Which is the purpose of the church? Why do some people reject it? Do we speak for a building or a movement or even denomination, when speaking about the church? Certainly no, according to the Bible. But lets see first some verses, speaking about a situation that apostle Paul was attending to and as I personally see it, it had to do with the church.

 “It is actually reported that there is a sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father’s wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

 Your glorifying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

 Here Paul was dealing with a situation that had happened in the church of Corinthians. We are talking about a church here, because Paul already called them with this name in chapter 1 verse 2.

 “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:” 1 Corinthians 1:2

 So, we see that those who formed the church were “sanctified” and “called to be saints”. This is what makes the church a true church, or with other words, these people make the church. It is not a building, or just any group that has to do with a religion, but these exact persons. Jesus said in Matthew 18:19,20

 “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

 Jesus is in the midst of those who are gathered in His name. Those who truly are. Here we are not speaking about people just proclaiming His name, or being gathered apparently in His name, but having another purpose in the same time, because it could happen, but we are rather speaking about true worshipers.

 So, we see that those who formed the church were “sanctified” and “called to be saints”. This is what makes the church a true church, or with other words, these people make the church.

 From all of these verses, we come to the conclusion that the believers make the church, not anything else. It is not simply the ecclesiastical order, pastors, deacons and others that form it, but the new born persons that proclaim His name. Amongst them will be pastors, deacons and others, but what is important is that they are sanctified as verse 2 of 1 Corinthians says.

 Going back to 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, we see that there was a person in that church that was practicing a sexual immorality, having his father’s wife. Seeing the situation, Paul decided to deliver such one to Satan.

 “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” 1 Corinthians 5:4

 Many times we see this passage and we think: “What is exactly Paul saying now? Is he having to do anything with Satan, as he mentions his name?” Of course not. But from what some other verses from the Bible say about Satan, we can conclude that such a situation is having to do with trials. Paul was delivering that person to trials and most probably with this statement he was referring to sending him away from the church.

 Why do we conclude that delivering that person to Satan refers to sending him away from the congregation? Because in the next verses of the same chapter, we see Paul saying that a little leaven leavens the whole lump and about purging out the old leaven, the one that could contaminate the rest.

 “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened” 1 Corinthians 5:7

 Of course here we are not speaking about a common person going to a church, but for a member of a church that supposedly was a believer and was behaving in that way. In the mean time we need to be very careful if we as leaders of some congregation send someone away. It needs to be with a specific purpose and we need to know what does it mean exactly. Maybe it might be just for a time or if that person was holding a particular position in the church and he lived and behaved not as a believer, then he probably just needs to be removed from his current position of the church, but still to be allowed to visit the church as any other common person. I think also that further on Paul was also telling them to forgive that person and take him back, but this situation is not the one that we are focusing on. We are focusing on the fact that Paul was comparing the state of sending someone away from the congregation with delivering him to Satan. Why? **Because out of the church a person is unprotected. That’s where the enemy’s ground is**. It is there where a person is more exposed to temptations and difficulties. I am not speaking of the church as a physical place, but I’m speaking of the communion with the other believers. The figure of Satan here represents trials and tribulations. He is the one that many times brings them to our life. If a person experiences difficulties or temptations, it will be for two reasons. Or because that person brought them to his own life or because the devil brought them. The second one happens often in the life of believers, even though they are not excluded from the first one too. The Bible also says that no one can say that God has tempted him, but if anyone is tempted, it is because of his own desires. Jesus said to Peter in Luke 22:31

 “And the Lord said, “Simon. Simon! Indeed , Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” “

 It means that Satan is the one that wants to tempt us and to bring difficulties and temptations to our life and the Lord knows that and delivers us, if we show faith in those moments. If we give up, then we are the ones that are getting enticed by the evil and we are following its desires. These moments are actually with the purpose to strengthen our faith. That’s why God allows them. Something that was meant to be bad, brought by Satan in our life, turns out to be good and helpful, when God works in our life and we love Him. Praise be to Him for that! We see here how Jesus recommends Peter to strengthen his brethren after the trial that he was about to go through. Why? Because he was going to come out strong from that trial.

