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Matthew 16:13-28

Dr. David Harrell

We've been examining various ways a believer can get trapped in a church that will stifle his spiritual growth. Often churches bare no resemblance to the kind of church Christ has promised to build. Many times church leaders are unsuspecting pawns that Satan uses to build his church by the same kinds of deceptions he used to deceive Eve. This was Paul's concern for the church in 2 Corinthians 11:2 he said, "I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." He was concerned about a lack of spiritual discernment due to ignorance and error in the church, and many times that error comes about because Christians try to be so tolerant of everyone. They try to have unity within their community and in order to do that they dumb down the word of God and they move away from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ as Paul was concerned about.

You might want to ask yourself this morning as we begin to study the word, does this describe you? Are you a person that has been distracted from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ? Is your mind cluttered? Is your mind confused? Perhaps corrupted, distracted? If so, you are going to be banished to an island of spiritual infancy unless you deal with these things. These were some of Paul's concerns, especially in light of false teachers. Therefore we want to go back to Matthew 16. If you will take your bibles and turn there. Because there we learn how the Lord has promised to build His church. We've been examining 7 pillars of the church that the Lord promises to build and bless in verses 13-28. We will continue to that this morning, and we're contrasting these with the kinds of priorities that Satan will have in his church knowing that he also will build a counterfeit church and he will bless it.

The first and most important pillar of a church that we examined the last time that we were together is that it will be one that confesses Jesus as Lord. Notice verse 16, Peter says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." By way of review, you will recall that the first thing Satan denied when he was deceiving Eve was the very first thing that God affirms. That He is Lord; He is the self-existent, self-dependent, Almighty Sovereign who rules with unfettered liberty over all that He has created.

A true church will have an accurate understanding therefore of the Lord Jesus Christ. That He was God Incarnate, the Savior that came and died and was resurrected, Lord and Master who has ascended back into glory and He is coming again.

So in a true church, one that the Lord will build and bless, you will see that He will be the center of gravity around which all else will orbit. You will see that He will be exalted, He will be obeyed. That will be the goal of the church, to help grow people in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every song, every sermon, every small group will ultimately have as its theme the glory and the majesty of Christ who we serve as willing and loving slaves. Everything will constantly point to Christ. We do not point to some person, we don't point to a Pope, we don't point to Mary the mother of Jesus, we do not point to some celebrity, some saint, some spiritual guru, we don't even point to man

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and his needs. We point to God and His glory in Christ. This is, according to 2 Corinthians 4:6, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." That's what a true church is all about. Satan absolutely loathes that kind of a church because he hates Christ. He hates Jesus as Lord.

In 1 Timothy 3:15 Paul said this, "I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (Truth there referring to divine revelation especially with respect to the true gospel). And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness." Next we have an ancient hymn they would have sung, "He who has revealed in the flesh, (there's the incarnation) was vindicated in the spirit (there's the resurrection), seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory. (There's the Ascension, He is returning again as Lord of Lords and King of Kings)

Paul counted everything in his life to be absolute rubbish in comparison to knowing Christ. Everything that he accomplished in life, he was willing to set aside, and he counted it as loss, according to Philippians 3:8, "in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." This was the priceless prize that he longed for above all else in his life. This was the very summit of his ambitions, the ultimate source of perfect satisfaction. I would ask you, is this the consuming passion of your life, to know Christ? Certainly that is the goal of this church, because we are part of the body of Christ and we serve the head of the church who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

A man who knows, loves, and worships Christ can endure anything in life. And you will be able to endure it with joy. Paul said in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." My friends if you have marital problems, problems with anger, loneliness, discouragement, fear, worry jealousy, ultimately it's rooted in the fact that you don't really know, love, and worship Christ. If you struggle with addictions, eating disorders, if you struggle with depression, poor self-esteem, ultimately it is all rooted in the fact that you don't really know Him like you need to know Him. You're not worshipping and serving Him in the simplicity and purity of devotion. That was Paul's concern.

Now you will recall again by way of review, Satan doesn't care if you profess Jesus as Lord as long as you don't mean it. Of course the majority of professing Christians, we are told, will confess Jesus as Lord but they don't mean it and therefore they will never enter the kingdom. That's what Matthew 7 is all about. Those who merely profess Christ with their lips but do not possess Him as the hope of glory, they do not serve Him as their Lord, have nothing more than a respectable religion that will ultimately be used as a witness to condemn them in the day of judgment. Jesus makes that very clear especially in Matthew 7.

