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*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV)*

Obviously, this passage deals with the marriage relationship and how husbands should treat their wives, but it also tells us how Jesus feels about the Church. He gave himself up for “her” (the Church). We know that Jesus died to save all those who would believe, but I love how Paul does not separate “believers” from “the Church.” Jesus’ plan is to present the Church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle... holy and without blemish.

It seems to me that Satan has spent a lot of effort over the past few decades attacking the Church. Have you noticed how popular it is to say, “I don’t need to attend church, I can worship at home?” Have you noticed how many popular church leaders have either been exposed in some sin or have decided to deconstruct their faith?

The effects of these public failures trickle down to our local churches. People have trouble trusting their local leaders. People think the pastor is probably an overpaid attention-seeker. Some people suspect that everyone at church is a hypocrite, or that they will inevitably be hurt if they attend.

Every church is full of human beings, so mistakes will be made, problems will arise, and folks will be hurt (usually unintentionally). But the fact is, if you and I want to be like Christ, we must love the Church! The outpouring of Christ’s love was that he “gave himself up for her... that she might be holy and without blemish.” Perhaps when I am ready to fight over some preference at church, I should instead give myself up, so that we can move forward in unity and without blemish.

At an organizational level, this is what the FEBC is really all about. We are working to strengthen churches, with the goal that each one may be as splendorous, spot-free, wrinkle-free, and blemish-free as possible. We are *joining our hands to strengthen His church*.

**Register for Connect24 and check out our new online magazine at: [www.fellowshipforward.org](http://www.fellowshipforward.org).**

Thank you for your prayers, support, and encouragement!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Stone".

**Kevin Stone**

President

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