

JESUS AND HIS CHURCH – PART 2 (HOLINESS)
February 28, 2016 morning service
Ephesians 5:22-33

Hey, listen. We've had two families kind of walk through it this week. We had Ms. Bobbie Johnson's funeral here last Thursday, mid 80's. Word came last night that Stewart Tidwell, 26, had a brain tumor and he stepped into the other side last night. One of our men, had a twin brother in our church. Somebody said, "They've gone into the afterlife." No, no, no, no. You're living in the before life right now. Where we're going is life. You see, they're more alive than you are. You've still got to go across the river they've already forded. You say, "I don't like the sound of that." Well you better get to liking it because you're going to wade that water. You see, you're in the before life. We're going to eternal life. Hallelujah. And somebody down here needs to learn to share that gospel and say Amen and be different.

We've kind of lapsed into a lull at Olive. Good things going on, meeting the budget but we're not doing all God wants us to do. We're not being all we need to be. We've got work to do. We need to be the church of the living God in this community. That's our assignment. I'm supposed to pastor you and lead you into this community to do the work God's called us to do. This is no time to sit down, shrink back, give up, quit, let somebody else do it. Bless God, we need to say Amen and go to work.

We've got stuff to do. A world's dying and going to hell. Crazy people running everything. Other crazy people wanting to run everything. Let me tell you, those folks are not running it. God's still sovereign and He's on the throne. The church of God is His people and we need to be salt and light and as Mary prayed, "In this world, we also need to have a prophetic voice." We need to speak that into our culture, into our county, into our country, into the conscience of this world. That's our job as the church.

So we're in a three part series about the church. Last week we looked at the church and its mystery. Today we're going to look at its holiness and its sanctification. Next Sunday we're going to look at its membership and its makeup. It'll be a little different kind of service next Sunday. It'll be a different kind of worship guide that comes in your hand. It won't have all the information that you usually get. I don't want no complaining and bellyaching either. I don't care if you like it or not, alright? It's just a little different day. Change will help you. We're going to do something to help reach people next week. That'll be part of what we put in your hand so get happy and like it and say Amen. Just look at your neighbor and say, "Next Sunday I'm going to be happy." Now take your Bible and go to Ephesians 5 and verse 22. The word of God says:

Wives [all the wives say Amen], be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands [all the husbands say Amen], love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

[right here is our text for the day], so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery [this was last Sunday, this mystery] is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.¹

Notice back up in verse 26, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word that he might present – look at this – that Jesus would present to Himself. You ever give yourself a gift? Jesus will present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she would be blameless. Wow. No spot. You got any spots? You got any liver spots? If you're 40 plus you're working on liver spots. You can rub all that stuff on them you want to but when you rub this one right here away, it's going to pop up over here somewhere else. You've got spots. Amen? The older you get, the more spots you've got.

I was born with spots. Freckles. That's not what I'm talking about. I had an old man that told me one time – he came in the IGA where I was working. He said, "You know, son, if you'll take a big rag and pour buttermilk on it and put that as a poultice on your face, those freckles will go away." I said, "You're crazy, old man." He laughed at me. He said, "I was just seeing if you'd do it." He'd laugh at me about that buttermilk every time he'd come in the IGA.

Jesus said He was going to present Himself, the church, with no spots. Hallelujah. You know, not only has your body got spots, our church has got spots. Olive's got spots. Some of you are the spots. I've been the spots. Those are stains of sinfulness and brokenness and failure. We've all got them. Amen? We've all got spots. Then wrinkles. You got any wrinkles? It won't take you long to get those. If you want some more, come pastor a Baptist church. That'll give you some wrinkles. Amen? You'll get them right around your eyes. They call those crow's feet. Lines begin to come on your forehead. You look. I had a preacher that told me this weekend, he said he had a guy in his church that told him, "You know, life begins at 50." He said he never has seen me get out of the shower or he wouldn't say that looking in that mirror. Amen? Wrinkles.

Jesus is going to present to Himself a church with no wrinkles. We've got some wrinkles in the church. We crash and we get old and don't look like we used to. He said, "I'm going to sanctify her," in verse 26, "cleanse her by the washing of the water with the word so that I can present the church in all her glory. No spot, no wrinkle or

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any such thing.” For you see, I Peter 1:19 says that Jesus Christ was the spotless Lamb of God. Amen. And we’re going to be like the Lord. No sin, no spot, no wrinkle, no condemnation in the world to come and He’s making us like Himself.

