

## What is the Purpose of the Church, and Why Should a Believer be Part of it?

What is the purpose of the church? Why do some people reject it? When discussing the church, do we talk about a building, a movement, or even a denomination? Certainly not, according to the Bible. But let's first look at some verses that speak about a situation that Apostle Paul was attending to, and as I personally see it, it had to do with the church.

It is actually reported that there is a sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Your glorifying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:1-8)

Here, Paul was dealing with a situation that happened in the church of Corinthians. We are talking about a church here because Paul already called them by this name in chapter 1, verse 2.

“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:” (1 Corinthians 1:2)

So, we see those who formed the church were “sanctified” and “called to be saints.” This is what makes the church a true church; in other words, these people make the church. It is not a building or any religious group, but these exact people. Jesus said in Matthew 18:19, 20:

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

Jesus is among those who are gathered in His name. Those who truly are. Here, we are not speaking about people just proclaiming His name or being gathered apparently in His name but having another purpose at the same time because it could happen. Still, we are rather speaking about true worshipers.

From all of these verses, we conclude that the believers make the church, not anything else. It is not simply the ecclesiastical order, pastors, deacons, and others that form it, but the born-again believers proclaiming His name. Amongst them will be pastors, deacons, and others, but what is important is that they are sanctified, as verse 2 of 1 Corinthians says.

Going back to 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, we see that there was a person in that church who was practicing sexual immorality, having his father’s wife. Seeing the situation, Paul decided to deliver such one to Satan.

“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Corinthians 5:4)

We often see this passage and think: “What is exactly Paul saying now? Does he have to do anything with Satan, as he mentions his name?” Of course not. But from what some other verses from the Bible say about Satan, we can conclude that such a situation has to do with trials. Paul was delivering that person to trials, and most probably, with this statement, he was referring to sending him away from the church.

Why do we conclude that delivering that person to Satan means sending him away from the congregation? Because in the following verses of the same chapter, we see Paul saying that a little leaven leavens the whole lump and about purging out the old leaven, the one that could contaminate the rest.

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened” (1 Corinthians 5:7)

Of course, here we are not speaking about a common person going to a church but about a church member who supposedly was a believer and was behaving that way. In the meantime, we must be very careful if we, as leaders of some congregation, send someone away. Such an act must be done with a specific purpose, and we need to know exactly what it means.

Maybe this must be done just for a time, or if that person was holding a particular position in the church and lived and behaved not as a believer, then he probably needs to be removed from his current position in the church, but still to be allowed to visit the church as any other ordinary person. I also think that further on, Paul was also telling them to forgive that person and take him back, but this situation is not the one we are focusing on. We are focusing on the fact that Paul was comparing the

state of sending someone away from the congregation with delivering him to Satan. Why? **Because outside of the church, a person is unprotected. That's where the enemy's ground is.** There, he is more exposed to temptations and difficulties and is in the hands of Satan. I am not speaking of the church as a physical place but of the necessity of communion with the other believers. The figure of Satan here represents trials and tribulations. He is the one that often brings them into our lives. It will be for two reasons if a person experiences difficulties or temptations. It is because that person brought them to his own life or because the devil brought them. The second one often happens in the life of believers, even though they are not excluded from the first one. The Bible also says that no one can say that God has tempted him, but if anyone is tempted, it is because of his own desires. Jesus said to Peter in [Luke 22:31, 32](#):

“And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.”

It means that Satan is the one who wants to tempt us and bring difficulties and temptations to our lives, and the Lord knows that and delivers us if we show faith in those moments. If we give up, then we are the ones who are getting enticed by evil, and we are following its desires. These moments actually have the purpose of strengthening our faith. That's why God allows them. Something that was meant to be bad, brought by Satan into our lives, turns out to be good and helpful when God works in our lives, and we love Him. Praise be to Him for that!

We see how Jesus recommends Peter to strengthen his brethren after the trial he was about to go through. Why? Because he was going to come out strong from that trial.

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith,

being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” (1 Peter 1:7)

In this verse, we see how Peter himself speaks about trials that test our faith and, in this way, strengthen it. As we said before, if a person experiences difficulties or temptations, it will be for two reasons: either that person brought them to his own life by being enticed by sin or because the devil brought them.