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Because of this, we plead with all men here at this church and in every true Christian church to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, to share Peter's confession that "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The second pillar of a church that Christ has promised to build that we will deal with today (and Lord willing we will deal with the other five the next time we get together) is:

Number 2: *A church that will be devoted to scripture alone.* I want you to notice verse 7, after Peter now has made his confession, "And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'" An amazing statement. "Flesh and blood" here is a Semitic idiom for mortal humanity. In other words, Peter's confession did not originate from human reasoning but from divine revelation. The word "reveal" here in this text means to *unveil* or *disclose*. So he is saying "My Father who is in heaven is the source of your confession." Remember, saving faith does not come to a man on the basis of empirical evidence or some kind of historical investigation. It does not originate in human reasoning; it is ultimately a gift from God. God through the Holy Spirit reveals Himself through His word and the spirit brings conviction. This is why Jesus said in John 17:17, Father, "Sanctify them in the truth, Thy Word is truth."

Peter says in 1 Peter 1:23: "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God." So how does man find Christ and life eternal? The spirit of God will direct him to the scriptures and he will search the scriptures. He does not search the wisdom of men. John tells us about Philip in John 1:45 saying that Philip found Nathanael and he said to him, "we have found Him of whom Moses in the law and also the Prophets wrote-Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." They found the one that the scriptures spoke of. In chapter 5:39 Jesus said, "search the scriptures because in them you have eternal life because they testify of Me."

Before we look at this more closely, I want to remind you of some basic theology. I want you to remember that according to the word of God the author of regeneration is God. Regeneration is new birth, being born again. We can no more contribute to our spiritual rebirth than we did to our physical birth. In John 1:12 we read, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

So the author of regeneration is God, but the Agent of regeneration is the Holy Spirit. In John 3:7 Jesus said, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again, 'The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

But we also know according to the scriptures that the instrument of regeneration is the Word of God. We read this in a number of passages, for example, 1 Peter 1:23 again,

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"you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God, and at the end of verse 25, "and this is the word which was preached to you." And in James 1:21 we read, "in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." So my friends, make no mistake, the kind of church that Christ will build and bless will be a church that is devoted to scripture alone. Not to tradition, not to human reasoning, not to psychology, or philosophy, not to "make 'em feel good" preaching, not to cotton candy sermonettes based upon episodes of Andy of Mayberry, but the revealed Word of God. By the way, there are bible studies I discovered based on the Beverly Hillbillies, I love Lucy, Bonanza, and Gilligan's island. My friend if you are studying those kinds of things, you will be banished to Gilligan's Island of spiritual infancy.

The kind of mindset that would somehow appeal to Andy of Mayberry over the Word of God displays a blasphemous attack on the authority, inerrancy, inspiration, and sufficiency of scripture. In Hebrews 4:12 we read that the word of God is living and active and is sharper than any 2-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, it cuts right down into the core of who we are, of both joint and marrow and it's able to judge the thoughts and the intentions of our heart. And it's for this reason Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:4: "And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." He went on to say in verse 6, "we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

My friends, God absolutely disdains human wisdom. It has no power to save, it has no power to sanctify, and therefore it has no place in the church. Because man's wisdom will do just the opposite.

In 2 Timothy 3:16 we read, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching (that refers to doctrinal precision), for reproof, (that speaks of conviction of sin and false beliefs), for correction (a term that means helping those who have fallen and putting them back up right and pointing them in a Godly direction for living and blessing), for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate (literally a person that is able to do all God commands); equipped for every good work." In other words the Word of God completely outfits and supplies us for all that we will encounter in life.

Because of this Paul says something very sobering in 2 Timothy 4:1-2—a text that has a profound impact upon me as a pastor. He said this to Timothy, a young pastor, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word." He does not say, preach your word, he doesn't say preach about the word, he doesn't say use the word to

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validate or illustrate the things that you want to say, he doesn't say make the word say what you want it to say, but he says "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." In other words whether it's popular or not this is what I want you to do.

My friends Satan hates that kind of preaching and he hates that kind of church. Let me illustrate how these glorious truths that are so clear for the church get distorted and ultimately cause a church and Christian people to fall victim to the types of things that Satan would build and bless.

I've attended some of the most popular and influential churches either in person or via the internet and TV over the last few years, some of them here in the Nashville area. Ones that attract the "many," not the "few" according to Matthew 7 that Jesus described. By the way as a footnote, whenever you see vast crowds, whenever you see enormous groups of people clamoring to attend a church, it's probably a church that is preaching the wide gospel. It's probably appealing to the "many" not to the "few."

