

The Church Triumphant

by Michael Catt

The Church triumphant stands against false teachers, follows the pattern of Christ, and stands firm in the midst of opposition and persecution.

Duration: 53:03

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 16:13, Ephesians 6:11, Philippians 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 3:8, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 1 Peter 5:12

Topics: "Church"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being holy and standing firm in the faith. He draws inspiration from the image of Roman soldiers who never retreated and were willing to die for their cause. The speaker also warns against false teachings and false prophets within the church, urging believers to be discerning and vigilant. He concludes by expressing his deep concern for those who deny the gospel and emphasizing the need for spiritual discernment.

Transcript

Because, you know, Paul was living in a day when the Church was under attack. There were Judaizers, there were legalists, there was the Roman government. A lot of things were bombarding in on the Church, and Paul was concerned about the health of the Church.

Paul would have never been a success in the Southern Baptist Convention, because everywhere he went he got run out of town. He'd have never been asked to preach at the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference. He'd have never been asked to be the chairman of the Committee on Committees.

We certainly wouldn't have considered him to be the head of one of our leading denominational agencies, because, after all, he had a tainted reputation. When Paul showed up, people got sad, mad, or glad, but they never were the same. And Paul was concerned about what was happening to the Church.

He's toward the end of his life, and he's writing this book of Philippians, and he's dealing with the Church and the opposition that it's facing. And I want to talk to you in just a few moments about the Church triumphant, and what we have to do to make sure that the Church stays the Church, because I think the Church is in danger today. It may not be as in danger as much overseas as it is in America, but it's all polished up today, and I'm not sure that if Jesus walked in most churches he would recognize what's going on.

He'd have to go find the remnant. He'd have to find the people that are really in tune with him and walking with him, because not everybody that goes to church loves God. I heard Manly Beasley say one time, not everything that happens within the house of God is of God.

And just because you put a steeple on it, just because you're on religious television, just because that you have a name and are recognized and have your book in a Christian bookstore, doesn't mean you're preaching the gospel. There's a lot going on today that is a compromise of what God's Word says, and if there's one thing we want to do in this conference is to remember that the old truths are still true. They may be old, but if some people heard them, they'd become new.

And we need to stay by it and stick to it. So Philippians chapter 3 and verse 17. Brethren, join in following my example and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

It's what Gary preached about this morning about Whitfield. There have been patterns cut out for us of lives that we are to follow. For many walk, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their appetite, whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things, for our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, whom I long to see, my joy and my crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. I think a lot of what's happening in the church today is anemic. We've got mega churches and we've got big churches.

I go to a meeting every year called Large Church Roundtable and then I go to another one called the Mega Church Conference. I always get uptight when I talk to these guys. Hey, how you doing? Man, you know how many we had in Sunday school last week? And I want to say, I really don't give a rip who you had in Sunday school last week.

Because you can be 20 miles wide and an inch deep. That doesn't mean you've got a church. I'll tell you something, folks, when the persecution comes to America, we're going to find out where the real church is.

A lot of these mega churches are not going to survive. We're considered a big church, but a lot of these mega churches are not going to survive because they're being fed pabulum and baby food, if they're even being fed food at all. Because we're trying to be cute.

We're trying to make sure everybody's got how to have a better marriage and how to have a happy home and how to raise kids that never have snotty noses and how to carpool for Jesus. We've got all these things. Oh, I want to take notes on that.

But you say, how to be holy? I don't think I'm going to come back for that. That doesn't sound interesting. That's not meeting my needs.

That doesn't seem practical. And Paul is chained to a Roman prisoner, but really he's chained to God. And he's bound up with God, but he's watching these Roman soldiers, and he sees them and he hears their battle stories, and he sees the scars on their faces and their arms, and he sees them with those vests and the helmets and all of their armor that they would wear to protect themselves in battle.

And a Roman soldier never knew retreat. They would rather die than run. Defeat was not an option for them.

