

270 Every 24 Hours

**Story of college gal being set apart and demeaned for having her values determined by her loyalty to the King of Kings,
-- what are we to do in this world?**

"For purposes of research the report defines "martyrs" as "believers in Christ who have lost their lives, prematurely, in situations of witness, as a result of human hostility." The report estimates that there were, on average, 270 new Christian martyrs every 24 hours over the past decade, such that "the number of martyrs [in the period 2000–2010] was

approximately 1 million.” 23”

1

from "Against the Flow: The inspiration of Daniel in an age of relativism" by John C Lennox

<http://amzn.to/2c3q1Ob>

TR: What are we to do when the cultural tides and winds are more against us than we've ever experienced? And outright persecution seems closer than ever?

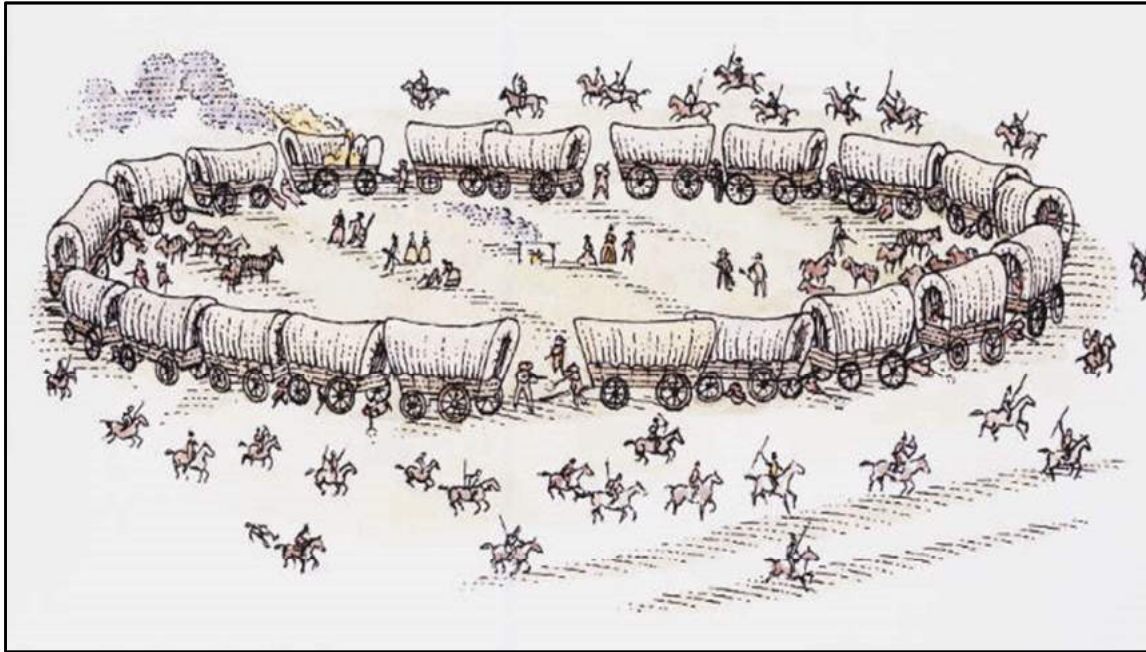


2

We must gain and sustain the focus of God's will for us.

- One of the great challenges of life is to figure out where we are going.**
- But even harder than that is to stay the course and keep on going in the right direction.**
- Every local church and every believer has been given a commission by God.**
- But the tides and winds of the world, Satan, and our flesh all buffet us and make us want to abandon the mission.**

TR: In our world, that has become more cynical and more slanted toward the harassment of believers, we are tempted to . . .