So, what Paul decided to do in the situation having to do with the church of Corinth was to deliver that person to Satan in a way that he can go through trials and difficulties if that might help him so that he can be saved somehow in the day of the Lord Jesus. How was Paul going to “deliver” him to Satan? By excluding him from the church, by sending him away from there as 1 Corinthians 5:2 says: “And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from you.”

In the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 5, we see discussed the topic of taking someone away from the church. We need to know that this is done with the members that have gone over the limit and influenced the others in a negative way. In this way, they cannot be part of the church's brotherhood (at least for some time), as the name of our Lord Jesus is holy and cannot be spotted and dishonored. We are definitely not speaking here for someone who has made some mistakes or has certain issues, but we are speaking about sin involving immorality or any sin that goes beyond the limit. Why was that person going to be in the hands of Satan and going through more trials than usual? Because when someone is in the church, he is protected. The other believers protect him in a way when he communes with them, but when he doesn't belong to a body of believers, he is more exposed to the world. When talking of this, I am not referring to when someone is physically out of the church, but to when he has stopped communing with the church.

I personally don't think that it will always work if someone is left completely unprotected in the hands of Satan, but in that exact situation, it had to be done that way, and the church couldn't help that person any longer. They had to take the evil out of them to prevent the negative impact on others. And we must remember that the questioned person wasn't a simple sinner but someone calling himself a brother in faith and a church member. They had to react in such a way to protect the church members, and they did it with the hope that the trials would help that person. In some cases, we need to take this kind of action toward others, but always leaning on God's understanding and righteousness. Later, when Paul writes **2 Corinthians**, we see that he recommends them to forgive a person, and I think that it has to do with the same one mentioned in 1 Corinthians. Still, the point of all this is that out of the church, that person was unprotected. We can say that in the church is where God's field is, and out of the church – Satan's space. Does that mean that God is only in the church? No. He is omnipresent and everywhere, but looking at it from another view, yes, He is manifested mostly in the church. This is where His word is mainly preached. This is where all the parts of the body of Christ are knit together in love, are being edified, and grow. The church is where the believers draw strength to face the daily battles in life and be a light in the world. A believer can and will have a personal relationship with His Lord, but in the church, he interacts with other believers, which is important for his growth and is a necessary part of his life as a believer. God wants to have communion with us and has created us in a way that we can enjoy sound relationships and communion with Him and with other people. Therefore, we understand that the church is a place where God manifests Himself through the preaching of the word, through the light of the believers, and through the parts of the body of Christ that edify each other. His presence is more likely to manifest when the believers are gathered together in a prayer. This is also what Jesus prayed to the Father for– that the believers may be united in one (John 17:21-23). I am

not saying that God's presence doesn't manifest when someone seeks Him alone. This is an essential part that all need to have. I am just saying that He is well pleased when believers are gathered together in His name. And last but not least – the church is meant to shed light on this world and manifest God's glory (Matthew 5:14). This is performed better and most effectively when the believers work together as a body.

We need to comprehend what a church is. It is not a building since God said He would not dwell in a temple or house built by man's hands. It is not either a religious group of persons or a denomination, but in the scripture, we clearly see that it is a group of persons that gathers together in the name of Jesus. He is there amongst them. I'm speaking about a group formed by **real** believers, those who pray sincerely to Him and are born from Him. Jesus said in **Matthew 18:19, 20**:

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

In this verse, it is said that He is among those who are gathered together in His name. It would be ridiculous today to say that such a group formed by two or three people can be called a church, looking at some mega-churches with great buildings and thousands of members. Still, according to the word of God, Jesus can also be among those who are few but are looking for His glory and name sincerely. I don't have anything against big churches and buildings. If they really glorify God, then obviously, it is something very good. Such churches are well organized and structured and could reach out to more people for God's glory. God's desire and purpose is also that more people can know Him and accept Him. Still, we people are used to measuring things by how great they are in our eyes. We always look for what is big, great, and more visible.

Anyway, here we are not speaking about any group of persons that goes rogue and creates its own religious group or denomination, but we are talking about those who are gathered **in the name of Jesus**. And this is not just by proclaiming that name, but really believing in it. We are speaking about those who are sealed, have experienced the new birth, and belong to Him. In the same way, just visiting a Christian place or church doesn't make us Christians. We need to have a personal experience with Him. Then, we will form a part of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, we will become a living stone that takes part in that great spiritual building with Him, who is the cornerstone that sustains everything. This is His church.