And Paul takes that image, and he baptizes it, and he says, These are the kind of men and women we're supposed to be for Christ. We're supposed to be soldiers in the army of God. And so he uses this phrase, to stand firm.

Paul uses that a number of times. Let me just give you some references for the sake of time. 1 Corinthians 16.13, he says we're to stand firm in the faith.

In Ephesians 6.11, we're to stand firm in the fight. 1 Thessalonians 3.8, we're to stand firm in the Lord. 2 Thessalonians 2.15, we're to stand firm in the Word.

And 1 Peter 5.12, we're to stand firm in the true grace of God. The word stand firm means that somebody's trying to knock us off balance. Somebody's trying to knock us out of kilter.

Somebody's trying to push us around. And Paul says in the midst of this battle that we're in, we need to dig our heels in and stand firm on what God has said. Vance Hefner said, When I go to most churches, it looks like the army of the Lord is AWOL.

They're absent without leave. And he said, You're trying to recruit more people to serve in the army when it looks like most of them have already defected. And he said this, If the church would just be the church, and if Christians would just be Christians, nothing could halt our onward march.

And so Paul is writing to people that he loves. He's got a pastor's heart. He says, You're my beloved, my dearly beloved, my beloved.

We need to read this because Paul had a heart for the church. He had a heart for the believers that were assembled together, the ecclesia, the called out ones. And so the first thing about a church triumphant is it stands against false teachers.

False teachers. There's two dangers to the church. And that's one is wolves that are on the outside.

And the second one is false teachers on the inside. We can recognize the wolves on the outside. Sometimes it's hard to recognize the false teachers on the inside.

He says, I have often told you. The imperfect tense there means I've not just told you. I continue to tell you you need to watch out for this stuff.

I know our folks at Sherwood get tired of me talking about this kind of stuff because I've been there 17 years, and they think I'm a broken record. But Paul sounded like a broken record too because he said, I'm telling you, I'm telling you, I'm telling you, I'm telling you, there are enemies of the cross of Christ inside the church. There are people that deny the gospel of Jesus Christ inside the church.

There are people that are false prophets inside the church. You need to be aware of what's going on in the church, and you need to have spiritual eyes. And look at what he says, I now tell you even weeping.

It broke his heart. He didn't have an agenda. He wasn't trying to start a political action campaign against these people.

It was a brokenhearted response of Paul. Paul was not popular, but just because you're popular doesn't mean you're a good preacher. I'm not going to offend anybody, but I'm about to say something that probably will.

I've had people come up to me. In fact, I had a lady in my office two weeks ago, and she said, Michael, I just want to tell you, my two favorite preachers are you and Joel Osteen. And I went, well, thank you.

I like to walk in a room and believe that everybody loves me. Everybody wants to talk to me. By the way, that's what he said last week in his sermon.

He defined faith as believing in yourself. That's how he defined faith. He said faith is believing in yourself.

You know, he got on Larry King and 16 times in one hour when asked a question by a man that does not know God, he said, well, Larry, I don't know. I don't know. You know, there are some times I'm not sure, but I'm never in doubt.

And you give me a chance on something like that, I'm not going to deny my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus said, you deny me before men, and I'll deny you before my Father who's in heaven. He was asked, Joel Osteen was asked by Tim Russert on Easter Sunday.

He had a panel discussion on Easter Sunday. And he was asked by Tim Russert, what does Easter mean? And this is what he said to 30,000 people, some of them that think they're going to heaven and go to die and go to hell. This is what he said.

Easter is different things to different people. Now, folks, that's not the gospel. The gospel is very clear about what Easter is, and it's not about a bunny.

It's about a resurrection. So Paul is weeping, and he says they are enemies of the cross. They are enemies of the cross.

I have a friend of mine that has been singing for years, and she went to sing at a church in California. I won't name the church, but it's got a lot of glass. And people that preach in glass churches should not preach any gospel.

