

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

If you will take your bibles and turn to Matthew 16. Today we are looking at the fourth and final examination of Satan's strategy for the church versus our Lord's strategy for the church that He has promised to build, because we see in Matthew 16:18 He says, "I will build My church."

Before we begin I want to share with you a true story. My wife Nancy and I have endured over a number of years a very sad experience. We have watched our home church up in Illinois, be ripped apart by perhaps well-meaning but deceived leaders. They were seduced by the philosophies of evangelical pragmatism. They became committed to growing the church numerically, not spiritually. There was a shift that occurred over a period of time.

Rather than "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry or the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ," as Paul tells us in Ephesians 4, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." Instead of all that, a new emphasis came on the scene. And that emphasis was about cultural relevance, all about contextualizing the gospel. So the leadership embraced this idea that a total transformation of the church needed to take place.

Sadly, the first 2 things to go were the first 2 pillars that we have studied from this text, namely, a church that confesses the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and secondly, one that is devoted to scripture alone. Suddenly the leadership became obsessed with meeting man's felt needs and making their services appeal to the unsaved, to people who are hostile to Christ, to the most immature. The word of man replaced the Word of God as the only source of truth. Sadly we began to notice that the older saints were no longer welcomed or needed. Obviously we weren't there, but we talked with many of them as they called and emailed us and wept over what they say was happening in their church.

Bible doctrine was jettisoned because it was considered divisive. Worship services were transformed into more of a party kind of atmosphere that would appeal primarily to the college-age pop-culture. The saints who had been there for years felt betrayed. I remember one dear saint saying, "We feel as though Satan has come in and taken over the church." And I said, "Well in fact, he has." The people were starving for the greatness and the glory of God, they were longing to hear the word of God and be nourished by it. They became spiritually malnourished, they became discouraged, many of them were outraged and those that complained were asked to leave.

The church gradually dwindled from about 350 down to about 50, and then little by little, the tares began to come in and to take over. Then just as Paul warned would happen, if the saints aren't equipped, according to Ephesians 4:14, he says, "As a result, (they will become) 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." Today we no

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

longer recognize the church.

These of course, are all marks of the enemy. This was Paul's concern for the church. In 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 he says, "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 also warned pastor Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:1, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron." Later in verse 6 he says, "In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following." Of course this is the very reason why I am presenting to you the contrast between the kind of church Satan wants to build versus the one Christ has promised to build.

Paul went on to warn Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:13, "But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

So in light of that we return to Matthew 16:13-28 where the Lord describes the kind of church where He will build. There He has revealed what I call 7 pillars of the church and we will continue to contrast these with the priorities of the kind of church that Satan would want to build and bless.

By way of review, you will recall that the first and most important pillar of the church is that, one: *It confesses Jesus as Lord.*

Notice verse 16, Peter says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Remember now, Satan hates for a person to really believe this and hates for a person to live consistently with this. So this will never be an emphasis in the kind of church that he will build and bless. But a true church will worship the Lord, will exalt the Lord, and will serve Christ, not man.

The second pillar of the church that we have studied thus far is that it will, number two: *Be devoted to Scripture alone.* We see this as Jesus goes on in verse 17, "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.'" So here we learn that a true church will understand that the source of all truth will be divine revelation, and that will be their focus. A true church will be committed to precise theology that can only come from a doctrinal proclamation of the word of God that's derived from an exegetical

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

process that is concerned only with the revelation of God, not the revelation of man because it's the word of God that the spirit uses to reconcile sinful man to a Holy God. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Romans 10:17.

But again, Satan wants a church that is devoted to the word of man, not to the word of God. Moreover, a true church will not seek to appeal to men's flesh with entertainment and worldly philosophies, but rather it will seek to appeal to the hearts of men by relying on the only source of transforming truth, and that is the revealed Word of God.

Well this brings us to the third pillar this morning, and that is, number three: *A church that is zealous for Kingdom Living*. Now this is a central truth that emerges from this next section of the narrative. Let me give you some preliminary thoughts here beginning in verse 18: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."