The church that He has established, or in other words, those persons that proclaim His name in Spirit and truth, is the place where a believer is spiritually protected. It is a secure place, and I am not saying that the enemy cannot come and harm, but it is a bit harder for him to do it this way. Again, I am not saying to be only physically present in a church or



amongst believers but to be there with the right attitude and purpose. And this is to receive the gift of being born again, repent, and have communion with the other brothers in faith. It can also happen that even if the person is a believer and is born again, he still doesn't have communion and relation with the rest of the believers. That also, in a way, doesn't give that person the full benefit of being in a church and walking with God. Indeed, God can be found anywhere, and we are invited to seek Him and proclaim Him anywhere, but God is found and is manifested in the church amongst the believers. There is where, in a way, it is much easier for us to find Him and have communion with Him.

We can see a good example in [Matthew 21:33-42](#)

Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"

They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?

We can see from this parable how a certain landowner planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a tower. We know that this landowner represents God because He is the one that owns everything – the land, the vineyard, that in this case, might represent the church (that is composed of a group of persons and is supposed to bring fruit to His kingdom) and us the believers as well, who were standing without doing anything profitable. Still, in His grace, He has entrusted us to administer part of His kingdom, if we can say so.

Obviously, this parable was said to the Jews, but as we see how the parable continues, they didn’t get the purpose and, consequently, didn’t bring fruit to Him. As we see in some of the verses coming after the parable, it is said that as they (the Jews) didn’t bring fruit, He will lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render him the fruits in their seasons. And it refers to us by speaking about the other vinedressers. We must know that God always works according to the same model and way. If He worked and required those things from the Jews in that time, He would work in the same way today with us. He will require fruits from us. So, we see that the vineyard represents a group of people, a congregation. It refers to the Jews but also to the believers today who are supposed to bring fruit for His kingdom and glory. This is required from each church and community, which has to do with the gospel in our days.



We see that this landowner built a tower and set a hedge around it. All of this represents protection. The tower is the one that is used to oversee if there is any danger approaching. This is the work of the church. It is a protection for the believer. Not because he is only physically inside it, but because there are Christians in it who care for the others and have communion with each other. In this way, they offer protection and security, always through the power of God, of course.

We, as believers, cannot be against the institution called “church”. It is true and exists because God has established and created it with a purpose. There are obviously good churches and maybe others that are not so good, but we need to belong to one because this is the way God

wants us to function. It might be a church of 5 members or 10,000 members, but we need to belong to one. Because we need communion with other brothers in faith, and sometimes, we will also need their help.

The purpose is also to edify each other—this is the purpose of the body of Christ. We must also be careful if the church doesn't preach sound doctrine and we see it going astray from what is right. I am not speaking about certain minor mistakes and defects we find in some of the members or in the pastor (because no one is completely perfect), but about seriously going astray.

The church is supposed to be like that city on the hill that shines with its light amid the total darkness that this world brings. Darkness in which people cannot see God and His truth. That's why the church is there so that they can see something. Inside the church is where God is supposed to move and show His truth completely through His power and the life of the believers. This is His field and house, and outside is the devil's field because he is the prince of this world. I am not limiting the power of God by saying this. We obviously know that He is everywhere, and His power is limitless. Still, it is just that **He also manifests His power through the life of the believers, and this is a necessary component so that we can grow individually and as a body by edifying each other.** It is meant to be in this way so we can be together. The Bible speaks about the lost sheep that left the rest of the flock. A believer alone will not be complete, will find many struggles, and will risk a lot, if not everything. Someone leaving a church (it might be for different circumstances because he changes place or for some other reason) must definitely find another group to join. Even if someone is upset for some reason with that place or church, he definitely cannot be upset with all the churches and must find another one. If someone somehow is upset with all the places, then he has a problem and needs to examine himself. The fact that we find mistakes in some of the groups doesn't surely mean that all of them are to blame, and I repeat that there might not be a

completely perfect place where all the members and pastors will be perfect. When we see just certain common faults or mistakes, it is one thing, and when we see radical mistakes in doctrine, it is something else. We need to discern well and also examine our motives and own life. We must also remember that often, not all of the members of a church are true members. We can see this in the parable of the wheat and the tares, where the tares were sown amongst the wheat. That's why when we see some discrepancies among the members, we mustn't blame it on the church, and that is not always a reason to leave that church ([Matthew 13:24-30](#)).

