

How Satan Destroys a Church - Part 5 (The Frog That Could Fly)

by Don Courville

The sermon warns against the wisdom of the world and encourages the church to operate by the wisdom of God, prioritizing spiritual growth and obedience to God over material success and human achievement.

Duration: 57:19

Scripture: Colossians 1:11

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his experiences at a fishing dock and draws a parallel between fishermen fixing their nets and people staying focused on their tasks. He emphasizes the importance of love and how it should be demonstrated, referencing the book of Revelation. The speaker also highlights the significance of prioritizing people over material possessions, sharing a personal anecdote about a time when he had to choose between ministry and work. He concludes by discussing the early church's growth through prayer and reliance on Jesus, contrasting it with the modern focus on increasing attendance and financial success.

Transcript

Turn in your Bibles to the book of 1st Corinthians. 1st Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, and 3rd Corinthians have a lot to do with a certain subject. And that subject is wisdom.

This is the fourth message in the series on how Satan destroys the church. And the title of this is The Frog That Could Fly. I had one young lady come up this morning inquiring about that.

That story, how many of you have heard that story before? It's been around a long time. Isaiah knows it. He knows how a frog can fly, don't you? See, he's pretty smart.

But before I tell you the story, let's look at some verses in 1st Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, and 3rd Corinthians. In 1st Corinthians, chapter 1, all down to about verse 17. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Notice the word wisdom. Not with the wisdom of words. Or we could say the wisdom of the world.

And why was that? Because he said the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Had not God made foolish, what? The wisdom of the world.

In verse 21. For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God. For it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. Where was this book written? I mean, who was it written to? It was written to the Corinthians. What were the Greeks known for? Their wisdom.

And so, he's going to talk about it. And he goes on down in 23. He talks about Christ being crucified.

We preach Christ crucified unto the Jews, a stumbling block. But unto the Greeks it's what? Foolishness. And then 24.

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. So there's a wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. And he goes on down to verse 30.

But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. And if you slip down to chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.

With man's wisdom. Declaring unto you the testimony of God. And slip down to verse 4. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

Now Paul knew what it was to use that type of speech. Because I believe he was a powerful man in the ways of the world. Even in the religious world that he lived in before he got saved.

In verse 5. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. How be it? Verse 6. We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world. In other words, around those that are mature in Christ, he would speak the wisdom of God.

Which was Christ. Christ was the central thing of his life. And if you come on down to, oh, say, let's slip over into verse 14.

Well, 13. Let's pick up in 13. He's talking about the things of the Spirit of God.

And then he comes down in 13. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.

For they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who had known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Now, I want you to notice he said that a natural man will not receive the things of the Spirit of God. He will not receive the things of the Holy Spirit. And then in chapter 3, in verse 19.

Let's start off in 18. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

Therefore, let no man glory in men, for all things are yours. Now, I want to say something and then we're going to pray. And then I'll tell you this little story.

Our churches today, are they operating by the wisdom of the world? Or are they operating by the Spirit of God's wisdom? I'll just ask you that question. We have the fruit of wisdom manifest. It will be the fruit of the world.

It will have its fruit. We have the fruit of God's wisdom. It will have its fruit.

Let's pray. Now, Lord, thank You for the insight that You give us this morning in Thy Word. And we ask that the Spirit of God would open up our hearts as we realize, Father, that we are in trouble.

Our churches are in trouble. Our churches are corrupted and have become places of kingdoms of man's wisdom. Operating with the supposed outlook and putting forth of working for God.

And we want to be right. And now, Father, I ask that You would show us if there's anything in our hearts. And if there's anything in our church that we need to change that's not right.

That's not of Your wisdom that You'd show us. And we ask that the Spirit of God would just open up to us this morning. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Now, this is a make-believe story, boys and girls. It's not true. It's not real.

But it's going to be used to give a point, an illustration. Because frogs can't really fly. They don't have wings.

And frogs don't talk. We've heard of maybe a parrot talking or something like that. And there's one donkey, at least in the Bible we know, that talked.

So, this is not real. But there was a story that went out. And it was a make-believe story somewhere.

And I don't know who made it up. It was sort of a silly story. About how one day there was a frog that wanted to fly.

But he couldn't do it. He watched the birds fly and everything around. And so, he got this bright idea that he was going to fly.

