

Sermon Outline

“The Indestructible Church”

Matthew 16:13-18 – Robin Boisvert – August 15, 2010

Main Idea: The church that Jesus builds is indestructible and cannot be destroyed.

The Church Is Built by Jesus (v. 18: *“I will build my church...”*)

How does Jesus build his church? The way Jesus builds his church is by bringing people to himself through the gospel and then by sending them out to bear witness to that gospel. In other words, Jesus saves us through the gospel, and then he sends us out with that gospel. It’s our mission to bear witness to the truth of the gospel with our lives and our words—in demonstration and declaration.

The Church Belongs to Jesus (v. 18: *“I will build my church...”*)

1. Why does the church belong to Jesus? It belongs to him because he bought and paid for it with his own blood, his very life.
 - a. *“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained (purchased) with His own blood.” (Acts 20.28).*
 - b. And Peter said that Christians are redeemed, *“...not with perishable things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” (1 Peter 2. 18-19).*
2. These verses tell us that the divine Lamb of God, of infinite value and infinite love, gave his life for the church. Therefore, the church is his, and it is precious to him. What is precious to him ought to be precious to us as well. We should not be indifferent to what Jesus values so highly.

The Church Can Be Threatened (v. 18: *“I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*)

1. What is meant by “the gates of hell”? The word “gates” refers to power or authority. The place where authority was found in an ancient city was at the city gates. Think of it in terms of headquarters, where authoritative decisions are made. “The gates of hell” would equate to “headquarters of hell” in our culture.
2. In other words, Jesus is building his church in the midst of opposition and cosmic conflict. It is a conflict that engages all of heaven and earth, all of creation and spans almost all of time, from the fall to final judgment.
3. There are four ways that the church can be threatened, two from the inside and two from without.

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- a. Division: Division happens when Christians do not take sufficient heed to themselves to obey Jesus' commands to love one another. Offenses that are not dealt with biblically (taking the log out of our own eye, asking forgiveness, and seeking reconciliation) can lead to divisions between persons, and can affect other people who choose up sides. Then, factions develop which can even lead to church splits.
- b. Heresy: Throughout the history of the church, heresies have arisen. Heresy is doctrinal error so serious that if it were true it would falsify the Christian faith.
 - i. For example, in the 4th century there arose a very serious heresy that denied Jesus' eternal nature and equality of divinity with God. This heresy still exists in the beliefs of the Jehovah witnesses. Athanasius and the Council of Nicea convened and determined that Scripture taught that the Son of God is of the same essence as the Father, that Jesus Christ is truly divine. This heresy was formally condemned.
- c. Persecution from the world: Since the beginning, the church has faced persecution. Jesus' own passion and death set the pattern. He told his disciples, *"If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also."* Paul made the sobering statement that all who would live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. And Peter said in 1 Peter 4:12, *"Don't think it strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you."* It is estimated that there were more martyrs for the faith in the 20th century than in all the previous 19 centuries combined.
- d. The patronage of the world: The favor of the state often comes with a price—compromise of the gospel. The church should keep a safe distance from political parties and from the favors of kings and politicians. The church is in danger when she is beholden to or protected by political interests.

G. Campbell Morgan commenting on Acts 19:23-41: *"Let us be very careful that we do not waste our energy, and miss the meaning of our high calling by any rejoicing in the patronage of the world. It is by the friction of persecution that the fine gold of character is made to flash and gleam with glory. The church persecuted has always been the church pure, and therefore the church powerful. The church patronized has always been the church in peril and very often the church paralyzed. I am not afraid of Demetrius. Let him have his meeting of craftsmen, and let them in their unutterable folly shout a lie twenty-five thousand strong. The truth goes quietly on. But when the town clerk begins to take care of us, then God deliver us from the peril."*

The Church Will Certainly Prevail (v. 18: *"I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*)

1. Church history and Scripture reveals that despite toil, tribulation and trouble the Church will persevere. Jesus Christ not only builds the church, but he preserves her from the gates of hell until that final day when the warfare will end and Jesus will

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return for his Bride. Believing this truth, D. M. Lloyd-Jones wrote, *“Do not waste too much of your time in worrying about the future of the Christian Church.”*

2. But that doesn't mean that Covenant Life Church will necessarily prevail. That depends on whether we appropriate the grace of the gospel and faithfully follow our Lord – maintaining our integrity, walking in love for our Savior and for one another, maintaining our grip on the gospel, and faithfully passing it on to others and the next generation.
3. As Robin regularly does, we should pray that 10, 20, 50, 100 years from now, if the Lord does not return, that Covenant Life Church will still be a faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Fellowship Starters:

1. The church is precious to Jesus because he paid the ultimate price of his own blood to purchase it. Do you value the church as highly as Jesus? Is the church precious to you?
2. Robin taught us that division between brothers and sisters can threaten the church. Are there any unreconciled offenses that have created division between you and another believer? What must you do to be reconciled?
3. Why can patronage from the world (i.e., favor from the state, politicians or political parties) be a threat to the purity and power of the church's gospel witness?
4. Robin exhorted us that for Covenant Life to prevail for decades, we must maintain our grip on the gospel, walk in love and do our part to serve this local church. Are you doing your part? Are you praying for Covenant Life? Are you actively serving and using your gifts to build up this local church?
5. Take time to pray (individually or in small groups) and ask for God's blessings and grace upon this church, that Covenant Life will continue to be a faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ for decades to come.