As I have studied these churches and taken notes, I can see that first of all they are very man-centered, not Christ-centered. Everything points to man's needs, not God's glory. They will appeal to experience; they will appeal to emotion not an accurate understanding of the word of God. They are certainly not devoted to scripture. Divine revelation is exploited and twisted to somehow validate and illustrate human revelation. The truth that they offer the people is more often things that they think are true rather than truths that come from the word of God.

I notice most of the time scripture isn't used, at least very little, and when it is it's often misinterpreted. Certainly there is no concern for the author's intention of a passage of scripture. The few passages that are used are typically tortured into meaning something they were never intended to mean, but in the mind of the pastor, somehow it supports what he wants to say and maybe even more importantly, it supports what the people want to hear. Moreover, a clear and accurate presentation of the gospel is very seldom heard and in most of these churches it is non-existent. It's more of a watered down type of a gospel. The worship can only be described as superficial at best and false at worst. In fact, as I observed, and as I have experienced some of these kinds of places, I see them reinterpreting Psalm 29 to read, "worship the Lord in the spirit of giddiness," not *holiness*.

Let me give you a little summary of what typically happens in these kinds of churches. The typical, middle-class American evangelical crawls out of bed on Sunday morning, slips into the same clothes he had on last night when he was at the ball game and goes to church primarily to see his friends, have a good cup of coffee, and some doughnuts, but he is not going to worship God. There is no overflow of doxology in his heart. That is not why he goes. He is not going to develop the mind of Christ. He certainly doesn't share Paul's passion in Philippians 3:8 concerning "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

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He enters the auditorium with his coffee in hand, not his bible, bobbing his head to the music, trying to adjust his eyes to a dark room and the light show going on, chatting with his friends. I notice that the services primarily appeal to the adolescent pop culture. Certainly nothing about the atmosphere would be what I would call transcendent, nothing worshipful or Christ-exalting. In fact, concepts such as holiness and reverence would clearly be out of place. After the band leads in some "worship music" that focuses on *I, me, my, mine* and *love* (by the way only a handful of folks typically sing), the crowd finally gets snuggled up to their very irreverent and grossly distorted understanding of Jesus. He is more of a smiley face god that exists to make them happy, not holy.

Now, with absolutely no concept of what Christ has really done and who He really is and how they are debtors to His grace, they are ready to have their ears tickled. They are ready to be challenged to examine some aspects of their life that needs changing so they can enjoy life more fully and feel better about themselves because after all, they are told, "the truth is going to set you free."

Then the pastor (wearing his favorite old shirt and shredded designer jeans) appears with great fanfare and applause and the main attraction gets underway. The pastors are very gregarious, outgoing, kind, engaging, creative, conversational, and funny; they love to interact with the crowd. In fact the atmosphere is one of a late night comedy show, only without the suit and tie.

It's obvious that it's important for the pastor to keep the people entertained, so many times they will show some videos of the pop-culture, some film clips, or share some personal stories to set up the sermon. And as you look at their literature, you will see that all of this is designed to help people on their "faith journey" in pursuit of "authentic spirituality" and "living to your full potential". You hear alot about "connecting with others" and "connecting with God," "we're in it to win it," and hype and activities and excitement.

Then he will point to a passage of scripture on the screen that he believes will validate or illustrate the points that he is trying to make. Unfortunately, what I notice is he makes it say whatever he wants it to say without any concern whatsoever for authorial intent. In other words the intention of the spirit of God through His inspired writer. And 90% of the time the passage had nothing to do with his point. Yet, no in that vast audience would know it, and no one really cares. He then elaborates on a few key points that some survey group or focus group has told him is important to that particular zip code, and yet none of his points emerge from the word of God.

Then without ever focusing on the transcendent, glorious Christ, the holiness of our God, the glory of God, without ever challenging the audience to place their faith in Christ, their only hope of salvation; without ever mentioning words like sin, righteousness, judgment, the cross, repentance, justification, faith and so on, he wraps up his thoughts with some

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clever concepts suited for an individualized belief system so that people can apply it anyway they want to their particular circumstance. He basically offers them a menu of a la carte truths and half-truths from which folks can pick and choose and apply to whatever will meet their immediate felt needs. After a short invitation challenging people to ask if God has prompted them to change something in their life that is counterproductive to authentic happiness and self-fulfillment and self-fulfillment, they are dismissed.

