

# The Failure of the Christian Church

by [Matt Slick](#)

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age," ([Matt. 28:18-20](#)).

Christianity is supposed to be the representative of Jesus who taught love, forgiveness, sacrifice, unity, and humility. Though that may be true to a large extent, Christians have demonstrated an amazing ability to overlook many biblical virtues and allow denominational fragmentation and bickering to weaken it. Unfortunately, because of doctrinal "refining" on the non-essentials, a desire to be comfortable in church, and a growing apathy towards making a difference in the world, the American church has, in many respects, become castrated. It spends too much time splitting doctrinal hairs, separating, and then hiding in churches designed to keep its members comfortable and safe in the "refined" truth. On the outside, the world is going to hell while on the inside, we are playing the "religion game."

I am not saying that doctrinal purity is unimportant. It most certainly is. Without a proper understanding of who God is, what He has done, and what we must do in relation to Him, we would all be surely damned. Our salvation depends on who Jesus is and what He did. We need to know the truth. Therefore, as Christians, we should separate ourselves from the false doctrines that make powerless the saving truth of Christ's sacrifice. But the motive to divide should be reserved for our dealings with heretics. We should separate ourselves from false teachers and false doctrines, not from each other. In the non-essentials we need to remain united as much as possible.

I recognize that denominations, to a small degree, are necessary and will never go away. But comfort and "doctrinal purity" have robbed the Church of much of its power. Where the early Christians had to rely on God for their every need, today creature-comforts and drive-through churches have made us complacent and sluggish to the call of God to make disciples of every nation. We are comfortable in America where we have the best of everything and only need to put on credit what our whims demand and thereby avoid the dependence upon God for our needs; this makes faith in God less of a pressing need. We have become distracted and the church is showing signs of spiritual apathy. We have our VCRs, air-conditioning, remote controls, and fast food. We have churches with central air, great sound systems, well educated preachers, plush pews, and fine-tuned choirs, pianos, and organs. We are blessed with committees, plans, and money. In fact, we have so many churches we are guaranteed we can find one to suit any whim or preference. And all too often, the messages are pleasant and don't make our hearts ache for the lost or our Lord.

Doctrinal purity is a plague when it unnecessarily divides that which has been made Holy by Christ's blood. It may already be that doctrinal idols have invaded our churches after all, we too often sacrifice people on the altar of doctrinal purity. Then we politely and lovingly expel fellow

believers from our churches and bless them on the way out because they baptize by immersion or don't, or speak in tongues or don't, or believe in pretribulation rapture or don't, etc. Hurt and confused, some wander the spiritual landscape looking for a safe haven only to fall prey to false teachers or the seductive call of the world. Yes, we need doctrinal purity and we may even need to die for it one day, but doctrinal purity is not our God. Confessions and creeds are not our bread and wine. We should not sacrifice the blessing of unity for the minutia of purity. But some will say, "These doctrines **are** important and our church has the truth." Perhaps. But Jesus said the world would know we were His disciples by the love we have for one another, not the purity of our doctrine.

And what does the world see in all this? Does it see a visible church full of sacrifice, love, forgiveness, and people who consider others more important than themselves? No. It sees polished televangelists with perfect hair and smiles pulling the wool over the eyes of countless thousands of gullible people as they ask for money. It sees the hypocrisy of moral uprightness proclaimed proudly in word and contradicted in deed. It sees a denominationally fragmented church that can't even clean its own house, let alone agree enough to present a united front.

And what's more, the church has all but stopped its public proclamation against sin. It has begun to believe the lie that the church is weak and powerless to stop the momentum of social decay. It flounders when faced with immorality and balks at standing strong against sin!

## **What are the consequences of this?**

We see the effects in the rise of the cults like Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses who have millions of followers going door to door faithfully and consistently spreading their damning doctrines. Where are the Christians who oppose them? Where is the church? Is it supporting the efforts to stop this spread of lies? Is it uniting behind a common cause? No! It leaves the work to the weary and few who have a burden and who spend their efforts in a constant and mostly frustrating battle for the truth. The church pats them on the back and says, "God bless. Go in peace" but too often leaves the depleted warriors to fend for themselves.

We see consequences in the educational system with the rise of humanistic philosophy. Purely secular agendas are being taught on moral, political, and social levels in schools. Homosexuality, relativism, values clarification, and "ethical cleansing" are wiping the minds of the youth clear of Christian values. The children sit and listen while we go to church and talk about hymns, the organ, and the color of carpet. May God have mercy on us.

Society needs not concern itself with the musings of our people because its conscience cannot be pricked when so many of the bickering failures of Christianity speak louder than our words. Society is little affected by the gospel. The secularist does not need to be wary of the church that sits idly by and pampers its members and does not encourage them to take risks for the gospel. The secular world is free to mock the truth, chip away at our freedoms, and claim more and more converts for itself. It is safe from Christianity. But is Christianity safe from it?

## What Should We Do?

First of all, we need to confess our sins to our Lord and Savior and repent from them. We need to recognize our sinfulness of apathy, pride, gossip, and any idols of unnecessary 'doctrinal purity' that are so divisive. We need to forsake them, and drop to our knees, pray, confess, forgive, and go on. We need to recognize that we must be united to be strong and that we must love each other, greatly! And we must do this without compromising the gospel of truth ([1 Cor. 15:1-4](#); [Rom. 5:1](#)) and keeping our eyes on Jesus.

Second, we need to recognize the Great Commission as something more than a recommendation from Jesus. It is not an option. It is a command. Jesus said, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations . . .*" ([Matt. 28:19](#)). Are we being fishers of men or keepers of the aquarium? Are we being obedient or comfortable?

Third, we need to work together as much as possible to bring the gospel of truth to the lost. This will require sacrifice, prayer, humility, and risk. We cannot easily undo the great fragmentation of the body of Christ, but we can cross the denominational boundaries by focusing on that which unites us in the faith: Jesus is God in flesh ([Trinity](#)), salvation by grace through faith alone, the atonement, and forgiveness of sins in Jesus' shed blood. We need to look at the essentials and let the gospel of God change the hearts of people.

Fourth, we need to use whatever gifts the Lord has given us for the increase of His kingdom. Whether it is praying for the lost and for the workers in Christ, or helping support financially, teaching the body, doing works of administration, or whatever gift you have, use it for the glory of God. Give it to Him and ask Him to bless you by letting you use your gifts and then do it! And don't be afraid to fail.

## Conclusion

God is a God of forgiveness, love, and power. He has forgiven us of our sins and continues to do that by His awesome Grace ([1 John 1:9](#)). He loves us deeply and wants to commune with us and enjoy our presence through Jesus ([1 Cor. 1:9](#)). And, His gospel is powerful, able to save the lost from their sins ([Rom. 1:16](#)) and change this world. Pray for the work of God in your life and in the lives of others. Make a strong effort to support and spread the gospel. Intercede prayerfully to the Father on behalf of the church that preaches to the saved as well as the lost. Humble yourselves before God and men. Don't remain comfortable. Take a risk. Trust God and go!

About The Author

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