The Church in Acts (Part 2) 030523

Prelude:

I’m going to begin today by reading scripture. Not a bad way to start!

Please turn to

1 Peter 5:6-11

Here the Apostle Peter says,

**“...humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 8Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. 11To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen.”**

Here Peter is writing to his brothers and sisters in the church during times of extreme persecution. He is writing to them both collectively and individually. He is trying to encourage them by reminding them who is in charge, that of course would be Jesus, and he is encouraging them to keep their faith in Christ. In closing the letter, Peter commends his brother Silvanus, who delivered the letter, which was a perilous job, and then sends greetings. And then he writes something that tells us much about the church.

**Continuing in verses 12-14 ,**

**“Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! 13She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does* my son, Mark. 14Greet one another with a kiss of love.”**

Church, you heard the Apostle Peter, greet one another! Maybe with a handshake, hug, fist-bump or smile of love...

**SLIDE 1**

Last week we did a topical take on what this thing called the church is.

The Greek word we interpret as church is “Ecclesia.”

Ecclesia means “an assembly or congregation of called out ones.

Remember how I have said of the Trinity that all things proceed from the Father, through Jesus by the Holy Spirit?

It’s fascinating to notice that the church is a creation of God,

(Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 3:9, 17; 15:9), founded and owned by Jesus Christ—

He said, “I will build *My* church” (Matthew 16:18)—and directed and energized by the Holy

Spirit (1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:5–27; Romans 12:4–5).

Wow!

From the Father, through Jesus, and by the Holy Spirit.

We looked at two levels or layers of the church;

The Universal or True church, and the local church.

We here today are all either members of or are attending this local body of Christ, but there is a larger, global body of Christ that is comprised of all people everywhere and throughout history from the time of Pentecost who have been saved by grace through faith in Christ.

This includes all who ever will be saved by grace through faith in Christ.

Finally, we saw in 1 Peter 2:9-10 that as a believer you are now part of:

**“...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God’s* own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”**

This is directed at you, but it is the second-person singular, which in context is directed at a single group of people. So “you” is inclusive of all of God’s people in this passage.

**SLIDE 2**

Unfortunately, we cannot escape facts, and the fact is that we here at WBC live in an extremely individualistic culture, and as “individual” believers in Christ, we are bound to wonder, “Well, how do I fit into this?”

Ephesians 2:10 tells us that God saved us for a reason, and that we can only identify ourselves now in the context of being part of something bigger than us.

It says,

**“For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”**

Notice Paul uses the plural “we” instead of the individual “you.”

Why? Because there really is no more individual “You” in Christ.

You exist in the context of a collective group of people that have been created for the good works God prepared for us beforehand.

You are no longer your own.

Let’s just say you have reached the point of Christian maturity where you have accepted your identity in Christ, this new reality that connects you directly to His death, burial, and resurrection, as well as all other believers.

Let’s say you have come to know what it means to be Christ-ian.

You are now ready for your marching orders as a member of God’s army.

So the question becomes, “What works is Paul talking about in Ephesians 2:10?”

“What are WE supposed to be doing?”

These questions lead us to the third topical-yet-necessary sermon in a row.

What is the mission or purpose of the church, and how should this determine our function as members of the church?

In other words, “Okay, Lord, What are we doing, and what should I do?”

**SLIDE 3**

The Mission/Purpose of the Church = Your Mission/Purpose:

The mission of the church could come under three categories.

First, is the overall, ultimate reason for God’s creation, second has to do with the external outreach or endgame (What on earth is God doing?), and the third covers the internal work of the church. So it goes like this, What is the purpose of all God’s creation, What is the purpose of His church, and what is my purpose within His church?

Let’s take these in order.

**Glorify God** - It follows then that our first mission as the church is to bring glory to God.

We do this by living and serving in a way that brings honor to Jesus.

We are, after all, His body on earth.

I’m quoting from a fantastic website called gotquestions.org when I say that “As the moon reflects the sun, so the church is to reflect the glory of God to a dark world.”

What a great statement that is. (Matthew 5:16, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Ephesians 1:11-12, Revelation 4:11)

**Go Get ‘Em** - The second function or mission of the church has to do with what God is doing on earth, God’s program, or His will, which is to reconcile mankind, His crowning creation, back to Himself.

