

Continuing in the Word, The Perfected Church, Ephesians 5:25-27.

There is a day yet to come when Jesus Christ will present to Himself His glorious Church; a completely, perfectly holy, sanctified, pure Church. God is doing the work in us to prepare us for that day. We are to submit to His working in humility obeying His Word. The goal of the Church this year and every year is to be behaving as is fitting for the bride of Christ looking toward that day of presentation.

God has various tools that He uses to prepare His bride for that day. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are essential in this pursuit. But God also condescends to use lesser tools in bringing about His will for the Church. In Colossians 1:28,29 Paul writes, "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily."

These verses tell me that as a pastor I am to preach Jesus Christ. In that preaching of Him I am to warn and teach, and I am to do that with all the wisdom and power that God supplies. Why? To what end? It is to be the pastor's goal to present His flock perfected in Christ. Ultimately Jesus presents His bride to Himself. But under Him, the Chief Shepherd, the under-shepherds have a presenting they are accountable for.

Scottish pastors Derek Prime and Alistair Begg in their book called "On Being a Pastor" tell God's under-shepherds, "The word *present* is worth pondering...in that it reminds us that we are to have in view always that glorious moment of presentation when our Lord returns and His servants meet Him to give an account of their service. Think of the joy of presenting on that day all those for whom we have had responsibility."

Pastors/elders are a tool God chooses to use to bring about His completed work in the Church. Ephesians 4:11-13 says, "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

The word "perfect" means to complete or finish, referring to something having reached its full end. I desire to see each one of us perfected in Jesus Christ. That is why I pray for you. That is why I preach, teach, and counsel from the Word of God. That is why I encourage you, challenge you, and sometimes correct you. I want you to come to your dying day able to say

like Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). I want to see you run with endurance the race that is set before you (Hebrews 12:1). I want to see you transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). I want to see this in our individual lives and thereby in our church.

Will you join me in the goal of being Jesus Christ's glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, being holy and without blemish before Him? This burden and responsibility is my joy. Know that I am praying for you with your "perfection" in Christ in mind. Know that when I preach it is with this goal pressing me on. Know that should I warn or correct you, it is with this end in view. And know that I pursue this not in my own strength or on my own authority. I simply serve as a conduit designed to deliver the Word of God to the people of God by the power of God.

Together let's pursue the beauty of holiness this year.

Pastor Jim