Now a bit of a footnote, but I believe it's important. The term "Peter" in the original language is *petros*, which means small stone, and the term "rock" is *petra*, which speaks of a rocky mountain or a massive peak. Some will therefore conclude that the church is built upon Peter, the man. We see this particularly in Roman Catholicism. They believe in what they call Apostolic Succession. They believe that Peter was the first pope. It's interesting, however, that the first office of the pope didn't even exist for 600 years, but they believed that he was the first pope. But if we look at this closely, the ending of the term "petra" (rock) is feminine in the original language and therefore cannot be used to describe a man's name.

Moreover if Peter was the first pope, you really don't have a lot to brag about because just a little bit later Jesus says to him, "get behind me Satan."

I would also add, if the 12 understood that Peter was the supreme pontiff, why would they later ask Jesus who was the greatest in the kingdom? You would think that they would know that. Why would James and John and their mother later on ask Jesus to give them the chief places of honor in the kingdom? No, dear friends, the church is established upon Christ and Christ alone, not Peter and his successors, whoever they might be. But again remember, Satan wants a church that is built upon man, Christ wants a church that is built upon Him and Him alone.

Now, if we look at this we can see that the antecedent of "rock" is taken to be Peter's divinely inspired confession. But we've got to remember that Peter was the spokesmen of the Apostles and *represented them* in his confession. So ultimately I believe it's best to understand that the rock of this divinely inspired confession was not Peter's alone, but one that belonged to the Apostles as Christ's chosen ambassadors, inspired and empowered to preach the gospel.

In Ephesians 2:20: (Paul says that God's household is) "built upon the foundation of the

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone."

In Revelation 21:14 in that great revelation of the New Jerusalem, there we read: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Of course this commemorates God's covenant relationship with the church of which the apostles were the foundation.

Well let's focus on Jesus' words here at the end of verse 18 he says, "...I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it." First we must understand that the term "church"- the ekklesia, basically means "an assembly". It comes from "ekkaleo", which means "to call out". The term "church" is basically a non-technical term of describing any group of people that are assembled or gathered together for a specific purpose. In Hebrews 12:23 the writer says of the church: "The general assembly and church of the first-born."

Now after Pentecost, the term ekklesia, the assembly, was used to define a community of the redeemed, those redeemed by God as a result of the Holy Spirit's coming. And this redeemed community was therefore founded upon the work of Christ. So the term church is basically a synonym for the redeemed citizens of Christ's kingdom. Do you realize that's who we are? So Jesus is basically saying here, "I will build My Kingdom—a Kingdom made up of the Assembly of the Redeemed."

As a church, we must always be asking ourselves, are we building God's kingdom? Or are we building our own little empire? Christ wants the former, Satan wants the latter.

He also says, "and the gates of Hades (this is the Greek version of the Hebrew, Sheol, which basically means "the grave"; this does not mean Hell, this is the grave. This is the place of the departed dead) shall not overpower it." In other words, "have mastery over it." The gates of death, he is basically saying, are unable to permanently overpower this redeemed assembly.

In Acts 2:24 at Pentecost, Peter declared, "God raised (Christ) up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." The writer of Hebrews describes this great victory as well in Hebrews 2:14 he says, "since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

So Jesus makes this astounding promise that the church that He will build cannot be "overpowered" by Satan's power of death. Death cannot hold the redeemed captive. What a wonderful truth that is for all of us. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15: 54: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

No we come to the important point here that the church that Christ will build, number three, is one that is *zealous for kingdom living*.

Notice verse 19: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This speaks of the church's authority in Christ's kingdom.

Now, we all know that keys are used to unlock and lock gates or doors, and here what we are seeing is the church has the authority to unlock the kingdom of heaven through the preaching of the gospel and let people who repent and believe come in. It has the authority through the gospel, through the word of God, to prevent people from entering the kingdom; those who are not dressed appropriately, those who are not dressed in the robes of righteousness, those who do not wear the garments of salvation, the righteousness of Christ, the imputed righteousness of Christ. In fact, according to Matthew 24:14, you have this phrase, "the gospel of the kingdom" and here we have the "keys of the kingdom" and basically these passages are synonymous.

Michael Horton says this, "They both refer to the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of all things that has begun even now with the in-gathering of outcasts to Zion, In its present phase, the kingdom is the gospel and the gospel is the kingdom . . . Wherever this gospel is taken, a piece of heaven-the age to come- begins even now to dawn in the dusty corners of this passing evil age."