So, he went and got himself a branch. And come over and found two crows. And talked those two crows into grabbing a hold on each end of that branch.

And he was going to grab a hold of the branch with his mouth. And they were going to take off and fly. And he thought he could fly like that.

And so, here's what they did. Those crows jumped on each end of the branch. He got down there and got his mouth.

And you know, a frog can hang on pretty good. He's got a sticky tongue. And so, he wrapped his tongue around that branch.

All right, guys, let's go! And so, they took off. And they're going down the runway. It probably looked pretty funny.

Flop, flop, flop, flop. And they're trying to get this frog off the ground. He's kicking and popping.

So, he can try to help them. It looked like quite a funny sight. But pretty soon, guess what happened? Those crows got enough speed and momentum going to where they got that frog off the air.

Up in the air. And boy, his eyes are about that big. He's flying.

And so, he lets his legs hang out in the back so they won't drag. And you know, they got them big old flippers back there. So, they could use those things to try to guide.

Of course, those crows, they're going to go wherever they want. But, you know, pretty soon, he's up there. And they are flying around.

And all the other animals are looking up at this frog flying in the air. And then, all of a sudden, he's up there. And his eyes are big.

And he's got a big grin. And he is flying for the first time. So, he is a frog that can fly.

It's just one little problem. And no, it wasn't the landing, so to say. Because they didn't get that opportunity.

You see, they're flying up there. And all of a sudden, one of his friends looks up there. And he says, look at that frog fly.

I wonder whose idea that was. And, of course, you know what that frog did. He opened his mouth.

And he says, mine. Now, that's a goofy story, isn't it? But that's about the equivalent of what we try to do in our churches. We try to do things our way.

Now, this is going to really fit in pretty good a little bit later on with some of the things. As I've been thinking on this, I'm going to get into a little bit of it. Today, I won't get into very much heavy stuff.

But I'm going to get into some stuff, I think, that should help us understand a little bit by what's going on. If we're not saved by the wisdom of man, why do we try to run our churches by the wisdom of man? Do you understand what I'm saying? A lot that goes on is from the wisdom of man in our lives. A lot.

And I'm going to explain that to you as we go along here. One of the evidences of operating our lives and our churches by the wisdom of man, or by the wisdom of the world, is that we operate without much prayer. Prayer is the fuel and the wisdom of God, how we stay connected with God.

And so, if we're not saved by the wisdom of man, why do we think we can run our churches or our lives without the wisdom of God? Well, a little bit will do. You know, if we put as much fuel in our car to drive in proportion to the amount of prayer that we put in to govern our lives, how many of us will not go very far? Now, as we go through here and we look at wisdom, we may find out there are some things in our lives that we're not very wise about. All of my failures and all of my flops and all of those types of things have come out of the operating of my life, spiritual life or whatever, outside of the wisdom of God.

Just a guaranteed program of failure is trying to do it your way. Now, this wisdom of the world, we went through here. I was going to read all of these things, but this wisdom of the world, I was going back to 1 Corinthians 2.12. I think that was where it was.

Now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. It's an amazing thing that we can get along with God and we can get steeled with the word of God and we can have God talk to us inside of our spirit and we can get all kinds of insight into things. It's amazing, if we'll get quite.

It's really amazing how much we can get. And he said, not with fleshly wisdom. That's from the fallen nature.

I want to give you a quote. I've got a little book I picked up here a few weeks ago by E.M. Bounce on the weapon of prayer. Now, listen to this.

He said, all great leaders for God have fashioned their leadership in the wrestlings of their prayer closets. Many great people have led and molded the church without being great in prayer, but they were great only in their plans, great for their opinions, great for their organization, great by nature of gifts, great by genius of character or character. However, they were not great for God.

All that glitters is not gold, as somebody said. You know, Paul, when he prayed, I was looking back over at 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 9. You notice the prayers of Paul. You notice how he prays.

Chapter 1 and verse 9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that you might have a great big church building. No. He said that you might be filled with knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

That was his prayer for them. And then in verse 10, he prayed that they might be able to get him a nice big motorboat. Did he? No.