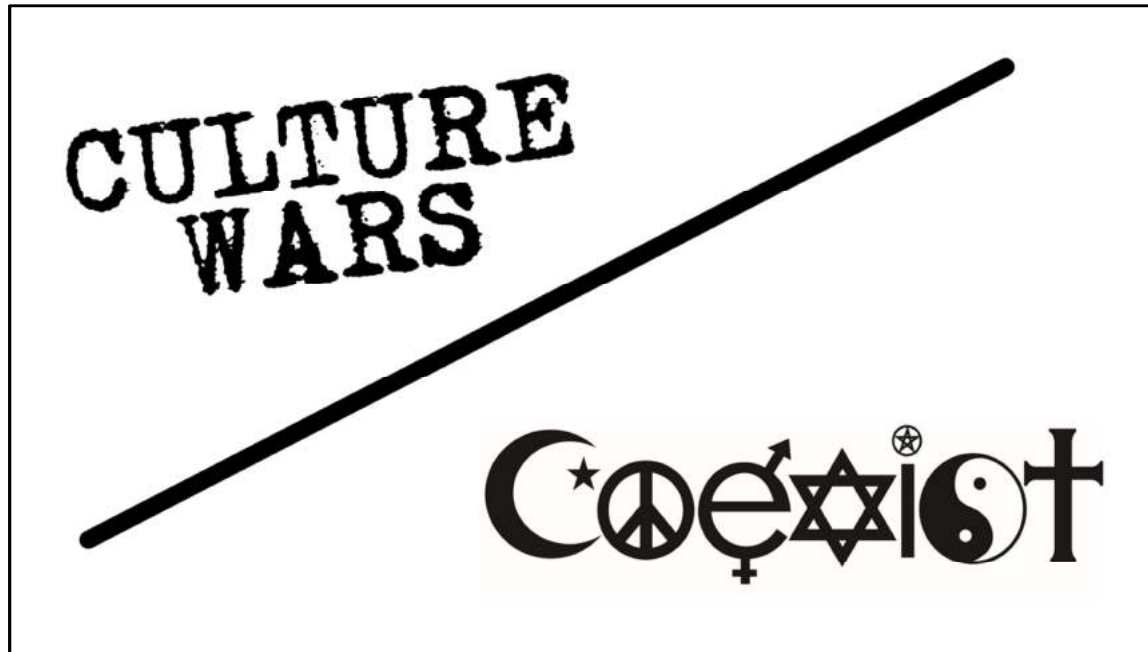


. . .circle the wagons.

-- So many churches have adopted an adversarial posture against the world, and it is understandable as our world changes and become more adversarial against believers.

-- But will that strategy allow us to fulfill our mission and stay on course?

TR: Are the only two choices really just . . .



4

... to have culture wars OR to “coexist” by imagining that it doesn’t really matter what we believe, as long as we are sincere?

-- Violating the laws of logic and saying that two contradictory things can both be true. The Law of Non-Contradiction gets thrown out.

-- OR do we become “contrary” by becoming militant in our defense of truth?

TR: Our world around us, even here in the Midwest, has gone through some of the most tectonic shifts in culture.

some 35% of those born 1981-96 (Millennials)

-- [http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-5)

tank/2015/05/13/a-closer-look-at-americas-rapidly-growing-religious-nones/

-- The issue boils down to how Christ-followers are to relate to the broader culture they find themselves in.

TR: But instead of fighting culture wars OR blending in and coexisting, we are called to something far more challenging . . .

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, **making the best use of the time.** Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

ESV

6

. . . to make the best use of the time God has given us.

-- READ SLIDE

TR: That's how the ESV translates it, the NASB hits home to me even more directly . . .

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, **making the most of the opportunity.** Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned *as it were* with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.

NASB

7

READ SLIDE

TR: Instead of being a fighting, angry believer OR a stealth mode, “it works for me but you do what you want” kind of believer . . .



. . . we must regain our bearings on the map of life and to set our course into the wind and tides of culture,

-- and remember that God's commission, Jesus' calling on our lives, is to be salt and light.

-- Every three years, our fellowship's leaders, listening to God and to the congregation, seek to regain our bearings and relaunch a fresh vision.

This is something that all of us need to do as well.

TR: As we look ahead for the next three years, we want to . . .



