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Corona Cannot Prevail Against Her



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These may be unprecedented days in our lifetimes, but they are not unprecedented in the life of the church.

The church has endured such suffering and uncertainty before, and much worse, just by way of pandemic, not to mention persecution. In days like these, and in every season of our lives, we do well to remember the certainty and centrality of the church in the care of the living Christ.

To be clear, this is not a word about being the church *in the coronavirus age*. This is the church's age, not a virus's. The church will not pass. Coronavirus will.

And this is our Father's world. This is Christ's world. And as his Bride, this is indeed, in real measure, *the church's world*. Not the news media's. Not the epidemiologists' and statisticians'. Not the economists' and politicians'. The church will endure these days, and outlive this trial, and be stronger because of the footnote that is our present distress.

Main Story in the World Today

The main news happening in the world right now does not concern data about the spread, or the economy and the stimulus and the free money coming your way. The main news is the church. Jesus Christ, with all authority in heaven and on earth, is building his church ([Matthew 16:18](#)). Not even the gates of hell hold back the final advance of his church, much less temporary panic and financial freefall.

Not that Christians won't get sick, and some die. Some already have. And not that particular local churches won't go belly up. Some will. Some are. Some local churches have closed doors that will not open again. But the global Church stands unassailable, under no genuine threat, and will be stronger than before.

The story of the global Church, as seemingly isolated Christians text and call and video chat and learn anew how to care for each other, and for our towns and cities, is the main thing happening in the world right now. Neither CNN nor Fox is following the story. But this is the first and greatest headline. In Christ, we are living the story that will be told, more than any other, for ages to come.

We are not only the audience and eyewitnesses, but also the participants. As we gather in living rooms to worship as families. As pastors and elders assemble over Zoom to take counsel and care for their scattered and physically dispersed flocks. As we open our Bibles with a hunger and thirst for substance and guidance like some haven't felt in a long time, or ever. As we bow our knees in our room, and bow our heads with the family. Our *churches* are being sifted, and some are being found wanting. But *the Church* is alive and well. Not just holding on, but growing in strength. Christ's Bride will be better for having endured these days.

Through the Church

Not only is the future of the global church certain in the sovereign power of God through Christ, but his sovereign purposes in the world *center*, we might say, on his church. The picture the apostle Paul paints in Ephesians 3 of the centrality of the church in God's work in the world is nothing less than stunning: *Christ channels his global glory uniquely through his church.*

God made him a minister of the gospel, Paul writes, "to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" and

to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that *through the church* the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ([Ephesians 3:8-10](#))

Did you catch that? God is making known his manifold wisdom, not just in the physical realm but also in the spiritual one — for all the universe to see. And how? *Through the church.* Wherever else human heads may be turning, the angelic and demonic hosts are watching the church. God is channeling his work in the world *through his church.*

And not just one channel among others. The church is the only channel mentioned here. Epidemiologists and economists have their part to play, but the main thing happening in the world right now, and at all times, is what Jesus Christ is doing in and through his church.

In the Church

As God's people, united in Christ, we are part of that collective lens through which God is focusing his work in the world *and for the very glory of his Son*. Paul doesn't just say it once. He comes back to it a few sentences later. He was not speaking imprecisely in verse 10. Don't try to explain it away. The point is just as plain, and striking, in one of the great blessings in all the Bible:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory *in the church* and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. ([Ephesians 3:20–21](#))

How is God — the one able to do *far more* than we can even dream — being glorified in our world today, and at this time? Stand in awe: *in the church and in Christ Jesus*. Through Christ, seated in heaven, and through his church, displaying him around the world in every major city and advancing on every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. The Husband, who is the very image of God ([Colossians 1:15](#); [2 Corinthians 4:4](#)) and the focal point of God's glory in history, gave us, his Bride, his own Spirit that we might collectively image him, and our Father, in this age.

This Is the Church Age

We are not the church *in the coronavirus age*. We may be enduring a global pandemic, but we do so as the church *in the church age*. We are not now living in a pandemic age, or a digital age, or a pragmatic age, or a whatever-new-thing-you-want-to-emphasize age. This is the church age.

And *church* is not simply another reality among others to swap in and out as an adjective for our times. Church is *the* adjective. This is what this age is. And in Christ, let's not let the mainstream media, or social streams, or our own forgetfulness lead us to think any differently.

As days disrupted turn to weeks, and weeks to months, let's be the church to each other, as promised, in these precious days. And let's represent Christ, as the Church, to our neighbors. There's no Plan B. Christ doesn't need a Plan B. Quarantined hours invested in what it means to be the church in such unusual days won't be in vain. Jesus will build his Church, however many congregations do not survive. The Church, every faithful member, will endure — and forever enjoy a new world without virus, disease, or any other ailment. The gates of hell will not prevail against Christ's advancing church.

Let's Be the Church

As odd as it may seem, days like these, when we cannot gather in large numbers, are precisely why we don't simply *attend* but *make promises* to each other in the local church.

This is why we have membership covenants. Not for the easy and comfortable seasons. Anyone can do convenient. But for the hardest and most challenging days. For the threatening times. For the uncertain and (seemingly) unprecedented seasons. For the times when shallow people curve inward, concerned only for their own safety and protection and remote productivity, instead of reaching out diligently (and digitally)

across the social distance to check in on others, get updates and pray, and, if needed, help with medications and supplies and groceries.

In marriage, we pledge ourselves for better *and for worse*, for richer *and for poorer*, in good times *and in bad* because those are the times when the objectivity of the covenant spreads its wings, gives life to our lives, and provides clear direction in our disoriented, confused, and subjective uncertainty. Objective covenants are for seasons of subjective confusion. This is one of those times.

The wind of these days may carry away much chaff. The tides are going out on the shallows. But Christ's church will endure. And shine out all the clearer. Hard times are good days to be Christian.