Now, these concepts of being "loosed" and being "bound" were used by the ancient rabbis and they spoke of a person that was bound in their sin because of the hardness of their heart or loosed from their sin because of the softness of their heart in repentance. Jesus uses the same concepts in Matthew 18. You remember that great text that speaks of how we are to conduct church discipline. In Matthew 18:18 he says, "Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

So what we are reading here is that based upon the principles of the word of God, the church has the authority to determine if a person is truly repentant and therefore forgiven or not. Heaven has already ratified or affirmed that decision because it was made on the basis of God's word. So we are to use scripture to determine if a man remains bound in his sin or if a man has been loosed from his sin, and either way God agrees with that decision.

Now again remember, Satan insists upon a church that has its authority based upon man, not on God, and this is why we see so many churches refusing to emphasize doctrinal distinctives and so few churches that discipline sin, as Jesus commanded us to do in Matthew 18. Yet isn't it interesting that Christ gave Himself up for the church according to Ephesians 5:25, "He might sanctify her and present to Himself the church in all her

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless." You see the Lord wants a pure, a chaste virgin, and He is doing that in this process of sanctification. But Satan does not want Him to have that and instead Satan wants a harlot bride; and he will have his bride someday according to Revelation 17:5. She will be described as, 'Babylon the great, the mother of all harlots and of the abominations of the earth.' Even today we see Satan orchestrating the events and the circumstances of this evil world to ultimately produce that harlot church.

Notice in verse 20, Jesus says something very interesting after this great confession and all of these wonderful truths that He has promised them. He says, "Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ."

No why would He do this? You would think just the opposite? Well the answer is that people had witnessed all of these miracles; thousands of people had been healed. Then in John 6 you will recall He feeds 25,000 people and they want to make Him king, they want the ultimate welfare state. In fact in John 6:15 we read, "Jesus therefore, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone." You see, they wanted a Messiah that was going to defeat Rome. They wanted the ultimate welfare utopia. In fact, they wanted the ultimate man-centered religion. We know that the next day the multitudes searched for Jesus. The text says they got into small boats, they go over to Capernaum and they find Him and Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs; but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you." Verses 26-27.

Then He talks about He is the bread of heaven, that they cannot be saved by the works of the law and then He talks to them about the sovereignty of God in salvation and as a result of that in verse 66, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore." By the way, there is no topic that will betray a self-absorbed, self-willed heart quicker than the topic of salvation being solely dependent upon sovereign grace.

So what happened then? Well Jesus tells the 12 here not to tell anyone that He was the Christ, because by this time He knew that the hearts of the people were so hardened to the gospel, they were so obsessed with self-gratification, that to continue to speak of Him as the Christ would be to cast pearls before swine. They might take Him by force for all the wrong reasons. If I can put it in our understanding, they wanted an Obama to make them happy, they didn't want a Savior and Lord to make them holy.

You see the church Christ will build and bless will be one that is zealous for the kingdom of Christ. It's not going to be a church that is zealous for some political party. It's not going to be a church that is zealous for social reform; it's not going to be one that is consumed with humanitarian relief. The Lord has not commissioned us to do those

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

things. Satan will always advance the efforts of a reverent Jesse Jackson or a Jeremiah Wright and try to silence those of a Voddie Baucham or John Piper.

Let me ask you, who do you think the media and the politicians want to promote more: Reverend Al Sharpton or John MacArthur? We see this all the time. Remember there are 2 competing kingdoms out there; there is the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. According to Colossians 1:13 we read that, "He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."

Now, thinking of this kingdom concept, later Jesus would stand before Pilate and He would declare to Him in John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world. Pilate therefore said to Him, 'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.'" You see friends, this is what the church is all about, bearing witness to and living consistently with the truth of the gospel concerning a kingdom that is not of this world. We are not to be preoccupied with this world, but the next.

John MacArthur says: "When Christians mix their faith with politics and various humanitarian causes, they run the risk of losing their spiritual focus and their spiritual power. Although human government is divinely ordained by God, the state is no more to be an instrument of the church's program than the church is to be an instrument of the state's."