Now I want you to look in verse 26 and underline that word, so that He might sanctify, sanctify her. He’s talking about the man and the wife and then he changes to the church, Christ being the head, we following as the body, and He will *hagios*, sanctify, make us holy. You get saved instantaneous. You believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved right now, immediately. Walk out of darkness into light. Have your life changed. God steps out of heaven into your heart. You’re born again, redeemed. Once you’re saved there is then after that instantaneous salvation, there is a lifelong process. It’s called sanctification.

Friend, if you’ve been saved 20 years you ought not talk like you talked 20 years ago. You ought not act like you acted 20 years ago. There are some things that God can immediately clean up. That’s those externals, what you watch and what you say, but now when God really begins to sanctify He moves into attitudinal washing. Yeah. He begins to clean up stinkin’ thinkin’ and the word of God begins to wash us. Look at these two verses. Hebrews 12:14. Look at this verse. *Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.* Did you see that? Pursue peace and pursue sanctification. You ought to pursue getting right with God and being holy but also being at peace with all men.

Then look at I Thessalonians 4:3. *For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.* It goes on to deal with a lot of sin but look at the first part of that phrase. This is the will of God. God’s will is for you to be holy, holy, holy, set apart, sanctified. So here’s my two questions. Number one, have you known an instantaneous moment of salvation? Have you asked God to save you? I’m telling you, friend, God so loved the world He gave His Son. His Son died for you. He didn’t just die for your sin. I John 2:2 said He’s the propitiation not only for your sin but the sin of the whole world. He died for you. You can walk up to any man anywhere and you can say to them, “Jesus died for you.”

I got on an airplane last night coming from Atlanta, Georgia. A little bitty girl, not much bigger than my 3-year-old granddaughter. A little bitty woman slid in there next to me. She was a plastic surgeon. I said, “Who do you operate on, Doc McSuffins?” Just a kid. The longer I live the more people look like that. But I mean she’s just little bitty. We began to have a conversation. Last Monday night I had a conversation with a military gentleman. I shared a tract. Man, he was hard to pin down. I was trying to find a way. I tried everything I knew but, man, he was running. You can run but God’ll catch you after awhile. I’m just a delivery boy.

Are you telling anybody about Jesus? I want you to hear me, church. We’ve got a boatload of people in this church that’s not on the field. I’m praying for God to send out laborers in the harvest. So my question is, have you heard the gospel and have you responded to it? Then secondly, are you walking toward sanctification and holiness and

letting God do this work in you? It is the will of God and He will one day present us without spot or wrinkle and sanctify the church.

So this morning, let me give you the five agents of sanctification. What is it God uses to sanctify us? Let's look at them very quickly. Number one is of course the word of God. We find that right here in Ephesians 5:26. That He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. The word of God will cleanse you. You ought to be a Bible reader. You say, "I don't understand it." Read the Bible. Just read the Bible. The Bible says in John 17:17 that He would *Sanctify them in the truth; Your word [O God] is truth.*

You see, the word changes our thinking. It changes us from the inside out. Your parents want to change you from the outside in. The world will try to change you from the outside in. It does not work. You must be changed from the inside out. You must learn to think right for as a man thinks in his heart, that's how he's going to be. You need to let this book help you think, think. His word is truth. His word will cleanse you. I'm telling you, it's like a sledgehammer. It'll bust you right between the eyes. Get you a Bible reading plan. Read it every day. I'm reading through Proverbs again this month. I was in the 28th chapter this morning. God wore me out early today. I said, "Lord, I'm going to church." He said, "I know. You're not ready. You need to deal with this right here." I'm fixin' to go back into Deuteronomy next month and be reading through Deuteronomy. I'm just this year taking some books and reading through and marking up my Bible. It's not for preaching, it's just – well there'll be some preaching come out of it but it's just for me. Are you reading your Bible? Friend, you'll never be holy if you don't read this book. His word's truth and His truth will sanctify you. I'm not talking about one little verse. You ought to read chapters of the word of God.

Now I'll make this deal with you. You just read as much Bible as you watch your favorite program. Some of ya'll when we get to the fall when you watch ten hours of football on Saturday, you watch the SEC game at 11:00, you watch the CBS game at 2:30. Then you get a little dinner and you watch the ESPN game at 6:30. My Lord, and you don't even know those teams. You can't be from all those schools. Get in the word. The word'll do it.

Hey, I don't know how many people have asked me about voting. Good night. I'm getting all kinds of texts. "Why is this person saying we ought to do this and why is this preacher endorsing this guy and why is that one over here saying this about this lady?" It's just all over the map.