That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. And then in verse 11, he prayed for what? Something else that was material? No, he said that they might be strengthened with all might according to His glorious power unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. In verse 12, giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

And then he goes into how they've been delivered from the power of Satan. But if you go down to verse 28, he said whom we preach. He's talking about Christ, whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Wherefore I also labor, striving according to His work in which worketh in me mightily. Now, I've got a statement to make. Whichever wisdom we operate our lives by, whatever wisdom we operate our lives by is going to have the fruit of that wisdom manifested.

And some of our fruit doesn't look too good sometimes. So, whichever wisdom, or let's put it like this. If we operate our lives by Christ, we'll have the fruit of Christ.

If we operate our lives by the wisdom of the world, we'll have that fruit. Now, somewhere along the line, we're going to go into this, but let me just take you back over to Prime the Pump when we do get into it.

Because of the wisdom of man, the wisdom of this world, and operating our life into this, it has its fruit.

You say, fruit? What are you talking about? Well, listen to this. This comes from James 3, in verse 13. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

We're going to have the fruit of meekness, kindness, gentleness, and all of those things. But if you have bitter envy and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth, this wisdom... Look at that. There's the fruit of envy, strife, and bitterness.

You have this bitter envy and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth, this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish. We can have a frog flying operation going on. But it's our deal.

It's our program. And sometimes it's our church. Look at verse 15.

This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish. Where do some of these ideas come from? We're going to go into some things. And then he says here's some more.

For where envy and strife is, there is confusion in every evil work. Now we're going to cover some things a little bit here as we go into this. Now, I want to give you several observations on how Satan destroys the church.

And basically, you can put it all in a nutshell. It's just take us away from the centrality of Christ. Just take us away from the centrality of Christ and get us sidetracked onto whatever else you can imagine.

But I want to start off by giving you a quote from Ian Bounds again, another one. And he says this, The devil is a hydra-headed monster, but he is hydra-headed in plans and wisdom as well as in monstrosities. His master and supreme effort is to get control of the church, not destroy its organization, but to abate and pervert its divine ends.

This he does in the most insidious ways, seemingly innocent. No startling change, nothing to shock nor alarm. Sometimes a revolutionizing and destructive change is introduced under the disguise of a greater zeal for Christ's glory, introduced by someone high in church honor.

Often it occurs that the advocate of these measures is totally ignorant of the fact that the tendency is subversive. It's subversive because it's undermining the authority of Christ, and it's undermining not only the authority of Christ, but the preeminence of Christ. And he goes on to say, One of the schemes of Satan is to debase and pervert One of the schemes of Satan to debase and pervert is to establish a wrong estimate of church strength.

Now we're going to talk about this a little bit. Wrong estimate of church strength. And that's my first point, by having a false measurement of church power.

Now let me go on a little bit here. If he can press the material to the front, if he can tabulate these forces so as to make them imposing and aggregating its commands, our end command, influence and demand, he has secured his end. A number of years ago, I was with a man down in the south.

And he wanted to take me over to show me a building. And he did. He took me over and showed me this huge family life center that was being built in a major church in the area of our denomination that I was

raised in.

And it was really this big thing, this big church was hurting all the other little churches around in the town because people were gravitating there. This building, I said, wow, that must be \$20 million. He said, why don't you try \$27 million? It was a family life center.

Now there's nothing wrong with family life centers. There's nothing wrong with buildings. There's nothing wrong with programs and all of that unless the centrality of Christ is removed.

And there's the subtlety of the things that we do. These things may be harmless in themselves, but if Christ is moved to the side or completely out, then it's our deal. Now, why do you say that? Because, I say, because we are getting off of Christ.

And if we're off Christ, we're off the track. And if we're off the track, we're not going anywhere. And if we're not going anywhere, what's the purpose? It's all for our glory.

And here's how we can tell if Christ is being prominent in what we're doing. Does He get the glory? Does He get the glory from it? Now, we're just starting on this. So, if we substitute the material and all this prestige for the spiritual or Christ, we are destroyed.

We have destroyed ourselves. Self-destruction. I'm going to get into some illustrations of this.

You know, think about this. This would not happen if Jesus was present, would it? It does. It has.

And it will. Imagine, Jesus is in Jerusalem and He's got His disciples and they say, Lord, come on over here. We want to show you this building.