You see folks, the church is all about rescuing men from eternal condemnation. The church is not to be about political activism, or social reform. It's not about peace on earth or justice, or morality, or stewardship of the world's ecology. It's not about even meeting man's felt needs. All of that stuff is just rearranging the deck furniture on the Titanic. It's not what we are called to do. But Satan will have a church that will be obsessed with those earthly things, and therefore distracted from God's priority of kingdom living. As I think about it, I think that next to a staggering lack of discernment, the great problem of the church today is being distracted from what is best to do things that are good.

We must remember the church is not an organization. This is just so basic. My friends the church is a living organism of which Christ is head, and we respond to that head. It is an invisible kingdom of passionate believers committed to the spreading of the gospel to save the lost; redeemed saints awaiting a visible kingdom on earth when the Lord returns, and ultimately the eternal kingdom in glory. In Hebrews 12:27, the writer speaks of a kingdom that cannot be "shaken", which literally means "destroyed," unlike a physical kingdom that can be destroyed. In verse 28 he goes on to say, "Therefore since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

Even there we see that we are not called to *build* a kingdom, the text says we are to

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

receive it. It's an amazing thought. You see again, Christ is the one that builds the church, we receive it. We are to be about the great commandment and the great commission, to be living witnesses of the kingdom of grace that we have received. The kind of church Christ will build will have a passion therefore for evangelism, a passion for the glory of God that will utterly eclipse their zeal for politics or moral reform.

The fourth pillar that Jesus speaks of is that it will *Celebrate the Cross*.

Verse 21: "From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." Now this is at the very core of the gospel. This is why Jesus said He must go to Jerusalem; he had to go to make atonement for sin. You will recall that atonement requires two things; satisfaction for the offended holiness of God, we have violated the law; and it requires substitution, an innocent person for the guilty. In Matthew 20:28 the Lord elaborates on this amazing sacrifice. There we read: "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

You see Christ only builds churches that celebrate the Cross, because it was on the cross that the Lamb of God bore our sins in His body. Yet so many so-called churches today remove the cross. They remove it from the physical worship centers; they remove it from speaking about it in their literature, their sermons, even from their conversations, because it is too offensive. They are ashamed of the gospel. Yet Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "I determine to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

The cross is where divine justice and grace came together. This is why Christ came as, we are told in 1 John 4:10, "the propitiation for our sins", to be the satisfaction of the wrath of God that we should receive. He took it upon Himself instead. So we celebrate the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ every time we come together. It is the center of everything we do. This is why we partake of communion as the Lord has called us to do, in remembrance of Him. The cross is at the center of the songs we sing, at the center of the service that we render. The cross is at the heart of our worship because my friends, without the cross we would have no Savior, and without a Savior we would have no hope. Without a Savior we would have no Lord.

When people ask you when did you get saved, you know what you could say is, "about 2,000 years ago." Romans 10:9 Paul says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

So the cross will be the center of gravity around which everything will orbit in the church that Christ will build, because the eternal destiny of men's souls are at stake. For this reason a true church will have no stomach for the juvenile entertainment and the

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

philosophies of men designed to appeal to sinners that you see in so many churches today.

The fifth pillar is that it will be a church that *Aggressively Wars Against Satan*. We see this illustrated in Peter's 2 outbursts. Notice in verse 22-23: "And Peter took him aside (let's stop there, can you believe that? Peter is going to take the Lord of glory aside. The idea is he kind of took him by the arm and said, "come over here I need to talk with you and I need to set you straight here") and began to rebuke Him, (the term rebuke is a strong term in the original language that denotes a vehement authoritative judgment, and grammatically in the original language it is what we call a present infinitive and suggests he is doing this repeatedly. He was really after the Lord on this deal.) 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you.' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan!' You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Now Peter's passion for the Lord not to be killed may seem noble, his rebuke may seem well intended but it was highly offensive to Jesus. Peter went from being blessed to being condemned in just a short amount of time. In fact, Jesus condemnation here is one of the most stinging and emphatic rebukes that Jesus ever made towards anyone! "Get behind Me, Satan!" By the way, so much for the infallibility of the first Pope!

