

**The New Testament Church**  
*Walking in Covenant*  
**October 15, 2020**

I Why does God put believers in local Churches? (For our spiritual safety)

- A. The Church is made up of believers who have a relationship with God through Christ
  - 1. Each has been regenerated (born again or converted) by the Holy Spirit
  - 2. This universal Church will eventually defeat the gates of hell (Matthew 16:15-20)
- B. The Local Church is more than merely a collection of believers, it is a bride and city
  - 1. It is a place where believers can grow in their walk with God *through* relationships...
  - 2. This is discipleship, living out our Christianity with greater consistency (Matthew 18:15-20)
- C. The Biblical expectation is that every believer is placed by God in a local body of believers
  - 1. We are to go to the church of His choice, not ours (though we are responsible to discern)
  - 2. We can't mature to the extent intended by God in isolation of other believers

II What does it mean to walk in Covenant? (a story of having each other's back / community)

- A. How do we walk in covenant with God? – 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:6-10
  - 1. We walk in the light – in fellowship with Him – *it is a heart to heart relationship*
  - 2. If we say we have no sin – we lie – *the mind will justify what the heart has chosen*
  - 3. We confess our sins when convicted – restoring our walk, but do we see them all?
  - 4. But all alone, we can easily be deceived... self-deception is the root of all deception
- B. God has designed each of us to walk in covenant with other believers
  - 1. In Acts we find believers are “sent” and “received” – letters of commendation (ex. Ro. 16:1-2)
  - 2. The Bible indicates that we cannot walk in the light without accountability with others
    - a. It is in the multitude of counselors that we have safety – Proverbs 11:14
    - b. We need help to remove the log in our eyes and then the speck in others – **Matthew 7:1-2**
  - 3. Every believer needs others – Hebrews 10:25-26
    - a. Home meetings – Acts 2:46 – *discuss the Word, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer*
    - b. Corporate meetings – Acts 20:7 – *first day of the week; preach the Word, sacraments*
    - c. Equipping meetings – Acts 11:21 – *a specific goal to be equipped to meet*
  - 4. Marriage, family, business should all operate by the same principles of communication
  - 5. This is voluntary, but that is the point of maturity, seeing your need - **Galatians 6:1-5**
    - a. Our need of others is assistance, not dependence or entitlement
    - b. The goal is that we could *bear our own load*.
    - c. We are able to help others be consistent in the practice of their faith
- C. The Church and its structure is to encourage fellowship among believers
  - 1. The church has often incorporated a philosophy of government hindering growth of believers
  - 2. Centralized and top-down control is most common, but discourages' growth
  - 3. *The form of government endorsed by the Bible for the church is self-government in Christ.*
  - 4. God has designed believers to be governed from within and mature enough to admit fault
- D. Leaders, though called directly by God and gifted, only exercise authority by consent
  - 1. Believers are given discernment as they mature, recognizing gifts and confirming them
  - 2. Since all are sinful, believers need guidance and leaders need accountability
  - 3. If leaders function outside their authority, believers can submissively disobey
  - 4. Leaders in the church (pastors, elders, deacons, etc.) are called to watch over the souls of those within (see Hebrews 13:17), guide, give advice, and even correct when necessary.
  - 5. Ultimately, the local Church is called to *keep itself pure* through covenant relationships
- E. The purpose of walking in covenant is for the church to be a city set on a hill – Mt. 5:14-16
  - 1. Not the hill sitting on the city – no one sees the light, only the leader...
  - 2. The way we handle relationships in the church communicates the gospel – John 17:21