And folks who know nothing of Christ Jesus as Savior, who know nothing of Jesus as Lord, leave the place saying, "Wow! I never thought church could be so great!"

My friends, this is the very opposite of the reaction of that will happen when the word of God is rightly divided and Christ is exalted when saints worship God in spirit and truth. When that happens, according to 1 Corinthians 14:24, "an unbeliever is convicted by all, he is called to account by all the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you."

Let me show you more specifically how this can play itself out. One pastor I listened to spoke on the topic of procrastination. And rather than going to a passage of scripture that would have addressed that particular issue, like Proverbs 6:6-11, "Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise..." and so forth. Rather than that, he goes to Exodus 8:6-10. And I thought, "this will be interesting" because that is a text that speaks of the plagues that God is pouring out on Pharaoh and the Egyptians. In that particular context we read how Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron to entreat the Lord that he would remove the frogs. That was the frog plague at that time, and in verse 9 Moses asked Pharaoh, "when shall I entreat for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you." Then in verse 10 it says, "Then (Pharaoh) said, "Tomorrow."

There was the word that he was looking for. He said, basically, "tomorrow is the most dangerous word in our vocabulary." "You see what happened," he told the people, "Pharaoh learned that he could live with the frogs." And he began to apply that to those who procrastinate and live with the "frogs" in their life. Folks that is absolutely absurd! This is what we call "eisogesis", where you read into a text what you want it to say. Rather than "exegesis" which means you take out of the text the author's intended meaning. And you do this by skillfully applying the principles of hermeneutics to the original languages. By the way, this is something that each one of you should do when you handle the word of God. Well he didn't do this and this is very typical.

He didn't explain from that magnificent text how God had designed every plague to be a mockery of the Egyptian deities, this one being the frog deity named "Heqt." He didn't explain that God was the One that was purposefully hardening Pharaoh's heart so that He could ultimately accomplish His eternal purposes. He didn't explain how that he was causing him to think that perhaps his priests could somehow appeal to the frog god and

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get this plague to go back in the other direction. He didn't explain to them how desperately Pharaoh wanted to get rid of the frogs, because the text goes on and describes how they had been piled up in huge piles of dead frogs—the putrefaction of which filled the whole land with an unbearable stench.

He didn't explain how God was preparing to use the Exodus to constitute the beginning of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12. He didn't explain to them how he was about to therefore establish a theocratic nation of Israel in her promised land ultimately to bring glory to Himself. He didn't explain to them that God was orchestrating all of these things to reveal to the children the Israel who He really was. The One that he revealed to Moses as, "I AM THAT I AM", YHWH, "I am the One who is and who will be." The one who is self-existent, the one who is eternal and sovereign. I am not a God who is far off, I am a God that is present and I will act on your behalf in fulfillment of His covenant promises. Those things weren't explained to those people. '

He didn't tell them that God was about to authorize Moses to become the first mediatorial ruler of Israel who would represent Him, YHWH, to the people. He didn't tell them that Moses was about to become a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus who would be the perfect embodiment of God's mediatorial ruler in the final phase of the kingdom when He will establish Himself as King of Kings and Lord of Lords on this earth, and pour out all of His blessings upon the nations after His glorious return.

He didn't tell them that all of these plagues were leading up to the final plague of the death of all the firstborn of everything that existed in the land, and that the Israelite preparation of the killing of the unblemished lamb and placing the blood on the doorpost and lintels so that the angel could pass over . . . He didn't explain how that all of that was pointing to our glorious redeemer, our Passover lamb. He didn't tell them that Lamb that was about to be slain in Egypt would be a picture of the Lamb that would be slain on our behalf to deliver us from a bondage far worse than Egypt, and that he would be slain at twilight, the very same time God told the Israelites to kill the lamb.

Finally, he didn't tell them that the author's intent in the passage that he took them to had absolutely nothing to do whatsoever with the issue of procrastination. Yet, nobody knew it. But people will say, "Oh isn't it great, my preacher preaches the word of God, and he's got the bible right there in front of him." No, he doesn't. My friends, he is manipulating the word of God to reinforce what he believes, what he thinks, what he wants to talk about. You see, we are commanded to preach the word, not exploit the word.

