expressions of grace, your faithfulness to us even when we are unfaithful, your patience, your forgiveness, your bestowing of blessing and privilege on us when we are so undeserving. We recognize that everything we have comes from you and it comes because of the Lord Jesus Christ and his work on our behalf. We thank you for him and we thank you for the privilege of assembling together to spend this time in fellowship and in instruction.

We pray that as we look at this portion of your word that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us, give us understanding, help each of us to see the pertinence that these truths have in our own lives and for our own decision making, the priorities that we set, the goals that we pursue, the understandings that we have of what is important as we live day to day in the time that you have allotted to us, ever shorter as the days go by. We thank you again for your gifts of grace and we ask your blessing on us as we spend this time in study. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ephesians chapter 5, you know the background, we've reviewed it many times. We are at a section where Paul the Apostle is talking to groups of believers. He's actually addressing this to multiple.

It's formally addressed, we think, to the Laodicean church, but it travels in the same pouch with the Colossian letter and one of the ways that I find great certainty in that conclusion, as I've mentioned before, is that in Colossians, the believers there are exhorted to read the other letter. That exhortation, I think, would make no sense as it survives and exists in the Colossian letter unless the other letter were available. Why would God have Paul write that and have it survive down to the day? And we say, well, he told them to read you the letter, but we don't have it so we can't do what Paul told the original recipients to do.

If Paul says, I want this letter read here and then sent to Laodicea and I want you to read the Laodicean letter as they read your letter, it doesn't make any sense to me at all that that instruction would exist, much less survive, unless both letters have survived. Well, the only possible candidate for the Laodicean letter is the book that we are now studying and so it is a virtual certainty in my mind that the rather late manuscript that has N. Efeso penciled in in the introduction is, in fact, a late edition and this is the Laodicean letter. So we've studied it, we've seen it, we've seen the emphasis on the privileges and the gifts, the opportunities, the potentials, all of the things that God has done for us and granted to us in Christ.

And these themes are so strongly echoed in the book of Colossians, you can tell that they were written at the same time with the same priorities and the same thoughts, but they are complementary. Things that are summarized in Colossians are expanded in this letter. Things that are mentioned in this letter, the same general thematic structure and sequence is found in Colossians.

We'll see that again this morning in a particular case, but we have come to the point where after talking about walking in love, walking in light, walking in wisdom, he is now talking about the importance of the recognition of authority, the recognition of divinely constituted authority, not self-appointed authority, not mistakenly granted or created authority, I would put the Pope in that category, but authority that has its foundation in God's plan and God's purpose reflected in God's word. This includes husbands, this includes parents, this includes those that have the rule over you, which are the decision makers in the church, in matters pertaining to the church. By the way, there's always a sphere of authority.

One wife's husband isn't every wife's authority. There is a sphere, there's a limitation. The elders in the church have a sphere in that the decisions that they make and the policies that they formulate and pursue pertain to that assembly at the time when that assembly is functioning as an assembly.

Elders in the church, the pastor in the church can't dictate to you matters that pertain to your personal life outside the church. Well, I forbid you to shop at Walmart. I have an issue with some imaginary thing at Walmart and I forbid you to shop at Walmart.

That is not within the sphere of a pastor's authority to tell you where to shop. He might suggest it, but he cannot dictate it. It's not anything beyond a recommendation or suggestion.

There is no authority to make that a mandate. So this is what Paul is now talking about in the last half of Ephesians chapter 5 and it's extremely helpful for us because all of us have areas where authority is either exercised by us or exercised over us. You can't be alive without having this in your sphere of function.

So as citizens of the United States, there is lawful governmental authority. And we have instructions about that in scripture. There is family authority.

There is authority that pertains in and during the assembly of believers for worship and instruction and fellowship. And so this is what Paul is now specifically addressing. Remember, he is building this instruction on the foundation of the first four and a half chapters, right? He has established the theological, the divine viewpoint foundation for what he is now giving in terms of practical wisdom.

If you're going to walk in wisdom, one of the primary ways to walk in wisdom is to have a clear idea of how authority functions and what its limits are. And we saw last time that one of the fundamental, and by fundamental I mean foundational, one of the fundamental limitations on authority is that its function either exercised by believers or followed by believers is in the fear of the Lord. Verse 21, submission for believers, this is the one another, is in the fear of God.