Out here in the foyer – we get them every year, the voter guides. Republicans are on one side and Democrats are on the other. You can see how they responded to value questions that the Florida Family group puts out and they're usually important questions for Christians about abortion, common core, Planned Parenthood, first amendment, judges, natural marriage, new taxes, citizenship, you know, all those things. If you want to know some things, you can pick up one of those and maybe that'll be good for you. You can figure out what you're going to do. Think. Think. Everybody

say that word. Think and let the word of God direct your thinking. Bring it to the word of God. He'll sanctify you. He'll sanctify your vote and whatever you do, don't stay home. I know you don't always have good choices but don't stay home. Get involved.

The word of God is the first agent. It's how we think. Number two is the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit of God. Look in II Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse number 13. *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.* He sanctifies us by the Holy Spirit. Think right. Get in the word of God. Then be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will do three things in your life. He will draw you, He will confront you, and He will convince you. The Holy Spirit is not a ghost. He's not a cloud. He's not a dew. He's a person and that person will draw you to Himself. That person will confront you with your sin. That person will convince you of what you need to be. Amen. Sometimes all He's got to do is clear His throat.

I've been reading John Gordon's new book about life begins in the locker room. He's a leadership guru and he's writing it with Coach Smith who used to coach with the Atlanta Falcons seven years. He had five great years and then two kind of bad years and he got fired. In that book Smith tells the story of the sixth or seventh year he was in Atlanta. They were in the dome and they were playing New Orleans and something happened and it was not good. He said he took off the headset and he threw it down and it broke into seven pieces. Then he just went on a tirade down the sidelines screaming and kicking. He said, "I just lost it." He said, "I got in the locker room and I looked on my phone and my mother had sent me a tweet." He said, "I didn't even know my mother knew how to tweet, or text I mean. I didn't know she knew how to send it. I'd never gotten a text from her." He said, "The text started not Mike Smith, Michael Wayne Smith." He said, "She undressed me on that phone like these little boys and girls are watching you. There is no excuse for you to act like that. Your behavior was not honoring to God, it was not honoring to the family name." He said, "It just went on and on."

Let me tell you, the Holy Spirit of God is a person and there are times when He'll call you by your first, middle, and last name, and when He does, He's drawing you and confronting you, and convincing you, that is not where you need to be. This is the direction where you need to be.

The first agent is the word of God. The second agent is the Holy Ghost of God. Number three, the third agent is the blood of Jesus that sanctifies us. Hebrews 13:12, look at it. *Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.* Jesus died on the cross. I John 1:7 helps us to understand that. *But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son [does what?] cleanses us from [how much?] all sin.* Every stain. Even the toughest stain in your life. Hallelujah.

I've got a pair of, I don't know, they're kind of copper colored trousers. I really like them but they stain real bad. Even water if you touch it sometimes will make a place. My wife's a home economics major. I took them to her the other day. I said, "I've got something on these." She said, "What is it?" I said, "I don't know what it is. It's just a spot." I said, "Can you get that out?" She said, "Well it would help to know what it is." I said, "I don't know what it is." She looked it and said, "It looks like it's food." I said, "Well it might be. I ate this week. I don't know what it is." I'm telling you, she'll get it out. She'll either get it out or she'll buy me some trousers just like them and tell me she got it out. I'm here to tell you, there's nothing in your life that Jesus cannot remove. Every spot. His blood is the cleansing agent.

Some of you are sitting in here and you've never been saved because you're worried about some stuff you've done. Let me tell you, friend, there's sinners larger than you that Jesus has changed forever. I don't give a rip what you've done. I'm telling you, the blood of Jesus can cleanse you from all of the tough stains of life.

There's only one time in my life I ever shared the gospel with a man that looked right at me and I was in my first little church – Mr. Simmons. I was sitting at his house. It was about 100 degrees on an August afternoon with no air conditioning. I sat down on a coffee table and I looked right at him and shared the gospel. I said, "God'll forgive you of anything." He began to name sins. He said, "You mean, preacher, if I've done this?" Yes. "If I've done that?" Yes. His wife was sitting there. He said, "If I've been unfaithful to my wife?" I kind of looked over at her. I said, "Yes." Every time I'd do that he'd say, "I've done that." He finally look right at me and he said, "What if I've killed a man?" I said, "God'll cover that." I said, "The man that wrote most of the New Testament was a murderer, the apostle Paul."

When I said, "Yes He will," he grabbed me by the hand. He said, "What's what I need." I found out later he had killed his brother in a drunken brawl years ago and that sin had haunted him all his life. I can't even tell you that man's first name because everybody in town knew him as Snake. That was his nickname. That old man cried out to God that day and God removed the stain through the blood of the Lord Jesus. Friend, whoever you are, I'm here to tell you, God will touch you and heal you and forgive you.