So she showed up at the church, and they met her, and they said, now, we are so happy to have you here to sing, but please do not sing anything about the blood because people in California are offended by the blood. Well, folks, the blood on the cross is offensive. And so she got up, and she said, well, I knew I wasn't going to be asked back, and so she sang a cappella.

She had a track ready. It was number 18, number 2, I think. And she had a track ready, and she said, just hold that, and she sang a cappella.

The blood will never lose its power. Why? Because blood will never lose its power. I want to give you three kinds of people who are enemies of the cross.

Number one, there are people who deny and dilute the word of God. People who deny and dilute the word of God. If somebody denies the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the sinless life of Jesus Christ, the cross of Christ, and the blood atonement, the physical resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the soon coming of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, if you deny those things, you're not preaching the gospel.

They deny the essence of the faith. They deny the essentials. They say these things are not important.

They have the Thomas Jefferson theology. I'm going to go through the Bible and decide what I believe Jesus said. It's not up to me to decide what Jesus said.

God said it, and that settles it whether I believe it or not. I don't have to understand it. I mean, I don't know how a brown cow can eat green grass and give white milk, but I still drink it.

I don't know how we can walk in here and turn on a switch, and all these lights come on that will blind you if you're standing up here, but I'm not going to stand around in the dark. There are a lot of things I don't understand, but I do know this. I know whom I believe, and I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day.

I'm not going to deny the word of God, and I'm not going to dilute it to try to make somebody happy. By the way, Warren Wearsby says don't ever move a fence until you find out why it's there. People have died, have been martyred over the issue of the virgin birth and the resurrection, and now that James Cameron has discovered the tomb, you know I don't get it.

I mean, this is the 15th consecutive year that there's been a national media attack on the gospel, 15 consecutive years according to Fox News, 15 years. Now last year, I'm just having a problem. Gary, I need counseling.

I'm having a problem because last year it was in France, and Mary Magdalene was buried in France, and they had a daughter, and Jesus, you know, she left, and Dan Brown gave us the Da Vinci Code, and this year he's buried in Israel under an apartment complex, and he's buried with the Virgin Mary and with his son Judah, and Mary Magdalene is in another casket. I mean, can they just tell me which story is the real one because they obviously are making this stuff up as they go. We've had one message for 2,000 years.

By the way, folks, the easiest thing to do to destroy Christianity is disprove the resurrection. Right now, the Arabs have removed since 2000 13,000 tons of temple artifacts from underneath the temple grounds because they're taking them out into the desert, and they're scattering them out there because Yasser Arafat started in 2000 temple denial saying that there was never a temple, there was never a King David, there was never a Solomon's Temple, there was never a Herod's Temple. The only thing that's ever been there is a mosque, and they've already got German theologians who are telling them that that's true, that there was never a temple, that David was just a tribal chieftain of a small tribe.

He never had a kingdom because if they can get temple denial, they can claim Jerusalem for themselves. And there are people today who try to be politically correct and make the Muslims happy who say, well, we just need to give them what they want. Well, why don't you give the devil what he wants, and that is a denial of the Word of God.

I'm far enough on that. E.V. Hill used to say about those people, they're not liberal, they're lost. Secondly, those who add man-made laws to the Word of God, the Judaizers, the legalists who deny grace.

Now, I don't need to do a lot here, but you know what they do. They've got the nasty nine and their filthy five and their dirty dozen. You know, sin is what you do that I don't do that I don't approve of.

Sin is never what the Bible calls sin. Sin is what you do that I don't do that I don't approve of. You know how that goes.

You add to the Word of God. You don't just let the Word. It's hard enough to live up to the Word without trying to live up to laws that are man-made.

When I went to Sherwood, I started preaching after about three weeks. I grew up, cut my teeth on New American Standard, so I started preaching on New American Standard. And I'd been very clear and very open with the committee.

And I had a guy come into my office, and he just read me the Riot Act. You know, he just read me the Riot Act. He said, you know, it's just King James Schofield.

