

STAND FIRM

WITHSTANDING THE ASSAULT ON THE TRUTH



Part 14

“God’s Purposes for the Church in Society”

May 21, 2023

Introduction

Marriage and family are foundational to God’s plans and purposes for humanity to be fruitful and multiply. The human societies that are formed as a result reflect both God’s image as well as human sinfulness. Because they know and worship Him, God’s people have always lived among in the world among unbelievers as strangers and aliens.

Main Point: We are called to stand firm on the truth that while God has called believers _____ from the world, He has left us _____ the world in order that we might live as His witnesses.

With & Among Whom Do We Stand Firm?

Believers & the Church

The Church Defined

Matt. 16:18b—...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

ἐκκλησία (*ekklesiā*)— A summoned or gathered assembly (civic or religious); a community or congregation.

⇒ From *ek*, meaning “_____,” and *kaleo*, which means “to _____.” Hence, the church is a “called out” group.

“...the church is revealed to be the company of believers formed of both Jew and Gentile who are called out of the world and joined together in one living union by the baptism of the Spirit.” — Chafer/Walvoord, *Major Biblical Themes*

“(1) There is the *universal* church—all believers in heaven or on earth. (2) There is the *visible* church—local churches in various areas...(3) There is the *local* church—the particular assembly with which I have my primary sustained relation.”

—Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*

Images of the Church

1. _____ and _____

Eph. 5:23b, 31-32—⁵ Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior... ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

2. _____

1 Pet. 2:5a—you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood

Key Point: It is critical for believers to understand their identity in terms of their _____ with Jesus Christ and therefore their _____ within His church.

Believers & the Church’s Mission

Matt. 28:18-20—¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Observations:

1. The mission is carried out by believers under the _____ of the Lord Jesus and among the nations.

2. The mission necessarily involves the _____ of the Gospel among the nations.

3. The mission necessarily involves the planting of _____ among the nations.

The Church Gathered

1. **The church gathers for _____.**

1 Pet. 2:5—you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

2. **The church gathers for _____.**

Eph. 4:11-12—¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

3. The church gathers for mutual _____ and _____.

Rom. 12:6-8—⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

The Church Scattered

1. The primary purpose for the church scattering among the nations is to bear faithful _____.

Acts 1:8—But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

⇒ We bear faithful witness in both _____ and _____.

1 Pet. 3:15-16—¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

⇒ We bear faithful witness through our _____ for one another.

John 13:34-35—³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

2. The secondary purpose for the church scattering among the nations is to _____ society through faithful presence.

Matt. 5:13-16—¹³ “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

“salt”

“light”

Biblical Example: Paul in Ephesus

Acts 19:26-27—²⁶ And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷ And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”

Key Point: The faithfulness of believers to _____ for worship will significantly impact the degree of faithful _____ that we will have in society when we are scattered.

Challenges to the Truth

1. Misplaced focus and effort.

“Rather than wasting energy and resources fighting unwinnable political battles, we should work on building communities, institutions, and networks of resistance...Rather than panicking or remaining complacent, [believers should] recognize that the new order is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be lived with. It will be those [believers] who learn how to endure with faith and creativity, to deepen their own prayer lives and adopting practices, focusing on families and communities instead of on partisan politics, and building churches, schools, and other institutions within which the orthodox Christian faith can survive and prosper through the flood.”

—Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option*

2. Cultural Compromise

Rev. 3:15-18—¹⁵ “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Concluding Thought

To _____ in and be _____ by the Word of Christ is the only way that to live faithfully in the world as His witnesses.

John 17:14-19—¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.



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Main Point: We are called to stand firm on the truth that while God has called believers out from the world, He has left us in the world in order that we might live as His witnesses.

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Images of the Church

1. Body and Bride

Eph. 5:23b, 31-32—⁵ Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior... ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

2. Building

1 Pet. 2:5a—you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood

Key Point: It is critical for believers to understand their identity in terms of their union with Jesus Christ and therefore their membership within His church.

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Observations:

1. The mission is carried out by believers under the authority of the Lord Jesus and among the nations.
2. The mission necessarily involves the proclamation of the Gospel among the nations.
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1. The church gathers for worship.

1 Pet. 2:5—you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

2. The church gathers for instruction.

Eph. 4:11-12—¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

3. The church gathers for mutual encouragement and service.

Rom. 12:6-8—⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

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1. The primary purpose for the church scattering among the nations is to bear faithful witness.

Acts 1:8—But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

⇒ We bear faithful witness in both **word** and **deed**.

1 Pet. 3:15-16—¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

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2. The secondary purpose for the church scattering among the nations is to influence society through faithful presence.

Matt. 5:13-16—¹³ “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

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Key Point: The faithfulness of believers to gather for worship will significantly impact the degree of faithful influence that we will have in society when we are scattered.

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