He did go on however to express how one of his "pet peeves" is hearing people leave his church saying, "we are leaving because we want to go deeper, we want deeper teaching." I noticed, by the way, that this was a common frustration that I heard many of these preachers talk about, and they attack it aggressively. His response is basically, "well you know I believe that we are already educated beyond our obedience, that we have all the

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knowledge we need, we just need to get around to doing what God tells us to do." That seems to be a prevalent talking point among many of these pastors.

You see, what he doesn't understand is that this isn't just about knowledge, although I would argue that the average church attender has a grasp of scripture that would be likened to a toddler's grasp of nuclear physics. *Folks want to go deeper into the word because they want to go deeper into Christ.* That's the longing of our heart. I would challenge these folks, go on YouTube and look up the reaction of Chinese believers who open up packages where they can for the first time touch a bible. You watch them kiss the word and hold it up to their face, you watch them weep. You watch them talk about how wonderful this is to them, and then you tell them they don't need to go deep in the teaching of the word of God. You go with me to some of the places I've been around the world and speak to persecuted saints. You go there and start yuking it up with them, laughing and caring on. You go to those people and talk about yourself, talk about the pop culture, don't get them into the word of God that much, give them your opinions and make them think that your opinions are God's opinions. Use a lot of homespun humor, have a little fun with the folks, make sure they feel at home, and you see how long you'll last. They don't want to hear that; they don't want to hear you, or me, they want to hear God.

My friends, wait until persecution hits the United States big time, and it's coming, and you watch what happens to churches that only give lip service to the Lordship of Christ. Watch what happens to churches that have no real devotion to the word of God. You will see those churches empty quicker than a theater in a bomb scare. But the true church will thrive when that happens. We see it today; you see what is happening in China today in the underground church. Do you realize that the church in North Korea, when they get together, for fear of persecution they have to whisper when they sing great hymns of the faith? They have to whisper the word of God, and they can't own it? They try to memorize it. You tell those people, "no you don't need to go deep in the word, and you don't need deeper teaching." The reason folks want to go deeper, according to 1 Peter 2:2 is because we are to be "like newborn babes, (we) long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

If you haven't, then you won't want the nourishment of His word. You see folks, true believers want to go deeper because they love Christ; they want to know more of Him. They want to hear His voice, they want to commune with Him.

John tells us in John 1:1 that He is the "word (that) became flesh". Jesus is the personification, He is the embodiment of the word, the *logos*. "The Word was with God" (*pros ton theon* - it means "face to face"). In other words, Jesus is the word who enjoyed face-to-face communion with his father. And yet in an act of inconceivable condescension, he left that glorious communion and came to earth to purchase my redemption. You bet I want to go deep in the word! Because I want to know more of who He is and what He has done.

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The word of God points us to the Lord Jesus Christ. By the power of the word we are told that we can protect ourselves from being conformed to this world. Instead we can be transformed by the renewing of our mind. The word causes a metamorphosis to occur within a believer so that our inward reality of being in Christ begins to manifest itself. That's why I want more of the word.

I know according to scripture that it is the word of God that helps me battle my flesh. It's the sword of the spirit that helps me battle Satan and his minions in this world. What so many of these pastors fail to understand is the word of God is our unerring guide in our life. It's a lamp into our feet, a light unto our path. Proverbs 6:23 tells us, "For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is a light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life."

Again we are commanded in 2 Timothy 2:15 to "be diligent to present yourself approved to God as workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness." In Psalm 1:2 we read: "(the blessed man will) delight in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."

Psalm 119 has text after text that tells us of the glory and the greatness of the word. For example we are told in Psalm 119 to love it exceedingly, regard it as the word of God, to esteem it above all things, to long after it, to stand in awe of it, to keep in remembrance, to grieve when men disobey it, to hide it in our hearts, to hope in it, meditate in it, rejoice, trust, obey, speak of it, esteem it as light, pray to be taught more of it, pray to be conformed to it, plead the promise of it in prayer.

Folks, Satan hates this. He doesn't want you to know this about the word. So he fills pulpits with men and women who do not preach it, who do not rightly divide it. They have no desire to "equip the saints," which literally means to complete or perfect the saints, Ephesians 4. And as a result, Paul says in verse 14 they are: "children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming." This is what Satan wants, and this was the burden of Paul's heart. After exhorting Timothy to preach the word in 2 Timothy 4:3 he says, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths." The grammar of that text means that they will deliberately choose to turn away from the truth. They don't like that, so it turns from the active voice to the passive voice which means now the myths will take you over without you even realizing it.