He said, that's the only authorized version. I said, did you know that version was authorized by a heretic? He said, do you know there have been 78,000, which version are you talking about? There have been 78,000 words changed since the original 1611, and you couldn't even read the 1611 version. It wouldn't even make sense to you.

And he said, well, it's Texas Receptacus. I said, well, I don't know what that means, but if you want to speak in tongues, I'm going to need to get somebody to interpret for me. And he just went on and on and on.

It was just one of those moments where I knew I wasn't going to win this battle. I mean, I just wasn't going to win it. Finally, I said, I'll tell you what, I'll preach out of the Greek, and you can follow along in whatever you want to follow along in.

But I'm going to be true to the Word of God. And by the way, there's a major error that causes problem in the church today, and that is the King James Version uses the word baptized, which is a transliteration of the Greek word baptizo, which means to dip or plunge or immerse. And the reason they didn't use immersion there was because King James was an Anglican, and it would have offended him to say immerse.

And so for fear of offending a pagan, they didn't put the word in that's supposed to be in there. Now, folks, I'm not going to die over a version. You can have whatever translation.

You need to be at home with something. I'm at home with the New American Standard. A lot of people are at home with the King James Version.

Some people are at home with the NIV. Some people are at home with the Dying Translation. That's the Living Bible.

Some people are at home with a lot. But, you know, I read a lot of different translations because I want to get the flavor of it. You need to be at home with one, but don't fight a battle over it.

It's not worth fighting a battle. I mean, women couldn't wear pants in church. You know, if you brought your tie in on Tuesday and you had pants on, ladies, you'd have to leave.

Now, folks, listen, I'll take a tie and a bikini. I mean, you know, really, I mean, if they're going to tithe, bless God. We'll give them a free T-shirt.

I mean, you know, come on. I mean, come on. Good gracious.

But we add to it. And it is the heart of a Pharisee to want to lay man-made laws on, so then we can check the box and say, see, I'm more spiritual than you. I do this.

Rather than living by the grace of God that makes us know we're all sinners and we can't live up to enough laws to please God and satisfy God and we can't do enough good things to please God and satisfy God, it is only by the grace of God and the Spirit of God that we can even breathe. So they add to the word. Thirdly, their practice licenses.

You know, you're hearing a lot of this today, and if you're not hearing it, you will hear it, about our freedom in Christ. And we're having a whole debate among 20- and 30-year-olds in the ministry, and it's one of my concerns for the ministry today is we're having this whole debate about, you know, can we drink a glass of wine at dinner? Because we're free in Christ, we ought to be able to do that. You know, can we smoke a cigar? Because we're free in Christ, we ought to be able to do that.

You know, I mean, I got saved during 60s liberalism. I mean, Jay Strack was a drug addict, came out of six broken homes. He was addicted to alcohol and drugs.

He said, you know, I got saved out of that junk. Why under grace and under God's love do I want to go back to what he saved me out of? You know what the issue is there? Just my opinion, which I highly respect. You know what the issue is there? The issue is there, how much like hell can I be and still go to heaven? How much like the world can I look and smell and still go to heaven? And some guy says, well, Spurgeon smoked cigars.

And they asked Spurgeon one day, he said, you know, do you smoke cigars to excess? And he said, well, what do you mean by excess? And so Spurgeon responded, I never smoke more than one at a time. And they didn't know what we know now about that. G. Campbell Morgan smoked cigars.

I tell you what, when you get to have the clout in the Christian community that G. Campbell Morgan and Spurgeon, go light up a cigar. Until then, keep one out of your mouth. You know, drink a glass of wine.

And I tell you what, we're going to be in the minority on this issue. This is not legalism. This is that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

And when we become like the world to reach the world, we don't reach the world because we've become like them. We need to be distinctively different. I don't mean weird, but we need to be different.

We need to be distinctively different in who we are. And this whole Libertine thing that's going on now is nothing but six of the emerging church, and there are about five different branches of that emerging church movement. But that whole movement that's going on is really just eat, drink, and be merry.