Would that ever happen? It did happen. And they took Him over to look at all of this. And you go back over.

Matthew and Mark, they both talked about that. How the Lord was taken over there and they wanted to show Him all of these things, these buildings and all of that. And I can't remember where it was.

I thought I marked one. Maybe I've got one here. Anyway, He taught them that they were going to be all torn down.

All the stones were going to be removed. As far as I know, they haven't all. That was what, Matthew 24, 1 and 2. There it was.

And Jesus went out and departed from the temple and His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. As far as I know, all the stones have not been taken down because they've got the wailing wall there and they still go back there and worship there.

But even His disciples said, Lord, we want to show you this. This is really something. Maybe He hadn't been to town before.

I don't know why they're doing that. Would any of God's great leaders do something like that? Besides the disciples, sure, they maybe didn't quite understand. But what about the day that David came and he said

he wanted to number the people? And Joab asked him this question.

He said, Why then doth my Lord require this thing? Because in the Mosaic economy, God had made it very plain that they were warned against and guarded. And they were warned against this thing of counting upon their own strength. So Joab said, Why do you want to do this? May God just bless you mighty, but don't do that.

Because to count was to estimate your strength and your power. And God doesn't want us counting on our strength and our power. He makes us weak so that we will count on Him.

And this is something I began to pick up on. And remember I told you I've got all these stories and illustrations I've picked up from around the country going into all these churches and meeting with all these pastors and things and like this. But when I began to do this over a period of time, and I began to hear this over and over and over, just like clockwork, I'd get off the plane someplace or I'd drive into town and I'd get to meet with the pastor or whatever.

I'd meet with pastors and we'd be talking about the meetings or we'd be talking about getting the meeting ready in the community for revival meetings. They would ask me these two questions. One, they would say, how big is your church? I got asked that question yesterday.

I don't have a church. Zero. I mean, I've got eight in my family.

But how big is your church and what school did you go to? I'm going to come back to that maybe in a little bit and talk about that. But there's a reason that they do that. And that's because when we go through the schools and I had my six years in the schools and whatever, we are programmed not to keep Christ prominent, but we are programmed to push ourselves and make ourselves look big and good.

And so we're going to go into these things, why we do these things. So we substitute these things. Now, God said, not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.

Or by Christ, we would say. Didn't anybody else ever do this? Well, you go through the Scripture and you look around. By the way, when God came along to Gideon, Gideon's fixing to go have a fight with the enemy.

And he's got this great big old army gathered up. Okay, we're ready to go. God comes along and said, wait, I think you've got too many.

Let's thin down the crowd. And so, you know, the story, by the time they got them all thinned down, they were down to 300 in Gideon. What's the Scripture say? What did God say? That's in Judges 7 and 1, by the way.

In verse 2, He said, lest Israel vaunt themselves. That means to glorify oneself, to boast. We wonder, why is God chopping on us all the time? He's trying to get us down to size.

You know what size He wants us at? Down to nothing. So He can be something. But as long as we are something, He is nothing.

And so when we come along, I belong to the first, the best, the biggest Baptist church in town, in the county. We've got a gym as big as your little old town. And all this other stuff.

Are we boasting in Christ? Or boasting in our stuff? This is what the enemy uses to destroy our church. I like this story. I think probably a lot of us have heard that story about the pastor down in Texas.

He finally got a hold of something. He came back to his people and he says, you know that big billboard down there on the highway so people can see how great we are? You know the TV advertising that we've got and the radio? So they can hear about how great we are, we're going to get rid of it all. And so if they're going to know how great they are, how are they going to find out? He's bringing them out of the world and the ways of the world and the methods of the world and bringing them back to Christ.

How do you know that they were getting back to Christ? I'll tell you how you can tell that they were getting back to Christ. By the fruit that began to happen. Because they began to reach into people's lives personally.

They took their money off the billboards and out of the air and put their money down there on the ground and they helped put furniture in a lady's house. They would buy vehicles for people, whatever. They would minister to people, pay hospital bills.

They were putting their money where their heart was not before. They were putting it right out there where it needed to be. And there was a great growth, a great change.

Well, we've got large buildings, we've got large crowds, and we've got large budgets. By the way, large debts would be it. And all these things.