Many times, if not all, we will see a church amongst the church, meaning that the group of real believers will be just a part of all the members of that church. The fact that someone visits a church doesn't make him a believer; what makes him one is the touch of God in his life, the new birth. Same as persons that have gone to study theology in a Bible seminar, and after they even get a degree to become pastors and open their own churches. That definitely doesn't make them pastors in God's eyes. People might be respected by others, but God might have a different opinion of them. What is really important is to be respected and appreciated by God. And with this, we are not taking away the study in a Bible seminary and having a pastor's degree. It is all good, but what we are discussing here is belonging to the church. And this can happen if someone belongs to Him and is born again.

What I say by all of this is that every person who is a true believer needs communion with the rest of the church's members. I personally need to hear a sermon from the pastor or advice or admonishment from some of my brothers, the same as they need me. We all need each other so that we can live perfectly knit together in love as one body. A hand is nothing without legs that take it to the place where it will be used. The same is true for the legs. They are nothing without the hand.

“But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:15, 16, emphasis added)

All of us who believe are like living stones that join together to build a spiritual house and church for His glory.

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

“Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” (1 Peter 2:4-6)

We see that we are those stones, and He is the chief cornerstone, the One that withholds everything. Our life must be based on Him. The church must be founded on Him.

Let's see another passage in **Matthew 16:13-18**

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that

you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Here in this passage, we see one of the greatest confessions a man can make: confessing that Jesus is Christ. It is not just a matter of words but to confess it with faith. In our days, the truth is that almost everyone knows that already, and this might not be such an impressive statement, but if we go back in that time to what that really meant, we see that it was a great statement, and we hope that we can understand it today and have the same revelation as the one Peter had in that time. He confessed that Jesus is Christ, the Son of the living God. The meaning of Christ is Messiah or the Anointed one, the one that the Jews have been waiting for a long time. The one that would deliver them and represent the salvation God promised them. It was their most important and precious hope. It wasn't easy to declare that someone was the Messiah at that time. Proclaiming this in the wrong way or time could have been considered blasphemy and punished with death. By saying that, Peter, in other words, said that Jesus was the answer they were waiting for, that He was everything in his life. That He was the most important. Is Jesus the most precious hope for us? We need to give ourselves an answer to that. This is the place that God should take in our life. The very first place. In today's days, the statement that Peter made would mean this. It is like when a person who believes says that Jesus is the answer to his life, that He is all of his hope and the most important ever. This could be said and really believed only by a revelation from the Father, the same one that Peter had. Many people proclaim it but don't believe it. Because it is God Himself who needs to explain and reveal that to our hearts and souls. We need to look for that kind of conviction. Most Jews today, anyway, don't believe in Jesus as the Messiah, exactly because they didn't receive this revelation from the Father.

What Jesus meant with His answer to Peter, “**and on this rock I will build My church,**” was that on the revelation Peter received, He was going to build His church. Notice that He said that He was going to build it. Therefore, we are not speaking of a man-made building, group, or organization. Even if people are involved in the group, organization, or building, they need to do it in His favor and guidance. Jesus is the center of the church. It is about heavenly revelation and something that He builds. Some people say that the church is founded on Peter, but it is more about the revelation he received. Even if he was called “rock,” it was because he had a revelation about who Jesus was. That was the center of the topic. The church, as well as our lives, must be founded on the revelation that Jesus is Christ, that He is the Messiah, the most important in our life. He also said that the gates of Hades would not prevail against it. This is only because it is founded on Jesus. By this, we see that the most important for each group and church is to be founded on Christ.

According to the Bible, the church is Christ's bride. He washed her with His blood. At His return, He expects her to be ready and without any spot or wrinkle. He is busy perfecting His work in her so that she (the church) might be ready for His coming.

**“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:25-27, emphasis added)**

As we see in this passage, there is a comparison between the love that a husband has for his wife and the love that Christ has for the church, or better said, the husbands are exhorted to show the same kind of love for their wives as Christ is having for the church because this is a perfect love. The one He shows to the church and the care He takes for it. This



kind of care and love is shown to us through Christ, to those who have believed and have been born again.

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