Jude says in verse 4, For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our Lord God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord. And Paul says many walk. Not a few.

Not every now and then you'll come into a town where there's a church like that. There are many who walk this way. They gather a carnal crowd and they ignore the cross.

Their God is their belly. Now, I know nobody has this but us. I know I'm the only church that has this, but please bear with me for a moment.

We actually have people in our church, and I know none of you have this, so it may be hard for you to grasp this. It may be hard. I'll talk to you later.

We have people in our church that actually have the attitude, What's in it for me? I didn't know church was about you. And they've got the spirit of preference. I prefer it to be this way.

I want it to be like I like it. I want it to be according to my style and my likes and my dislikes. Listen, folks, when you died in Christ, you are supposed to be dead.

And that means that those things don't matter and that I don't get over the dashboard on something that's a nonessential. You know, I mean, sometimes, you know, I mean, Mark and I have talked about it. Sometimes we do a song, and I like some songs better than other songs.

I can live with anything for three minutes. I mean, you ought to meet my mother-in-law. I mean, she's a liberal Methodist.

I mean, I don't know how much further you can go. She said, When I die, I want to get that Methodist symbol put on my grave. And Terry and her brother Chris, Chris is a member of our church, and we were standing around having this talk.

Well, if she was a good Methodist, that might make sense. She's not even a good Methodist. I mean, why would she want the Methodist symbol on a grave when she's not even a good Methodist? You know, she thinks being a Methodist is going to bridge club faithfully.

He says, Many walk their God is their belly. And I want to tell you, any teaching that minimizes sin or the holiness of God, our God's our belly. What's in it for me? What are you going to do for me? And he says, Whose end is destruction.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7? There are going to be a lot of people going to say, Lord, we did all this. And Jesus says, Depart from me, I never knew you. Jude 16 says, Following after their own lusts, they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

They flatter people for the sake of gaining an advantage. Can you imagine anybody broadcasting, and we now bring you the Gospel Hour with Jude. I want to tell you that the guy that was on before me and the guy that came on after me, he's just using you for his advantage.

Oh, we don't want that. That might offend somebody. Paul couldn't get a television program on TBN.

I've been there. I've been on the set. Listen, folks, they've got gold-plated lions in the bathroom.

I've been there three times for interviews, and I almost felt like I needed to go take a shower when I got through. I mean, it was just, I've never seen so much gaudy. I mean, it's gaudy.

I mean, they make Anna Nicole Smith look like a peasant. I mean, it's just gaudy. I'm sorry if you like TBN.

I'll pray for you. And there's some good stuff on there, but I'll tell you, I heard a guy say one time, we don't need religious television because we can't fix all the sorry theology out there with a few hours of good teaching because our people are confused. Because somebody has a Bible in a pulpit in a church building doesn't mean that he's preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's the Joy Boys. That's the prosperity gospel. You know, there's one of those guys, and I won't name him, but he's always laughing.

He was on about a year ago. He says, I need you all to give me \$30 million because I need to buy a Gulfstream airplane because I want to take the gospel to the world. One of my staff members sitting there said, Delta's ready when you are.

You know how many plane tickets you could buy to sit? You could take his whole church to share the gospel for the next 30 years for \$30 million. Billy Graham never had a private plane. I wonder how he got along.

Billy Graham flew commercial. Bless his heart. Just think he could have had a better name and a bigger ministry if he had just had a private jet.

Their God is their belly, and their glory is in their shame, and their end is destruction. Well, I need to go quickly. Paul says to mark them.

Church trumpet, secondly, keeps an eternal perspective. Our citizenship is in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven.

Folks, this world is not my home. I'm just passing through. I like it.

I like this world. If the Lord's taking a bus today, I'd just as soon stay a few more days because I've gotten to meet some new believers in Christ this week, and it's fun. I enjoy that.