And what this pastor learned after all these years is the same thing that the Scriptures have been teaching us is that people are more important than things. Many years ago, back when I was doing missionary work and getting a church started, I had a little business going. And one day I needed to be two places at once.

I needed to be somewhere in the area of ministry with people, but also I had a job going and I had some men working with me. And I had one of the men with me and I remember being in my garage and I said, What are we going to do? And he said this and I never forgot it. He said, People are more important than things.

I said, You're right. Let's go minister. People are more important than things.

And how can you tell if Satan is destroying your life, destroying your church? It's when things become more important than people. Do you know that doctrines to some of us could become more important than people? It wouldn't be possible, would it, that we would destroy a church for our supposed doctrinal view, would it? And if that happens, I wonder who's behind all of that. Wow! I wonder how much of this stuff that goes on is just no different from that frog trying to fly.

But somewhere along the line, if it's our idea and if it's from our wisdom, we're going to open our mouth and we're going to have a big splat. And we do. Well, we glory in these things.

We glory in these things. Do you know if we glory in these things why Jesus came back on them and He said He was going to destroy all those things? Because what He's basically saying is if we glory in things, we are being deceived, we've been diverted, and we will be depraved. Because we are deceived and we're diverted from God's way and we become depraved.

I remember it was probably about a year and a half ago, I was down in a huge church down in the south, the southeast part of the country at a conference. And this pastor got up, and I mean this auditorium was beautiful. It was a beautiful thing.

I didn't know how they got it or whatever, but the pastor, he basically said, would you look around at this beautiful building? He said, I call it my hall of shame. My hall of shame. Because he did that before he learned about the wisdom of God.

And I guess by saying that, he's got his church into a lot of debt. I remember being with the pastor over 20 years ago. And I went into that church for a week and that was really fun because I got to stay in the house of Otto Conning.

But I was talking with that pastor and he shared his heart how he had many opportunities to go out and minister. But he said, I stay home because I've got this church in a lot of debt on this building and I feel obligated to stay here and work until we get it out of debt, and so I won't travel much. It was his hall of shame.

Where do we learn to do those things? It's the wisdom of the world. It's the wisdom of the world. I think it was just this week I heard either last week and my brain's fuzzy on this.

Oh yeah, it's coming back a little bit of it. About many times givers in the churches hold back. They're waiting to see what they're going to do about a building program.

And if they say, okay, listen, we don't have enough, but we need to get this done, we're going to go to the bank and get some money and get it finished. And many times givers are back there waiting to see. And if they say, wait, we're not going to go forward until we've got the money, then the giver will step forward and say, you've got it.

Now, givers can be wrong in by holding back, putting the pressure on the others to try to get this, they need to get it done, and maybe the givers need to step forward and say, God has spoke to me about getting it done. It's done. Let's move ahead.

And so it can go wrong both ways in that area. Let me share two things about this area. Because we're getting into the area of wisdom of the world.

We're talking about worldliness. Satan will destroy us if we operate our lives according to the world. That's worldliness.

Now, let me give you one of the ways. If we boast of our spirituality by the measure of things. I remember being judged by somebody in particular years.

It just went by year after year after year. I did ask this question. How big is your salary? You don't want to know.

But they were saying, because I was in mission work a lot. How big is your salary? How large is your church? And these type of things. Because they equated, because of the wisdom of the world in their religious setting, they equated success with a large salary.

I remember one time, a church called me. We were traveling on back up into Arkansas to come back to that church. They offered us a huge salary.

They had a lot of money. They had an oil well. And God, you know what He said to me? He said, don't you look back.

I mean, it would have been the equivalent today of probably \$60,000, \$75,000 a year. And God said, don't you look back. You keep on going.

Let me go through these things. True strength lies in a church's recognition of its weakness and need for Christ. True strength lies in a church's 1. recognition of its weakness and need for Christ.

2. Praying out of desperation to Christ. And 3. Our strength lies in our piety and our holiness, at least striving for that with Christ. That's our strength.

Not all of these buildings. Now, we've got a building here that's pretty large. I guess a couple times there have been 400 people in here at our family camp.

And you might say, wow, you're really going somewhere. No. We just had a bunch of people here for family camp.

Our society is sick. And what the world needs to see the medicine, the cure in us. But what happens when they look at the church? They see themselves reflected back.