This is how you know when to obey and when to disobey. If you cannot obey in the fear of God, you've got to find some solution. In other words, you cannot stand before God at the judgment

seat and say, I did bad things because I was told to.

I knew it was bad, but I was just following authority and so it's not my fault. We have to function in the fear of the Lord. And all of the examples that he gives, all of the exhortations that he gives after this have that same qualifier, wives submit to your own husbands as you would submit to the Lord.

This is something where your conscience is clear, where you are not transgressing known moral boundaries. There is an example that's well known to those of us that are a little bit older during the Vietnam War. Army Lieutenant named William Calley was given the order to wipe out the civilian inhabitants of the village of My Lai and he and his men did so.

And when this came to light and he was brought up and court-martialed for it, his defense was, I was just following orders. And his conviction came as a result of this principle. You cannot justify doing what you know to be immoral on the grounds that you were just following orders.

There were a lot of people who claimed to be Christians in Germany during World War II. And you know, some of the awful things that happened in Germany and were perpetrated by Germans, many of whom were church goers. And while I was just following orders, this was a governmental policy.

You cannot use that excuse. We are thinking sentient believers and this is one of our guiding lights. I do what I do as unto the Lord.

If you're told to do a thing and you're uncomfortable with it on moral grounds, as a Christian, I shouldn't do this, then you have to take whatever steps. And as I said before, those steps may vary depending on the individual circumstances. If you're not sure what is the best course, pray, ask God.

Jesus told the disciples, you're going to be hailed up before kings and rulers and it will be given to you in that hour. By the way, those are civil authorities. He said, don't worry about what you're going to say.

It will be given to you in that hour what you should say. And circumstances will differ. This is not a legalistic prescription or proscription.

It is a recognition of a teaching of the word of God that we have to try to find a way. Remember our other limiting doctrines of scripture. We have another verse that says, to the extent that it is up to you, live peaceably with all men.

Remember that as much as it is up to you, live peaceably with all men. So try to find a way if you can make your discomfort known and someone says, I'll take responsibility, you know, it's out of your hands. You have done as much as you can do and it is taken out of your hands.

There are other authorities have said, you know. I. This this action or this thing will be credited to me, not to you, I am removing it from you and I'm doing it myself. Well, you've done as much as you can do.

If you can stand before God with a clear conscience, then you're following the teaching presented to us in this passage. So wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. There's going to be friction in any marriage.

There's going to be times when there is a difference of opinion. There's going to be times when there are stresses. There are times when people mess up.

Husband messes up. The wife messes up. We don't say, well, here's an instance where I can't follow my husband's authority as unto the Lord, so I'm packing up and leaving.

No. As much as it is within our power endeavor. To live peaceably, to establish peace.

But you cannot end up in a situation where you are doing something that is against your biblical conscience, is against the teaching of the Word of God. Prime example, you remember Daniel in the latter days of his life after the kingdom had changed over, the Babylonians were gone and the Persians were in and the new satraps that came in were jealous of Daniel's influence and his standing and his power. And so they conspired together and said, let's get the king to sign a law that makes it against the law to pray to anybody but the king.

And they fooled the king into signing this thing. Daniel is now under the authority of the king, forbidden from praying to God. What did Daniel do? He continued to pray.

And for that, he was cast into the lion's den. God superintended the outcome of that situation, but Daniel had no problem standing in the presence of God, defending that decision. There is a time when we have to stand up for what we believe, what we know to be right.

There is a time when, especially in minor things, as long as we have done as much as within our power to do and we can stand in that light before God, it's really taken out of our hands. But here's where we come to this morning. Verse 23.

The context is giving thanks always for all things to God, the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Can you do what you are doing? Can you exercise or function under these authorities? Giving thanks always for all things to God, the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And functioning in this authority structure in the fear of God, that's the criteria.

And it's going to be different. We have to figure it out. There's no fixed set of rules.

There's no little black and white handbook that you can carry around. We have to figure this out. That's the reason there's so many of us in so many different situations.

If God could illustrate every truth with five people going into 25 different situations, that's what he would do. But he's had billions of people in hundreds of billions of situations because they're each different and unique. And under the ministry of the Spirit and the guidance of the word of God, we have to figure it out.