 “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” 1 Peter 1:7

 In this verse we see how Peter himself speaks about trials that test our faith and in this way make it stronger. If a person experiences difficulties or temptations, it will be for two reasons. Or because that person brought them to his own life by being enticed by the sin or because the devil brought them. The second one happens often in the life of believers, even though they are not excluded from the first one too. The Bible says that no one can say that God has tempted him, but if anyone is tempted, is because of his own desires.

 So what Paul decided to do in this situation, was to deliver that person to Satan, in a way that he can go trough trials and difficulties, if that might help him, so that he can be saved somehow in the day of the Lord Jesus. How was going Paul to “deliver” him to Satan? By excluding him from the church, by sending him away from there as 1 Corinthians 5:2 says: “And you are puffed up, ad have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from you.”

 And in the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 5 we see the topic of taking someone away from the church discussed. We need to know that this is done with the members that have gone over the limit and influence the others in a not good way. In this way they can not be part of the brotherhood of the church (at least for some time), as the name of our Lord Jesus is holy and it can not be spotted and dishonored. We are definitely not speaking here for someone that has done some mistakes or is having certain issues, but we are speaking about sin involving immorality or any sin that goes over the limit. Why was that person going to be in the hands of the Satan and going through more trials than usual? Because when someone is in the church, he is protected. He is protected by the other believers, but when he is not, he is more exposed to the world. I am not saying this for when someone is physically out of the church, but for when he has stopped having a communion with the church.

 I personally don’t think that it always works if someone is left completely unprotected in the hands of Satan, but in that exact situation the church couldn’t help any longer that person and they had to take the evil out of them, to prevent the negative influence over the other persons. And we need to remember that the questioned person wasn’t a simple sinner, but someone that was calling himself a brother in faith and a member from the church. They had to do so, to protect themselves and with the hope that having some hard times will help that person. In some cases we need to have these kind of actions toward the others, but always with God’s righteous judgement and wisdom. Later on when Paul writes 2 Corinthians we see that he recommends them to forgive a person and I think that is having to do with the same one mentioned in 1 Corinthians. But the point of all of this, is that out of the church, that person was unprotected. We can say that in the church is where God’s field is and out of the church – Satan’s space. Does that mean that God is only in the church? No. He is omnipresent and everywhere, but looking at it from another view, then yes, He is manifested mostly in the church.

 First we need to know, what a church is. It is not a building, since God said that He will not dwell in a temple or house built by man’s hands. It is not either a religious group of persons or denomination, but in the scripture we clearly see that it is a group of persons that gathers together in the name of Jesus. He is there amongst them. I’m speaking about a real group formed by **real** believers, those who pray sincerely to Him and are born from Him. Jesus said in Matthew 18:19,20 “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

 It says in this verse that He is amongst those that are gathered together in His name. It will be ridiculous in today’s days to say that such a group formed by two or three persons can be called a church, looking at some mega churches with great buildings and thousands of members, but according to the word of God, Jesus can be also amongst those ones who are few, but are looking for His glory and name in a sincere way. I don’t have anything against the big churches and big buildings. If they really glorify God, then obviously is something very good and His name will be known amongst more people, because this is also the purpose, that more people can know Him and accept Him, but we people are used to measure things by how great they are in our eyes. We are always looking for what is big and great and for what is more visible.

 Anyway, here we are not speaking about any group of persons that goes rogue and creates its own religious group or denomination, but we are speaking about those ones who are gathered **in the name of Jesus**. And this is not just by proclaiming that name, but really believing in it. We are speaking about those ones who are sealed, who have experienced the new birth, those ones who belong to him. In the same way, going or just visiting a Christian place or church, doesn’t make us Christians. We need to have a personal experience with Him. Then we will form a part of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then we will become a living stone, that takes part of that great spiritual building with Him that is the cornerstone that sustains everything. This is His church.