And inside the world goes, eh, if that's what they've got, I don't need that. That's what I've got. And that's why I'm so messed up.

They need Jesus. They don't need to see all of our stuff. Here's the second thing.

We boast about spirituality by the measure of these things, and not Christ, but two, which look like a fashion show. Look like a fashion show. You say, why are we going to get off into that? Ian Bowne said, no more fatal or deadly symptoms can be seen in a church than this transition of its strength from spiritual to material, from the Holy Ghost to the world.

Is it important to you that you look like the world, especially if you come to church? This doesn't apply to us maybe, but I've been to some churches where I go in there and I look why these Christians are dressing just like Hollywood or just like whatever one of them fancy stores is or whatever. Well, let me say something about this. I was looking at something that Ian Bowne said again, because Ian Bowne has a book on how Satan destroys the church.

A very rare book. But he calls what's happening, and he said it a long time ago, so what's going on now is very much more. But he says what's going on is men are making churches into habitations for devils.

And they're doing that by turning the church over to men's leaders. And I'm going to talk to you about that a little bit later on. But I wanted to talk about this.

The church is to be preeminently Christ-centered, right? It's to be a spiritual institution. It's to be an institution that is created for the indwelling of Christ, for the Holy Spirit to lead. We get our life from that.

We're to be possessed and directed by the Spirit of God. Ian Bowne said her machinery, her rites, her forms, her services, and officers are to have no comeliness, no power within themselves, save as they are dispositions and channels of the Holy Spirit. It is in His indwelling and inspiration which makes its divine being and secure its divine end.

If the devil can by any method shut the Holy Spirit out from the church, he has effectually barred the church from being God's church on earth. And he accomplishes this by retiring from the church the agencies or agents which the Holy Spirit uses and displaces them by the natural. You see, what the frog was trying to do was not natural.

And what we are trained to do in our seminaries and Bible schools is to artificially stimulate growth. It's not natural. And so if we're not growing naturally, what do you do? Well, you give your church a big old shot of hormones to make it grow.

We did a program. I remember a number of years ago, we went to a church, some kind of music thing or whatever, and some guy cornered us out in the parking lot. He saw our large family coming and his eyeballs got big.

Hey, this is great. Come over. Get us all to wear a little red ribbon.

I think it was. Because they had a contest going. Whoever could get the most people to come into the church, they're trying to grow with red ribbons.

And I thought, Lord, this is crazy. This is sick. But this is what we are being programmed in our society is to have artificial growth.

And this is why we are dying. He went on to say, "...and displaces them by the natural, which are rarely, if ever, the media of His energy." Christ announced the universal and invariable law when He said, "...that which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." So if we grow our churches according to the flesh, this is why we've got godly Christians all over the country roaming around trying to find a church to go to because they do not fit in. If they are spiritual, they do not fit into the natural.

And so they have to come out of it. But we have great prayerlessness. Then he just goes on, "...if Satan can by any method retire a man and put in a man..." What he's saying is if he can get the praying people pushed to the side and get in the prominent people, the powerful people, the important people, the rich people to control the church, he can destroy it.

"...if Satan can by any method retire the spiritual man and put in a man of no prayerfulness, plausible, eloquent, and popular, the church may seem to have gained, but it has gained by the substitution of the natural for spiritual forces." This is a whole other subject, but I'll say this on it. And I've got some things over here on this. One time I went into a church, and I can't remember if I told you this story or not, but it's been one of my favorites.

And I think later on I talked with the man that I substituted. As a matter of fact, I think I counseled him. We went into this little church down in the south where I was raised.

And I was a last-minute fill-in. Did I tell you that story? I was a last-minute fill-in because Dr. So-and-so from a seminary couldn't make it. And my pastor got me put in there, and so I preached.

I don't know what I preached. Probably wasn't very good. Who knows? Anyway, I just never forgot this because this was so good.

I'm done, and I don't usually go back to the back. I usually stay up in the front. If somebody wants to come up and talk or pray, we'll do it.

So, these two little old ladies come trotting down the aisle. I'm standing in front of the pulpit, and I watched them come. And they come up there, and they said, Oh, Dr. So-and-so, this was so good.