I want to live life to the fullest. I want to enjoy it. We have a place up here in the mountains that God gave us when my parents died, and I get up in the mornings, and I study, and I look out over the Greenbrier Ridge, and I don't see any houses.

I just see thousands upon thousands upon thousands of acres of God's creation. I was sitting there back in February, and a storm rolled through, and you can hear the thunder roaring as it crests that mountain, and it rolls down into those valleys and those gashes in the mountains, and you hear it just trembling, and you hear it move across the mountain. You can literally watch the weather change coming over that.

And I sit there, and I look, and there's no lights. There are no street lights. And I look up, and I see the stars, and I see the clear sky, and I see the moon, and I think, Who could deny there's a God? When you see the mountains thunder His presence.

They thunder His presence. Our citizenship is in heaven. One day, I don't know if I'll live on a golf course in heaven.

I hope I do. But, you know, heaven's not about the streets of gold, and it's not about the gates of pearl because if Jesus wasn't there, it'd be hell. It's heaven because Jesus is there.

We're dual citizens. We're citizens of heaven, and we're citizens of earth. You know, when a Roman citizen moved out of Rome, he didn't lose his Roman identity.

He still dressed like a Roman. He still had a Roman accent. You could tell a Roman anywhere that he was because his accent gave him away.

He lived by the laws of Rome. He lived by the customs of Rome, whether he was in Philippi or whether he was in Alexandria or wherever he might be, he would live according to the laws of Rome because he never wanted to lose his Roman identity. We are identified with Christ.

Our citizenship is in heaven. Paul reminds the church that we're a colony of heaven on earth. We're aliens and strangers and pilgrims, and we need to live and act and choose and speak like citizens of heaven.

I grew up in the South. I don't know if you all noticed that yet. We had a waitress yesterday at the restaurant.

I mean, boy, she was East Tennessee, Ken, now. I mean to tell you, she was real East Tennessee. And when she walked away from the table, I said to Mark, I said, you know, I think that girl's from Boston.

You know, sometimes our accents betray us. Quick story, we moved to seminary in Kansas City, and I went into the grocery store, and I just asked a question. I thought it was an intelligent question.

I said, do you have any grits? And this 16, 17-year-old smart aleck full of a devil girl behind the counter said, you're not from around here, are you? Well, no, I'm not. How did you know? My ye tongue. You don't sound so hot yourself, sister, but our citizenship is in heaven.

Number three, the church trumpet proclaims a soon-coming king. Our citizenship is in heaven from which we also eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, at word, Savior's deliverer or liberator. We're waiting for a coming king.

It's a picture of the emperor who leaves his home city and goes out to deliver and free up his people who are held captive by another army. And, folks, I want to tell you something. I don't want to be retreating when my deliverer shows up.

I don't want to be backing up. We were in Israel last October. We're going back in November, taking a group of about 35 people from our church.

And I want to tell you, when you smell the dirt, when you put your hands on the rocks, when you stand on the Mount of Olives and realize that one day this thing is going to be split, the Ottoman Turks covered up the eastern gate so that the conqueror, the emperor, couldn't return to his home city. And they buried, it's the most expensive burial grounds in the world, it's a Jewish cemetery. Tens of thousands of Jews are buried along there and along the ridge going up the Mount of Olives, and they buried bodies there because no priest or rabbi would step on a dead body.

He's not going to step on them. He's just going to walk over the top of them. And one day he's going to come back.

I got a picture of my youngest daughter, Haley, and she's standing right above the Valley of Armageddon, and she's pointing up at the sky toward the east. And, like, yes, we're going to come. Folks, we've got a soon-coming king.

We don't need to be backing up when he comes. I don't want to stand before my Lord and apologize for not preaching his word. I don't want to get into heaven as by fire, Paul says to the Corinthians.

I want to get in and say, Lord, I may have believed too much, but I didn't want to believe too little. He's a soon-coming king. He may not come in our lifetimes.