 The church that He has established, or in other words, those persons that proclaim His name in Spirit and truth, is the place where a believer is protected spiritually. It is a secure place and I am not saying that the enemy can not come and harm, but it is a bit harder for Him to do it. Again I am not saying to be only physically in a church or amongst believers, but to be there with the right attitude and purpose. And this is to receive the gift of being born again and to repent and also to have a communion with the other brothers in faith. It can happen as well that even if the person is a believer and is born again, he still doesn’t have a communion and relation with the rest of the believers. That also in a way doesn’t give that person the full benefit of being in a church and walking with God. Surely God can be found anywhere are we are invited to seek Him and proclaim Him anywhere, but God is found and is manifested in the church, amongst the believers. There is where in a way is much easier for us to find Him and have a communion with Him.

We can see a good example in Matthew 21:33-42

 “Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more that the first and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

 “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?”

 They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.”

 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

 ‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

 We can see from this parable how a certain landowner planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. We know that this landowner represents God, because He is the one that owns everything – the land, the vineyard, that in this case might represent the church (that is composed by a group of persons, and is supposed to bring fruit to His kingdom) and us the believers as well, who were standing without doing anything profitable, but in His grace He has entrusted us to administer, if we can say so, part of His kingdom.

 Obviously this parable was said to the Jews, but as we see how the parable continues, they didn’t get the purpose and in consequence didn’t bring fruit to Him. As we see in some of the verses coming after the parable, it is said that as they (the Jews) didn’t bring fruit, He will lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons. And it refers to us by speaking about the other vinedressers. We have to know that God always works according to the same model and way. If He worked and required those things from the Jews in that time, He will work in the same way today with us. He will require fruits from us. And this vineyard represents the church. In that time represented the group of persons that were supposed to bring fruit and these were the Jews and in this time it represents us the believers as the group of persons that forms the church, that is supposed to bring fruits for His glory. This is required from each church and community in our days.

 We see that this landowner built a tower and set a hedge around it. All of this represents a protection. The tower is the one that is used to oversee if there is any danger approaching. This is the work of the church. It is a protection for the believer. Not because he is only physically inside it, but because there are Christians in it that care for the others and have communion with each other and in this way they offer protection and security, always through the power of God obviously.

 We as believers can not be against the institution called church. It is true and exists because God has established and created it with a purpose. There are obviously good churches and maybe others not so good, but we need to belong to one, because this is the right way. It might be church of 5 members or a church of 10 000 members, but we need to belong to one. Because we need the communion with other brothers in faith and sometimes we will need their help as well.

 The purpose is also that we edify each other. This is the purpose of the body of Christ. We have to be careful as well if the church doesn’t preach a sound doctrine and we see it going astray from what is right. I am not speaking about some mistakes and defects we find in some of the members or the pastor (because no one is completely perfect), but about seriously going astray.

 The church is supposed to be as that city on the hill that shines with its light in the midst of this complete darkness that this world offers. Darkness in which people can not see God and His truth. That’s why the church is there, so that they can see something. Inside the church is where God is supposed to move and show completely His truth trough His power and the life of the believes. This is His field and house. And outside is the field of the devil, because he is the prince of this world. I am not limiting the power of God, saying this, obviously He is everywhere and His power is limitless, but it is just that **He manifests His power through the life of the believers as well and this is a necessary component so that we can grow individually and as a body, by edifying each other**. It is meant to be in this way, so that we can be together. The Bible speaks about the lost sheep that left the rest of the flock. A believer alone will not be complete and will find a lots of struggles and will risk a lot, if not everything. Someone leaving a church, (for different circumstances might be there, because he changes a place or some other reason), must definitely find another group to join. Even if someone is upset for some reason with that place or church, he definitely can not be upset with all the churches and he must find another one. If someone somehow is upset with all the places, then definitely he has a problem and needs to examine himself. The fact that we find mistakes in some of the groups, doesn’t surely mean that all of them are to blame and I repeat that there might be not a completely perfect place, where all the members and pastors will be perfect. When we see radical mistakes in doctrine or something else is one thing and when we see certain faults or mistakes is another. We need to discern well and also to examine our own motives and own life. And we need to remember that not all of the members of a certain church are going to be true members. We can see that in the parable of the wheat and the tares, where the tears were sown amongst the wheat. (Matthew 13:24-30).

