

# Church Matters

## “The Church and Purpose in Your Life”

Pastor Brad Bigney / May 17, 2015 / Grace Fellowship Church

When God calls a person to Jesus, He calls them to Christ’s Church, because the church is still the Bride of Christ.

Three reasons you shouldn’t give up on the local church:

### I. **The Gathered Church – in All Its Weakness – is Still the Place God has Chosen Most to Put on Display His Wisdom, His Glory, and Our Savior – Jesus Christ!**

God’s Word tells us that the church is the primary means through which He intends to accomplish His plan in the world! The church is His ordained instrument.

**Eph. 3:8-11** “...that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all people see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that **now** the manifold wisdom of God might **be made known by the church** to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**v. 20-21** “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory **in the church** by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

### II. **The Gathered Church is Not a Hindrance to Avoid But a Massive Help You Should Embrace If You Want to Persevere and Finish Well!**

The Christian life is not a sprint; it’s a marathon. All people in the church need each other to continue to plod along together to make an impact and to finish well.

**Hebrews 12:1-3** “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”

There’s a lot of TOGETHERNESS in this passage!

- **The church can help you recognize and lay aside what’s slowing you down**
- **The church can you keep going when you feel like quitting**
- **The church can help you focus on the right things**

There are horrible consequences of NOT being connected with brothers and sisters who can help you. In **v. 3** it says, "...lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."

**Two great dangers:**

1. You'll become spiritually sick – Greek 'kamno' – to be sick as the result of continual work
2. You'll become discouraged – Greek. 'eklyomenoi' – to unloose, as in a bow-string. To be undone. No longer tight to the things of God.

It's a soul condition. It's a sloppy, loose, spiritual condition. That's what happens when you fight, run, and focus all by yourself.

**III. The Gathered Church is the Place That Will Help You Put Your Specific Persecution and Suffering into the Greater Context and History of God's Sovereignty**

Persecution is coming, but this is not a new thing! We don't need to cry out to God as if He's never dealt with this before.

Peter spoke to the crowd about Jesus Christ after a lame man was healed and the religious leaders didn't want to hear it.

**Acts 4:2-3** "... being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody..."

**Acts 4:22-33** sheds light on why you need the local church in your life. The local church will help you in the face of increased persecution and suffering.

**v. 23** "... they went to their own companions..."

**v. 24-28** Together they prayed and acknowledged the sovereignty of God over all of history!

They acknowledged God's sovereignty in the distant past (Psalm 2), the immediate past (crucifixion of Jesus), and prayed for BOLDNESS in the present!

God stirred them in a fresh way when they were TOGETHER crying out to Him!

**v. 31** "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."

Notice two BIG things that happen when God's people meet together and get this kind of help: great power and great grace.

**v. 33** "And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all."

The Apostle Paul dealt with a lot of hurt, messes, disappointment, and disillusionment by the weakness of the church, yet he never threw in the towel! Look at **Romans 16:3-16**.

Even at the end of his life Paul recognized that he had never been running alone!

**2 Timothy 4:7-8** “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

<b>Bonus – for further study on your own</b>
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**IV. The Gathered Church is Where You Can Regularly Remind Each Other that Because We Have Boldness to Draw Near to God We Can also Have Freedom to Risk Loving People and Risking Our Property and Reputation**

**Hebrews 10:19-25** Loving other people

**Hebrews 10:32-36** Losing personal property and reputation

**V. The Gathered Church is the Place to Join Other People Who Can Help You Get Serious about Your Witness for God and Your Warfare against Your Own Sin**

**I Peter 2:9-10** Witness for God  
“... that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness”

**I Peter 2:11-12** Warfare against your own Sin

“I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.”