9

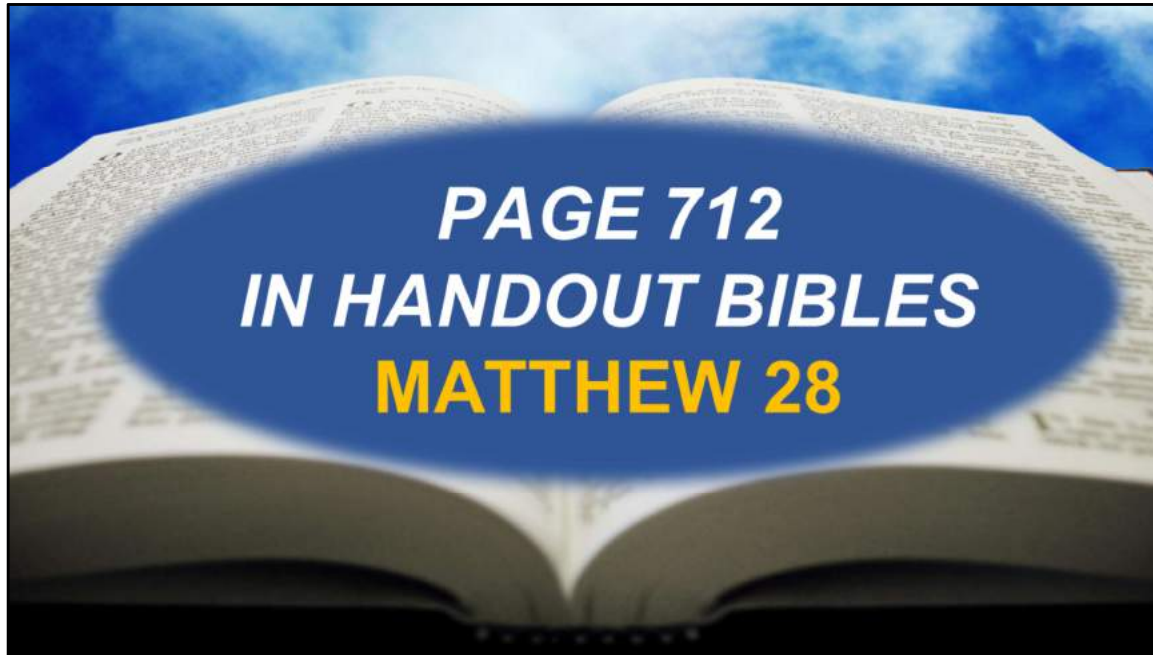
. . . turn up the light and get out the salt.

TR: Even as Jesus said we are the salt of the EARTH and the light of the WORLD . . .



. . . we admit we need to be intentional about being IN our communities.
-- Our mission remains the same, to win and grow disciples.
-- Of all the renewed visions we have had during the 33 years I've been here, none is more organic. That is, focused on all of us and not just those who are leaders or staff.

TR: Will you look with me at God's Word these next few weeks and ask the Lord if this vision isn't already resonating in your hearts and minds?



Let's grab our Bibles . . .

-- Handout Bibles

TR: When we use a compass to site a reference point, you want it to be memorable and simple but also specific.



Our challenge these next years will be to . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Over time the shorthand for this vision will be . . .



... simply IN ... IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

TR: For those who need more specifics, as most of us do ...

*Seeking to win and grow disciples who show allegiance to Jesus Christ,
the Christ-followers of Trinity Fellowship will*

MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY



OUR COMMUNITIES

*We will seek the welfare of the communities
we are part of individually. We will do this intentionally,
even at great cost, as we courageously advance the Gospel.
Together, striving side by side with one heart and mind,
our small groups will lead us with the encouragement and equipping
needed to boldly go into our communities.*

14

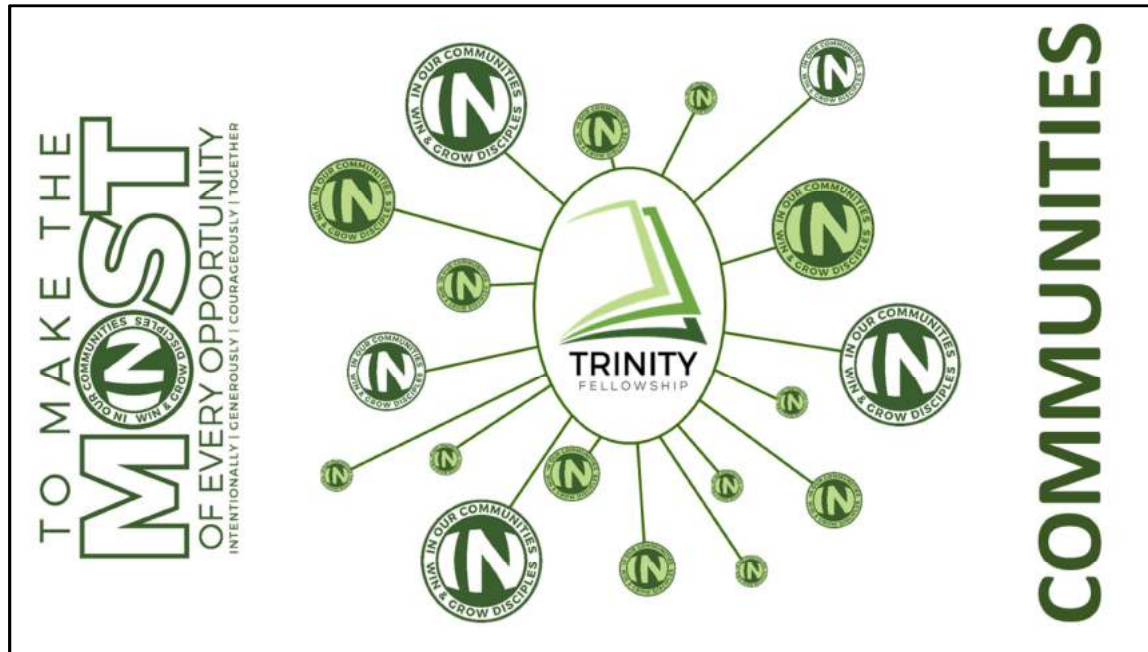
READ SLIDE

TR: Why do we say, “In our communities” (plural)?



