

# The Church

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Text: Matthew 16:18

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## Introduction

- When we consider the state of the church in our country and in our world, most of us would acknowledge, we don't always feel particularly encouraged by much of what we see and observe.
- At times, we can feel discouraged.
- Thankfully, into the discouragement we sometimes feel, God's Word speaks.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. -- Matthew 16:18

## I. What is the church?

- In [Matt. 16:18](#), the word "church" is used for the very first time in the New Testament.
- The literal meaning of the word translated "church", in the original language, is "assembly."
- As the rest of the New Testament makes clear, "the church" is the assembly of all God's people for all time.
- It is comprised of all whom Christ died to save.
- Christ gave himself up for the church; meaning, not merely one local church, or two local churches, or two hundred local churches — But rather the entire church --- All believers living in Every era; Every time period.
- Theologians refer to the church in this comprehensive way as the universal church.

"The universal church is the true, worshipping community of God's people, composed of all the elect from all time." — Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith

- The universal church is all believers — past, present, future. And it is this universal church, that Christ Jesus promises to build.
- That said, the universal church, must never be disconnected in our thinking from the local church.
- Scripturally, the universal church and the local church are inextricably linked and cannot be separated — thus love for the universal church and local church go hand-in-hand.
- The Statement of Faith explains the connection in this way:

As an expression of Christ's universal church, the local church is the focal point of God's plan to mature his people and save sinners. — Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith

- So the church local, local churches — biblically, are an expression of Christ’s universal church.
- That’s why every believer committing to be part of a specific church matters so much.

## II. Who owns the church?

- Well Jesus is very clear. "I will build my church." That means, the church belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ!
- It doesn’t belong to a denomination. It doesn’t belong to pastors. It doesn’t belong to congregation members. Instead, it belongs to Jesus Himself.
- The people of Israel would come every Sabbath to the the Temple and worship Yahweh.
- Now Jesus, the Messiah has broken on to the scene—and He announces the beginning of a new assembly, the church.
- The church is the Messianic community made up of the Messiah’s redeemed people Thus we are Christ’s church.
- I am indebted to Dr. DA Carson for that insight.

The messianic reign is calling out the messianic people. The kingdom has been inaugurated; the people are being gathered. — DA Carson

- At his first coming, through His life, death and resurrection —Christ inaugurated the rule and reign of the Messiah on earth.
- One Day, at His return, the Messiah’s rule will be consummated.
- But until then, the people of the Messiah are now being gathered. The messianic community is being gathered. The church of Christ the King is now being gathered through the proclamation of the gospel.
- So the church belongs to Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah. He alone is Lord over the church.
- This is wonderfully encouraging, because if the church is Christ’s, well then the ultimate responsibility for the church’s welfare, blessing and good lies with Him; not us.
- Hence we can trust Him...we can trust the One who is now gathering His church, to take care of His church, no matter how challenging and difficult things may sometimes seem.

## III. Who is building the church?

- Jesus gives us us a clear answer He says- "I will build my church."

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” — [1 Cor 3:6-7](#)

- We must always remember and never lose sight of the fact that --Jesus and Jesus alone is the One who builds the church.
- The church belongs to Christ and He promises to build it in His time and in His way.
- And God in His Word simply has not called pastors and local churches to build the church by inventing and implementing clever techniques to attract crowds and grow the church.
- God calls churches and pastors to emphasize, highlight, put in bold the priority of the preaching of God’s Word — in season and out of season.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. - [2 Timothy 4:1-4](#) (ESV)

“A true church is marked by the faithful preaching of the Word” — Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith

- So a church that is biblically healthy emphasizes the importance of the faithful preaching of God’s Word and then allows the Lord Christ Himself to build His church to gather His Messianic community around that faithful preaching as He wills.

Even true churches are imperfect: they often contain a mixture of unbelievers hidden among the true flock and are vulnerable to theological error and moral failure. Yet Christ is unwavering in his commitment to build his church and will surely bring it to maturity. — Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith

## **IV. Will the mission of the church succeed?**

- Jesus came “to proclaim liberty to the captives.” In the mission of the church, the gates of hell will not prevail.
- Disciples will be made of all nations! Christ will set the captives free! Christ will build His church!
- The mission of the church will succeed.
- Jesus promises it!

*As the body of Christ, the church exists to worship God, to edify and mature his people, and to bear witness to Christ and his kingdom in all the world.... As the Father sent Jesus into the world, so Jesus has sent his people into the world in the power of the Spirit. The church’s mission is to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded. We do this by proclaiming the gospel, planting churches, and adorning the proclamation of the gospel through our love and good works. — Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith*

## **Conclusion**

- May God by His Holy Spirit unite our hearts together anew on this day and strengthen both our commitment to one another as well as our resolve—to proclaim Christ together—to shine the light of Christ together....knowing that Christ has said
- I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

## Questions for Discussion/Application

- Read Matthew 16:18. What initial observations or insights do you have about the text?
- What do you find most encouraging about Jesus' words in Matt. 16:18?
- What is the church? How do we define it, biblically?
- Why is it important for every believer to join themselves to a specific local church?
- How would you counsel the person who said to you, *"I don't need to be part of a local church, because I am part of the church universal? I read my Bible regularly and pray. I sometimes listen to sermons online and that is enough for me."*
- How does Christ use believers, to help build His church?
- What does commitment to the local church look like practically?
- Consider taking time to pray, that God by His Holy Spirit would continue to build His church. Ask God also to use us to help proclaim the gospel and build Christ's church.