It was so wonderful. Just a wonderful message, Dr. So-and-so, you had. They got there late, I guess, or whatever and didn't understand that Dr. So-and-so didn't make it.

Little Dr. Nobody was there. Nobody, nothing. And so they went on for a few minutes, and I thought, respective persons.

Well, ladies, that was nice of you to come. I appreciate that everything. I'm sorry to inform you, but I'm not Dr. So-and-so.

Something come up and he couldn't make it. And they both went, Oh, and turned around and walked out. And I watched them walk.

And I thought, Hey, wait a minute. Maybe I got a doctor's degree. Who knows? But I don't.

That is the type of stuff that goes on in our churches. Respective persons. If we get over into the envy and all of that other stuff.

Well, the early church, Peter said, silver and gold have I none. But what did they have? He said, but such as I have, I'll give you. What did he have? He had Jesus.

So he gave them Jesus. What do we have? You can't give what you don't have. Are we going to give the world what the world already has? They already got their big buildings.

They already got their big debts. They want something to liberate them from all of that, even though they come in and they put on the pretense. So how does Satan destroy the church? By taking these things and substituting Christ.

A false measure of power. Let me say this a little bit about a false measure of performance. The early church grew by sitting around and thinking, Okay, all right, Peter, you take this section of town.

You can this town. John, you take this section of town. Oh, yeah, Andrew, here, you take the balloons and go get over in that section of town.

There's a lot of kids. And here's the handout folders. And you tell them we're going to have a big free meal, big barbecue.

And okay, you guys, you're ready? Oh, by the way, oh, hold it. Let's pray. God bless our frog endeavor.

Okay, boys, go. No, they were on their face. They were seeking God.

They were in prayer. They were fasting. God, what do we do? What's the next direction we go? What do you want us to do? Where do we go? Who do we send here? Who do we do? And they got their directions from Jesus out of prayer.

And they went. And they took the town. And they didn't use one balloon.

Not one balloon. So the early church grew by souls saved. The early church grew by giving them Jesus.

Today, we're working on how many people can we get them in? Can we cram more people in? Oh, we've got to have more people. Alright, staff, listen. We've got to get more people in.

Here's what our plan is this week. Because we've got ourselves, we've got some big bills we've got to pray. So we get more people in.

Pass the offering plate twice. I know one evangelist. He was out in California, a friend of mine.

He went in a church out there and he said that pastor passed the offering plate three times until he got the amount of money he wanted. Can you believe that? It's dead. We've got a box in the back.

That's all there is. And if we get more spiritual, we may hide it in the back room. Like one church I was in Pennsylvania, Harrisburg area.

Went in there and said, what do you do about offerings? He said, we don't take an offering. We've got a box. Where's your box? He said, oh, it's way downstairs, way back in the back room in the corner.

I said, praise the Lord, that's my kind of church. You get lost trying to find it down there. If people want to give, they're going to have to find it.

So the early church grew by Jesus being there. So they didn't have the gimmicks. They didn't have the balloons.

They didn't have the entertainment. They probably didn't even bring in celebrities. How did they ever do it? How did they ever make it? They didn't have these programs and all of this stuff and these contests.

Bake sales, lotteries, you just name it. What did they have? All they had was Jesus. That's all we need.

And so just say simple. You know, we started off on this series, on this thing. Remember, the basis of the home is marriage.

The basis of marriage is a lifelong relationship. And the basis of a lifelong relationship is agreement. Eve Lossett wrote this down.

When we, like Eve, have been deceived from our lowly, simple, holy walk with Jesus, we have missed it. When we, like Eve, have been deceived from our lowly, simple, holy church life for the shows and the worldly ways of the devil, we die. And so then we come back and we say some churches die in battle and some churches die in flames, but most churches die inch by inch as they play silly little games.

How does Satan destroy the church? Very simply, he just gets Christ out of the center of the church. I'm going to close up with these things. It's so amazing that we can be so dumb.

Isn't it? We are no different than that dumb frog by our methods. That's the methods of the world. And sooner or later, we're going to open our mouth and we're going to crash.

Revelation 3, verse 17. Sad story. This is to the angel of the church of Laodicea.

Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I'd rather be as poor as a church mouse and have Jesus. I'd rather have just a few little people to worship with and to serve God with and have Jesus than have hundreds or thousands of people in all the worldly ways.