This was the same rebuke that Jesus said to Satan himself in Matthew 4:10, remember when he was in the wilderness? He said to Satan, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'" This is why Jesus was so furious with Peter. Peter got it mixed up, and fell into Satan's trap. What did he do? He rejected God's word and will and replaced it with his word and his will. He ended up serving himself and ultimately Satan, not God. By the way, this was the same strategy Satan used with Eve, do you remember? He basically said to her, "it's ok to question God, to challenge Him and if necessary even to rebel against His word and His will if it doesn't serve what you perceive to be your best interest."

So Jesus says to Peter, "You are a stumbling block to me." Stumbling block—*skandalon* in the original language. It was originally used to describe the bait stick in an animal trap, and it eventually came to be used to describe luring a person into captivity or destruction, an enticement to sin. Jesus is basically saying "You're opposing God's plan and trying to lure Me into obeying Satan's plan." That is exactly what Satan tried to do in the wilderness, it's what he tried to do later on in the garden of Gethsemane.

So Jesus is saying to Peter, "You're all about your agenda, not mine"

"You expect Me to submit My will to yours."

"You've got it backwards here, you see, I am God and you are not!"

"You think I exist for you, but ultimately you exist for Me."

"Your looking out for number 1, you! So don't you dare question My word, don't you dare question My will and try to cause Me to fall into the snare of the devil that you've

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

been ensnared with yourself."

By the way, don't be too quick to judge Peter here, we do this all the time, don't we? You know whenever we oppose God, we side with Satan don't we? That's what happens. Think of all the commands in scripture that you refuse to obey. By the way, if they don't come to your mind then you need to go before the Lord and ask the spirit of God to reveal them to you because they are there, there in my life, I know there in yours. Think of the times we rebuke God for bringing sufferings and trials into our life and we end up complaining about it.

Many churches reject God's word and will by replacing it with, according to 2 Corinthians 10:5, "speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God." Churches that don't set their minds on God's interests but man's interests, exactly what Jesus is accusing Peter of doing? When this happens in a church, insanity sets in. Churches become more concerned about where to place the coffee bar than contending earnestly for the faith. Churches become far more concerned with being culturally relevant than unleashing the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. Churches become much more obsessed with music and much less concerned with being biblically accurate or being obedient to the Lordship of Christ.

I was flipping through the channels yesterday and I noticed one charlatan on there and it had at the bottom this big print where everybody could read it: "Sow your seed of \$58 per month with the expectation of a harvest. (By the way, you write a check out to that church that he has control over). If you want an uncommon harvest, you must sow an uncommon seed." In other words, God's blessings are for sale. For a little bit of money you can manipulate God to do things for you. This is exactly the type of thing that Satan wants people to believe.

One prominent architect of church marketing, George Barna, advocates the very thing Jesus condemned as being satanic. He says this, "Thing of your church not as a religious meeting place, but as a service agency—an entity that exists to satisfy people's needs."

In his excellent book, *The Gospel Commission: Recovering God's Strategy for Making Disciples*, Michael Horton further illustrates this kind of Satanic Deception, He mentions a name Tony Jones who describes his church, Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis (led by Doug Padgitt), where they brag about transforming the traditional service into a conversation. Jones says, "The point is to jettison the magisterial sermon that has ruled over much of Protestantism for five hundred years...Here the sermon is deconstructed, turned on its head. The Bible is referred to as a 'member of the community' with whom we are in conversation, and the communal interpretation of a text bubbles up from the life of the community." Bread and grape juice and wine are offered in "a loud, party atmosphere, and an optional quiet meditation room, "but "this aspect of the worship is not guided by a clergyperson." Sometimes communion is introduced with a poem or "a testimony about 'what the Lord's Supper means to me,' and another week with the

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

traditional 'Words of Institution' from the Book of Common Prayer. After this, "We sit down again for announcements, and the kids then begin to fight over the leftover communion bread, since its usually cinnamon raisin or chocolate chip or cheddar jalapeno sourdough." It's messy. "But true worship of God is a messy endeavor. I make no bones about that. It's not meant to be done 'Decently and in order,' but messily and with only a semblance of order, and with a great deal of joy."