Wives, submit to your own husbands as you submit to the Lord in the same way, with the same heart, for the same reasons, to the same extent, always guided by verse 21. Why? Verse 23, this is our passage for this morning. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church.

And he is the savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her, the church, with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. No one ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it just as the Lord does the church.

For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. Man leaves father and mother, joined to his wife, one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Verse 32, verses 20 through 22 through 32. Here's my question. You ready? How many times is the word church mentioned in there? You got church once in verse 23, church in verse 24, church in verse 25.

You've got references to the church in verse 26, her, that he might present her a glorious church in verse 27. She should be holy and without blemish in verse 27. The Lord does the church in verse 29.

Members of his body, which is a reference to the church in verse 30. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. You've got roughly 10 separate references here to the church.

Here's my question. Especially in the day that Paul is writing this letter to Laodicea and to Colossae, to these, these groups of, uh, probably a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles. What does church mean? What does church mean? What is the church? You can see that this passage depends heavily on, if we're going to understand how husbands and wives are related, we need to understand how Christ and the church are related, right? Because that's his continual example.

For 10 verses here, he's talking about submission as to the Lord, as the church is to the Lord and the Lord is the church. So the wife should be to the husband, husband and wife, right? So how clear a grip do we really have on what the church is? And I'll tell you, one of the reasons I asked myself this question, verse 25, husbands love your wives. Just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her.

We just had Christmas. We've been through all of the nativity passages, the prophecies from the angel Gabriel, the fulfillment of prophecies from the old Testament, uh, the ministry of John the Baptist, uh, as it paves the way and levels the ground for the Lord Jesus himself. Why did Jesus come to earth? Why did they call his name Jesus? Thou shalt call his name Yeshua because he has come to give himself for the church.

Is that what it says? Thou shalt call his name, Yeshua deliverer, Joshua. Why he shall save who from what he shall save his people from their sins. Who are his people in that context? What does Messiah mean? What does son of David mean? Are all of those people in the church? Is his people a synonym for the church? You see the issue I'm trying to introduce here.

If Jesus came to save everybody and all the different dispensations, why does Paul say here that Jesus loved the church and gave himself for her in order that he might sanctify and cleanse her? It doesn't say mankind. It doesn't say all the elect. It doesn't say Israel and the Gentiles.

It doesn't say Old Testament, New Testament saints. In one place, we have Jesus presented his coming as the Messiah to Israel and the redeemer of his people, the rightful heir to the throne of David in Israel. The redeemer that Job said, I know he lives and I will see him one day, even if the worms eat my flesh, I will see him with my own eyes.

We will be raised. Ezekiel prophesied to the dead bones. We will stand and breath will enter us and we will come back.

After two days, on the third day, we will rise again. Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mashiah, the anointed one is the anointed king of Israel, bringing the kingdom to Israel. And when they are unwilling to accept it and accept him, now you have this presentation, you know, we go to the Gentiles or shaking the dust off the sandals from your village and we're going elsewhere and the branches are broken out and other branches are being grafted in.

But all of that seems beside and unavailable and unreferenced when Paul says Christ loved the church and gave himself for her so that he might, his purpose being to sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word in order that he might present her to himself as a glorious church without spot or blemish or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. Now we know absolutely that God loved the world and gave his only begotten son so that whoever believes in him doesn't perish but has eternal life. So you have that universal aspect, but why do we have church here? We need to spend a little time understanding exactly

what the church is because that's what's going to help us understand this passage.

That's the 10 verse presentation of the example, the comparison, the analogy, right? So what is the church? Well, one of the first ways to find this out is to see how the term church is used in the New Testament. What exactly does it mean? Well, you can quickly discern that it is used two ways. Most often it is used for an assembly of people.

Let's look at just the Pauline epistles, just the letters that Paul wrote. Paul's writing this letter. In his other letters, how does he use the term? What would he be referencing specifically by the word church, which is ekklesia, e-k-k-l-e-s-i-a in Greek, e-k-k-l-e-s-i-a, ekklesia, translated church.

Well, in the book of Romans, Paul writes what we have divided up into a 16 chapter letter. In those 16 chapters, he only uses the word church three times. Romans, the most theological book you can think of, so dense.

We went through it, took us a long time. He only uses the word church three times. And nowhere in the first 15 chapters.