2 Peter 3:9 says, **“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”** Our job as the church, as Jesus’ body, is to be Jesus’ witnesses and to make disciples

(Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19, Matthew 4:19).

In other words, we are to be doing what Jesus was doing on earth.

He ministered to people not simply for the sake of ministering, but to offer them a place in His Kingdom. Romans 5:10-11, 2 Peter 3:9, Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19-20.

**Grow the Body** - The final, or internal (meaning within the body) reason for the church is to equip the saints and build up the body.

This has to do with teaching, encouraging, disciplining, and simply loving others.

This may be best viewed through a series of “one another” statements from scripture.

(Ephesians 4:12-13, Ephesians 2:19-22, Colossians 2:19)

**SLIDE 4**

The “One Another” Passages

Our mission or purpose within the church is carried out individually through our execution of a series of One Another Statements.

In other words, there is a biblically prescribed way of life that will result in accomplishing all three of the purposes listed a minute ago.

The phrase "one another" is derived from the Greek word *allelon* which means "one another, each other; mutually, reciprocally."

It occurs 100 times in the New Testament.

Approximately 59 of those occurrences are specific commands teaching us how (and how not) to relate to one another.

Obedience to those commands is imperative.

It forms the basis for all true Christian interaction and community and has a direct impact on our witness to the world. In addition to *allelon*, the Bible uses other words and phrases to instruct us how to relate to others.

With that in mind, the following list is not exhaustive, and primarily focuses on the use of *allelon*.

We can also know that the Lord is using us and working through us as we obey these “one another” statements.

Others can see this also.

John 13:35 tells us, **“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

POSITIVE COMMANDS

Love one another (John 13:34 - This command occurs at least 16 times)

Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)

Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10)

Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)

Build up one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Be likeminded (in unity, in harmony) towards one another (Romans 15:5)

Accept (to take in, to take as a companion) one another (Romans 15:7)

Admonish (to caution or warn gently) one another (Romans 15:14)

Teach one another (Colossians 3:16)

Greet (receive joyfully) one another (Romans 16:16)

Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)

Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)

Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)

Forgive one another (Colossians 3:13)

Be patient with one another (Ephesians 4:2)

Speak the truth in love with one another (Ephesians 4:15, 25)

Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19)

Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5)

Consider one another more important than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)

Look to the interests of one another (Philippians 2:4)

Bear with one another (Colossians 3:13)

Teach one another (Colossians 3:16)

Comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13)

Stir up [provoke, stimulate] one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)

Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)

Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another (1 Peter 4:10)

Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another (1 Peter 5:5)

Pray for one another (James 5:16)

Confess your faults to one another (James 5:16)

“NEGATIVE COMMANDS (how not to treat one another)”

Do not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9)

Stop passing judgment on one another (Romans 14:13)

If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you'll be destroyed by each other (Galatians 5:15)

Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another (Galatians 5:26)

Do not slander one another (James 4:11)

Don't grumble against each other (James 5:9)

We do all this because we are in a real sense “members of one another” (Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25)

Clearly, all of these statements relate to how we relate to “one another.” The point of all this is not to make other people feel good about themselves. Ephesians 4:13 gives us something to shoot for. It says that we should work together,

**13 “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”**

This is kind of amazing. There will come a day when Christ’s church, His body, matures to a point that it attains the fulness of Christ.

This is what we need to work and pray for.

If we do these things, we will reach outside the church to those who will believe.

They will be irresistibly drawn to Jesus.

Conversely, if we lie to, pass judgment on, bite and devour, slander, provoke, envy and grumble against one another, we will be an ineffective, dead church. What unbeliever would be drawn to Jesus through that kind of behavior?

Remember, His intention has always been, since before He created anything, to reconcile all things to Himself. He wants to invite all people to come home to Him. We are those who extend that invitation.

We as members of His church, as His body, are to get with His program.

So again, what is His program?

**SLIDE 5**

1. **Glorify God**

**Matthew 5:16, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Ephesians 1:11-12, Revelation 4:11**

1. **Go Get ‘Em**

**Romans 5:10-11, 2 Peter 3:9, Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19**

1. **Grow the Body**

**Ephesians 4:12-13, Ephesians 2:19-22, Colossians 2:19**