Beloved this is what happens when a church refuses to aggressively war against Satan and his deceptions. It sinks into an abyss of chaos and deception; it's exactly what Satan wants. The word of God is reduced to a "member of the community with whom we are in conversation, and the communal interpretation of a text bubbles up from the life of the community." Are you kidding me? You see unless we aggressively assault anything and everything that is contrary to the word of God and the will of God, we will become nothing more than pawns in Satan's little army deserving of the same kind of rebuke that Jesus gave to Peter.

Next Jesus follows up this rebuke concerning setting our minds on man's interests rather than God's with the sixth pillar and that is, *It will joyfully deny self to follow Christ.*

Verse 24: "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself (renounce, disown) himself, (not disown yourself in terms of your individuality with respect to your own personal identity—for we are all precious in God's sight, those He has redeemed—but with respect to our unredeemed self that is constantly striving for gratification, fulfillment, and demanding our own way. That fleshly part of us that has nothing of any value to offer Christ. This is what Paul said in Ephesians 4:22, "the 'old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit."

One old theologian Arthur Pink said this, "Growth in grace is growth downward; it is the forming of a lower estimate of ourselves; it is a deepening realization of our nothingness; it is a heartfelt recognition that we are not worthy of the least of God's mercies."

Jesus goes on and says, "and take up his cross, and follow me." In other words there needs to be willingness to suffer for Me, to follow Me, come what may. "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul."

Friends a true church will call it's people to discipleship, that's what this is. It will call them to following Christ, not ourselves, much less some human celebrity. Again this hearkens back to the first pillar, the Lordship of Christ.

I might add, we do not make Jesus Lord anymore than we make Him our creator. Jesus is Lord; you've got to understand that. The question is, do you submit to Him as Lord? This will be the priority of the kind of church that Christ will build and bless, because He is

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

our living head; He is the Lord of our life. Isn't it interesting that the Lord Jesus in the great commission says that we are to go and "make disciples.... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded." When we invite people to embrace the gospel and be saved and place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are also asking them to renounce themselves, deny themselves; to disown that self-centered, self-willed, self-absorbed self, and instead of that become a willing slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what you will hear in the kind of church that Christ will build and bless. And oh, this will be terribly offensive to the one Satan wants to build.

Therefore our priority is to teach you to observe all that He has commanded. Jesus is asking you to jettison all of your fleshly preoccupations to save your earthly life all of this pursuit to enjoy all the fleeting pleasures of this life and instead He is wanting your heart desire to be that of being willing to set all of that aside to serve him. If your willing to make this great exchange of your own fleshly agenda to serve Christ, even if it takes you to a cross, then you will find eternal life. Because this demonstrates that truly He has done His work of grace in you.

So the kind of church that Christ will bless will be filled with these kinds of folks. Satan's church will look very different. You will see, as I have, in many of these churches, as I hear from these people almost everyday over the Internet. Their churches will be filled with sin, sin will just run rampant, and you can't distinguish those that profess Christ with those that don't. You see lots of self-will. The focus of the church will be a gospel of self-fulfillment, not self-denial. Because again, that doesn't sell.

I heard one lady say, "I go to church to connect with God so He can help me discover my true inner self and live up to my potential." Now, Satan's church will say, "hey, come on in, that's what we are all about." Christ's church will say, "no, that's not what we're about here. We're not about you connecting with God to discover your inner self and your potential, were are about reconciling you as a sinful person bound for hell to a Holy God through faith in Christ and serving Him with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength." That's the difference. It's sad very few Christians come to church to really worship the Lord and be taught whatsoever things that He has commanded that they can live a life of obedience and honor to the Lord of their life.

Notice what Jesus says in verse 26, "For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Now remember what Satan did with Eve? He basically told her, "hey, you know, really? You can't eat of that? Come on, God's a little restrictive here don't you think? His will is depriving you of pleasure and freedom to be yourself and to pursue all that you believe is good for you, besides come on, your not going to die, you surely will not die? God isn't some harsh judge; He is a God of love here. There are no real consequences if you don't do exactly what he says, assuming you even know what He says? Isn't that how it works? It's what he did with Eve, its' what he does in the churches that he builds and blesses. Do

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

you really believe that, that God is restrictive? That there aren't any consequences? May I remind you that Eve and Adam believed that and they lived to regret it?

