

## We Are A Peculiar People

The church is a people who are called out and set apart from the world who are also called and sent into the world. The goal of the Christian life is complete conformity to Christ, and such conformity is both in character and in mission. In other words, the church is to be both a holy people set apart and missionary people sent at the same time, all the time.

Remember to consider the promise that Jesus will build His church and the purchased goal that Jesus will perfect His church.

Christ the Builder - Matthew 16:18 "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."

Christ the Perfecter – Ephesians 5:25-27 25 'Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26' that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word 27 'so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish'.

Jesus, the head of the church, is very committed to His bride, that is His people. He has determined that His church will be built and that His bride would be pure. Given that these promises are "yes" and "amen" and are sealed in His blood, we should consider the implications on who we are and how we should function as His people.

For instance, Jesus went deep into the world without becoming "worldly." His mission was not to sanitize or limit the moral boundaries of cultural normativity. And yet there was never a point when He was not the sinless Savior, the lamb of God without spot of blemish. His active obedience to the Father was not only the fulfillment of the law's demand but also the fulfillment of the Father's redemptive mission.

For the Christian, the sanctified lifestyle and sent lifestyle go hand in hand. To pursue holiness apart from mission or to pursue mission apart from holiness is to pursue a path contrary to the way of Christ. On the one hand, too much cultural adaptation misses the call to holiness, on the other hand, too much cultural isolation misses the call to the mission of Christ the builder. The promise of Christ's building through mission and the purchase of Christ's bride for purity should be held together.

Questions that arise from these truths should challenge us all: Are we living as God's sent people? Are we available and reliable tools for the Master to build His church? Are we pursuing holiness through repentance and faith? Are we committed to being a pure church, addressing sin both through formative and corrective discipline? Is our desire to reach the world leading us to compromise in areas of holiness that doesn't reflect or honor the character of Christ?

As you can imagine, the challenge is to embrace the promise of Christ as builder as participants in His mission while embracing the purchased goal to have a pure church. A church that is distinctively formed by the gospel and functions to spread that gospel in word and deed will be both attractive and offensive. We are not offensive by being "holier than thou" with an "us vs. them" mentality; rather the gospel that transforms us exposes their idols and confronts the folly of futility of life alienated from God.

What encouragement do we have in knowing that Jesus has promised to build His church and perfect his bride?! May God help us to be a missionary people, renewed by the gospel to behold, believe, and become like Christ who has sent us in His name for the advance of His church and spread of His fame.