I stood in the Atlanta airport last night with a young man. I was walking down the corridor. I heard my name and I turned around. I was getting ready to go to Pensacola so some people on the plane knew me. He began to tell me about his sin. I said, "Let me tell you, young man." He named all those deals and I said, "I'm telling you, you need to come to the blood of the Lord Jesus." We had church right here in the B concourse at the Atlanta Hartsfield Airport. I took him by the hand and I said, "You cry out to God, He'll forgive you." I'm telling you, friend, whatever's in your life, you may be a believer as this young man was, but he had a stronghold. I'm telling you, the blood, the blood, the blood sets you free. There's bondage all in this room today. There's strongholds. I'm telling you, the blood of Christ will break those strongholds. He'll set you free.

There's men in here hooked up on pornography. I'm telling you, God'll set you free if you'll get right. If you'll come to Him, I'm telling you, He'll break that stronghold. People here with a liquor problem, I'm telling you, God'll set you free. Marijuana's quickly becoming the drug of choice. I talked to a man in Nashville this week who is a Baptist preacher in Colorado. He said, "We can't keep people out of Colorado. They're moving here by the thousands." He said, "We attribute that to one thing. Everybody wants to come smoke dope." That was his word. You say, "It's just for medicinal purposes." I understand. A lot of sick people moving to Colorado.

I'm telling you, the blood, the blood, the blood. He'll get out every stain. The word of God, the Holy Ghost, the blood of Jesus. Number four, He sanctifies us. The fourth agent is faith. Faith. You must believe the Lord God. Acts 26:18 tells us: *to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to [the dominion of] God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'*

Hallelujah. Friend, if you'll believe God He'll set you free. When you give heed to the word of God, your faith will expand and your faith will be enabled. The word of God. When you believe it, you stand on it, you count it as if it is so when it's not so, so it can be so and when you begin to count what the word of God says is true, even when it's not true, so it can be true, that's faith and the word of God will begin to expand your faith and give you an enabling faith so that you can be an overcomer and get out of the bondage that sin's got you in.

Faith. You've got to believe God. When God says, "I will," you've got to trust Him. You say, "Preacher, that's a leap in the dark." No, no, that's a leap into the light. There ain't nothing out there but light but I'm telling you, He'll hold you up. You can trust Him. You see, sanctification, the lack of it is nothing but a faith crises and you won't trust God to cleanse you. You think you can do it yourself. We act like a bunch of atheists. A lot of times a church is atheistic. They say a lot of good stuff but they act like God's not there. Let me tell you, friend, God is there.

Stewart Tidwell stepped into the arms of Jesus. His wife posted on Facebook one of the most powerful statements I've ever read in my life. That young girl in her mid-20's quoted the word of God. She said, "My husband's walked into the arms of Jesus today." I mean she talked like she really believed all that heaven stuff. If you get to dying, you'll get to believing in it.

Let me tell you, friend, when you find the promises of the word of God, you begin to believe the promises of God. He'll set you free. He'll sanctify you. He'll get rid of the spots and wrinkles in your life and set you free.

Number five and I've got to sit down right here for a few minutes today because you've never read this verse. The altar. The altar. The altar will sanctify you. So let's all take our Bible and go to Matthew's gospel chapter 23. Let's go here. This is a

phenomenal chapter but, boy, this water will get deep in a hurry. Matthew 23. Jesus is dealing with Baptist Pharisees. We've all got them. The Assemblies of God's got them. Catholics have got them. The Jews have got them. Well the Baptists have got them too. These are the people that live by sight, not by faith. Jesus is dealing with the Pharisees and I want you to look at this. Matthew 23:16. This is the discourse of the Lord. I've been dealing with this all week reading through and I'm thinking I'm going to preach through the 23rd chapter here before long. You might want to take a vacation during those weeks. These are tough verses. Matthew 23:16.

"Woe to you, blind guides [these are the preachers now, alright? He's not talking to some bunch of drunks. He's talking to the rabbis. Woe to you, blind guides], who say [this is what you say], 'Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.' [So first of all He's saying it's not by the house of God but it's by the gold, by what you give] *You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? [Well it's the temple, it's the worship. It's not the money. Verse 18] And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.'* *You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering?*

The altar sanctifies the offering. The altar that sanctifies the offering. Now listen to this preacher, the word of God, the Holy Spirit, the blood of Jesus, the faith of your heart, but do not miss the altar. The altar is what sanctifies the offering. You've got to come to the altar. I don't mean you've got to come to the front of the church but I mean you've got to make an altar where you give your life to God. That's where sanctification begins. Romans 12:1. You know that verse. We are now therefore to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice which is our reasonable service of worship and it's all done at the altar.