Christ's church will be marked by humility, by brokenness, by self-denial, selflessness, and by a joyful willingness to deny self and follow Christ and hear is why in verse 27,

"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds." this leads us to the final pillar.

The final pillar of a church that Christ will build and bless is one that will *Live in Light of Christ's Glorious Return*. Do you look for the Lord to come? I do and I know most of you do too. How I long for that. I long to see my Savior face to face. I'm tired of this old life, you know it? I'm willing to serve but for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

For millennia those who fear God and hate sin have longed for the day when God will rule the world in righteousness. A day when all those who live in rebellion to Him and who have served their father the devil will be vanquished. A day when as Habakkuk 2:14 says when, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea." Boy I long for that day. A day when we will have the answer to the prayer that Jesus told us to pray and that is "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The church that Christ will build is what I call a 2nd coming church. It will be filled with saints that long to see their Savior face to face. Saints that long to see every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

But they will also be a group of people that are looking forward to the awards ceremony. Don't we all look forward to award ceremonies? There is going to be one someday. All believers one day will have to give an account for what they did with their opportunities, with their gifts in serving the King, building the kingdom.

2 Corinthians 5:10 it says, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (worthless). 1 Corinthians 3:13, "the equality of each man's work will be tested. And his valuable enduring works will be rewarded." Paul even said in Romans 13:12: "Each one of us will give an account of himself to God."

Now on that day God will know which ones are His. He obviously knows which ones are not His. But He will be able to look on a true believer and you know what He is going to see? He is going to see that a true believer was apart of this redeemed assembly that He built. He will be able to look at their life and the pattern and the passion of their life would be consistent with these 7 pillars. He will be able to look at that life and say, "yes that was one of mine because he confessed Me as Lord and lived consistently with that. Yes this is one of Mine because this person was devoted to scripture alone; he cared

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

nothing about the wisdom of man. Yes this is one of Mine because this person was zealous for kingdom living. This one is one that celebrated the cross that aggressively warred against Satan in his life. One that joyfully denied Christ and yes this is one that lived in light of My return.”

Paul summarized this so well in Titus 2:13-14, he said that: "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, who gave Himself for us."

Verse 28: "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." These were great words of encouragement and with this we will close. The term “kingdom” here is often used as a metonym to mean "royal majesty" or "a manifestation of regal splendor". Everywhere where we see this promise given in the gospels (about some of the disciples seeing the kingdom) it always immediately precedes the great account of the transfiguration of Christ. That is what this is speaking of.

Indeed before their death, Peter, James, and John saw a preview of the Son of Man coming in His kingdom when the Lord peeled back His flesh and allowed the Shekinah glory of His presence to emanate from Him. There they saw the effulgence of His glory, a sample, a little foretaste of the coming kingdom. So my friends the 7th pillar of the church that Christ will build in contrast to the one that Satan will build will be one that looks for the appearing of Christ. The one that Satan will build will scoff at the very notion of this and it will downplay it, it will disregard it because they are not living for the glory of Christ, they are living for the glory of self.

What a contrast between two masters, two churches, two kingdoms. Very few churches are built upon these seven pillars, and by God's grace I hope we can be and we will be. Instead they are built on the sinking sand of satanic deception. And therefore I would submit to you that probably the greatest mission field in the world today is that of the professing Christian church.

If your in a church that denies any of these seven pillars, I would encourage you to leave it as quickly as possible, because if you don't, you will be banished to an island of spiritual infancy, worse yet, you may not even truly know Christ.

May I also encourage each of you that know and love Christ, make these seven pillars of the church, seven pillars of your life, ok? This isn't just for this *group* because we as individuals make up the body of Christ. Never forget that.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for these eternal truths. I pray that You will cause the seeds of everything that has been said according to Your word to bear much fruit in our lives that You might be glorified, that sinners might be converted. We commit it all to You because indeed You are our living head, our Lord, our Master, our Savior. And it's in Your name that we pray, amen.

Satan's Strategy for Church Growth Part 4

Selected Passages

May 19, 2013

Dr. David Harrell