We are tempted to speak of “the community” but there isn’t one unified community “out there.”

TR: So, the vision is to be IN OUR . . .



COMMUNITIES.

-- Because . . . *God has already positioned us through our families, work, hobbies and interests “IN” various communities. We may speak of the Big Rapids or the Howard City community, yet in reality there are many communities within these geographic areas. We believe God wants us to be involved in our various spheres of influence, doing good so that we can have the opportunity to share the great news of salvation through Jesus Christ.*

-- There isn't one “community” (singular) out there . . . but many.

-- Baseball and other sports, School of Optometry and other spheres of influence for professors and students, Factories, Governmental bodies, neighborhoods, Arts, schools, farmers, unions, musicians, medical services like the hospital . . . are just to name a few.

-- Our vision is to help the salt and light get out IN OUR COMMUNITIES and fulfill Colossians 4:5 (making the most of the opportunity)

TR: But the only way to do that is the only way to regain our bearings and head true north into the howling winds of culture, and that is to do it . . .



INTENTIONALLY.

-- Turning to our sermon notes page . . .

TR: We can and must be intentional about MAKING THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES because we . . .

WE HAVE BEEN COMMISSIONED

18



. . .have been commissioned by God.

TR: Most of us are familiar with Jesus' great commission given after He was raised from the dead and before He ascended into heaven . . .

Matthew 28:18-20 (page 712)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

ESV

19

READ SLIDE

-- Very literally this reads: **GOING, BAPTIZING, TEACHING . . . MAKE DISCIPLES.**

-- **GOING** into the communities

TR: Even from Jesus' earliest public ministry, this commission's pulse-beat throbs . . .

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

ESV

20

Look at Matthew 4 . . . READ SLIDE

-- Fishers of men

TR: Two other brothers understood the challenge of following Jesus . . .

And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

ESV

21

Verse 21 . . . READ SLIDE

-- This commission must take priority over our jobs and even families.

TR: Jesus would teach in Matthew 9 about the urgency behind this commission . . .

Matthew 9:35-36 (page 694)

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, **he had compassion for them**, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

ESV

22

Verse 35 . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 37 . . .

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

ESV

READ SLIDE

- The disciples left their nets, were challenged to pray earnestly, and then they were told to GO . . . make disciples.
- It is easy for us to take the same posture that we do at a football game . . . as spectators want to cheer on the players.
- But it was not just the first disciples, the first followers of Jesus, who were commissioned. We too have been commissioned.

TR: And even beyond that, we have been . . .

23

WE HAVE BEEN COMMISSIONED

WE HAVE BEEN POSITIONED



24

. . . positioned.

-- Some strategic visions may leave us waiting for THE church or THE pastors to do something impressive, but we have ALL been positioned already in our communities in order to fulfill the commission given by our Lord.

TR: We have been positioned . . .

WE HAVE BEEN COMMISSIONED

WE HAVE BEEN POSITIONED
- INTENTIONALLY



25

. . . intentionally.

-- In the mystery of God's sovereignty and our choices, we see that God has us where we are for a reason.

-- Even if we are where we are because of bad choices in the past.

TR: A powerful example of this is found in Jeremiah's writings.

These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

ESV

Jeremiah, who witnessed the waves of deportations of the people of Judah, would write from Israel to the exiles.

-- Hopefully you read Jeremiah 29 in preparing for today.

-- READ SLIDE

TR: Jump down to verse 5 . . .

Jeremiah 29:5-7 (page 555)

Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But **seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you** into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

ESV

27

At the core of his letter were these instructions . . . READ SLIDE

-- Yes, they were exiled because of their repeated sins.

-- But that didn't mean that they were to squander the opportunity.

They were to seek the welfare of where God had sent them.

-- And so must we. Whether we are here for a year, four, forty, or a lifetime, we must be the salt and light that improves the welfare of West Central Michigan.

TR: We have been positioned intentionally and also . . . 27

WE HAVE BEEN COMMISSIONED

WE HAVE BEEN POSITIONED
- INTENTIONALLY
- NATURALLY



28

. . . naturally.

-- That is, we already fit in our communities.