Friend, you can make an altar anywhere. Moses made one with a burning bush. He made an altar. Amen. Old Jacob made one out of a rock. Jewish people in that temple had altars but the blind, foolish guides said the offering plate is more important than the temple, that the gold is more important than the altar. How stupid. How foolish. How blind. Your offering is only good if it's given in brokenness on the altar. That's how God sanctifies it, multiplies it, uses it. Some of you have so many gifts. Oh my. The gift of leadership, the gift of influence, the gift of encouragement. We often talk about the gift of gab. Some of you got that and it's a good thing because you make people feel good. You just love people. I don't care what your gifts are, friend, you'll never have those gifts sanctified until you bring it all to the altar. Amen.

I was in northwest Arkansas preaching Friday night and Saturday morning. I gave the invitation. I'm telling you, men poured – there were 1,200 men in that meeting. They poured to the altar two and three deep and they were crying out to God on that altar. Friend, you need to make an altar. You may need to make it right here. You may need to go home out in the woods behind your house and make an altar. You may need to go in your back bedroom, close the door. It doesn't matter where it is. It

doesn't have to be elaborate but I'm telling you, you've got to make an altar and present your body a living sacrifice unto God.

Let me just recap for you these five things. Now the word of God, first of all, when we find – now the word of God washes us, okay? Get that. The word washes us. Secondly, the Holy Spirit draws us. Thirdly, the blood, the blood keeps us. You're under the blood. You're never lost again. The faith enables us. The altar sanctifies us. It sanctifies the offering when we come and we lay it on the altar. We need to always have an altar before the Lord.

Ya'll like sushi? I never did much but I do now. I was taught about it and younger people like it and I tried it and I liked it. I like it if it's steamed better than if it's raw but I eat it raw if it's the right kind of fish, you know. I like that. Every one of these sushi places I go in has got a Buddha in it. You seen them boys? Old Buddha's got a big belly. I guess that's a blessing in Buddhism, I don't know. I'll see these. You know, it's just décor I understand but then some of them they'll have little candles around them. It's like an altar. That's a load of hooey. I'm not sure. Is that a nasty word? Is it alright? They say it on the mountain but not everything they say on the mountain you can say here. I go in other places and we travel to Israel and you'll go in those old churches and there's altars and candles and smoke and guys with long beards and robes and they've got a candle on a chain with incense. It's going everywhere. That's tradition.

Let me tell you, an altar is when you get naked before God with your soul. You peel off everything of pretense you've got and you cry out, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." I'm telling you, whenever God gets you there, you're on your way to sanctification but as long as you've got all this church stuff around you and looking prim and proper and lighting this and doing that – I've just seen all these Baptists giving up stuff for Lent. That's just got in my craw. There's nothing in the Bible about that. They're just waiting on Easter so they can go back to living like hell.

Let me tell you, friend, if it's good for you before Easter it's good for you on the Fourth of July. I said, "It's good for you after Easter." Ya'll don't even believe that. Are ya'll here today? What's wrong with you? You see, you can't work this up. It's not something you do. You just get stripped before God and get on the altar. Go read those Old Testament altars. Friend, they kill the bull, they kill the dove, they kill the goat, and lay it on the altar. That's what we've got to come to if we're going to be without spot, without wrinkle, sanctified, stripped down of all fleshly pretense and on the altar. It's on that altar that He sanctifies, makes holy the offering.

Now watch this. Whenever God begins to do that in you, the first mark of holiness is humility. It is. It's the first mark and you just simply say, "It's not of me, it's of God," when people begin to ask. It's just of the Lord and you reflect all praise unto Him.

I just kind of came with my heart sort of full this morning and I've preached a little longer than I should but we can't quit until we have an altar call. So Jamie's coming and when he starts to sing – hey, you know, I didn't even ask you about this. Do you play the piano and do like Jon? Okay, good. Amen. So he's going to sing over here and we're going to have an old fashioned altar call. We do it nearly every service. We call it an invitation but today I want to kind of regress to some old language that I think may be better. Rather than inviting people, let's have an altar call. God's calling us to the altar. You may need to come kneel here. You may need to just fall on your knees where you are. You may need to just bow your head.

Friend, if you don't know Jesus Christ, if you're not a Christian you need to come talk to me because we need to talk with you and lead you to the place where you can call on the name of the Lord. If you need to join this church you need to come here and tell me that today. If you're coming for baptism like these two then you need to come. Maybe you just need to come fall in this altar and say, "O God, I'm ready for sanctification." We're on our feet all over this room standing, dear Jamie singing, and as he's singing we call to the altar for these moments. You come as God woos and woos and woos you. God love you. Amen. You come. You come. You come.