When we have Jesus, we have all we need. Our schools program us, the pastors, to go many times in the ways of the world. And not all that is in there is bad.

They do a lot of good teaching and a lot of good things. But a lot of the basics were missing. Matter of fact, the key basics were missing.

To depend on God by prayer. To depend on God by prayer. Someone said this, and I don't know who said it.

It is a damning delusion to judge the condition of the church by its material exhibits and activities or size. And that's what we've been talking about. Where does our strength lie? It lies in Jesus.

If we lose Jesus, we don't have anything. So strength lies in our prayer activity, our people contact, our evangelism, our outreach, our ministry to each other. And how do we do this? We do it out of weakness.

We do it in humility. We do it in gentleness. All of this is the product of the Spirit of God living and working through us.

And we do it in our kindness. It's Jesus. He's the One that works out of our weakness.

And wasn't this what the Apostle Paul was told? He was trying to get rid of that thorn in the flesh. And many times we're trying to do the same thing. And Jesus came back and said, I'm not going to do it.

I'm not going to get rid of your thorn in the flesh. And that's when Paul figured out that when he was weak, he was strong. But if we build ourselves up to be strong and big with all our buildings and our programs and our activities, and they may not necessarily be wrong, but we can just squeeze Jesus right out.

You know, the Spirit of God is so gentle. This is why we need in our church those that are very gentle, that have a sensitive spirit. Especially the prophet types.

We sort of go through like a bull in a china shop many times. We all need each other. We all need each other.

Because Christ lives through your gifting. He lives through your life. He lives through each of us and each of us together.

You know what? We can get along as long as we're all focused on Christ. But as soon as one of us gets off or we both get off, I guarantee you we're going to fight. And what do fishermen do? I remember going over into Patmos.

I went there a couple of times. And I remember sitting out there on the docks. There would be the fishermen.

You know what they were doing? They were fixing their nets. They were busy. And you know what they did? If they didn't fish and fix their nets, they fought.

That's what we all do. That's what everybody does. If we're not focused on what we're supposed to be doing, we'll do something we shouldn't be doing.

And the love that comes out of Jesus would be demonstrated. By the way, this is such a sad thing. It's such a sad, sad thing.

But this is where it starts. And I'm going to close down on this. This is where it starts.

In the book of Revelation, in chapter 2, And unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write these things, saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Where is Jesus? He's right in the middle. I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil.

Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars, and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake, hast labored, and hast not faded. You boys have been right on track. You're really doing good.

Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee. What's that, Lord? What? We're doing everything we possibly can. We're trying to stay separated from the world.

We're trying to dress white. We're trying to do everything. And he says, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

We can have all of these outward things right. But yet, again, we can move into trying to operate without the wisdom of God if we cease to love Him. Let's pray.

O Lord, I just want to thank You for Your presence. And thank You that You said You'd never leave us. And Lord, I confess, I've been caught up, and I can still get caught up in a lot of this.

And getting degrees, and having numbers, and nickels, and buildings, and all of this. When what You want is our hearts. You want us to be focused on You.

And You said in Your Word, Hearing is my Father glorified, that You bear much fruit, so shall You be my disciples. Lord, may we have that fruit that only You can produce. Lord, as we're going through this series of how Satan destroys the church, may our hearts be broke if You have pointed out something in our own lives.

Because we've probably all done something wrong in our walk with You. There's probably not a one of us that have walked perfect. But may we be humble so that we can be holy.

Because we know that we'll never be holy as long as we are proud and boasting on other things other than our Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross to save us from our sins. And Father, if there's someone listening today that needs to humble themselves before You about their lost condition, about their empty life, about how really they are living their lives for themselves, I pray at the Spirit of God, Father, would You just work in their hearts to draw them to Yourself. Thank You for the day that You broke my heart and You broke into my empty life.

And I pray that You would do that for them even right now. As they surrender their vain, empty life and ask You to fill their life with Yourself. Thank You for loving us.

Thank You for rising from the grave. Thank You for all that You have done for us. And I pray, Father, that somehow through this little message and through this church and through our lives You can just get all the glory.

As A.W. Tozer said, would You glorify Yourself in our lives at our expense and send us the bill. In Jesus' name.

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