Satan wants a church devoted to the word of man, not the Word of God.

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But he is clever to somehow make the sheep and the shepherd think that they are devoted to scripture because they are using a few bible passages here and there. Folks if you dumb down the word of God long enough you will have a congregation that's too dumb to even know they have been dumbed down. That is where we are in the church today.

Let me give an example in Jeremiah 23, way back in ancient Judah they had ear-tickling false prophets, false shepherds that weren't preaching the word of God instead they were preaching their own word. They failed to confront the sins of the people. They told them what they wanted to hear and God said in Jeremiah 23:1, "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture! Declares the Lord." Then he says this beginning in verse 16 and following, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; they speak of a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the LORD.

Verse 17: "They keep saying to those who despise Me, 'The LORD has said, "You will have peace" ', And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.' In other words, they are telling you what you want to hear, but not the truth.

Verse 18, "But who has stood in the council of the LORD, that he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened? "Behold, the storm of the LORD has gone forth in wrath, Even a whirling tempest; It will swirl down on the head of the wicked. The anger of the LORD will not turn back Until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart; in the last days you will clearly understand it. I did not send these prophets, but they ran. But they prophesied. "But if they had stood in My council, then they would have announced My words to My people, And would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds."

Verse 23, "Am I a God who is near, declares the LORD, And not a God far off?" "Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?" Declares the Lord.

"Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" Declares the Lord. In other words, false teachers do you not think that I don't see what is going on?

Verse 25, "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name, saying, 'I had a dream, I had a dream!' --Your speaking out of the fiction of your own heart.

Verse 26: "How long? Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even these prophets of the deception of their own heart, who intend to make my people forget My name, (Isn't that what satan wants all along?) by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal? "The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw (no nourishment) have in common with grain? Declares the LORD, and like a hammer which shatters rock? Therefore behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD who steal My words from each other. "Behold I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who use their tongues and declare, The Lord declares." Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams, declares the LORD, and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did

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not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit," declares the LORD.

The Lord was furious with that kind of preaching in that day and He is furious with it today. The preachers of that day had mixed their own personal opinions with God's word causing the people to believe what they said was actual from God when it wasn't.

Notice what happens when this continues in verse 36, "For you will no longer remember the oracle of the LORD, because every man's own word will become the oracle, and you have perverted (literally means to turn, overturn, twist, distort) the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God."

Beloved make no mistake, Christ will build and bless a church that is devoted to scripture alone. If your in a church where the majority of what the preacher says is based on his mind, his reasoning, his experiences, his stories and he only used a passage of scripture here and there to validate what he says or illustrate what he says, I would warn you to be careful.

I would close with a quote from our own website, from our own mission statement at Calvary Bible Church there it says, "We exist to equip the saints through expository preaching. Then I explain it this way. Saints cannot be equipped for godly living and service apart from precise theology (Ephesians 4:11-16). This is the goal of expository preaching and teaching. The term "exposit" literally means to expound or explain in a detailed manner. Expository preaching is therefore a doctrinal proclamation of the Word of God derived from an exegetical process that is concerned only with the revelation of God, not the wisdom of man, and therefore carefully conveys the God-intended meaning of a text, passionately applying that meaning to the contemporary issues of life with an internal zeal and authority that cannot be extinguished. Although this kind of preaching and teaching is rare in contemporary evangelicalism, since this was the method exemplified in the Bible, and I give a number of passages, and since we have a divine mandate to "preach the Word" (2 Timothy 4:2), we believe that this is the God ordained method and we remain committed to it."

My friend, the church will not be built on music, entertainment, it's not going to be built on casual dress, and coffee bars, and doughnuts, and fellowship and small groups, and a watered-down gospel. It's not going to be built upon some savvy pastor who tells people what they want to hear. It's going to be built on the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. Christ will be exalted in everything that is said and done in those kinds of churches and it will be built upon the knowledge that scripture alone is how God reveals Himself. So it will be a church devoted to scripture alone. Because again, flesh and blood has not revealed these great truths to us, but our Father who is in heaven.

So I would challenge you this morning to examine your own heart. Are you confessing Jesus as Lord in your life? Are you devoted to scripture? If not, won't you get serious

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about this? As you do you, will find God opening up your mind and your heart to amazing truths, life transforming truths that will bring blessing and joy to you beyond your wildest ability to imagine. Amen? We all know that don't we?

Let's pray together, Father thank you for these truths apply them to our hearts I ask in Christ's name, amen.