 Many times, if not all, we will see a church amongst the church, meaning that the group of the real believers will be just a part of all the members of that church. Just for the fact that someone visits a church, doesn’t make him a believer, but what makes him to be one is the touch of God in his life, the new birth. Same as persons that have gone to study theology in a Bible seminar and after they get even a degree with which they can become pastors and open their own churches. That definitely doesn’t make them pastors in God’s eyes. People might be respected by people, but God might have a different opinion for them. What is really important, is to be respected by God. And with this we are not taking away the study in a Bible seminary and having a pastor’s degree. It is all good, but what we are speaking about here is to belong to the church. And this can happen if someone belongs to Him, if someone is born again.

 Just for the fact that someone visits a church, doesn’t make him a believer, but what makes him to be one is the touch of God in his life, the new birth.

 What I say by all of this, is that every person being a true believer needs a communion with the rest of the members from the church. I personally need to hear a sermon by the pastor or an advise or admonishment from some of my brothers, same as they need me. We all need each other, so that we can live perfectly knit together in love as one body. A hand is nothing without the legs that take it to the place where is going to be used. The same with the legs. They are nothing without the hand.

 But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:15,16

 We all need each other, so that we can live perfectly knit together in love as one body. A hand is nothing without the legs that take it to the place where is going to be used. The same with the legs. They are nothing without the hand.

 All of us who believe are like living stones that join together to build this spiritual church and building for His glory.

 “Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

 “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.”” 1 Peter 2:4-6

 We see that we are those stones and He is the chief cornerstone, the one that withholds everything. Our life must be based on Him. The church must be founded on Him.

Let’s see another passage in Matthew 16:13-18

 “When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

 Here in this passage we see one of the greatest confessions that can be made by a man, and this is to confess that Jesus is Christ. It is not just a matter of words, but to confess it with faith. In our days the truth is that almost everyone knows that already and this might be not such an impressive statement, but if we go back in that time to what that really meant, we see that it was a great statement and we hope that we can understand it today and have the same revelation as the one Peter had in that time. He confessed that Jesus is Christ, the Son of the living God. The meaning of Christ is Messiah or the Anointed one, the one that the Jews were waiting for a long time. The one that was going to deliver them and the Salvation that God has promised to them. It was their most important and precious hope. It wasn’t easy just to declare that someone is the Messiah at that time. Proclaiming that in the wrong way or time could have be considered as a blasphemy and punished with death. With saying that, Peter with other words said that Jesus was the answer they were waiting for, that He was everything in his life. That He was the most important. Is Jesus the most precious hope for us? We need to give ourselves an answer for that. This is the place that God should take in our life. The very first place. In today’s days the statement that Peter made, would mean this. It is like someone **believing** says that Jesus is the answer of his life, that He is all of his hope and the most important ever. This can be said and really believed only by a revelation received from the Father, same one that Peter had. Many people proclaim it, but don’t believe it. Because it is God Himself that needs to explain and reveal that to our heart and soul. We need to look for that kind of conviction. Most of the Jews today anyway, don’t believe in Jesus as the Messiah, exactly because they didn’t receive this revelation from the Father.

 Jesus said that on this kind of revelation He was going to build His church. He said that to Peter, because he has had the revelation that Jesus is the Son of the living God, that He is Christ. I think that when Jesus said that on this rock He was going to build His church, He was referring more to the revelation than to the person. The church, as well as our life must be founded on the revelation that Jesus is Christ, that He is the Messiah, the most important in our life. He said as well that the gates of Hades were not going to prevail against it. This is only if we are founded on Jesus. By this we see that a church must be founded on Christ.

 The church according to the Bible is Christ's bride. He washed her with His blood. And at His return, He aspects her to be ready and without any spot or wrinkle. And He is busy perfecting His work in her, so that she (the church) might be ready for His coming.

 “Husbands, **love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her**, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.“ Ephesians 5:25-27

 As we see here, there is a comparison between the love that a husband is having for his wife and the love that Christ is having for the church, or better said, the husbands are exhorted to show the same kind of love for their wives as Christ is having for the church, because this is the perfect love. The one that He shows to the church and the care He takes for her. This kind of care and love is shown to us through Christ. I mean for those who have believed and have been born again.