

“The Church and the Purpose of the Christian”

Matt. 16:13-20

Open: Story

- Jesus and His disciples are traveling from one destination to another, and Jesus asks them what is seemingly and odd question. **Matt. 16:13** “... *Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*”
- Jesus then turns the question from a general one, to a specific one. **Matt. 16:15** “... *But whom say ye that I am?*”
 - Jesus wanted His disciples to transition from a knowledge that came from what they heard to a knowledge that came from what they had seen and experienced. **Matt. 14:24-33**
 - The storm came and all became fearful.
 - During the storm one proved his own faith.
 - All walked away from the storm with a knowledge; but only one with personal conviction.
 - Jesus knew that until His followers understood who He was, then they would not be willing to step out by faith and do what He was doing.
 - A child will be hesitant to do something they are fearful of, until they get to know the one who experienced in that thing of which they fear. (Fire, heights, storms...etc.)
 - As a child of God, we are given many examples of others who have chosen to live by faith; but until we get to know the one who authored our faith then we will never live the faith He has called us to live.

I. The Purpose of the Church

A. The **Faith** of the Church

1. Faith for *salvation*. **Eph. 2:8a** “*For by grace are ye saved through faith...*”
 - a. The Church was established as an institution to teach the Bible way of Salvation.
 - b. The Church was established to teach those who were saved how to teach those who are not saved how to get saved.
 - c. The Church is the tool God intended to use to expose the error of the Devil’s doctrine (works) and exhort man in the way of Christs doctrine (faith.) **II Tim. 4:2** – *ILL: Lighthouse*
2. Faith for *service*. **Rom. 1:16-20**
 - a. The second purpose of the church’s establishment was to expand and build on the faith that was given to the child of God at Salvation. **II Peter 1:3-9**
 1. Foundation = Faith for Salvation
 2. Building = Faith for Service
 - b. God wanted all to be saved, but after salvation God wanted His children to personally experience and publicly demonstrate the blessings of living by faith.
 1. Witness
 2. Work (labour) of Love
 3. Winning Souls

B. The **Focus** of the Church

- Just like in **Matt. 14: 24-33** when Jesus wanted to teach the disciples to stay focused on the truth, of who he was, during the storm; God wants His children to understand that they are to stay focused on Him during the trying times of life.
 - *“We can not always explain the purpose of or the reason for the storm; but we can always trust (God) in and through the storm.”*
1. The focus of the church is the Word of God.
 - a. We do not come to church to talk about our listen to man’s opinion; we go to church to reinforce our commitment to obeying the Word of God. **Heb. 4:12**
 1. Powerful – Brings heavy conviction (sinful conscious).
 2. Penetrates – Brings understanding (carnal mind).
 3. Perforates – Passes through an into a thought barrier (hard heart).
 - b. Church is not where we go to learn the Bible, church is where we are reassured of and instructed in the truths of the Bible.
 - *“Many criticize the Catholics for paying their priests to pray for them; while many Christians are paying their pastors to study the Bible for them.”*
 - c. The focus of the Church is the Word of God because it is the Word of God that gives life to the lifeless, that gives light to those walking in darkness, and it gives a lift to those who are living in discouragement.
 2. The focus of the church is the Work of God.
 - a. The church is not the fulfilment of the work of God, it is the foundation of success for the work of God.
 - b. We are to take what we learn in church and tell those who were not at church about what God did for us while we were at church.
 1. **ILL #1:** *The ministry of Jesus was successful because not only did they focus on doing the work of God, but they also got others involved in telling about the great work that was being done.*
 2. **ILL #2:** *The N.T. Church in the book of Acts grew, because the church was not only obedient in the work of God, but they spread the excitement about the work of God that was being done in the church to those not at church.*
 3. **ILL #3:** *Going to church is the pep rally before a ball tournament. We go to church to lean about who God is and what God has done for us so we can leave from the church and go out into a world of discouraged people and tell them about what God can do for them.*
 3. The focus of the church is the accomplishment of the Will of God.
 - a. Just like Jesus’ number one priority was to please His Father by doing His Father’s will; the church, as individuals and as a group, is to focus on and work together to accomplish the will of God. **John 6:38** *“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”*
 - b. The will of God for the church and for the individual Christian is the same.
 1. Deliver the gospel to the unsaved.
 2. Encourage the discouraged to continue.
 3. Love those that Jesus would love.

➤ **Note:** *None of these are affectively accomplished unless continued and carried on outside the 4 walls of the church.*

II. The Person of the Church.

A. The **Foundation** of the church is truth, that was revealed by the faith of Peter in **Matt. 16:16b** “... *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*”

- **Matt. 16:17** “...*flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*”
- **Matt. 16:18b** “...*upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*”

B. A church that does not, by faith, build on the foundation of the truths of God’s Word will see its foundation crumble and ultimately lose its effectiveness. **I Cor. 3:6-11** – *Foundations with not building on them eventually crumble.*

- Build.
 - Build using the right materials.
 - Build continuously [regardless of the apparent results].
1. Are you a Christian who has his life built on the Rock or on the sand? **Matt. 7:24-27**
 2. **Heb. 6:1a** “*Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection not laying again the foundation...*”
 3. **Eph. 2:21a** “*In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord...*”

C. When a church ceases to grow or decreases in its productivity or effectiveness, it is because they have lost sight of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. **John 12:32** “*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*”

D. The same power that Jesus had over sin, death, and the grave is the same power that was given to the church to perform the works that God has called it to do.

1. **Matt. 28:18-20** “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. [19] Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*”
2. **Lk. 10:19** “*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*”

III. The Promise of the Church.

A. The **Fortification** of the Church. **Matt. 16:18b** “...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

○ “The only way a Christian or the Church can be defeated is if they fail to, by faith, obey the plan of success laid out for them in God’s Word.”

1. It is obvious that the goals of the church are bigger than the church and that those who attack the church are bigger than the (human) individuals of the church.
2. We need to recognize that the power God gives the church will allow the church to accomplish a work bigger than itself, and it [the power of God] will also defeat those enemies that seem to be stronger than the church. **Heb. 3:14** “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;”
3. The church that remains steadfast on its foundation will find itself doing a work bigger than itself and defeating an enemy far greater than they.

➤ **Note:** The same fortification given to the church is also extended to the Christian who remains firm on the foundational truths of God’s Word. **I Cor. 15:58** “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

B. The “**Foreverness**” of the church.

1. Because the Church is founded on the Word of God, the same promise that is given to the Word of God is extended to the Church. **Matt. 24:35** “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”
2. Any Christian that stays attached to the church that is built on the foundation of God’s Word will also be granted the same promise extended the church.

Close:

- Are you a part of the church?
- Are you fulfilling your purpose in the church?
- Is your life founded on the promises of the church?

Matt. 16:18b

“...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”