It may be another 1,000 years, it may be 10,000 years, but I want to tell you his coming ought to be our motivation. We ought to live like he could come before this day ends, and we ought to live like it may be forever, but we're still believing it could be today. It could be today.

Lastly, the church triumphant stands in his power, verse 21, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory by the exertion of power that he has even to subject all things to himself. That word subject means to arrange in rank. It's a military term.

It means to orchestrate and to order, that he has the power to subject all things to himself. The church triumphant stands in his power. We don't stand in methods.

We don't stand in programs. We don't stand in gimmicks. We don't stand in budgets and buildings and nickels and noses and numbers.

We stand in his power. We don't have power because we're Baptists or Methodists or Pentecostal or charismatic or Church of God or anything else. We stand in power because the power has been given to us through the Holy Spirit, and God blesses likeness to Jesus Christ.

He does not bless it because it came out of Broadman Press. Our hope is not built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and Broadman Press. And I'm going to tell you, if we're going to keep raising money in the name of Lottie Moon, we're going to have to get her a makeover, but it's a joke.

Don't get offended. I'm afraid that sometimes we think the only people God blesses are Baptists, and power is not on Baptists. Power is on likeness to Jesus.

And you know what? If God chooses to do it in the church down the street because they're more willing to be like Jesus than my church is, then let God put his blessing on them, and we'll follow. Beth Moore tells a story, being in an airport. I think about Beth Moore kind of like I think about Ann Graham Lotz.

Ann Graham Lotz was speaking at Bellevue, and Joyce went to Adrian's office and said, I want you to come in here and listen to this woman, and I want you to tell me before God she's not a preacher. She's a better preacher than Franklin. And, I mean, she doesn't mince any words.

She really doesn't care. And Beth Moore is kind of that way too. In fact, I listen to Beth Moore because I think the woman is in the word.

So I listen to people that can teach the word of God without apology. I don't have a hang-up about that. I don't think she ought to be a pastor.

I think the Bible forbids that, but I don't think it forbids her from being a teacher. She was in an airport. She had some work to do.

And at the corner of her eye, while she was sitting on this side, an old man was rolled up in a wheelchair on the other side of the airport, and his hair was long and nasty and matted, and his clothes looked dirty, and there was a red cap pushing this guy through the airport. And Beth says that the Lord spoke to her and said, You see that man over there? And she thought, Lord, I need to study. I need to study.

I don't want to witness to that man. Don't make me go over there and witness to that man. He's dirty.

He looks dirty. His hair looks nasty. Don't make me go over there and witness to that man.

And she says, God just spoke to my heart. Beth, I don't want you to go witness to him. I want you to go comb his hair out.

She said, Lord, let me just share Jesus with you. Let me just witness to him. And so she said, I got up, and I went over there, and I walked up to him, and I leaned into him, and I said, Sir, can I brush your hair out? He said, What? Because he's hard of hearing.

I said, Can I brush your hair out? He said, What? So she reached into a bag, and she pulled a brush out. She said, Can I brush your hair? And tears began to go down the old man's eyes. And he said, Oh, thank you.

I've been in the hospital for a number of weeks. I'm going home to see my bride. And I'd hate for her to see me like this.

Folks, if something doesn't change, we're wheeling an unkept bride to the throne of grace. And we've got to get out of our comfort zones and get out of our discernment of, Oh, I just want to be popular and liked and loved. And we've got to start brushing the mats out of the hair of our membership.

And we've got to start loving the unlovely and ministering to those it is difficult to minister to and lift up Jesus and exalt Jesus and get a church ready that when he comes for his bride, we don't look tainted and dirty and filthy, but we're as much like Jesus as we can be when he shows up for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Let's pray together. Father, we're all called as lay people, as pastors, as staff members, to be a part of the church.

Lord, I'm grateful for the church. Lord, there are so many ways in which the church is more family to me than family, so many ways in which relatives are distant and distant from us emotionally and by miles, but the family of God, there's a bond that is there that is unlike any other. Just the story of what a church in Florida does for a church in Texas.

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