Romans chapter 1, not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, power of God to salvation. Romans 3, wages of sin is death. Romans 6, 23, sin comes short of the glory of God.

Romans 8, who will deliver me from the body of this death? Creation groans. Romans 9, 10, and 11, my heart bleeds for Israel. I would count myself accursed if I could drag him kicking and screaming into the kingdom.

9, 10, and 11, Jacob of I loved, Esau of I hated. Romans 12, Romans 13, Romans 14, the word church occurs nowhere in those first 15 chapters. In chapter 16, Paul says in his personal remarks, I commend to you Phoebe, our sister, who is a servant of the church, the ekklesia in Cancra.

What would the meaning of the word be there? Universal body of Christ or the group that assembles for worship in Cancra? Well, modest size town. Pretty clear there. Few verses later, Romans 16, 5, likewise, greet the people that are mentioned in verse four and greet the church that is in their house.

Fairly small group. It's got to fit within a house. In verse 23, conveying greetings instead of his own greetings and his own commendations, he says, Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you.

Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you and Cordus, a brother, greets you. Greetings from Gaius and the church that meets in his house. So in the book of Romans, the only way Paul uses ekklesia is to designate a group of worshiping believers, believe in the Lord Jesus, right? First Corinthians is written to the church of God, which is at Corinth, those sanctified in Christ Jesus, et

cetera.

Chapter four of that letter, I send Timothy to you. Uh, he will remind you of my ways in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church, every local assembly, we could go through these, there are dozens of them, but throughout the Pauline epistles, almost exclusively, he uses ekklesia to mean local assembly of believers in Jesus. If the whole church comes together in one place, people are speaking in tongues.

Somebody needs to interpret. If there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church. Uh, the churches of Asia greet you.

Uh, it is shameful. Uh, if a woman wants to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home. It is shameful for women to speak in the local assembly in church.

Uh, probably the only exception might be a first Corinthians 15, nine, where he says, I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. This would mean I persecuted any one particular local assembly. This is a more general reference to those who would attend such an assembly, right? Well, in the whole book of second Corinthians, he only uses the word once Paul and apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timothy, our brother to the church of God, which is at Corinth, never uses the word again throughout the book in Galatians.

He uses it exactly once you've heard of my former conduct, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. Those who assemble in the name of Jesus, I persecuted them, try to destroy them. It isn't until our book Ephesians, if you're taking them in biblical order, where we have seen him use the term in this general sense in a very manifest way.

We saw this in chapter one, God, the father has put all things under the Lord Jesus feet and given him to be head over all things to the church say, well, how just one church, all churches, anybody who attends a church, you'd have to say this is some larger entity. Jesus is the head of all things to the church. We saw it in chapter three, verse 10, to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church, doesn't say by the church is, might the wisdom of God be known by the church to the principalities and powers.

God is demonstrating something to the angels in heavenly places by the church large, and we've usually, most people have this understanding. The church can mean two things. It can either refer to the local assembly or it can be the quote church universal, which comprehends all the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who are being referred to, usually they are alive at the time.

And after those references in chapter one, verse 22, chapter three, verse 10, chapter three, verse 21 to him, the Lord Jesus be glory in the church to him. God, the father rather be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations. Amen.

And then the next examples are here in chapter five. So in this Laodicean letter copied to Colossae. He is clearly using ecclesia in, in all three previous instances to talk about a larger group.

However, how would somebody understand that term? Because we don't know how much background they have. We talk, we say church and we think building, we think steeple, we think group of believers, we think new Testament, we think dispensationally, there's a lot of things that we attach to that. But if Christ wants to present to himself a glorious church, might present her to himself.

He's making this husband, wife analogy, holy and without blemish. And in the same way, husbands ought to love their wives. What is the nature of the relationship that Paul is defining and describing between Christ and the church? You remember, for example, that Jesus himself used the term ecclesia.

He used it in the four gospels twice. Matthew 16, 18, you're the Christ, the son of the living God, Peter says, Jesus says, you're right. And I say to you that you are Petras.