-- We already have spheres of influence.

TR: Like Levi did after Jesus called him.

Luke 5:27-29 (page 735)

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.

ESV

29

Look at Luke 5:27 . . . READ SLIDE

- Levi, who we also know as "Matthew", was called by Jesus.**
- Like the sets of fishing brothers, he left everything and followed Jesus.**
- But when it came time to celebrate and make much of what had happened, the party included those who the tax collector would have known . . . other tax collectors.**

TR: Verse 30 continues . . .

And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

ESV

30

READ SLIDE

- Clearly, Jesus was calling the sinners through the party that Levi hosted to his friends.
- Jesus was making a "house call" or a "community call"
- We too have natural contacts within our communities, people who would not see our invitation to join us at a party to be a media blitz.

TR: We have been position intentionally, naturally, and . . .

WE HAVE BEEN COMMISSIONED

31

WE HAVE BEEN POSITIONED

- INTENTIONALLY
- NATURALLY
- **PROVIDENTIALLY**



. . . providentially.

-- There is a book in the Bible that does not even mention the name of God.

-- It is the account of what happened to some of God's people who remained in exile.

-- While God is not mentioned, the entire account looks like, as one person described it, multiple shots of a dollhouse . . . someone is moving the furniture and figures but you never see this mysterious hand.

-- The story is about Queen Esther, who God has intentionally an

providentially placed as the wife of the ruler of Persia. When an evil henchman plans to destroy all of the Jews in the land, Esther's uncle comes to her and challenges her to do something.

TR: In Esther 4 we read . . .

Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom **for such a time as this?**”

ESV

32

READ SLIDE

- Mordecai trusted God . . . deliverance would come . . . but he also could see God's providential, mysterious hand in the placement of Esther as queen.
- Have you never wondered whether God has you right where you are “for such a time as this?”
- But, like Esther, we will need to be courageous and generous, even with our lives, if we are to fulfill God's commission.

TR: Verse 15 continues . . .

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and **hold a fast on my behalf**, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, **and if I perish, I perish.**"

ESV

READ SLIDE

- To approach the king without invitation was to risk her life. If he did not extend the scepter to her, she would die.
- If we imagine being salt and light in our communities will not cost us anything, we will not pray and fast.
- As followers of Jesus we have been challenged to leave everything . . . it all belongs to Him.
- We have been commissioned and positioned to be salt and light.

TR: But to truly be in our communities, we must gain and sustain that focus by being . . .

WE HAVE BEEN COMMISSIONED

WE HAVE BEEN POSITIONED

- INTENTIONALLY
- NATURALLY
- PROVIDENTIALLY

**WE MUST BE INTENTIONAL,
... BEGINNING IN**



34

Intentional!

- Our fearful spirits will want to pull back into a holy huddle, a sanctified circle.
- We will want to protect ourselves and our children to the degree that we open ourselves and them to the greatest of dangers . . . to lose our bearings as the called ones of Jesus.
- We are tempted to hide, only to pop out once in a while and hurl harsh words as culture warriors.
- This year we will learn more about how God wants us to live in a world

**that is no longer a friendly place for Christ-followers . . . living like the exiles that Jeremiah wrote to or that Esther asked to pray with her.
-- This year we want to leverage the natural positioning of our lives in our various communities, but to do so we will need to be INTENTIONAL.**

TR: And that intentionality must begin with prayer.

WE HAVE BEEN COMMISSIONED

WE HAVE BEEN POSITIONED

- INTENTIONALLY
- NATURALLY
- PROVIDENTIALLY

**WE MUST BE INTENTIONAL,
... BEGINNING IN PRAYER**



35

Intentional prayer about being Intentionally IN our communities as salt and light.

-- Intentional prayer in our small groups about more than just extending our lives or having less pain . . . but about fulfilling the commission of our Savior.

-- Intentional prayer about our recognizing what communities we have been positioned in.

-- Intentional prayer about what the felt needs are in those communities.

-- Intentional prayer about serving the felt needs of our communities with gospel fluency.

-- Intentional prayer about starting up spiritual conversations with those who are need to hear that there is hope.

TR: Will you join me in intentionally praying that, individually and together, we can . . .



. . . make the most of every opportunity in our communities?

-- EX: Dave Yonker and baseball

"God is a great deliverer –but he will not deliver us from having to make our own decisions." from "Against the Flow: The inspiration of Daniel in an age of relativism" by John C Lennox

God would deliver Esther and the Exiles. The Kingdom of God is not in danger because of the winds and waves of culture. YET, He will not

deliver us from our decisions. Who knows . . . for such a time as this!