Petras, and on this Petra, I will build my ecclesia, I will build my church. And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Remember that? What does he say next? And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Have you ever looked at anybody talking about the history of locks and of securing things and showing what medieval locks looked like? The lock that was on a famous door in Paris was taken by Lafayette when the French Revolution took place. He brought that lock over and presented it to somebody over here in the United States. But it's a very primitive lock compared to what we have today, master locks with these keys and, of course, electronic locks and that.

But locks have existed far back into ancient times. What does a lock do? In looking historically at it, what sort of a thing does it secure? They didn't really have locked boxes. They didn't really have, you know, lockable things other than areas that were secured by doors.

Locks worked on doors. They worked on gates. You could lock the gates.

You could lock doors. So when Jesus says talking about and he uses these terms synonymously, he says on this rock, on this confession that Jesus Christ is the son of the living God, on this confession, I will build my ekklesia, ek out from, kaleo to call, the called out ones. In Greek, going back hundreds of years before the time of Christ and during the time of the translation of the Septuagint, what did ekklesia mean to people? The ekklesia meant the assembled group from, for example, a city.

You have this in the Book of Acts in a place where Paul and the other apostles are being

persecuted and there is an assembly of the people. And I think it's translated congregation in the New King James, but it's ekklesia. It's the assembly of people.

They have been called out to observe and to make a decision. They are the ones who assemble to around an issue. It is even said that Moses was in the ekklesia of Israel.

And this is kind of a startling thing. If you translate it as church, that Moses was in the church of Israel. But you look at Acts chapter 7, verse 38, when Stephen is testifying just before he stoned and he's talking about Moses and he says, this Moses is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai.

The word congregation there is ekklesia. In Acts 13, 43, the assembled villagers who, there's this big controversy about Paul and Barnabas when the congregation, when the ekklesia had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas who speaking to them persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. This has nothing to do with a church gathering or meeting to worship Jesus.

So here's my question back to Ephesians chapter five. What is the relationship? What exactly is the church? Are we just assuming we know what the church is? Well, that's, that's the body of Christ. And yet we know that we also use that term to refer to local assemblies.

What is the difference in a local assembly and the universal body of Christ? Why do we use the same term for both? When Jesus says on this rock, I will build my church. Is he looking forward to the church age? He's not in the part of his ministry where he's telling the apostles, you know, we're done and the Holy Spirit's going to come, you know, remain here and you'll be witnesses to me. And he's not introducing the church age at that point.

So why does he say on this confession, acknowledging who Jesus is as the son of the living God, I will build my ecclesia. In what sense are the Israelites and ecclesia in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to Moses? In what sense is a group of villagers who gather because there is a controversy and there is a dispute and there is a diffugalties regarding the apostles and they get together and they are called an ecclesia. We certainly don't translate it church.

Relative to Israel and we don't translate it church with regard to Gentile villagers. So what we want to do is be sure we have a clear grip on what this word is. One of the keys again is the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew when he says on this rock I will build my church and verse 19 Matthew 16 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven is set in apposition a p p o s i t i o n. It is set in parallel. My church and the kingdom of heaven are synonymous here on this rock. I will build my church.

The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it and I will give you the keys of my church. You say whoa wait a minute. So it was Peter the first pope.

We're back to subscribing to Catholicism. Not at all. We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back we're going to look at the key to understanding what the church is and the key to understanding the church is the word key in verse 19 of Matthew chapter 16. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said I will build my church.

This is the same church that he sanctified and cleansed with washing of water by the word. This is the same one he wants to present to himself glorious without blemish. I will build my church.

I will sanctify it. I will cleanse it. I will glorify it and I will take it to myself.

He's going to present it to himself perfected my church. I will build on this rock my church. I give myself for in order that I can sanctify and cleanse it.

It's all of a piece. So interestingly you would expect to be in Matthew to understand what Paul is saying in Ephesians but that's exactly where we are because the words of the Lord Jesus in these two verses 16 18 and 19 of Matthew tell us what Paul means in Ephesians chapter 5. And we're going to come to an understanding of what keys are what it is that needs a key. What is it that is locked.

What is it that's inaccessible unless you have the key. Because if there are keys to the kingdom of heaven there are keys to the church. What are those keys.

Well if you know what it is you're unlocking and opening the door to the keys help explain it. So we're going to take a break when we come back we're going to look at the church we're going to look at the kingdom and we're going to look at keys and what they secure and what they open. Let's pause and take a break.